

August 31, 2010

A Convenient Truth for Tourism

Cross-Promotion of Sustainable/Responsible Tourism and Renewable Energy

1. Everyone can be an Unlimited Clean Energy Producer

These days there is a documentary movie stirring up people's minds (and hearts) in German cinemas: *The Fourth Revolution – Energy Autonomy* (www.energyautonomy.org), produced over four years by Carl-A. Fechner ^{*1)}. It stars inspiring protagonists like Muhammad Yunus, Bianca Jagger, Matthias Willenbacher, Hermann Scheer.

Based on Dr. Hermann Scheer's book *Energy Autonomy*, the documentary responds to Al Gore's blockbuster *The Inconvenient Truth* with a visionary '*convenient truth*': Within thirty years from now, as producers of *The Fourth Revolution* say, solar, wind, or biogas-powered transport will be real. Will this be the first effects of the butterfly flapping its wings to cause a hurricane in renewable energies?

Although still an anticipated reality, it's a sign that something is about to take-off, proven by successful projects in ten countries around the globe and testified by those people who have turned a silent commitment into a global movement by *making their vision our joint cause*.

Many years back, Greenpeace succeeded in arousing people's minds and hearts by simply telling them that "*Man can save whales*". Nowadays, experts teach people about the assets of environmental responsibility, decentralization, sustainability, and they write a lot of papers about it. Does an instruction manual make converts? Will the prosaic use of 'sustainability' be strong enough to keep inflaming people's hearts? Are appeals to morals enough? Doubts seem appropriate. Instead of rehashing the technical advantages of system updates in coded messages, why not tell people that "*everyone can be an unlimited clean energy producer*"?

1*) International Camera Award Winner Sorin Dragoi performed an imaginative shooting, and both Russian composer Natalia Dittrich and the Stuttgart Film orchestra emotionally soundtracked the film

2. Renewable Energy and Sustainable Tourism – a Catalyst of Renewed Solidarity

Regarded as a 'social (humanitarian) business', sustainable/responsible Travel and Tourism organizations should cooperate with partners who ...

- share the same values, mission, vision,
- exert substantial influence and/or have the necessary (public and private sector generated) funds,
- pursue 'sustainable development business planning' in a social and ecological way,
- have a 'pioneering mindset'; are 'out of the box' thinkers.

The idea of tourism is freedom, and the idea of energy is power. Why not link their promotion, thus multiplying their impetus, since both sustainable tourism and renewable energy are 'lifestyle vehicles'. Moving ahead, they make us *both co-creators (suppliers) and co-beneficiaries (consumers), interactively setting trends*. Both sustainable tourism and renewable energy share their proper sense of sustainability, renewability and locality. Sustainable tourism, due to travel destinations' natural permanence of location and stakeholders' innovational capacity and ecological commitment. Renewable energy, due to its very nature of limitless 'power' and its capacity to produce 'clean' energy where it is used: locally. The selling of both 'a destination' and 'renewable energy' makes a kind of 'one-stop shop'. Cross-promoting sustainable/responsible tourism and renewable energy would not only provide a win-win solution, but also a *strategic social business partnership* of two separate industries, generating a joint solidarity impact. Extending an already available concept of 'total tourism' *2) to the renewable energy sector could be instrumental to enhancing cross-industry investment and to mutually boosting export in both energy and tourism.

"The world's largest industry revolves around the smallest destination" (World Tourism Foundation Founder, Edward Beauchamp). International tourism organizations (WTF, UNWTO, WTTC, PATA ...) and the *World Council for Renewable Energy* (www.wcre.org), including IRENA (WCRE's Abu Dhabi-based promotion agency), could supplement and complement the ongoing bottom-up processes by creating a joint platform for top-down impulses: to "think locally when acting globally". *3) This is just as responsible visitor behaviour can make responsible suppliers and investors. *Sustainable/Responsible Tourism and Renewable Energy together could form the strategic linkage jointly promoting a new lifestyle.*

3. Change and Sustainability: No Contradiction

Needless to say, such a turnaround would entail a *quantum-leap in lifestyle change*, comparable to the introduction of railroads, aeroplanes, and more recently, the Internet – all of them involving elements of technical innovation, progress, movement – driven by energy.

The basic idea of linking sustainable/responsible tourism with renewable energy is that 'renewables' have already been a global issue for a long time, with growing intensiveness ever since many

2*) (benefits from covering the complementary benefits of inbound and outbound tourism – introduced by the Pacific Asia Travel Association PATA years ago)

3*) „... Funding programmes must ... be established at political level. These programmes must transform the macroeconomic benefits into incentives for microeconomic initiatives. This is the most important guideline for strategies to promote renewables" (Hermann Scheer, *The Long Road to IRENA*, 2009, page 78)

scientists have become sensitized on climate change, to an important degree, as being attributed to man-made impact. Notwithstanding a still controversial debate on the human share of responsibility for climate change, everybody, in a way, has felt that the climate has turned 'crazy'.

However, it's not all about CO₂: People's health is at the stake, when smog is in the air, and environmentalists, crying for biodiversity salvation, point to diminishing rain forests, fossil energy calamities and an almost pandemic spread of civilization garbage, which altogether cannot but suffocate flora and fauna. Enhanced sustainability and durability, for which we all long for, are at stake. Yet, there is no controversial awareness of a 'ticking clock' among grassroot stakeholders.

It is time to make friends with *change*. Time, above all, to reflect on our own indifference towards the collateral damage caused by a civilization whose negative impact has become disproportionate to the desired conditions of many. Environmental pollution is disastrous, wasting energy a scandal, and neither make good business sense. Using and boosting renewable energy instead of fossil fuels would not demand ceding one slice from our usual comfort. On the contrary, it would improve it and profitability of businesses as well. However, using renewable energy is less dependent on a generally acknowledged rationale, but rather on an amalgam of consumer, company, and governmental long-headed habits, combined with the well woven networks of conventional energy supplier and traditional financial players to keep wielding their overwhelming lobbying power with political decision makers.

4. **Renewable Energy – the Pivot of Sustainable Tourism**

Granted these great perspectives, renewable options are being implemented more and more, and cooperation with other sectors has started – but there is still little promotional cooperation visible from the part of the 'bandwagon' of mobility, organized wellness and dream journeys – of the Travel and Tourism industry. Tourism, professing sustainability, ecology and responsibility, actually should – and could – create new synergies and give inspiration to new lifestyle trends. Where are the organizations that claim to be ecological protagonists and who promote sustainable/responsible tourism, by *making renewable energy the pivot of its social and ecological solidarity?*

Energy means *power*, and tourism means *freedom*. These are higher values added to mere functions like providing 'electric power' and offering 'transport/accommodation/recreation'. It is up to us to extrapolate 'renewable energy' and 'sustainable/responsible tourism' to a 'lifestyle', keeping in balance the very sense of development of social wellbeing, economic progress and ecological sustainability.

But how to handle such an outwardly simple, profoundly reasonable but technically complex issue?

- a) It's the *core-message*, 'powered by analogy', i.e. to turn an abstract idea into an emotional picture. Take *Greenpeace*: At the beginning, their ambitious but somehow theoretical vision was to make people aware that nature should be preserved to warrant man's survival. However, Greenpeace turned this reasonable vision into a more emotional picture of *'the idea that man can save whales'*. The whale provided people 'something great', and they made Greenpeace's vision their cause.
- b) It's the face of the whale that gave the Greenpeace message its emotional power – a *'face' to be identified, recognized, and remembered*. A 'face' will be needed to concretize abstractions like sustainable tourism and renewable energy.
- c) It's the capability to identify a *surrogate* that may stand, as it were a symbol, for the object as a whole, in order to trigger the effects desired. Take the children of the Plant-for-the-Planet

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Foundation *) – ‘butterflies, flapping their wings’? Since 2007, they have planted a million trees in Germany. Like planting trees is to symbolize ‘climate equity’, renewable energy may stand for *subsidiarity* and *sustainability*, and in general, responsible tourism as a *new lifestyle* surrogate. As a photographer, I know that close-up photo shots may provide a more thrilling and emotional impression of the whole object than its total view.

- d) It’s the way how to underpin that “*everyone can be an unlimited clean energy producer*”.
- e) It’s the glimpse across the fence that could make the difference: Are there possible communalities or complementary benefits? Why not cross-promoting sustainable/responsible tourism and renewable energy – just to obtain *sustainable energy and a renewable tourism*?

Fossil energy has started to show its limitations, whereas renewable energy is practically unlimited. Biological systems are energy systems, after all, and invisible energetic conditions create and form visible and tangible conditions, as evolutionary research tells us. Hence, like fresh air, sunshine, and spring water, energy is originally a gift – renewable and accessible for everyone. That’s how it should be. Sometimes visions come true if the people in charge only want it. Today, the heart of the matter is no longer technology, it is up to the political will to turn the magic of ‘tapping the sun’ into reality – it’s pioneering decision-makers awareness of *butterflies flapping their wings*

5. **The Convenient Truth is ‘(W)holistic’**

Less survival nature itself has no purpose, no goal, nor will. Attaining biological maturity, the ‘natural system’ follows natural fits which supplement and complement one another. Being ‘organic’ rather than organizational, the natural system points to the deficiencies of human efforts to replace natural processes in a ‘(w)holistic’ perspective by sharply defined functions, hierarchically structured, logically broken down and meticulously categorized. Watching the rich biodiversity of which we ourselves are a part, we may conclude that natural organism is far more apt than man-made organization to create abundance and managing complexity.

Nature follows its systemic code, with or without man. Therefore, man’s decision to adapt to the natural management pattern, would be a wise one. However, we should not regard systems from their – perceived or unperceived – function only, nor forget about man’s will to ‘accomplish something’, his aspirations and beliefs, and hence his thirst for transcendence in order to gain a ‘higher purpose’; for *whale watching is good, saving whales is better*.

It is time to remember the missing link, time to recall ... *solidarity*: Solidarity with the ecological responsibility, human dignity, and trust. An animal’s compass is directed by instinct; man’s by instinct, or intuition and conscience. In an effort to help maintain or restore trust and dignity, being part of the Creation is good to be conscious of. In this very case, *the convenient truth is ‘(w)holistic’*.

6. **The Sun – Symbol of a Solar Age**

Exposed to cold and rain for most of the year, people in Northern regions share a basic desire which is crucial to holidays: the sun. The *sun* has become the synonym of ‘*fun*’, the very symbol of change and contrast to normal life: An unrenounceable ingredient to wonderful holidays, the *sun* has become the ‘*face of tourism*’ on catalogues and advertisements.

4*) Global Marshall Plan Initiative, www.globalmarshallplan.org

Providing the basic impulse for any kind of movement and life, *the sun is the 'face of energy'*, a symbol of freedom, happiness, wealth, success, beauty, restart or unification. The sun as an age-old image throughout thousands of years, shown on cave walls and native art, yet essential for contemporary holiday makers – and promising for energy and tourism promoters. Why not catch the spirit, making *The Sun*, shown in so many national flags and coats of arms, the new symbol of an emerging Solar Age, the interface of Renewable Energy and clean global Travel and Tourism' ?

Therefore, renewable energy should be firmly anchored at the top of the international Travel and Tourism industry agenda, in order to become an anchor element of sustainable tourism (including convention, conference, meeting and business travel). Moreover, Travel and Tourism, one of the world's key-industries and an important lifestyle trend-setter, would make the vision of a "4th Revolution" the industry's cause, multiplying the message of Solar Age and Energy Autonomy.

In developing countries, especially, and other regions which depend largely on Travel and Tourism, the immense damage caused by tourism, due to high water and energy consumption, plays an elementary part. In their capitals, sometimes only a few major hotels account for most of total energy (and water) consumption. Mega hotels are energy eaters – almost like a small town under one roof.

People say that travellers won't worry about their hotel's energy source. To be sure they will once it has become usual that hotel heating, cooling, illumination are constantly available, *clean and free of charge*. This is contrary to some current experiences with scores of power cuts per day in so-called 'holiday paradises'. Once it is common practice that visitors are no longer exposed to the night-and-day sound of diesel-propelled power engines, spoiling the otherwise highly appreciated natural holiday ambience, whether in the shelter of an alpine cottage in the majestic Tien Shan mountains or in a rainforest lodge on the shores of the mighty Amazon river.

As a high energy user and the world's largest employer, international Travel and Tourism (all types of travel) has identified decisive potentials to improve their ecological and social commitment. We could make *renewable energy and sustainable tourism*, or the symbol of the Sun as a symbol of a new lifestyle to change long-headed habits. With Travel and Tourism being, by its very nature, job-intensive, renewable energy means new jobs. Moreover, cherished as a veritable lifestyle industry, Travel and Tourism has been more and more identified as a highly versatile cross-communication tool among cultures; thus often referred to as *The Peace Industry*. Why not take this job-producing Peace Industry and make it the leading industry in renewable energy conversions under the sign of The Sun?

7. More Caterpillars – or Nicer Butterflies?

Sharing the spirit of the natural system in times of global complexity, renewable energy and sustainable/responsible tourism are nothing less than natural allies: *'El sol' and 'solar' for 'sol-idity'!* Renewable energy will make the world more beautiful, and Travel and Tourism will become a prime winner. However, the way to sustainability goes via change and needs solidarity behind it. At last, it is up to us to do everything to make tourism generally 'sustainable and responsible' and 'renewable energy' self-evident on a global scale. We will decide what should prevail – the Authentic, the Beautiful, the Valuable – or mere mediocrity, hypocrisy, fallacy. The fossil-energy consumer or the renewable-energy user, the indifferent tourist or the responsible traveller, paradise lost, or Planet Earth regained? The options are more quantity, or better quality. Either more caterpillars or nicer butterflies.

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