

11/28/09 - Save the word

This article may be a little heretic around a Peace Department at a University that is considered Nr 1 for Peace Studies worldwide, but in the name of free thought and fostering debate, let's write (and read!) it anyway. I have talked to many people in Peace Studies that feel the same way I do and can therefore assure you, I am not the only deserter. So, what is my concern?

Straightforwardly, I am uncomfortable with the word peace all over the place. I do find it a noble and enlightened endeavour, but certainly not a good marketing product. Because, used in marketing as part of a name, it is first and foremost just another big word. And big words, when used too frequently, become empty words. This goes not against society in general or the use among scholars, but I criticise the overuse of the word peace as marketing, which pushes it further and further into emptiness. I fear it also gets in its own way, because, at least for me, it would take an extra effort to join a peace society, simply because of the odd feeling I would get telling somebody that I am part of a 'peace' society. Considering or not considering marketing aspects like this is directly affecting the success of our efforts.

To make use of an analogy: Overused words, such as 'peace' or 'sustainability', are like the following lawn. From the Uni towards Laisteridge Lane, there is a corner you can cut if you walk over a small stretch of grass, which saves you three seconds of your way. Everybody does it. Now, you would think once the grass is downtrodden or even gone, people would walk around it and just give it some rest. In the end, you nevertheless reach your aim. But, like in game theory, as long as some keep using the track, what everybody else does is irrelevant - the lawn will not recover. I should just put up a sign.

So, for 'peace', consider this my sign. Please keep off the grass.

*Essay*

*Bin*