Conflicts of Interest: Plasticity of Peace Tourism and the 21st Century Nation

Veda E. Ward
California State University, Northridge

Abstract
Peace tourism is a holistic, multi-dimensional phenomenon that intersects natural, social, economic, political and spiritual systems. This paper analyzes the dynamic construct of nation through five study questions, two theoretical frameworks, and three cases demonstrating the impact of varied applications of peace tourism on quality-of-life in different regions of the world.

Keywords
nation, plasticity, peace tourism, peace education theory, Kantian peace theory, leakage, transformative learning

Introduction
The movement of natural resources, goods, money and services across boundaries is not a new phenomenon, but one that is intensified by globalization, and “the nature of present day globalization is capitalist” (Brubaker 2001). Media, electronic communications and international travel connect governments, industries and everyday citizens more rapidly than ever. In light of political and economic forces constantly pushing nations to evolve in a direction that is often described as liberal democracy, it is not difficult to imagine that national autonomy is, at best, an illusion tied to outmoded definitions of sovereignty. In fact, the term plasticity—the property of being physically malleable; the property of something that can be worked or hammered or shaped under pressure without breaking—can be applied to the topic at hand—the nation in the global era—since the construct of nation, is undergoing significant transformation as a result of forces of globalization. In this year of the fortieth anniversary of the US peace movement of the late 1960s, this paper examines peace tourism as it exemplifies one among many social, political and economic constructs being shaped by and helping to shape both the direction of globalization and the meaning of nation for future generations.
Defining Terms

At the core of this discussion is the meaning and relevance of “nation” in light of the impact of globalization. Like many terms in modern times, nation has a variety of definitions. Two of the more relevant here are: “the body of inhabitants of country, united under an independent government of their own (AR Dictionary), and “a community of people comprised of one or more nationalities and possessing a more or less defined territory and government (Merriam-Webster online dictionary)”.

Tracing the evolution of nation-states as products of globalization, Bayart (2004/07) identifies the social costs associated with becoming a “player” in the global community, and the first casualty seems to be loss of identity with a single religion, or with a fundamentalist version of a religion as central to national identity. Adhering to a rigid set of beliefs has often resulted in war throughout human history, such as the Crusades or the present US War on Terror. Religion was used as a divinely-inspired rationalization for violence, genocide and other forms of justice for many of the world’s people. Rank-and-file citizens of nations, however, may also act on their personal version of faith that may lead to beliefs that war is the inevitable resolution for nations in conflict. Today, whether regional or international in geographic scale, war has repercussions for many nations, not just those directly involved.

Ariarajah (2004) explains this seeming conundrum when he notes that “one of the reasons why religions get so easily co-opted in violent situations, and why religious sentiments could so easily be used to fan hatred, is the reality that they already have exclusive, intolerant and anti-relational attitudes built into their self definitions and doctrines. Thus, while religions are in theory in favor of justice, peace and love, the doctrines and structures of most religions do not promote or nurture a spirituality of just relations across religious barriers.” (p.117) However, both individuals and organizations seek to take action on their goals for furthering peace. Ironically, those who travel the globe to promote peace may be viewed as “the enemy” by all sides, since their actions suggest an allegiance to no one, and may be perceived as direct defiance of religious doctrine.

Tourism has often been associated with acquisition of expanded knowledge of the world for both countries and individuals. From ancient nation-states sending explorers to meet the need for natural resources and goods through expanded trade and commerce with foreign nations, to long-term colonization, to the more recent wholesale packaging of travel for fun, relaxation and renewal, tourism has always been characterized by a blend of positive and negative impacts on the visitor-tourist and the host community.