

Citizen diplomacy through peace tourism

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Abstract

Peace tourism is a niche form of tourist activity that, as its name suggests, is driven by an interest in peace. Peace tourism is a broad category of tourist activity that can have both positive and negative contributions to the host destination. This chapter explores the ways in which peace tourism enables individuals to satisfy this interest in peace by exercising citizen diplomacy. In doing so, it addresses a methodological gap in diplomacy research, which conventionally adopted a state-centric perspective and overlooked the political agency of the individual – and as such, the tourist. The chapter examines the ways in which citizen diplomacy is applied through peace tourism and whether it can positively contribute to sustainable peace within and beyond state boundaries. Using the case study of Israel/Palestine, this study identifies initiatives of citizen diplomacy through peace tourism and examines their impact using Anderson's model of six levels to peace. The study's findings show that citizen diplomacy through peace tourism can yield positive contributions to peace. The findings are discussed in reference to the UN Sustainable Development Goals framework, and specifically SDG 16, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

Keywords: Citizen diplomacy, peace tourism, sustainable peace, Israel/Palestine, peace activism, SDG 16

Introduction

There is a growing scholarly interest in identifying the political impact of tourism and, more specifically, assessing the contribution of international tourist activity to sustainable peace. This growing area of research (Antoniou, 2023; Blanchard *et al.*, 2022; Farmaki and Stergiou, 2021; Jamgade, 2021) reconceptualizes tourist activity as one with direct political implications and, consequentially, redefines the tourist and the host as international political actors. The political activity of individuals has often been labelled as political activism and, more recently, as citizen diplomacy. The latter has been identified as a form of diplomatic activity that is “by the people, for the people” and falls under the broader category of non-state diplomatic activity (Huijgh, 2016). Defining citizen diplomacy has been a contested process often featuring ambiguity, with the term being used to refer both to individuals as non-state political agents, as well as individuals acting as representatives of state actors (Tyler *et al.*, 2016).

Redefining the individual as a distinct political actor and understanding how tourists and hosts engage in citizen diplomacy is a complex and challenging task, but also a key step in advancing research on peace, specifically to inform the tourism and peace relationship. The challenge in acknowledging the tourist as a political agent delves from the convention that states have been treated as the primary actors of the international political stage and the ones to define diplomatic discourse and shape international relations. Methodologically, this has translated into a state-centric approach to the examination of international political discourse, often treating tourists as recipients and not drivers of political activity. Nevertheless, emerging research on citizen diplomacy has introduced individuals as separate political agents, acknowledging that citizens can deviate from their state's official narrative, foreign and public policy

and engage in diplomatic activity through non-state channels, without becoming representatives of their state's position.

This realization is of particular importance for distinguishing between state-led and individually led forms of diplomatic activity. While the former contributes to identifying and measuring the impact and influence of state actors, the latter sheds light on an underexplored political agent, the individual. If individuals can engage in political and diplomatic activity that becomes impactful on an international scale and influences state-led political activity, then the individual's political agency could be catalytic for international diplomatic discourse. In reference to the peace and tourism relationship, exploring citizen diplomacy through tourism can offer valuable insights to tourism's contributions to sustainable peace. It is important to note that not all tourist activity can foster citizen diplomacy or engage with peace as a cause. International tourist activity represents a vast scope of activities, experiences, and motivations, each yielding a distinct set of effects to the people and places involved. To reduce this spectrum of activity towards forms of tourism that are directly relevant to peace, this chapter considers peace tourism – in its various forms – as the type of tourist activity most relevant to the quest for peace. Defined as “travel that is specifically motivated by and associated with conflict resolution practices and war prevention” (Antoniou, 2021, p. 323), peace tourism is effectively the amalgamation of tourist practices that actively seek to engage with, be informed about, or foster peace. Peace tourism is, therefore, directly associated with acts of peace activism and citizen diplomacy, which makes peace tourism a niche tourism form that directly addresses sustainability – particularly sustainable peace.

Individuals in divided societies experiencing protracted conflict may seek to engage in political activity and peace activism beyond the state, particularly through peace tourism and citizen diplomacy. This chapter's case study, Israel/Palestine, offers an example of intractable conflict for which political leadership has failed to achieve any form of resolution, leaving citizens in prolonged division without indications of state-led reconciliation. Israel/Palestine has attracted a plethora of visitors for peace tourism, including educational visitors, activists, researchers and peace professionals. At the same time, citizens of protracted and intractable conflicts such as the example of Israel/Palestine have often sought alternative routes for connecting with members of the other community and forming alliances across the division to engage in political dialogue, or citizen diplomacy beyond state structures. Examples of citizen diplomacy across division lines have often been recorded to occur both beyond that state's territory, as well as through visitor experiences engaging international audiences locally, practices that both highlight the significance of travel in enabling citizen diplomacy for citizens of divided societies. To inform the tourism and peace relationship and reconceptualize the individual as a political actor, this chapter examines peace tourism as an enabler of citizen diplomacy in ways that contribute to sustainable peace. By employing Sustainable Development Goal 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16) as a point of reference, this chapter explores the ways in which citizen diplomacy through peace tourism fosters peace, and whether these align with the notion of sustainable peace as determined through the SDG 16 targets and indicators.

Citizen Diplomacy: the citizen as a separate political agent

McDonald (2006) differentiates diplomacy between Track One and Track Two. Track One is the government-to-government diplomacy, which he refers to as “fairly rigid, [...] not risk-taking, and [...] not very imaginative” (McDonald, 2013, p. 4). Track Two on the other hand, is “person to person, small group to small group, it's dynamic, it's risk-taking, it's imaginative, it gets things done” (*ibid.*). McDonald uses Track Two as a synonym for citizen diplomacy, which he then illustrates through a variety of activity categories – funding, activism, research,

business, etc – identified as a multitrack system, indicating the broader diversity of citizen diplomacy in comparison to state diplomacy.

Initiatives of citizen diplomacy have been linked to democratization as avenues of participatory democracy. The expansion of diplomatic discourse to engage individuals has been considered a democratization of diplomacy (Anton, 2022). For authoritarian regimes, citizen diplomacy has been seen as an effective means of accessing citizenry with restricted access to democratic processes and creating opportunities for public dialogue through workshops and conferences (Fulda, 2019). Geis *et al.* (2022) see citizen diplomacy as a product of a broader process of democratizing diplomacy, which enables citizen participation in processes of foreign policy. Nevertheless, considering citizen diplomacy as a form of participatory democracy and as a state-bound political activity restricts its potential to be seen as diplomatic activity beyond the state.

There is a distinction to be made between citizen diplomacy and public diplomacy. The latter is a state-led diplomatic activity which, according to Gilboa (2008), allows a state to engage with public opinion abroad and improve the state's image among foreign audiences. Public diplomacy is a form of diplomatic activity through which states or state-affiliated agencies engage with individuals from other territories with the aim of improving the state's image abroad (Melissen, 2013). It has also been treated as an umbrella term to incorporate various forms of diplomatic activity that enable states to engage with non-state actors and individuals – one such example being cultural diplomacy (Ang *et al.*, 2015). Citizen diplomacy can be diverse in an analogous manner to public diplomacy and utilize culture, education, the arts and other avenues for diplomatic discourse. The key differentiation between public and citizen diplomacy is that the former is a government-led activity, whereas the latter is citizen-led and occurs beyond the state. Fulda (2019) characterises citizen diplomacy as *society-centric* and as a key component of the world's transition towards new forms of diplomacy.

In response to the diversity of non-state forms of diplomacy – including citizen-led diplomacy – Anton (2021) and Antoniou (2023) place citizen diplomacy under the umbrella term civil society diplomacy (CSD), which offers a society-centric alternative to state-centric diplomatic activity. Contrary to McDonald's 2006 argument that Track Two and citizen diplomacy refer to the same activity, Antoniou (2023) identifies Track Two, grassroots diplomacy, and citizen diplomacy as three separate forms of civil society diplomacy. Antoniou defines Track Two as diplomatic activity involving non-state actors, grassroots diplomacy as diplomatic exchange across non-state actors and individuals, and citizen diplomacy as diplomacy across individuals, or people to people.

While there is a general scholarly agreement on the nature of citizen diplomacy and its capacity to be citizen-led rather than state-led, there is an evident challenge in drawing the line between individuals as distinct political actors and individuals within organised and institutionalised units under the framework of civil society. Individuals may choose to advance their political activity through civil society groups, which become hubs for coordinated citizen diplomacy. Such groups can vary from nonformal partnerships of a few individuals to transnational civil society movements engaging hundreds of thousands.

A common characteristic of the various forms of citizen diplomacy, and one that differentiates them from conventional, state-led diplomacy, is that they are nonformal in nature and there is no formal process or conditions under which an individual's activity can be classified as diplomatic discourse. This nonformal nature of citizen diplomacy can be seen as the principal factor of why it was not considered as an integral component of international diplomacy until recently, when globalization and increased mobility have given individuals more opportunities for political engagement beyond their state.

Anton and Moise (2022) consider an individual's global recognition and ability to exert global influence as a factor that elevates their capacity as a citizen diplomat and enables them

to have global reach and diplomatic power. Global figures such as Angelina Jolie, Leonardo DiCaprio and Emma Watson, among others, are figures with a global outreach who have used their position to speak out about global causes such as peace, climate action, and women's rights. While internationally known figures have an established platform for conducting citizen diplomacy, a plethora of both community-based and transnational civil society networks provide a platform to individuals regardless of their level of global influence to serve global causes and conduct citizen diplomacy.

Citizen diplomacy for peace

Citizen diplomacy has been heralded as a means enabling individuals to serve peace. Yaniv (2013) discusses citizen diplomacy in reference to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and highlights the importance of citizen involvement in reconciliation discussions. Fulda (2019) considers citizen diplomacy to be an alternative problem-solving route to problematic interstate relations, which are often examined solely on a government-to-government level. A prerequisite for examining the contribution of citizen diplomacy to peace is to define peace and identify suitable indicators for its measurement. Anderson (2004) defines peace as a condition characterized by harmonious relationships and low levels of violence and suggests that there are various levels for achieving it from a micro to macro scale. The seven levels presented are the personal level, the interpersonal, the intercultural, the intercommunal, the national, the international, and the ecological (*ibid.*). This definition highlights the need to look beyond the state level for defining and measuring peace and acknowledge key areas of peace that have remained largely underexplored by state-centric research such as the interpersonal, the intercultural, and the intercommunal. Isaac (2014) agrees that peace does not refer solely to the relationships between nations, but should be extended to incorporate communities, groups, and individuals. These less observed levels are where citizen diplomacy takes place more evidently.

A prominent example of citizen diplomacy for peace is the personal initiative and advocacy demonstrated by Nobel Peace Prize winners, who were awarded for their ability to establish routes for diplomacy beyond their state in cases where human rights violations were performed. 2023 Nobel Laureate Narges Mohammadi received the Nobel Peace Prize for advocating for women's rights and fighting against women's oppression under Iran's theocratic regime (Nobel Prize, 2024). In 2021, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to two investigative journalists, Maria Ressa and Dmitry Muratov, for their fight to secure freedom of expression and press freedom. Ressa and Muratov, active in the Philippines and Russia respectively, were publicly critical of their governments' actions. Their activity towards safeguarding freedom of expression was heralded as a precondition to democracy and sustainable peace (*ibid.*). In 2014, the Nobel Peace Prize was shared between Kailash Satyarthi and Malala Yousafzai for their actions in India and Pakistan respectively to protect the right of children to access education.

There is a notable observation to be made regarding citizen diplomacy and its impact. Although the activity is seen as citizen-led, the overwhelming share of citizen diplomacy cases discusses activity that individuals take in reference to their state. In the case of the five Nobel Laureates, their contributions to sustainable peace were made within their state boundaries and in reference to challenges caused by their state governments. Anton (2022) highlights that citizen diplomacy, like most forms of diplomacy, is examined from a state-centric approach, which restricts efforts for conceptualizing citizen diplomacy as a separate international political activity. It therefore seems that citizen diplomacy research has expanded more as a people-to-state phenomenon and less in its capacity as a people-to-people activity. When research is primarily concerned with how citizen diplomacy serves states, it expectedly ignores the individual's agency, organisational mobility and autonomy, and as a result fails to assess the political impact of individuals as separate political actors.

To this end, there is a methodological gap to be addressed in the study of diplomacy, which is the failure to assess individuals as political agents within the international political stage. The inability to methodologically acknowledge individuals as political actors is caused by the state-centric approach that has overwhelmingly been applied when discussing and analysing diplomatic discourse. Mingst *et al.* (2018) identify the state-centric approach as one of three levels of analysis employed in the field of International Relations.

Namely, the three analytical approaches are the state level of analysis – for which the state is the principal actor – the individual level – which focuses on individuals and political interactions at a micro-level – and the systemic level – which puts more emphasis on the system's structure at a macro-level rather than examining its agents (Temby, 2015). Addressing the gap caused by state-centric approaches requires moving beyond the state as the principal political actor. For the purposes of this chapter's analysis, the individual level is deemed as the most appropriate for discussing the political impact of individuals as separate political agents. Shifting the focus to the individual as a political agent, who is separate from their state's decision-making processes allows us to understand the evident divergence between state and citizen agency, and therefore formulate a clearer understanding of international political dynamics and contributions to sustainable peace.

Citizen diplomacy through peace tourism: active beyond state boundaries

In a state-dominated international stage, political activity often follows a linear Actor (states)-Process (political activity)-Impact (individuals) relationship. From the state perspective, political decisions can have an impact on various individual activities, such as travel and tourism. A prominent example is the recent COVID-19 restrictions that states imposed on their citizens and territory, restricting, or preventing travel and mobility with a profound impact on individuals. States deciding to endorse international treaties, to wage war, to impose embargos, or to revisit geopolitical alliances are all examples of state-driven international political affairs that affirm the above linear relationship and see individuals as recipients of political discourse and not as political agents.

Nevertheless, this chapter focuses on the individual's political agency – exercised through citizen diplomacy – and examines the reversed relationship Actor (individuals)-Process (political activity)-Impact (international political stage). Moving beyond the state perspective, this approach focuses on how individuals, as separate political agents, engage in political activity that can influence other political actors and the international political stage as a whole. Examining citizen diplomacy enables this shift in perspective, which encapsulates political activity driven by the individual as a political actor (Antoniou, 2023).

Anton (2022) acknowledges that individuals as citizen diplomats have separate political agency and do not act as representatives of their states. By using the term *unattached diplomat*, Anton (2022) emphasizes that, unlike traditional diplomats, individuals should not only be seen as instruments for state action nor as mere recipients of state-driven discourse, but as agents. Arguably, key factors for achieving separate agency for the unattached diplomat are transnational communication and mobility.

To this end, this study examines the contribution of individuals as citizen diplomats to causes beyond their national boundaries, such as sustainable peace, with a focus on transnational citizen diplomacy for peace. While transnational citizen diplomacy is a novel concept, it has in fact been practiced for decades. The notion of global civil society is an example that highlights citizen action on a transnational scale, in the form of global activism (Kaldor, 2003, 2020; Keane, 2003). With globalization having enabled global governance, transnational communication, and the emergence of non-state actors, political activity does not take place on a territorial basis, but rather in reference to specific issues (Kaldor, 2020). Moving beyond state

boundaries has allowed individuals to tackle global issues through coordinated action that is informed by a variety of perspectives.

Noy (2013) discusses how peace activism can be achieved through tourism, not from the visitor's perspective, but through local initiative. Noy speaks about locals offering tourist experiences and narratives that act as alternatives to hegemonic narratives and aim to raise visitor consciousness. Using examples from Israel and Palestine, Noy illustrates how peace activism through tourism can challenge the apolitical nature of specific locations and question the way national ideology is enacted through tourism. Wintersteiner and Wohlmuther (2014) identify three types of peace-sensitive tourism, or tourism through which participants assume a responsibility to promote a culture of peace. These are: (1) Tourism as an experience of the other, (2) Cross-border tourism and reconciliation tourism, and (3) Peace tourism.

Peace tourism, or tourism about peace and for peace as Wintersteiner and Wohlmuther (2014) define it, involves a niche audience of tourists with a direct interest in peace issues and enables them to advance their peace work through new knowledge, exchange of perspectives, and dialogue (*ibid.*). Antoniou (2022) explains peace tourism as “a type of special interest tourism generated by the traveller's interest in peace”, emphasizing that this interest alone cannot guarantee that peace tourism will have a positive contribution to peace. Instead, to assess the contributions of peace tourism to peace, Antoniou identifies a spectrum of peace tourism activity, which differentiates between peace tourism that is informed and intentional from passive or unintentional peace tourism that could potentially lead to encounters counterproductive to the peace cause.

Moufakkir (2010) considers peace tourism to have emerged as the antithesis of political tourism, which is utilized to promote nationalist and divisive narratives, particularly in contested and divided destinations. Moufakkir's position aligns with Noy's (2013) argument that peace-motivated tourism can promote alternative narratives and foster peace activism, or more broadly citizen diplomacy for peace. Peace tourism can therefore offer peace-oriented mobility for visitors interested to actively pursue peace as a cause beyond national borders and potentially link them to local audiences offering peace tourism experiences as alternatives to either contested and divisive political narratives or apolitical versions of contested territories. Peace tourism, therefore, serves as an avenue for citizen diplomacy linking members of host and visiting territories under a common cause of intentionally serving peace.

Albeit a growing volume of literature discussing peace tourism and its potential over the past decades, the contribution of citizen diplomacy to peace through peace tourism has remained largely underexplored. There is, therefore, a scholarly gap to be addressed by shedding light on acts of citizen diplomacy through peace tourism. In addition to the methodological gap identified for examining citizen diplomacy beyond state-centric approaches, this chapter seeks to address the following two questions:

- Can individuals utilize peace tourism to practice citizen diplomacy and make significant contributions to peace beyond their state affiliation?
- Is it possible to identify the contribution of citizen diplomacy to peace using a non-state-centric methodology?

Methodology

To meet its research objectives, this chapter adopts an International Relations analytical model to assess political activity and impact. From a selection of three levels of analysis, the state level, the individual level, and the systemic level, this chapter moves beyond state-centric political analysis previously applied to diplomatic discourse and adopts the individual level of analysis for assessing citizen diplomacy conducted through peace tourism.

Through a review of secondary sources, the study identifies empirical data on citizen diplomacy initiatives through peace tourism to and from the destination of Israel/Palestine. A case study that has extensively contributed to research on peace tourism, peace activism, and activist tourism, Israel/Palestine can offer valuable insights on citizen diplomacy and the ability of individuals to foster peace as distinct political agents. Through a review of peace tourism activities as recorded in relevant scholarship, the study identifies cases of citizen diplomacy conducted through peace tourism. These cases are then discussed in reference to their contribution to peace, using both Anderson's (2004) classification of seven levels of peace, as well as the sustainable peace indicators identified through Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

Findings and Discussion

People-to-people diplomatic initiatives have become an integral component of peace work in the case of Israel/Palestine, with Israelis and Palestinians finding non-state avenues for common action (Isaac, 2014). The table below identifies organised groups and citizen initiatives in Israel/Palestine that engage with peace work, exercising citizen diplomacy through a variety of host and visitor peace tourism activities:

Table 1: Peace tourism activities in Israel/Palestine

	Organisation/ Initiative	Description	Peace Tourism Host Activity	Peace Tourism Visitor Activity	Source
1.	Sala Manca	Jerusalemite activist group wishing to expose the hegemonic politics of tourism in Jerusalem	Challenges nationalistic narratives through guided walk recordings. Engages with peace activism through art projects and exhibitions.	N/A	Noy, 2013
2.	Emek Shaveh	Israeli non-profit association of archaeologists and human rights activists (est. 2008)	Countering the phenomenon of abusing archaeological sites to prove ownership of the land by offering alternative archaeological tours in East Jerusalem.	N/A	Noy, 2013
3.	Mejdi	Tour operator	Delivers dual-narrative tours in Israel/Palestine.	N/A	Schneider, 2019
4.	Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IP-CRI)	Public policy think tank	Delivers the Breaking Down Wall Tours.	N/A	Belhassen, 2023
5.	Ir Amim	Israeli organisation	Delivers the United Jerusalem tour.	N/A	Belhassen, 2023
6.	Roots/ Shomashim/ Judur	Israeli-Palestinian grassroots initiative	Visitors can access the West Bank Palestinian and West Bank Israeli settler members of the initiative in a central location of the West Bank and discuss peace and collaboration.	N/A	Belhassen, 2023

7.	Breaking the Silence	Veteran Israeli soldier organisation	Delivers tours to offer a dissonant voice to the narrative of militarism and provide personal testimonies of to challenge the status of military occupation.	N/A	Esu, 2021
8.	Walls2Windows	Tour program	Delivers guided visits to the Occupied Palestinian Territories to the Jewish diaspora (mainly Jewish Americans).	N/A	Schneider, 2020
9.	Zochrot	Tour Operator (est. 2002)	Delivers tours to depopulated Palestinian sites to challenge national-historical narratives, promote awareness on Palestinian localities, and foster dialogue and reconciliation between Jews and Palestinians.	N/A	Aviv, 2011; Noy, 2013; Belhassen, 2023
10.	Encounter	Tour Operator	To challenge national-historical narratives, and promote dialogue and reconciliation between Jews and Palestinians.	N/A	Aviv, 2011
11.	Women Wage Peace	Israeli women's organisation (est. 2014)	Hosts local peace activism events to promote women leadership in Israel across political spectrums for a political agreement in the conflict; to establish intercultural dialogue and joint action with Palestinian women.	Travels internationally to promote the organisation's message in partnership with their Palestinian sister organisation.	Bartolini De Angeli, 2023; Women Wage Peace website, 2024
12.	Women of the Sun	Palestinian women's organisation	Hosts local peace activism events to promote women's involvement in leadership for peace, and to establish intercultural dialogue and joint action with Israeli women towards peace. Delivers youth camps for international audiences.	Travels internationally to promote the organisation's message in partnership with their Israeli sister organisation.	Women Wage Peace website, 2024, Women of the Sun Facebook page
13.	The Mothers' Call	An initiative run by the partnership between Women Wage Peace and Women of the	Initiative promoted through local events and demonstrations.	Initiative communicated abroad in various forums	Women Wage Peace website

		Sun to promote cross-border motherhood for peace.			
14.	Tourism4Peace Forum	Initiative by the Israel Hotel Managers Association and the Peres Center for Peace to bring together tourism and hospitality providers from Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine for peaceful, coordinated action (est. 2005).	Promotes opportunities for peace tourism as an alternative to political tourism and exposes visitors to multiple narratives from all parties involved.	N/A	Moufakkir, 2010
15.	Sally Abed Alon-Lee Green	Citizen initiative by Israeli Jewish and Israeli Palestinian individuals to tour university campuses in the United States and discuss peace for Israel/Palestine	N/A	Deliver talks to university students at Harvard and other campuses in the United States to advocate for unity and peace.	Boorstein, 2023
16.	Standing Together	Grassroots Arab-Jewish peace advocating group in Israel	N/A	Trips to the United States to advocate for peace for Israel/Palestine.	Boorstein, 2023

Source: Author

The initiatives listed above have utilized peace tourism through two approaches: (1) traveling abroad to conduct citizen diplomacy through peace tourism, and (2) establishing community-based structures within the host destination to engage with peace tourists – domestic and international. This observation highlights that peace tourism is an avenue for citizen diplomacy available to both host and visitor audiences, who utilize it in a variety of forms to advocate for peace.

There is a common element in all the initiatives of citizen diplomacy through peace tourism that are identified in this study, both for initiatives conducted within the destination as well as abroad. This common element is the initiatives' attempt to provide access to alternative, peace-oriented, under-represented and often marginalised narratives. In the case of Israel/Palestine, initiatives by local citizen diplomats have exposed international and domestic audiences to multifaceted narratives, contested testimonies, recordings, guided walks, and unlikely partnerships in a way that promotes empathy, challenges nationalist and divisive rhetoric, humanizes the local communities, and establishes opportunities for peace action.

Participants of Mejdī's dual-narrative tours have reported a reduction in prejudice (Schneider, 2019), while Jewish diaspora participants of Windows2Walls reported increased sympathy towards the Palestinian community (Schneider, 2020). Abed and Green, Standing Together, and Women Wage Peace have engaged diplomats and policymakers within and beyond Israel to convey their message to state actors as well. Women Wage Peace and Women of the Sun

have significantly expanded their global reach, joining events such as the Bled Strategic Forum and the Time Magazine 2024 Women of the Year ceremony (Women Wage Peace, 2024).

From an admittedly wide plethora of local citizen diplomacy initiatives, including several initiatives on human rights and the reporting of military violence that were not included in this table, more than half have utilised tours, guided walks and interaction with visitor audiences to promote peace activism and offer insights to the destination's peace prospects in a people-to-people manner. Participants to the community-based initiatives for citizen diplomacy reported, in their majority, increased empathy towards both Israelis and Palestinians, as well as significant change in their understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Esu, 2021; Schneider, 2019; 2020).

Observations about the impact of these initiatives are discussed from an individual level of analysis in reference to Anderson's (2004) levels of peace listed below:

- 1) Personal, inner peace
- 2) Interpersonal peace within the group
- 3) Intercultural peace among social groups
- 4) Local peace within the community
- 5) National peace within the nation
- 6) International peace among nations
- 7) Ecological peace with the Earth

On a personal level (Level 1), significant changes in perception were recorded, and at the same time, participants were exposed to peace within groups of unlikely collaborators (Level 2), to peace among social groups (Level 3), and peace within the visited communities (Level 4). There is less impact recorded on a national and ecological level, however exposure to alternative narratives arguably affects the international level (Level 6) by reaching international audiences. Looking at these initiatives from a state-centric approach, one could argue that there is negligible if any impact. However, when delving into the levels of peace experienced on a micro-level from an individual level of analysis, it is evident that citizen diplomacy through peace tourism can have a transformational effect on individuals and enables them to reconceptualize their understanding of divided societies and their dynamics in a post-state manner.

Methodologically, the nonformal nature of citizen diplomacy makes it difficult to examine whether any of these initiatives caused a multiplier effect with participants further engaging in citizen diplomacy for peace as separate political agents. It is therefore challenging to explore the relationship between peace tourism participants and the international or ecological levels of peace in detail. This area of citizen diplomacy research has the potential to be further informed through empirical data that examine the long-term attitudes of peace tourism participants, both hosts and visitors.

With reference to SDG16, the initiatives of citizen diplomacy through peace tourism identified in this study are more closely relevant to target 16.10, which aims to "ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements" (United Nations, 2024). By providing access to alternative narratives, challenging divisive and nationalist rhetoric, and offering the opportunity for dialogue across local and international audiences, these initiatives directly contribute to sustainable peace through one of its key targets. Nevertheless, SDG16 targets and indicators reflect at large the national and international levels of peace, and do not sufficiently monitor peace work done at the micro levels of personal, interpersonal, and intercultural peace. Advancing citizen diplomacy research to measure impact on the macro levels of peace (Levels 5, 6 and 7), and at the same time expanding sustainable peace targets to grasp peace activity at the micro level

(Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4) can achieve a more comprehensive understanding of citizen diplomacy and peace tourism's contribution to peace.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to examine the political impact of individuals as non-state actors in reference to SDG16 and sustainable peace. More specifically, the study focused on the political impact that can be generated through tourism-enabled citizen diplomacy. The relationship between tourism and peace has been extensively explored to assess whether there is significant causality of the former to the latter. In responding to this quest, Farmaki (2017) and Antoniou (2023) highlight that the question to be asked is not whether tourism leads to peace, but rather which forms of tourism have the capacity to do so, and under which circumstances.

Identifying the niche activity of peace tourism is a key step towards answering this question and effectively informing the tourism and peace relationship. Peace tourism is the collection of tourist activities that are motivated by an interest in peace and are, therefore, a principal reference point for assessing the impact tourism can have on peace: peace tourism activities have the potential to be intentional, informed, and destination-driven – with host and visitors utilizing peace tourism to conduct citizen diplomacy as independent political agents – either by hosting international peace tourist audiences or visiting destinations abroad as peace tourists.

This chapter delved into the impact of peace tourism by discussing its ability to foster citizen diplomacy beyond the state. Through a review of peace tourism examples that involve travel to or from the case study of Israel/Palestine, it is evident that peace tourism has the capacity to encourage political activity through citizen diplomacy and create alternative routes for political action beyond state channels and state diplomacy. The activities reviewed indicate that peace tourism can foster citizen diplomacy initiatives and generate a positive impact to sustainable peace on the personal, interpersonal, intercultural, local/communal, and international level.

A key observation that emerges from this research is that moving beyond state-centric perspectives in diplomacy and peace research is imperative in understanding emergent forms of diplomatic discourse such as citizen diplomacy, and in acknowledging the impact of individuals as political agents. Adopting the individual level of analysis addresses this methodological gap and informs diplomacy and peace from an individual perspective that more fittingly records tourist activity. Future research should delve further into the political impact of individuals on sustainable peace through their capacities as hosts and visitors.

Introducing niche tourism as an enabler of international political activity informs the fields of both Tourism and International Relations by identifying the political impact of tourism and by acknowledging niche tourists as actors within the international political stage. At the same time, a focus on the political impact of peace tourism provides direct theoretical implications to the study of sustainable peace and allows researchers to expand on the tourism and peace relationship from novel perspectives.

On a practical level, peace tourism has evolved to offer meaningful intergroup contact and experiences that significantly transform host and visitor perspectives. The insights on the transformational capacity of peace tourism recorded through this chapter's case study of Israel/Palestine make it a prominent peacebuilding tool for rapprochement and reconciliation in divided societies. When it comes to protracted conflicts, peace tourism becomes catalytic in providing access to marginalized, peace-oriented narratives and fostering intergroup connections within and beyond state boundaries, making it a valuable tool for achieving sustainable peace. To this end, the political contribution of niche tourism, and more specifically, the contribution of peace tourism to sustainable peace ought to be further examined within the realm of Diplomacy studies and International Relations.

This chapter has provided insights that acknowledge the individual as a non-state political actor with agency within the international political stage. If peace tourism has the capacity to

endorse and amplify the political agency of individuals beyond the state, then state-owned deadlocks in protracted conflicts and divided societies can be challenged through novel avenues of citizen diplomacy.

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