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## Re-envisioning community-based heritage tourism in the old city of Nazareth

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This study specifically examines the potential for heritage tourism development to promote cross-cultural dialog in the historic old city of Nazareth (Israel). The paper focuses on a case study of a small-scale heritage tourism venture that seeks to influence tourism development in Nazareth's old city. This is an exploratory case study that uses qualitative research methods including extensive participant observation and in-depth interviews with the venture's senior management group and selected employees. Study findings indicate a model of the relationship between community-based tourism development, heritage, and peace-building in a city that has experienced a wide range of cross-cultural conflicts. This model represents an alternative view to the notion that heritage serves to enhance differences and dissonance between different cultural groups. In contrast, findings from this study suggest that heritage in the form of tourism can help create shared interests between different communities in settings characterized by cross-cultural conflict.

**Keywords:** cultural heritage tourism; tourism and peace; community-based tourism; sustainable tourism; cross-cultural conflict; Nazareth historic city

### Introduction

The relationship between tourism development and peace continues to be actively debated among scholars in the field. On the one hand, research suggests that tourism can be an important element in promoting and maintaining peace in a variety of settings (e.g. D'Amore, 1988; Jafari, 1989; Pizam, Jafari, & Milman, 1991). Other studies, however, have called into question the role of tourism in reducing conflicts (e.g. Cho, 2007). Recent scholarship has also examined the role that heritage plays in empowering local communities to tell their own stories (e.g. Edson, 2004; Laven, Ventriss, Manning, & Mitchell, 2010). In recent years, such research has focused on settings and/or sites characterized by deep cross-cultural conflict (Giblin, 2014). In many instances, these heritage sites are turning towards tourism as a development strategy for preserving and sharing these traumatic histories (e.g. Alluri, 2009; Causevic & Lynch, 2011; Sharpley, 2012; Winter, 2008). The convergence of these factors suggests that heritage – in the form of heritage tourism

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development (Timothy & Boyd, 2003) – may offer insight into the relationship between tourism and peace more generally.

This study specifically examines the potential for heritage tourism development to promote cross-cultural dialog in the historic old city of Nazareth (Israel). The paper focuses on a case study of a small-scale heritage tourism venture that seeks to influence tourism development in Nazareth's old city. Tourism has long been one of the primary economic drivers in the Nazareth region (Cohen-Hattab, 2013; Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2007). Yet the old city has experienced an ongoing tourism development crisis, which was exemplified by the highly controversial "Nazareth 2000" urban revitalization effort (Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2007). From this point of departure, we examine the Fauzi Azar Inn, which is a small-scale heritage tourism venture located in the heart of Nazareth's old city. The paper's theoretical frame lies at the intersection of three conceptual arenas: (i) tourism and peace agenda, (ii) heritage development, and (iii) the sustainability paradigm. The study area, methods, and results are then discussed, and we conclude by addressing the implications of the studied guesthouse for tourism development in Nazareth's old city and related multi-cultural, contested settings.

### **The agenda of tourism and peace**

Tourism has been described as a social force that can potentially contribute to and promote international understanding, cooperation, and global good will in establishing and keeping world peace (D'Amore, 1988). The potential connection between tourism and peace has been investigated in settings around the world (Kim, Prideaux, & Prideaux, 2007; Litvin, 1998; Moufakkir & Kelly, 2010). For example, Litvin (1998) asked whether a causal relationship exists between tourism and peace or whether they simply share a co-relationship whereby tourism is a beneficiary and not a cause of peace. Other studies have investigated the validity of the claim that tourism was a mediator of peace in the USA and the former Soviet Union (Pizam et al., 1991) and Israel and Egypt (Milman, Reichel, & Pizam, 1990). Another example is the Mt Gumgang tourism development effort, which is located inside North Korea but allows visitors to enter from South Korea, and has had tangible and practical outcomes (such as meetings among families and friends from the two countries or economic income for North Korea from tourist services at the site) that have contributed to the promotion of peace on the divided Peninsula. Findings from research conducted at the site have demonstrated mixed results. For instance, Kim et al. (2007) suggest that tourism has significant potential to help shape more positive images of long-term enemies. However, Cho (2007) reports that the contribution of Mt Gumgang tourism development to peace has been weak and slow.

Studies of international relations have also examined the potential for tourism to reduce tensions and suspicions between former hostile countries (Gelbman, 2008; Gelbman & Maoz, 2012; Jafari, 1989; Matthews, 1978; Uriely, Maoz, & Reichel, 2009; Var, Brayley, & Korsay, 1989; Var, Schluter, Ankomah, & Lee, 1989). For example, a study by Maoz (2010) about "warming peace" used contact theory (Allport, 1954) to examine the interaction between Israeli tourists vacationing on the shores of the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt (to the south of the international border with Israel) with their Egyptian hosts, and its effect on reducing prejudice and negative stereotypes. These findings show that first there must be contact, which must then be followed by personal and sustained interactions between individuals from the different countries. Previous research suggests that if peace can play a central role in the story of these places, then their attractiveness to tourists grows (Gelbman, 2010). This emphasis on sharing "place stories" suggests that heritage

may be an important element when tourism development is undertaken in settings characterized by cross-cultural conflict. Studies of international relations also include a debate about the possibility of peace between states, and the role of transnational person-to-person contacts in the development of peaceful relations. Liberal perceptions hold out more hope for the potential of tourism to promote peace, but more realistic attitudes are quite skeptical about this process (Kim et al., 2007).

### **Heritage tourism**

According to Lowenthal (2005), heritage is the meaning and values associated with “everything we suppose has been handed down to us from the past” (p. 81). Other scholars have described heritage as the cultural traditions and physical elements of the past that society attempts to preserve and transmit to future generations (Hall & McArthur, 1988; Hardy, 1988; Timothy, 2011; Timothy & Boyd, 2003, 2006; Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996). Scholars have debated the impact of heritage to visitors at tourism sites through various forms of interpretative programming and/or messaging. For example, several scholars have advanced the argument that rather than enhancing understanding, peace, or “people” diplomacy (Reisinger & Turner, 2003), heritage attractions may actually inhibit mutual acquaintance, thereby serving as obstacles to peace-building activities (Poria & Ashworth, 2009). In this view, heritage sites are political resources that aim to legitimize a specific social reality, which often emphasizes the differences between groups of people (Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2000). This perspective also includes the notion that heritage attractions tend to highlight and entrench differences and social boundaries between groups when something becomes defined as “heritage” (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996).

Within this context, Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) have introduced the concept of “dissonance” to characterize how heritage can reinforce differences between various cultural groups. This notion of dissonance focuses on the lack of agreement and consistency in the meaning of heritage. In tourism settings, such dissonance might be caused by the development (or marketing) of a particular destination to different market segments, and in doing so, presenting different meanings and interpretations of the same place. This type of development is especially common in pilgrimage and/or religious tourism settings, where a specific site may represent different values to different religious communities. Hall (2005) extends this notion of dissonance to describe the complexity of heritage, whereby the same destination (or site) reflects very different values, stories, and beliefs. Ultimately, this notion of heritage raises the important and critical question: “Who’s heritage is being preserved?”

Through this conception of heritage, heritage tourism ranges from the examination of physical remains of the past and natural landscapes to the experience of local cultural traditions (Zeppel & Hall, 1992). A rapidly growing component of heritage tourism involves settings characterized by cross-cultural conflicts and trans-boundary disputes. For example, in a study of cross-cultural conflict, heritage, and tourism development at Angkor (Cambodia), Winter (2008) argues that tourism development must be coupled with “more community oriented policies capable of improving the equitable distribution of tourism related capital” throughout the region (p. 535). A host of other studies have reported similar findings including Alluri’s (2009) analysis of tourism in post-conflict Rwanda, Al-Oun and Al-Homoud’s (2008) examination of the community-based tourism in Bedouin communities (Jordan), Catalani and Ackroyd’s (2013) work on the heritage of the slave trade (Bahamas), and Cohen-Hattab’s (2013) case study of public involvement and tourism planning in the Old City of Jerusalem. The common linkage in these studies is that heritage

development, which typically involves tourism, is used to facilitate “post-conflict renewal” (Giblin, 2014, p. 501) and therefore requires high degrees of local community involvement and control.

Indeed, local stakeholder involvement has become an important issue in the field of heritage studies. For example, Guttormsen and Fageraas (2011) treat heritage sites as “resources to achieve social goals” (p. 442). Other scholars (e.g. Cheape, Garden, & McLean, 2009; Harvey, 2001) consider heritage development as the process of stakeholder engagement associated with Lowenthal’s (2005) notion of heritage. Edson (2004) adds notions of empowerment to the stakeholder engagement perspective:

in the best of circumstances, heritage enfranchises the emotionally and culturally disenfranchised. It allows humankind to transcend individual destiny to achieve continuity. The heritage resources have extraordinary emotional and intellectual appeal since they evoke a feeling of prestige and, therefore, a sense of pride. They help to generate an environment where the people can acquire an awareness of the continuity that exists in human creation, glimpse a past that they receive with admiration and gratitude, and project the future to which they will transmit the results of their own endeavours. (p. 345)

In other words, local stakeholder engagement and empowerment appear to be an essential ingredient for heritage tourism development, particularly at sites characterized by cross-cultural conflict and/or contested heritage. The importance of such stakeholder engagement is also considered to be an essential element in contemporary approaches to sustainable tourism development.

### **The contemporary sustainability paradigm: a tourism perspective**

The sustainability paradigm emerged largely from the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Edwards, 2005). The concept generally refers to development that meets current social, environmental, and economic needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet those same needs (e.g. Goodland, 1995). While “sustainable tourism” has been described as tourism that is managed according to the principles of sustainable development (e.g. Butler, 1999), recent scholarship treats the concept as a “balance between the consumption, transformation, and creation of tourism resources” (Liu, 2003, p. 465).

A recurrent theme in the sustainable tourism literature is that such development efforts are more likely to succeed if local stakeholders are meaningfully engaged throughout decision-making processes. For example, Byrd (2007) references Gunn’s (1994) work and argues that “one main key to the success and implementation of sustainable tourism development in a community is the support of stakeholders (e.g. citizens, entrepreneurs, and community leaders)” (p. 6). To conclude his study, Byrd, draws on stakeholder theory, sustainability concepts, and the work of Clarkson (1995) by stating that tourism development must be sensitive to the potentially wide range of local community interests in order to avoid “failure of the entire process” (p. 10).

Variations on Byrd’s theme are evident in a number of other studies from the last two decades. For example, Simpson (2001) “argues strongly” that “multiple stakeholder participation” is an essential element of sustainable regional tourism (p. 12). Similarly, Briassoulis (2002) encourages “wide local participation and autonomy in decision making” to better manage the “tourism commons for sustainable development” (p. 1079–1080). A host of more recent studies (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Dredge, 2006; Ko, 2005; Okazaki, 2008; Saarinen, 2006) have also shown that local community involvement is a necessary condition for

applying sustainability concepts to tourism development. Perhaps Burns (2004) offers the most succinct articulation in formulating “a third way” for tourism planning, whereby small-scale entrepreneurs and opportunities for local ownership should be highly incentivized over outside investors.

In summary, our three theoretical perspectives suggest that tourism in the old city of Nazareth can serve as Cohen-Hattab and Shoval’s (2007) “important bridge” if such development:

- promotes cross-cultural contact and exchange;
- enables the sharing of the different narratives that have defined the region’s cross-cultural conflict; and
- results in locally focused, bottom-up economic activities.

Despite its potential, tourism development in the old city of Nazareth has been plagued by a series of planning, management, cultural, and political challenges. Understanding these barriers is an essential contextual element of this study.

### **Barriers to tourism development in the old city of Nazareth**

Israel offers a multifaceted tourism product, comprising a wide range of historical, cultural, and religious sites, an array of modern attractions and amenities, as well as diverse landscapes and climates. Nazareth is Israel’s largest Arab city and is regarded as the capital of Israel’s Arab population, with almost 74,000 residents (State of Israel, 2012). Located in the heart of the Galilee region, Nazareth presents a unique case study of cross-cultural conflict and tourism development because of tensions between the region’s different cultural communities (tensions between the Arab minority and the Jewish majority in Israel as well as tensions between Nazareth’s Christian Arab and Muslim Arab communities). Until the mid-twentieth century, most of Nazareth’s residents were Christian (Emmett, 1995). However, in recent decades, the Muslim population has surpassed the Christian population in the city.

Nazareth is one of Christianity’s holiest locations and many of the city’s sites are associated with significant events in the early history of Christianity (Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2007). For example, according to one tradition, the Franciscan Church of the Annunciation is said to be built on the site of the house where Mary lived and where the angel Gabriel appeared and informed her that she would give birth to Jesus. Other examples include the adjacent Church of St Joseph, which marks the site of the carpenter Joseph’s workshop along with Mary’s Well where, according to yet other Christian traditions, the Annunciation took place in an event now memorialized by the Greek Orthodox with the neighboring Church of St Gabriel. The Synagogue Church, which today is a Greek Catholic church, is said to be the site of the synagogue where Jesus prayed, and the Mount of the Precipice, is according to the New Testament, the site where residents of Nazareth attempted to throw Jesus into the abyss after the storm he raised in the synagogue (Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2007).

The concentration of these sites positions Nazareth as a key tourism destination for religious pilgrims. This potential was reinforced in the year 2000 when the Pope announced his intention to undertake a pilgrimage to Israel and encouraged all believers to visit the region and experience the Christian holy sites (Collins-Kreiner, Kliot, Mansfeld, & Sagie, 2006). Such attention led to estimates that up to 3.4 million pilgrims would visit the area for Millennium-related celebrations (Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2007), which also gave rise to the Nazareth 2000 effort.

Nazareth 2000 began in the early 1990s as a modest municipal effort, which subsequently evolved into a high-profile, national urban renewal project. The initiative was designed, in large part, to promote Nazareth as a Christian religious tourism destination in advance of the Millennium celebrations (Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2007). Despite these intentions, the “Nazareth 2000” initiative became highly contested because of top-down planning processes, tensions between the city’s Christian and Muslim populations (Kliot & Collins-Kreiner, 2003; Uriely, Israeli, & Reichel, 2003), and a general lack of trust resulting from the broader Arab–Israeli conflict (e.g. Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005). Consequently, a substantial majority of the old city’s artisans and entrepreneurs abandoned the district nearly 20 years ago and much of the district lies vacant today (see Figure 1). In their assessment, Cohen-Hattab and Shoval (2007) conclude that Nazareth 2000 alienated large sectors of the local population and, consequently, failed to gain the necessary political support to be fully successful.

While Nazareth 2000 did improve some of the old city’s infrastructure, the project was largely a failure due to the abandonment of large sections of the old city (including much of the market district). For example, tourism did not measurably increase, and this sector’s economic contribution to the city was negligible (Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2007). This clearly indicates a need for more community-based approaches to tourism development rather than the top-down, “cosmetic effort” represented by Nazareth 2000 (Cohen-Hataab & Shoval, 2007; Kliot & Collins-Kreiner, 2003; Uriely et al., 2003). Moreover, Cohen-Hattab and Shoval (2007) suggest that if future development efforts in Nazareth can engage local residents in shaping their cultural landscapes, then tourism can serve as an “important bridge” between Israel’s Arab and Jewish populations (p. 715).

### Study site

The Fauzi Azar Inn – an alternative small-scale tourism venture located in the heart of Nazareth’s old city opened in 2005 and, for several reasons, represents a special case in



Figure 1. Abandoned sections of the old city of Nazareth, July 2013. Photographs from the personal collection of Daniel Laven.

the context of the controversial “Nazareth 2000” project and the broader Arab–Israeli conflict. First, the inn has important tangible heritage values because of its location inside the historic market along with several unique structural and architectural elements (Garrod & Fyall, 2000; Yazbak & Sharif, 2013). Along with these architectural values, the inn also has important intangible heritage values because of its connection to Arab identity within contemporary Israeli society. These tangible and intangible values are important because of a lack of formal efforts to promote and preserve Israel’s Arab cultural heritage (Graham et al., 2000; Saban, 2004). Second, in addition to these heritage values, the business has earned the 2011 World Responsible Tourism Award for its commitment to sustainable community development practices (<http://www.responsibletravel.com/awards/>). Finally, on its website, the guesthouse offers its vision as a place where “Christians, Muslims, Jews and others can work and live together, share ideas, thoughts and lifestyle with respect to each other’s differences” (<http://www.fauziazarinn.com/fauzi-azar-story/>). In these ways, the guesthouse appears to be the kind of alternative, community-based development widely discussed but rarely observed by previous research on tourism development in the Nazareth region or Israel more generally.

## **Methods**

This is an exploratory case study (Yin, 2014) that uses qualitative research methods (Patton, 2002). The pairing of case study design and qualitative methods is well established in the scientific literature (e.g. Stake, 2010) and is especially appropriate in complex settings where little prior research has been conducted (Patton, 2002). For this study, three forms of data collection were utilized: (i) participant observation, (ii) document review, and (iii) in-depth interviews.

To gather data, the researchers visited the guesthouse on four separate occasions between May 2012 and December 2014. During these visits, the researchers conducted extensive participant observation which included observations of staff meetings, interaction with the inn’s staff and volunteers, as well as interactions with guests. These participant observations focused on observing how the guesthouse’s senior management team framed and delivered their interpretive message, with a particular emphasis on how they handled their cross-cultural dynamics. In some settings (e.g. staff meetings), the researchers were identified. In other settings (e.g. during breakfast at the guesthouse), the researchers presented themselves as “regular” guests. Careful notes were taken during these participant observations.

The researchers were also given access to documents upon request. These documents primarily included media reports (e.g. newspaper articles) about the guesthouse. Other planning documents (reports either produced or commissioned by the Municipality of Nazareth as well as the Ministry of Tourism) were also reviewed. These documents were included in our data set because they shed light on how key public actors in the tourism sector shape their discourse about the guesthouse.

Finally, the researchers conducted five in-depth interviews with the inn’s senior management staff, which represents a form of purposeful and key informant sampling strategies. These interviews focused on understanding (a) the guesthouse’s unique Arab–Jewish ownership and management partnership and (b) how the guesthouse’s owners/operators view their work in the context of the tourism development and cross-cultural challenges in Nazareth (described above). All of the interviews were conducted in the language that the respondents were most comfortable using (Arabic, English, or Hebrew). With the consent of each respondent, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Study participants were offered



the opportunity to review the transcript as well as the analysis presented in this paper (member-checking).

The data from these three sources were then coded and analyzed for categories and explanatory themes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2014). Given the exploratory nature of this study, emphasis is placed on understanding how the guesthouse works with the complex, cross-cultural (and often conflicted) heritage dynamics that are at the heart of their tourism venture (Stake, 2010). Triangulation across the three sources of data was used to enhance the validity of the explanatory themes and the associated model (presented in Figure 2) derived from our data.

The analysis presented in the following section is illustrated with data drawn largely from interviews conducted with the owner–manager group of respondents (three specific individuals, which comprise a subset of our sample) because of their role in the strategic decision-making associated with the inn. These three study participants gave their consent to be referenced in the paper. Their identity is critical to our analysis because of the cross-cultural focus of the study. The following nomenclature is used to refer to these individuals for the remainder of the paper:

- Interviewee A = Owner of the hotel building, founding partner in the guesthouse venture, resident of Nazareth, member of the Fauzi Azar family, Israeli Christian Arab.

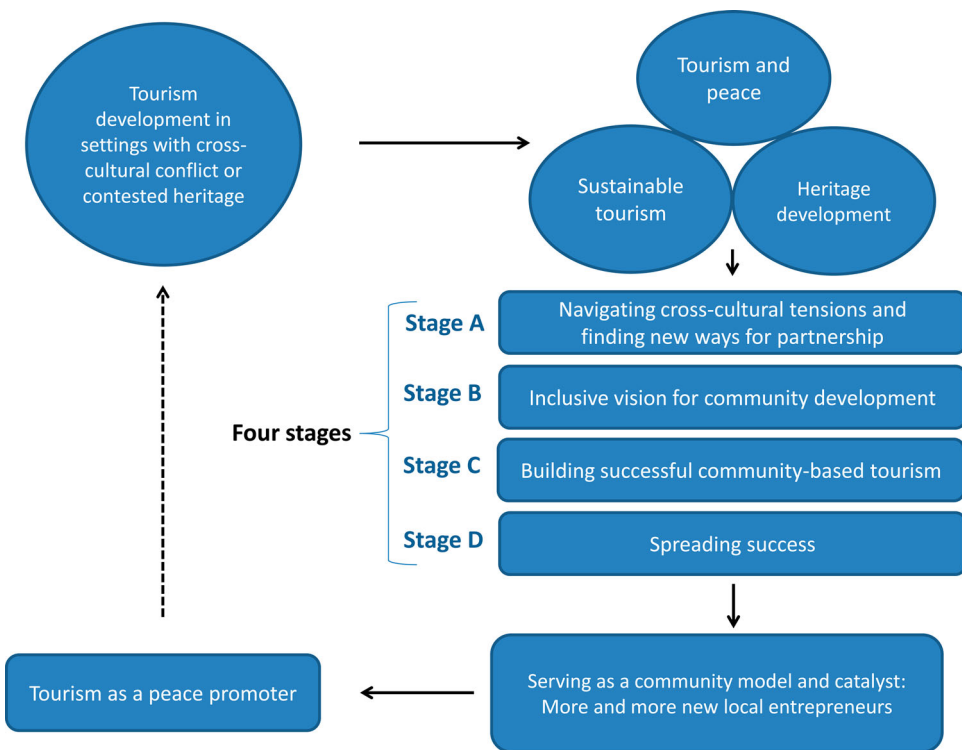


Figure 2. A model of the relationship between tourism development, heritage, and peace-building as observed in this study.

- Interviewee B = General manager of the guesthouse venture, resident of Nazareth, member of the Fauzi Azar family, Israeli Christian Arab.
- Interviewee C = Founding partner in the guesthouse venture, unrelated to the Azar family, does not reside in Nazareth, Israeli Jew.

### **Findings: re-envisioning heritage tourism development in historic Nazareth**

Four themes emerged from our study data, which are presented as the four stages in a model of the relationship between tourism development, heritage, and peace-building (see Figure 2). Specifically, these four stages are (a) navigating cross-cultural tensions and finding new ways for partnership, (b) creating an inclusive vision for community development, (c) building a successful community-based tourism business, and (d) spreading success. The remainder of this section presents and discusses each stage in relation to our theoretical frame and the broader conceptual model (Figure 2).

#### ***Stage A: navigating cross-cultural tensions and finding new ways for partnership***

In all of the interviews, study participants described the various ways that tensions between Israel's different cultural communities makes the development of a successful tourism venture like the guesthouse very difficult. These tensions – and the dark history of conflict in the region – have left a series of emotional, psychological, and geopolitical barriers between some of these different cultural communities (e.g. Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005). Thus, when Interviewee C contacted Interviewee A about the potential of restoring their property for use as an inn, his interest raised considerable suspicion about his “real” motives. Interviewee B described these suspicions this way:

The first time that I met him I told him “Why [do] you choose Nazareth?” Why do you wanna come to Nazareth? What are you looking for? It's dangerous for you being a stranger and the only Jew ... You Jewish people came and took all our land, now you want to take [my family's] house? You think I'm stupid?

Interviewee B continued to struggle with the idea that her family was in a business partnership with an Israeli Jew, and this notion of suspicion carried beyond the Azar family. Not long after Interviewee C and Interviewee A reached an agreement to restore the house and open the guesthouse, rumors began to spread through local media channels in the city. Interviewee B offered this reflection on the situation:

People [said] that we are betrayers, you know, after seeing my mom with him [Interviewee C]. It was [also] written in the newspaper: An Arab family sold their house, “The first Jewish house [in Nazareth]”.

Despite its challenges, this notion of “struggle” has been an important ingredient in the inn's development. For example, both Interviewee A and Interviewee B described how the 1948 war was deeply traumatic for their family. This war resulted in the creation of the State of Israel as well as the displacement of thousands of Palestinian families. According to Interviewee A, a substantial part of this trauma was the scattering of her relatives (to Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria) and the associated loss of her family's heritage and identity. Yet both Interviewee A and Interviewee B explained how the restoration and transformation of the Fauzi Azar family home into the Fauzi Azar Inn represented a special opportunity to

recover and share this lost identity with the inn's guests. For example, Interviewee A recalled that an important condition for opening the guesthouse was that it must be called "Fauzi Azar" to honor her family. Interviewee B articulated a similar narrative, which, for her, extended to her family's role in fighting the loss of Palestinian lands when the State of Israel was created. Interviewee B described the importance of engaging guests in this story in very strong terms:

I sit with guests – [and] many of them are Jews – and I share with them that [my] grandpa [Fauzi Azar] fought against the occupation. And [sometimes they] ask me, "Do you still call it occupation?" I say, "Excuse me, maybe for me it is still occupation." . . . . Sharing this story with [our] guests is giving us [an opportunity] . . . to tell [visitors] that here are Arab Christians. Ok, we have Israeli identity cards but it doesn't mean that we don't feel [a sense of] belonging to the Palestinians, or we are not Palestinians anymore. So these kinds of things are very challenging . . . [But] It was very important for me what [Interviewee C] did . . . this feeling that you don't have to hide anything, it's the truth.

This quotation speaks directly to Edson's (2004) notion of heritage as community empowerment and Giblin's (2014) description of "post-conflict renewal". This is not to say that Interviewee B feels that the conflict ("occupation" in her words) has ended. Rather, Edson (2004) and Giblin (2014) help us understand that Interviewee B sees the guesthouse as a potential empowerment vehicle for acknowledging and validating her family's experience in this conflict. This is important because of Interviewee B's minority status in Israeli society. The tourism element is also important here because it is the inn's guests that create the opportunity to share this experience. Without guests, there would be no audience with which to transfer the story.

Interviewee C reinforced many of the same themes as Interviewee A and Interviewee B, particularly the idea that establishment of the guesthouse is really an opportunity to conserve heritage through community-based tourism development. Interviewee C described his perspective in very explicit terms:

When I opened the [guesthouse] . . . I wanted to create a model for tourism [whereby] a small business can make a big difference . . . A small guesthouse, that host guests from all over the world, can change the image of the entire area. And how you can empower the local community, set up small businesses and create a model. So for me this is what is standing behind the brand of the Fauzi Azar.

In summary, our data indicate that Interviewees A, B, and C are using tourism development to wrestle with some of the broader, cross-cultural challenges associated with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (e.g. Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2007). It appears that the process of developing the guesthouse as a commercial tourism venture forced Interviewees A, B, and C to engage each other in issues of branding and identity for the business. In doing so, this management group recognized that by acknowledging and grappling with their complex heritage, they could provide visitors with uniquely authentic experiences while also advancing an inclusive vision of community development for the historic district of Nazareth.

### ***Stage B: creating an inclusive vision of community development***

According to their website, the guesthouse seeks to "support each other" through its operation as a successful, locally owned, and operated business (<http://www.fauziazarinn.com/fauzi-azar-story/>):

We are doing our best to give our guests the opportunity to interact with the local community and with other fellow travelers. We work closely with local businesses and the community, supporting each other. For us, each guest is the most important; and while giving high-quality service, we try to let him be part of our vision where Christians, Muslims, Jews and others can work and live together, share ideas, thoughts and lifestyle with respect to each other's differences.

There are two dimensions to the inn's notion of "supporting each other" that warrant discussion here. First, the inn explains this notion of "supporting each other" through a description of their "responsible tourism policy" (see [Figure 3](#)).

While it was beyond the scope of this study to evaluate the extent to which the guesthouse implements this policy, the researchers observed and experienced many of these elements during their fieldwork from 2012 to 2014. (As noted above, the guesthouse was named the "best accommodation for local communities" at the 2011 Responsible Tourism Awards.) The inn's stated commitment to these principles strongly echoes the community-based emphasis in much of the sustainable tourism literature, and, in particular, parallels Burns' (2004) focus on local ownership and involvement in the tourism development process.

The language used in the "supporting each other" description cited above is additionally striking because it speaks directly to the cross-cultural issues that define the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, rather than using the development of the guesthouse to promote any single cultural community (at the potential exclusion of other cultural groups), the guesthouse seeks to explore and embrace the multi-cultural dynamics of the Galilee region. Indeed, according to Interviewee C, this inclusive vision of community development was a central part of his negotiations with Interviewee A about restoring the historic Azar family home into a guesthouse. In his reflection, Interviewee C recalled how Interviewee A reframed the issue of "cross-cultural co-existence" into the pursuit of shared business interests:

When I met her [interviewee A] for the first time, I said "it's gonna be a 'coexistence' guesthouse". And she told me, "I don't really think it will be 'coexistence' ... I believe in shared interests, I'm not gonna do business with you because you are Jewish or you are Christian, or Arab. I want to do business with you because we are sharing the same interest, and that is what's gonna make it sustainable." I think it was very smart.

Interviewee A's instinct to approach the development of the guesthouse as an exercise in cultivating shared interests is important. According to our research, Interviewee A's framing reflects a deeper understanding that mutual recognition, by Arabs and Jews alike, of their shared heritage can be a cornerstone for their future prosperity rather than a continued source of collective trauma. Interviewee C expressed this vision in very explicit terms:

So I am very optimistic about the future, and I think if we all look on each other on the eye-to-eye level as human beings we can use our trauma to build a better future. Not to ignore, but to work on the understanding ... .And again, with this [approach to community development, we can] start to make it the foundation for the better future for the people in the Middle-East.

Throughout our data set, study participants frequently described how the senior management group's (Interviewees A, B, and C) commitment to an inclusive vision, paired with their willingness to engage with their complicated and contested – yet very shared heritage – have been key ingredients in the guesthouse's successful first decade. These findings very much parallel the inclusionary, community-based themes in the heritage development

**Responsible Tourism Policy**

**Fauzi Azar Inn**

**Ecotourism** has been described as *"the practice of low-impact, educational, ecologically and culturally sensitive travel that benefits local communities and host countries"* (Martha Honey, 1999). Since its creation, Fauzi Azar Inn has committed to the belief that it exists for the benefit of the city of Nazareth and its people. We believe this can be achieved through the following commitments:

- **Shopping locally for all our food and supplies.** Everything from the fruits, vegetables, and olive oil used at breakfast, to our office supplies, cleaning supplies, bedding, wine, and souvenirs are purchased locally. (Local is defined as the closest seller available for a specific need.) We have found that most of these needs can be met from within the city itself.
- **Hiring Nazareth residents.** Though we have a large amount of volunteers serving with us, their purpose is to assist the primary staff, not be a substitute for them. This way, we are able to employ the maximum number of locals possible, from the maintenance and cleaning staff to the head manager.
- **Increasing guest awareness.** Our goal is for guests at the Fauzi to come into contact with every bit of Nazareth culture, life, food, and people. We have created a very detailed map of the city, freely available to all our guests. Upon arrival, we take the time to highlight restaurants, historical sites, spice shops, money exchange – even where to find a pita pizza or kataif (Ramadan pancake) year round!
- **Free city tour.** Daily, we invite our guests to join us on a tour of the city, which starts with a history of the Inn itself, then winds through the streets of Nazareth, where guests not only see ancient architecture and historical sites, but meet the local owners of spice shops, coffee shops, and carpentry stores.
- **Water and energy conservation.** All water faucets at Fauzi Azar Inn are equipped with water conservation devices. All light bulbs are energy efficient and air conditioners are furnished with motion detection so the units shut off if no one is near. We encourage our guests to turn off the water during their showers and be mindful of the amount of water and energy they use. We believe conservation is "a family affair" – we all work together to make a difference. To support this belief, we offer a 10% discount to all cyclists, and a hiking trail that directs travelers around the beautiful Galilee region by foot ([www.jesustrail.com](http://www.jesustrail.com))
- **Extensive volunteer opportunities.** Our volunteers are invited to extend their services beyond the doors of the Inn and find their place in the local community through helping at the hospitals, teaching English, or measuring out grain at a spice shop. The opportunities are vast and we encourage our volunteers to make the most of their stay with us by finding their own niche within the city.
- **Support other local accommodations.** We believe the local businesses in the old city should work together and help each other succeed. We are pleased that the opening of the Fauzi Azar Inn in 2005 has since prompted other places of lodging to emerge inside the old city. Please feel free to check out their websites as well: [www.al-mutran.com](http://www.al-mutran.com), [www.abusaheedhostel.com](http://www.abusaheedhostel.com), [www.vitrage-guesthouse.com](http://www.vitrage-guesthouse.com), [www.samira.co.il](http://www.samira.co.il).
- **Always a student, always a leader.** From the owner to the staff to the volunteers to the guests, we are all students in this effort. When we approach life with this mindset, we learn about a world far bigger and far more beautiful than our own. We fully believe that when we take the initiative to step out, it invites others to do the same. So we commit to the process of learning, asking questions, hearing stories, and maintaining an attitude of eagerness to see life from a new perspective.

Figure 3. Screen capture from the Fauzi Azar Inn's website description of the guesthouse's responsible tourism policy (<http://www.fauziazarinn.com/the-inn/responsible-tourism-policy/>).

and sustainable tourism literatures (e.g. Burns, 2004; Dredge, 2006; Edson, 2004; Ko, 2005; Winter, 2008). The findings articulated in this theme also suggest that tourism development, as practiced by the guesthouse, has the potential to ease some of the area's cross-cultural tensions similar to approaches envisioned in Nepal (Upadhayaya, 2013), Rwanda (Alluri, 2009), sub-Saharan Africa (Novelli, Morgan, & Nibigira, 2012), and other contested/conflict areas globally (Wohlmuther & Wintersteiner, 2014).

### ***Stage C: building successful community-based heritage tourism***

All study participants discussed the numerous challenges that the Fauzi Azar Inn faced during its first decade of operation. Along with the cross-cultural tensions associated with the "Nazareth 2000" effort (described above), the inn also had to overcome the negative image that many local residents, as well as Israeli citizens more generally, held of Nazareth's historic district. According to Interviewee C and Interviewee B, the historic district of Nazareth simply was not a place a person would choose visit. Interviewee C and Interviewee B were very forthright when describing this perception:

Interviewee C: And [most] Jewish-Israelis, like me, [had] never been to Nazareth. It's not on the main highway so they don't really know where it is ... Is it in the West-Bank, is it in the Galilee, they don't know ... So [the city had a] very poor image. And also the image of the local Nazarenes, about their city, was very low. No business can succeed here, it's the Old City it's only drugs and crime.

Interviewee B: If the locals aren't ready to step into the Old City [how can we expect tourists to come?]. 17 years I didn't step, I was afraid ...

Interviewee C: And when a Jewish-Israeli calls, the first question before making a booking or how much the room costs, was "Is it dangerous?" And I knew that if Jewish-Israelis would consider Nazareth dangerous, they would tell many of the tourists [and] friends, "Never go to Nazareth because it's dangerous!"

Along with these challenges, the guesthouse also suffered from the broader geopolitical situation that continues to define the region. For instance, during the latest round of violence between the State of Israel and the Hamas-led government in Gaza (summer 2014), the guesthouse experienced a 60% loss of income during July 2014 (compared to July 2013) and a near 90% loss of income during August 2014 (compared to August 2013). Indeed, the economic situation became so dire that the senior management group undertook a social media campaign to communicate the situation broadly. In their messaging, the senior management group directly links the inn's success as a business with overcoming the cross-culture tensions that fuel the Israeli–Palestinian conflict:

Dear Friends,

Now, the vision of the Fauzi Azar Inn, to break the barriers of fear, ignorance and race between Muslims, Christians and Jews, is shining more clearly than ever. We dream of creating a model which empowers the local community and supports small businesses in Nazareth and beyond. These are sad days at the Fauzi Azar Inn, as we face our greatest challenge since we opened in 2005. Whilst the political situation is calming down after a difficult month, the tourism industry in Nazareth has been hard hit and suffered a tremendous blow. Compared to last year, during July, our income dropped 60% and we expect August to end with a drop of 90%. We are forced to cut all unnecessary expenses and are ready to face whatever will come our way in order to save the Fauzi, its vision, and promising future ... [The message goes on to direct readers how they can support the guesthouse].

Interviewee C strongly reinforced the message conveyed in the inn's social media. When asked to identify the single biggest business threat facing the guesthouse, his answer was simple:

War ... This is ... my [biggest] criticism of the Ministry of Tourism of Israel, is that it must be a safety net for crisis. For geopolitical crisis when we can't make it, we just can't make it.

According to every study participant, despite the challenges outlined above, the guesthouse has been successful in ways often discussed, but rarely observed, within the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. For example, Interviewee B reflected that the guesthouse's continued existence as a viable tourism business in historic Nazareth is, itself, an important success – especially because of its special Arab–Jewish partnership. Interviewee B described it this way:

It's a fact. I'm an Arab, he's a Jew. We met and now there is a business here. At that time I didn't believe he would continue [or succeed] because it is very difficult to start something out of nothing in this area.

Interviewee C offered other examples that, in his mind, illustrate why the guesthouse is a successful tourism business. These range from the inn's growing list of recommendations in travel publications such as the “Lonely Planet” to numerous awards. Along with these examples, Interviewee C described two other elements of “success”. The first element echoes Interviewee B's description of simply surviving as a tourism business in historic Nazareth. For example, Interviewee C used the word “miracle” when reflecting on the fact that the guesthouse was still operating. When asked about the future, Interviewee C described economic “success” for the guesthouse this way:

[That we remain] a legitimate business and follow all regulations of the municipalities, etc. And [that] we are able to maintain ourselves and even make a profit without any need to ask for funds from the government, from NGOs, from our own personal money. And we run it as a business and we are able to pay salaries, good salaries over the minimum wage. No one is getting the minimum wage, everyone get more. We are paying bonuses for each employee. So we don't need to count on outside money.

The other element of “success” that Interviewee C described is the inn's ability to integrate heritage conservation with tourism development in ways that simultaneously builds the inn's brand, contributes to the re-vitalization of Nazareth's historic district, and helps reduce cross-cultural tensions associated with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Interviewee C articulated this strategy in very direct terms:

I'll take it again to the business perspective ... heritage [is a] great way to brand your business ... Because for tourists ... we are not as luxurious, there is no parking, the water breaks down, the electricity breaks down, no internet sometimes. So we can't compete on many levels. But no other place can give the heritage and the story that Fauzi Azar is sharing with its guests. That for tourism, you can keep the local heritage and you can empower the local community living in the area. I want our guests to take something from here ... [Also for me] it's really important that we keep and preserve the Arab heritage of this country.

Interestingly, the data presented in this theme directly align with Al-Oun and Al-Homoud's (2008) research on community-based tourism among the Bedouins in the Badia of Jordan. This alignment is important within the context of Nazareth's tourism

development barriers discussed above. In their assessment of the potential for using heritage tourism as a development strategy for the Bedouins in the Badia, Al-Oun and Al-Homoud (2008) conclude that sustainable tourism “requires community involvement and control”, whereby the local communities themselves “appraise what unique tourism resources” they have to offer (p. 50). This community-based approach stands in stark contrast to the planning and implementation of Nazareth 2000, and as also noted earlier, its absence has been cited largely for its failure (Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2007). Not surprisingly, this community-based strategy that Interviewee C articulates directly above also gives rise to the fourth theme that emerged in our data set, which is the notion of “spreading” the inn’s vision of success.

#### ***Stage D: spreading success***

In every interview, Interviewee C and Interviewee B described the importance of transferring the inn’s model in two ways. First, both Interviewee C and Interviewee B repeatedly described their commitment to sharing the inn’s experience in an effort to revive Nazareth’s historic district. Interviewee B was very explicit about this aspect of her work and the importance of bringing “life” back to the historic district:

It’s very important for me that I bring my kids to the Old City ... [That] my friends bring their kids to the Old City ... [That] young people come to drink coffee at the Fauzi Azar and in the Old City. Nobody thought of coming back to the Old City. The Old City was a dead body ... and yeah, it was difficult for me to believe in that there would be a change at all. But I think within the [last] seven years, there was a big change for Nazareth. First of all, the change of knowing ... [that] Nazareth is [no longer] a small depressing city not worth [visiting]. Now, people are coming from all over the world.

Interviewee B also talked about the importance of changing these perceptions in order to generate more interest among local entrepreneurs in making business investments in the historic district. Interestingly, these data reflect an emerging strategy for spreading community-level innovation, namely the social business model (Yunus, 2007). While there are many variants to this approach (see Alter, 2006), the European Union defines social business as entrepreneurial activities that have a positive social impact and address social objectives as their corporate aim rather than only maximizing profit (European Commission, 2011).

Interviewee C extended this view and described the mentorship role that the guesthouse plays not only to other local businesses in the historic district of Nazareth, but to other tourism businesses in Israel that face challenges similar to Nazareth. Interviewee C offered the following two examples:

The former night manager is opening his own place [in the Old City of Nazareth]. And another employee, who’d worked for five years, she started in the cleaning staff and now she is a receptionist and she’s from [the nearby village of] Keina. [She is now] working on a business plan for a guesthouse in Keina ... There is a need and demand for a guesthouse there. So a Muslim girl [hopes to] open a guesthouse in their hometown ... I couldn’t ask for more. This is exactly what we want ... to take the Fauzi branding, and our focus now to help, support, and mentor other small businesses around us.

For our study participants, spreading the inn’s model and experience is how tourism development can help promote cross-cultural dialog and shared interests in the region. This approach to tourism development is summarized in [Figure 3](#). The upper-left portion



of the figure represents the old city of Nazareth and its associated tourism development challenges. We then argue that a theoretical frame comprising three distinct but linked concepts is necessary for understanding tourism development in this setting. Using this theoretical frame, our analysis revealed four themes that explain how the Fauzi Azar Inn has thus far succeeded. An important element in this model, as evidenced by our last theme, is the catalytic role that the guesthouse seeks to play for the old city of Nazareth and in the region more generally.

## Conclusions

This paper examines the potential for heritage tourism development to promote cross-cultural dialog in the historic old city of Nazareth in a case study focusing on a small-scale heritage tourism venture. Although previous studies argue that heritage often exacerbates the differences and dissonance among groups of people (Graham et al., 2000; Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Poria & Ashworth, 2009), this study suggests an alternative view whereby heritage tourism can enhance understanding and peace among people. Specifically, this study indicates a model of the relationship between community-based tourism development, heritage, and peace-building (Figure 2). This model includes four stages that explain this process. These four stages are as follows: (a) navigating cross-cultural tensions and finding new ways for partnership, (b) creating an inclusive vision for community development, (c) building a successful community-based tourism business, and (d) spreading success.

Within the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and the associated cross-cultural tensions, it appears that navigating cross-cultural tensions and finding new ways for partnership (Stage A: navigating cross-cultural tensions and finding new ways for partnership) is the most challenging and perhaps most difficult because of the lack of trust between individuals on both sides of the conflict (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; Kliot & Collins-Kreiner, 2003; Uriely et al., 2003). Indeed, our study suggests that it was the ability to find “shared interests” that enabled Interviewees A, B, and C to grapple with their complex yet shared heritage.

The decision of the guesthouse’s management group to adopt a community-based approach (Al-Oun & Homoud, 2008; Catalani & Ackroyd, 2013) (Stage B: creating an inclusive vision for community development) was a very strategic alternative given the failure of previous top-down tourism development efforts in Nazareth (Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2007). This reinforces previous research about the high degrees of local community involvement and control required in order to use heritage development to facilitate “post-conflict renewal” (Giblin, 2014, p. 501).

The senior management group’s decision to undertake an ongoing social media campaign that directly links the inn’s success as a business with overcoming the cross-cultural tensions fueling the Israeli–Palestinian conflict represents a significant stage of the model (Stage C: building a successful community-based tourism business). In defining success in these terms, the guesthouse’s senior management group is, in fact, implementing Edson’s (2004) notion of heritage as community empowerment and Giblin’s (2014) description of “post-conflict renewal”. It appears that the inn’s senior management group recognized that by acknowledging and grappling with their complex and contested heritage, they could provide visitors with uniquely authentic experiences while also advancing an inclusive vision of community development for the historic district of Nazareth.

The last stage (D: spreading success) is rooted in the inn's ability to integrate heritage conservation with tourism development in ways that simultaneously builds the inn's brand, contribute to the re-vitalization of Nazareth's historic district, and helps reduce cross-cultural tensions associated with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Furthermore, the guest-house's management group is explicit in its vision to use this strategy to bring “life” back to the historic district. Interestingly, this reflects an emerging strategy for spreading community-level innovation, namely the social business model (Yunus, 2007). The social business concept refers to entrepreneurial activities that have positive social impacts and address social objectives as their corporate aim rather than only maximizing profit (European Commission, 2011).

Although the relationship between tourism development and peace continues to be debated among tourism scholars, the four-stage model presented in this paper depicts a relationship between tourism development, heritage, and peace-building that suggests that tourism can be an active element in reducing conflicts (Cho, 2007) as well as help promote and maintain peace in a variety of settings (D'Amore, 1988; Jafari, 1989; Pizam et al., 1991). Our findings also support the notion that heritage can play an important role in empowering local communities to tell their own stories (Edson, 2004; Laven et al., 2010), and consequently, that heritage sites are turning towards tourism as a development strategy for preserving and sharing these traumatic histories (Alluri, 2009; Causevic & Lynch, 2011; Sharples, 2012; Winter, 2008). While it is naïve to suggest that such tourism development will resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, numerous observers are now calling for grassroots initiatives that can promote peaceful co-existence and a “healthy inter-dependency” between peoples in the region (Friedman, 2014). For example, in a prescient opinion article titled *The old peace is dead, but a new peace is possible*, the noted Israeli political columnist Ari Shavit wrote:

The New Peace will be very different from the Old Peace. There will not be grandiose peace ceremonies in Camp David or at the White House, no Nobel Prizes to be handed out. The New Peace does not mean lofty declarations and presumptuous vows, but a pragmatic, gradual process whereby the New Arabs and the New Israelis will acknowledge their mutual needs and interests. It will be a quiet, almost invisible, process that will allow Turks, Egyptians, Saudis, Jordanians, Syrians, Lebanese, Palestinians and Israelis to reach common understandings. (Shavit, 2013)

Interestingly, the findings from our study echo Shavit's conception of this “new peace”.

Despite the positive nature of the Fauzi Azar Inn experience, it is important to acknowledge the fragility of their endeavor along with the substantial challenges they face in sustaining and transferring this model. As noted above, the case study is highly vulnerable to regional geopolitics; when the situation is stable, tourism flourishes. When the situation becomes tense or hostile, tourism ceases, which further stresses the relations between the different actors in these settings. We, therefore, caution readers to interpret this study as one positive example of how tourism can contribute to the reduction of such tensions, and we encourage future research to explore how such efforts can be effectively scaled-up in spite of the geopolitical risks.

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