

ABSTRACT OF THE KEYNOTE SPEECH BY DR. STEPHEN W. BOYD

Sustainability and Post-Conflict Tourism Development

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Sustainability in a tourism context is hard to achieve in conflict-free environments; where regions are emerging from a prolonged period of turbulence and instability it is even more challenging. Unfortunately, not all places have enjoyed a conflict-free past. The focus of this keynote address is to examine the relationship between sustainability and post-conflict tourism development where the goal is for places to become destinations that have moved beyond an initial phoenix stage of tourism development as they move out of conflict. Casuevic and Lynch (2011) viewed 'phoenix tourism' as a distinct period in post-conflict tourism. Using Northern Ireland as an exemplar, discussion focuses on the following: addressing vulnerability, developing resilience strategies and establishing strong governance that facilitates stakeholder empowerment, with an outcome that sees the nature of tourism development move beyond a narrow and often dark-focused product offer and experience. Discussion also focuses on issues such as dissonance, place identity and cultural integrity as these can influence the type of tourism opportunity a region can promote. Is there, however, a conundrum in post-conflict destinations over whether to promote a more inclusive form of cultural heritage tourism as opposed to the development of a more niche opportunity of dark and political tourism? Debate is offered around the issues of dissonance and cultural sharing and the role that dark and political tourism development can play in the 'normalization' of a region's tourism industry (Boyd, 2013). The challenge, as discussed in this keynote address, is being able and willing to move to that position beyond a post-conflict development stage.

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