Alternative Tourism Journal

ATG

Sustainable Just Tourism in Palestine

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Alternative Tourism Journal is an initiative of the Alternative Tourism Group-Study Center Palestine (ATG). It is a journal which offers an alternative narrative of the situation in Palestine and the way it impacts on tourism.

ATG is a Palestinian NGO specializing in tours and pilgrimages that include a critical examination of the history, culture, and politics of the Holy Land. ATG operates on the tenets of "justice tourism" and seeks empowerment of the local community through affirmation of Palestinian cultural identity, and protection of eco-rights. Above all, ATG seeks to promote justice in the Holy Land with tourism as one of its instruments.

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Sustainable Just Tourism in Palestine

Preface

Efforts of various tourism concern groups and consumer education campaigns have brought first changes to the field of tourism. Tourists are becoming more aware of the impact that their travelling has on destination countries and societies. More travellers are concerned and willing to pay a higher price for a holiday that is organised in a sustainable and ethical way and that minimises negative externalities (such as damage to the environment, social costs, loss of identity, etc.). Also, tourist providers such as tour operators and hotels become more concerned and want to provide sustainable services as well.

The importance of sustainable tourism goes beyond being eco-friendly and involves three main pillars: Socio-cultural, environmental and economic, and tourism has to consider these three dimensions to be considered sustainable tourism.

In various countries, different approaches have been launched and are being developed, both on small scales and in regional campaigns, to promote responsible tourism as an alternative to mainstream travelling. The idea of responsible tourism is based on the understanding that tourism should make a positive contribution to the host communities instead of only exploiting their resources.

According to the World Tourism Organization, "[sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, and biological diversity and life support systems."

In the case of Palestine, the issues of sustainability are a bit different due to the political particularity of the place. The occupation itself has created many hazards for the Palestinians. For example, the political economy of tourism is set by Israel to ensure that the local economy does not gain too much from tourism. The acquisition of land meant for normal Palestinian activity means losses of many kinds. Villages are separated by

the Separation Wall which, in itself, is an environmental hazard. Bypass roads have removed green areas and the dryness and climate conditions affect tourism in many ways.

Palestinians living under occupation are unable to access some of the most attractive and significant parts of the West Bank due to obstructive checkpoints that disrupt or disallow reaching Jerusalem or Bethlehem. Hence every political factor in Occupied Palestine hinders an ideal sustainability in tourism.

This study by Amjad Alqasis offers many crucial pointers that go beyond sustainability as traditionally understood and defined. It aims to open the mind of the reader to examine the intersectionality between politics, economics, social constructs, culture, and the natural environment. The author examines sustainability from the angle of political economy and this is the core of sustainability in Palestinian tourism. Under the patterns and designs of the occupation, Palestinian tourism will always be diverted in ways which will negatively impact sustainability. At the same time, the Palestinian Authority in joint action with civil society actors, whether in tourism, cultural advancement, development, human rights, or other related fields must apply tourism as an instrument of truth telling. From thereon, tourism can become the pathway to economic development, reaffirmation of culture, mobilizing the world's attention to the facts-on-the-ground, and, thus, building a global movement which converts tourism into a method of achieving justice through peaceful means.

We ask our readers to examine the challenges and pass them through wide dissemination to those concerned for justice in Palestine. It is a timely study, innovative in character, and with many out-of-the-box proposals. ATG thanks Amjad Alqasis for the time and energy he gave to the work and endorses it with great interest.

Rami Kassis
Executive Director
Alternative Tourism Group

Introduction

Israel's grip on Palestinian tourism is hindering the natural growth and development of the Palestinian tourism sector. Israel uses tourism as a tool to strengthen its position as occupying power, to maintain its domination over Palestinian land and people, and as an instrument for the dissemination of propaganda to millions of tourists. This latter category includes politicians, community leaders and journalists, all of whom have been approached by the Israeli government with free-of-charge first class tours to the country. [1] Such trips are led by well-drilled Israeli tour guides whose primary purpose is to spread the official Israeli narrative among all visitors. This narrative is created through the omission of crucial information, and by ensuring that no contact between visitors and local Palestinian communities takes place. [2]

Such an approach is based upon Israeli recognition that exposure to the present and historical realities of the occupation will have a transformative effect on the majority of tourists visiting Palestine, and that these tourists would then return to their home countries as opponents to Israel's oppressive policies against Palestinians. For instance, an Israeli branding campaign for the tourism industry in 2008 was developed to intentionally deflect attention from the occupation. [3]

Additionally, the complex web of unequal laws and restrictions adopted by Israel gives Israeli tour companies an unfair advantage in their ability to provide seamless service for their groups. Israel follows a two-tiered strategy: firstly to invest millions of dollars into its tourism market in order to attract the maximum number of visitors; and secondly to cripple the Palestinian tourism market to the greatest extent possible. Very few permits to build or convert buildings to hotels were granted by the Israeli authorities to investors in the Palestinian sector during the last

1   O. Gershenson, Countering single-narrative academic tours of Israel (2013). Retrieved January 2017 at http://972mag.com/countering-single-narrative-academic-tours-of-israel/65072.

2   See for example: Israel Government Tourist Office, (2009). Israeli tourism posters banned by watchdog over controversial map. Retrieved January 2017 at http://www.theguardian.com/media/2009/jul/15/asa-israel-tourism-poster.

3   Alternative Tourism Group, Economic Disparity in Israeli›s Tourism Monopoly – The devastating impact in occupied Palestine. Israel's stranglehold and monopoly over Holy Land tourism and its impacts (2013). Retrieved January 2017 at http://www.atg.ps/resources/file/pages/Economic%20Disparity%20in%20Israel.pdf.

two decades, whilst at least 15 military orders and regulations related to tourism have been issued since 1967 by the Israeli occupying authorities.[4]

Israel's suppression of the traditional Palestinian tourism market has prompted the development of "alternative tourism" or "political tourism" in Palestine. This form of tourism has been designed to better understand and respond to the conflict, and incorporates political and legal discussions and presentations alongside the standard pilgrimage or mainstream tourist attractions in Palestine or Israel. These kinds of tourists are far fewer in number, and are typically already sensitized to some degree to the Palestinian situation.

According to the prominent journalist and activist, Ben White, "[a]lternative tourism in the West Bank has definitely seen marked improvements and developments since it really began to get off the ground in the 1990s. The pioneers were the Alternative Tourism Group (ATG), based in Beit Sahour near Bethlehem, who in the aftermath of the first Palestinian intifada realized the positive potential for an infrastructure in Palestine to receive visiting foreigners looking to understand the local reality." [5]

Recent decades have witnessed the emergence of tourism concepts distinct from mainstream or mass tourism. These range from cultural tourism, just tourism or aboriginal tourism to sustainable tourism, eco-tourism or pro-poor tourism. However, none of these concepts can be simply applied to the Palestinian context. The Israeli occupation and its grip on Palestinian tourism, as seen above, adds a political dimension to Palestinian tourism which is unique compared to other geographic areas. This political dimension and the resulting inequities are of critical importance when assessing the suitability of sustainable tourism in Palestine. Here, given the unique operating environment, it is insufficient to adopt an approach of 'sustainable tourism'; instead the focus must be on sustainable just tourism.

In 2007 the ATG co-developed the Code of Conduct in order to create

4 See Amjad Alqasis, Israel's grip on Palestinian tourism (2015). Retrieved January 2017 at http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=765245
5   Ben White, Visit Palestine'' says West Bank's growing alternative tourism industry (2009). Retrieved January 2017 at https://electronicintifada.net/content/visit-palestine-says-west-banks-growing-alternative-tourism-industry/8343.

a unified message concerning just and sustainable tourism in Palestine.[6] The Code of Conduct seeks to place Palestine firmly on the international tourism map, and challenges the current mainstream tourist sector.

According to the ATG, "the establishment of sustainable [just] tourism for Palestine and Palestinians requires an understanding of political context and history, for it is these that set the constraints and barriers within which Palestinian tourism has to operate. The Code addresses these directly – and, by doing so, attempts to overcome them. At the same time, the Code urges the local community to interact positively and in a respectful way with pilgrims and tourists, and to renounce small-mindedness and exploitation of visitors."[7]

In this light, it is important to define sustainable just tourism in the Palestinian context.

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6   Code of Conduct available at http://www.atg.ps/print.php?page=code_english
7   See above.

Sustainable Just Tourism

Sustainable tourism can be defined as "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, [political], and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, and the environment and host communities".[8] Or according to the World Tourism Organization, "[s]ustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems."

to achieve sustainable tourism requires the participation of all stakeholders. It is also a continuous process, with careful monitoring of the results and, when needed, implementation of corrective measures or preventative mechanisms. Additionally, it should maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience for all visitors, raising their awareness of sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.[9]

Since the end of the last century, international strategies, guidelines and declarations concerning sustainable tourism have been developed, culminating, among others, in a set of United Nations Environmental Programme Principles which seek to build on definitions of sustainable tourism and to explore how to put it into practice.[10]

In 1987 a vision on development was established by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development known as the Brundtland Report. This vision was expressed as "[d]evelopment that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of

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8 World Tourism Organization, Sustainable Development of Tourism. Retrieved January 2017 at http://sdt.unwto.org/en/content/about-us-5

9 See UNWTO, SDT E-Bulletin No. 19, Sustainable Development of Tourism Programme (2011). Retrieved January 2017 at http://www.unwto.org/sdt

10 Ilona Husting, Challenges and opportunities for sustainable tourism development: The European Commission›s actions to enhance sustainable tourism (European Comission 2013). Retrieved January 2017 at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/4119I. LELONEK_HUSTING_UN%20Expert%20meeting_Final.pdf

future generations to meet their own needs''.[11] Sustainable just tourism, therefore, is centered on a forward-looking conception of development, with implementation requiring close cooperation with local populations. Bundled within such an approach is the inherent acknowledgement that communities must be afforded full protection for the conservation of their environment, culture and, most importantly, their political self-determination. In this light, a group of activists - including Palestinian activists - from various countries operating in the tourism sector joined their strength at the 2004 and 2005 World Social Forums and highlighted that, ''tourism issues within a multitude of... [social and]... human rights movements is crucial to sharpen local struggles and community initiatives of those impacted by tourism... [to] influence tourism policy agendas.'' [12]

For sustainable just tourism to distinguish itself from mainstream tourism, it must be built on four key pillars: environmental; economic; socio-cultural, and - of particular importance in the Palestinian context - political.

•   Environmental sustainability: the preservation of natural heritage and resources, taking into consideration the limitations and capacity of local environments. It works to avoid the harmful environmental effects of mass tourism by ensuring that tourists leave the smallest footprint possible on local ecosystems.[13] For instance in the Palestinian context it is important to educate tourists about the need to limit their water usage.[14]

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11 World Commission for Environment and Development, Our Common Future: The Bruntland Report (Oxford University Press, 1987).

12 Global Tourism Interventions Forum, Who really benefit from Tourism (2004).

13 See Brian Goodall, Environmental Auditing: A Tool for Assessing the Environmental Performance of Tourism Firms (The Geographical Journal, Vol. 161, No. 1 (Mar., 1995), pp. 29-37). See Timothy Forsyth, Environmental Responsibility and Business Regulation: The Case of Sustainable Tourism (The Geographical Journal, Vol. 163, No. 3 (Nov., 1997), pp. 270-280).

14   Water is a highly politicised issue in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. According to Al Haq, a leading Palestinian human rights organization: ''Contrary to popular belief, water is not, and has not been, scarce in the region, which contains three main sources of natural fresh water. However, since 1967, Israel has exerted considerable military and political efforts, including the establishment of settlements, to illegally exercise sovereign rights over Palestinian water resources. A series of military orders integrated the water system of the OPT into the Israeli system, while at the same time denying Palestinian control over this vital resource.' (Elisabeth Koek, Water for One People Only: Discriminatory Access and Water-Apartheid'' in the OPT, Al Haq 2013).

• Economic sustainability: tourism can play an important role in raising standards of living, education, and health for local populations by providing them with resources and jobs.[15] On the other hand, tourism should not be allowed to dominate a local economy; non-tourism-related local industry must be protected to ensure the continued socio-economic harmony of the community. Ways must be found to invite the substantive participation of local communities in tourism while also preserving cultural and natural resources. In short, tourism must be integrated into a broader strategy of sustainable development to build linkages and reduce leakages – essentially, keeping the money 'local'.[16] The local community should share and benefit from the financial surplus resulting from tourism. For example, the ATG initiated a homestay program in the 1990s, whereby participating households were provided with grants with a view to building extra private rooms and bathrooms for the hosting of guests. This program provides over a hundred local households an extra source of income. In addition, the program offers visitors the chance to experience Palestinian culture and hospitality by spending more time with locals. [17]

• Social-cultural sustainability: respecting human rights and equal opportunities for all in society. As such, travelers are urged to expose themselves to unique local lifestyles, values, and traditions, as well as to learn about current political and social problems. It further promotes participation in, and ultimately control over, the protection and management of historical sites by the local population. Three central issues should always be taken into consideration: the possible effects of tourism, the factors needed to develop and sustain tourism, and the ownership model on which to base a tourism business. [18] The ATG Code of Conduct, for example, asks travelers and tourists to adopt a considerate attitude towards the people they encounter, the environment, and host
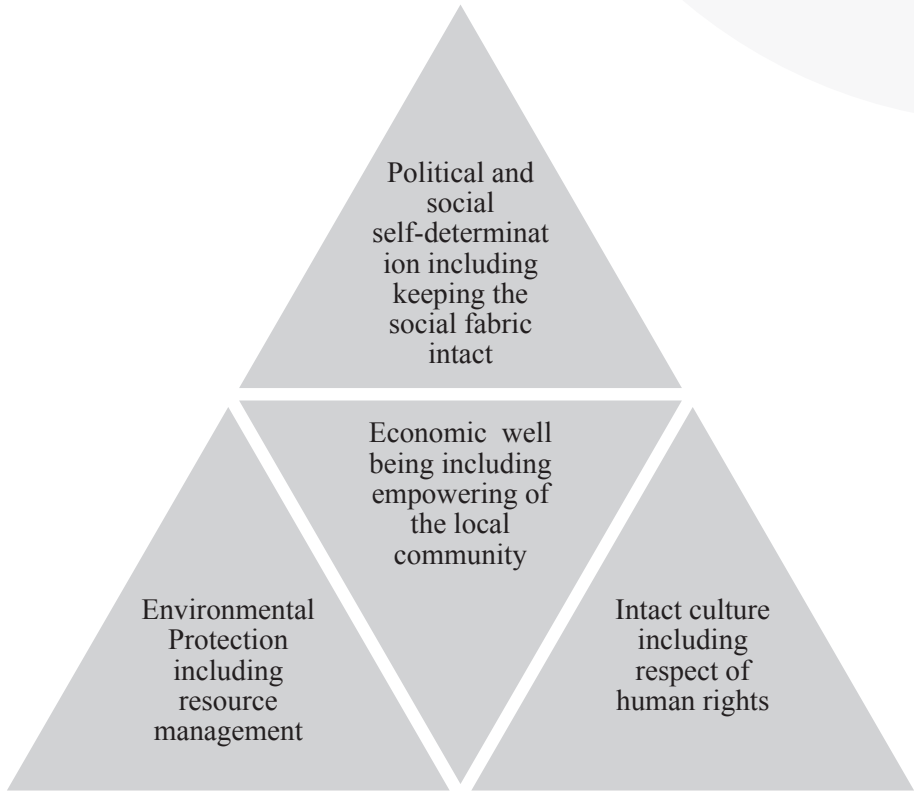
15 Matthew Krystal, Cultural Revitalization and Tourism at the Morería Nima› Kʼiche (Ethnology, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Spring, 2000), pp. 149-161).
16 See Tony Binns and Etienne Nel, Tourism as a Local Development Strategy in South Africa (The Geographical Journal, Vol. 168, No. 3 (Sep., 2002), pp. 235-247).
17 For more information please visit the ATG website at: http://atg.ps/programs/home-stay.
18 Kristal Markowitz, Cultural Tourism: Exploration or Exploitation of American Indians? (Indian L. Rev. 233 2001-2002).

communities when travelling in Palestine.[19] The ATG co-authored Come and See initiative invites travelers to seek an authentic face-to-face human encounter while visiting the area. [20] These are important examples to illustrate possible basic guidelines for the participation of travelers or tourists in developing social-cultural sustainability.

Political and social self-determination including keeping the social fabric intact

Economic well being including empowering of the local community

Environmental Protection including resource management

Intact culture including respect of human rights

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19 Alternative Tourism Group, Code of Conduct. Retrieved January 2017 at http://www.atg.ps/print.php?page=code_english.
20 Alternative Tourism Group, Come and See Guidelines (2009). Retrieved January 2017 at http://www.atg.ps/resources/file/pages/Guidelines.pdf

•   Political sustainability: conserving and strengthening the rights of the local population, and avoiding any interference with their social fabric and/or human rights as a people. Most importantly, the right to self-determination must be upheld. Since Palestine is under foreign rule and occupation it is essential that tourism does not strengthen Israel's grip on Palestinian land and people. Tourism should be a vehicle for positive change. In this regard the Come and See initiative emphasizes that a journey to Palestine should include seeking justice and "to understand [the political situation] and [to] make a positive difference in the lives of people whose lands they visit. Meeting Palestinians who are living under occupation is an act of solidarity that brings hope to the people and contributes to their… development [and possibly self-determination]". [21]

It is important to note that these four pillars are in many ways interdependent and can be both mutually reinforcing or in competition with one another. Delivering sustainable development means striking a balance between them.

According to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)[22], and the Millennium Development Goals from 1999, sustainable development of tourism should include the involvement of local communities, implementation of environmental and quality standards, and the allocation of tourism revenues to prevent degradation of resources. As tourism is dependent on both natural and human assets for its promotion, the environment, people and establishing and maintaining global partnerships for development are essential in order to achieve and maintain a healthy industry. Despite the clear need for an holistic approach to sustainable tourism, however, environmental criteria are often more developed than social and political criteria, with more accepted indicators, practical methods for benchmarking and accepted methodologies for measurement

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21 See above.

22 The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is a treaty of the World Trade Organization that entered into force in January 1995 as a result of the Uruguay Round negotiations. The treaty was created to extend the multilateral trading system to service sector. All members of the WTO are signatories to the GATS.

and monitoring.[23] There are several proposals to internationalize tourism standards, though none of these are yet at a sufficiently advanced stage of development, and concerted efforts are required for these proposals to attain the necessary level of consensus and become a viable international, sustainable tourism standard. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO), through its Committee on Consumer Policy (COPOLCO), is considering the feasibility of standardization of the tourism market, which could change the nature of international tourism. Currently, several certification programs are rapidly gaining in support and this success may serve as a future platform for the assessment of the benefits of an internationalization of tourism standards.

International tourism standards and law deal with issues occurring from travel, which by its legal definition involves the physical crossing of national borders. Tourism law is diverse, composed mostly of laws applying to situations arising from unforeseen incidents such as disappointments and damages; industry specific laws and international regulations; and laws arising from the need to regulate this vast world market in a socially sustainable and environmentally friendly manner. [24] Nevertheless, unlike in many other areas of law, there is not one specific set of laws regulating international tourism. The body of tourism law consists of different codes, conventions, regulatory materials, treaties and national best practice, of which the majority are voluntary standards and therefore non-binding in nature. Those of particular importance include: Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, 2005; European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage; International Labour Organization's Working Conditions (Hotels and Restaurants) Convention, 1991 (No. 172); Convention on Biological Diversity Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development; United Nations Environment Programme Principles for Implementation

23   The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is a treaty of the World Trade Organization that entered into force in January 1995 as a result of the Uruguay Round negotiations. The treaty was created to extend the multilateral trading system to service sector. All members of the WTO are signatories to the GATS. UNWTO, Tourism and Biodiversity – Achieving Common Goals Towards Sustainability (2010). Retrieved January 2017 at http://dtxtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/tourismbiodiversity.pdf.
24 See Rowe, A, Smith, J and Borein, F. Travel and Tourism (Cambridge University 2002). Retrieved January 2017 at http://assets.cambridge.org/052189235/X/sample/052189235Xws.pdf.

of Sustainable Tourism; and World Tourism Organisation Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. [25]

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism of the World Tourism Organisation offers an example of such an international codification. Most importantly, it deals with two pillars:

1. Sustainable development as enshrined in articles 3 and 5:

- Article 3. Tourism, a factor of sustainable development

(1) All the stakeholders in tourism development should safeguard the natural Environment[…].

- Article 5. Tourism, a beneficial activity for host countries and communities

(2) Tourism policies should be applied in such a way as to help to raise the standard of living of the populations of the regions visited and meet their needs; the planning and architectural approach to and operation of tourism resorts and accommodation should aim to integrate them, to the extent possible, in the local economic and social fabric[...].

2. Rights and obligations of stakeholders and duty bearers involved in tourism as exemplified by articles 4, 6, 7 and 9:

- Article 4. Tourism, a user of the cultural heritage of mankind and a contributor to its enhancement

(1) [T]he communities in whose territories they are situated have particular rights and obligations to them[…].

- Article 6. Obligations of stakeholders in tourism development

(1) Tourism professionals have an obligation to provide tourists with objective and honest information on their places of destination and on the conditions of travel, hospitality and stays[…].
- Article 7. Right to tourism

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25   Jose Salom, Sustainable Tourism: Emerging Global and Regional Regulation (Intl Envtl. L. Rev. 801 2000-2001).

(3) Social tourism, and in particular associative tourism, which facilitates widespread access to leisure, travels and holidays, should be developed with the support of the public authorities[…].

• Article 9. Rights of the workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism industry

(1) The fundamental rights of salaried and self-employed workers in the tourism industry and related activities should be guaranteed under the supervision of the national and local administrations[…].

Sustainable just tourism, therefore, first and foremost protects the local community from degradation of its environment and cultural heritage in order to preserve it as tourist attraction for future generations. In essence, the idea is to ensure the sustainability of tourism for an infinite period of time. Additionally, it aims to protect employees of tourist businesses as well as tourists themselves, and create a positive atmosphere in which local residents and tourists both stand to benefit. Given the critical importance of these aims, there exists a clear need to bolster them through the codification of appropriate legal standards so as to create enforceable obligations and ensure compliance.

Role of Tourists and Travelers

As yet the role of tourists or travelers themselves has not received the necessary level of attention in literature on sustainable tourism development, with this role often limited to identifying tourists as clients in an economy-driven setting.[26] Tourism and therefore tourists themselves have changed from local to global actors and their direct involvement in the development of sustainable just tourism appears the only appropriate option. Based on this understanding, the aforementioned ATG Code of Conduct addresses tourists and travelers by highlighting their responsibilities. Among others, the Code highlights in A 1-14 that the tourist or traveler should prepare for the trip by reading guidebooks, travel accounts and articles about current news and events, and to get

26 Marinus Gisolf, The Background of Sustainable Tourist Experiences. Retrieved January 2017 at http://www.tourismtheories.org/?p=905.

up-to-date information about the current situation, safety, local history, culture and customs. In addition, the trip should also be approached with a desire to learn rather than just to observe, while adopting a considerate attitude towards the people you encounter, the environment, and host communities when travelling in Palestine helps to ensure your trip is beneficial to all parties. Visitors must seek to respect and learn about the local culture while keeping in mind that Palestinians may have different concepts of time, personal space, communication and society. These values are not 'wrong' or inferior, just different. Another important aspect of any visit is cooperating with locals in conserving natural resources and to commit to a moderate use when possible. The Code, furthermore, outlines the responsibility of tourists or travelers to share their experiences with friends and relatives upon their return and to use the trip as a learning experience to question stereotypes and generalizations.[27]

Moreover, according to Rami Kassis, the director of ATG, "all tourists have a choice: sunseekers can help to heal the inequalities between cultures by injecting local economies with resources, or they can participate in their exploitation; adventure tourists can wreak havoc on local environments, or they can participate in efforts to protect them. Put simply, tourists with a commitment to social justice have the opportunity not only to make positive contributions to the communities they visit, but to become holders of the knowledge that will one day lead to equality, democracy, and human rights for all." [28]

Role of Palestinian National Institutions

The Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) is the public sector institution with responsibility for all issues related to tourism in Palestine, including implementing the Palestinian government's national strategy for tourism.[29]

The bulk of the currently applicable Palestinian tourism laws were

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27   Alternative Tourism Group, Code of Conduct.

28 Rami Kassis, The Palestinians & Justice Tourism: Another Tourism is Possible (Bethlehem TEMPUS Programme 2006).

29   For more information please visit the website of the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities at: http://travelpalestine.ps/.

established during Jordanian rule over the West Bank in 1965. Subsequently, and as an additional legislative layer, military orders have been introduced by the occupying power to serve Israeli interests. The main tourism laws are roughly 40 years old and are still applied today. The applicable tourism legislation does not specify the rights and duties of all sectors that organize and influence the Palestinian tourism sector, including MoTA. In addition, due to the political situation in Palestine, where the private sector often assumes responsibility for services that would ordinarily be provided by the government, an understanding of this dynamic should be reflected in laws and regulations. Specifically, the applicable legal framework should include the possibility of holding the private sector to account when undertaking ostensibly governmental tasks.

Palestinian tourism law also fails to consider environmental dimensions in its protection of touristic and archaeological sites, or the creation of natural reserves. Moreover, it does not include mechanisms to protect the local community or the rights of workers in the tourist sector, or make any efforts to include local populations in the design and promotion of Palestinian tourism.

The Palestinian Authority can – and should – play a crucial role in limiting or preventing a market-driven model of tourism that would privilege industry and tourists' needs over the interests of the local community. Too often such a development leads to privatization of public property and resources for exclusive use by industry and thus conferring little or no benefit on local communities. For example, community-oriented tourism would allow the local population to benefit from money spent in the tourist sector instead of simply "observing from outside how their culture and history is being sold for the profit of others." [30]

In essence, the currently applicable laws and regulations do not take into consideration sustainability principles. MoTA is currently working on a new tourism law and a first draft of this legislation is presently being discussed within the ministry. The minister will issue their official opinion which will then be submitted for further deliberation. At the time of

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30 Rami Kassis, Alternative Tourism: Possibilities for new forms of tourism in Palestine (London Metropolitan University 2008).

writing it is unclear which direction this new Palestinian tourism law will take. [31]

Responsibilities of Local Community

The support of the host or local community is vital in achieving sustainable just tourism. The community's perceptions and attitudes towards tourism must be taken into consideration when planning and promoting tourism. Tourism should be in conformity with the community's standards, moral code and desires as well as contributing to its well-being and development. There will be many interactions between tourists and the local community. For any tourism market to be truly sustainable, local populations must play an active role in the decision-making process. [32]   Thus, the local community shares a responsibility in creating and fostering sustainable just tourism. The local community should engage within the provided legal framework and/or demand more opportunities to participate in the creation of a shared vision regarding the tourist sector. Communities as a whole must abstain from exploiting tourists or bowing to any perceived preexisting stereotypes which may be held by tourists. Concerning the latter, local communities must avoid portraying their own culture based on tourists' assumptions for financial benefits. Local communities have a responsibility to portray their culture and heritage in a natural manner and to treat tourists as periodic visitors rather than one-time strangers to be financially or otherwise exploited. With the help of tourism professionals and activists, the tourism sector should constantly push to find new ways to integrate more and more families and individuals into the tourism market in order to derive maximum benefit from tourism.

Political Dimension

Concepts of justice and fairness were a basic aim of early sustainability concepts, as set out in the aforementioned Bruntland Report, however, with the global marketing of places and cultures comes the potential for inequalities and injuries which are often unseen and, therefore,

31 See Amjad Alqasis and Dafer Kassis, Status of Tourism Legislation in Palestine (ATG 2015).
32 James Hanrahan, Host communities participation in planning for sustainable tourism in Ireland: a local authority perspective (PhD, Institute of Technology 2008).

unaddressed.[33]

Another step in the right direction is the Melbourne Principle for Sustainable Cities which among other things states, in Principle 2, "[t]hrough fair allocation of resources, economic strategies should seek to meet basic human needs in a just and equitable manner." In addition, Principle 7 calls for the empowerment and inclusion of "those whose voices are not always heard, such as the poor." Another example is the Global Code of Ethics, as seen above, which calls for tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious, philosophical and moral beliefs, and associates them with responsible tourism. The subsequent Kerala Declaration also noted that the ethic of mutual equity and respect is essential to responsible and just tourism. Just and responsible tourism also "includes aboriginal rights and self-empowerment, control, participation of traditional owners, cultural justice and stigmatization of discrimination and racism."[34] It should enable the active involvement of locals including low-income, diverse and minority groups in the development and marketing of tourist sites and goods. It should further include fair distribution of marketing, promotion and development initiatives among different groups, with particular attention paid to the needs of disadvantaged groups. Discriminatory or racist treatment aimed at excluding specific societal groups from the benefits of tourism should be prevented and pro-active measures should be taken to challenge such a situation. All societal groups and in particular disadvantaged populations should be able to participate in the planning and decision-making process related to the use and distribution of cultural goods and services. [35]

A pro-poor approach to tourism has also been advocated for the strengthening of disadvantaged and marginalized societal groups by improving their access to economic opportunities. This is to be pursued through policy reform aimed at enhancing participation in planning, development and management of tourism activities, as well as removing

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33 Tazim Jamal and Blanca Alejandra Camargo, Sustainable tourism, justice and an ethic of care: toward the Just Destination (Journal of Sustainable Tourism Vol. 22, Iss. 1, 2014). See Kristal Markowitz, Cultural Tourism: Exploration or Exploitation of American Indians? (26 Am. Indian L. Rev. 233 2001-2002).

34   Final Draft, March 9, 2013. Forthcoming in Journal of Sustainable Tourism (2014).

35   See A. B. Pittock, Aborigines and the Tourist Industry (The Australian Quarterly, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Sep., 1967), pp. 87-95).

existing obstacles for greater participation, and encouraging partnerships between government agencies or the private sector and disadvantaged people in the development of new tourism goods and services.[36] Moreover, the pro-poor approach entails provision of adequate training to all groups within the population and to penalize social exploitation, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and environmental pollution.[37] In short, sustainable just tourism needs to include participatory involvement, aided by capacity-building in planning and policy making, plus inclusive, procedural justice principles, and control over the allocation and use of development and marketing funds.

Moreover, political misuse or intentionally false portrayal of archeological sites and historical heritage should be resisted. History should not be cynically appropriated by political agendas that seek to justify oppression and dispossession. Israel has created a tourism narrative to align with its own national narrative which erases Palestinian history, belonging and ownership of Palestine. It is a "zero-sum game where only one of the two sides can be present. Dismissing the 'other' and emphasizing everything expressing 'Israeliness' are part of this."[38]

Within the Palestinian context, tourists should not only receive accessible, readymade information but also explore the genealogy of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; they should demand that tourist tours and experiences include diverse views of people and groups of the area and to visit different areas. Sustainable just tourism encourages improved and meaningful interaction between visitors and local communities, which in turn promotes truth, political awareness and personal development.[39]

36   See Sarah Tillotson, ‹Cultural Tourism› or Cultural Destruction? (Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 23, No. 38 (Sep. 17, 1988), pp. 1940-1941).

37 Frederico Neto, A New Approach to Sustainable Tourism Development: Moving Beyond Environmental Protection (DESA Discussion Paper No. 29). Retrieved January 2017 at http://www.un.org/esa/esa03dp29.pdf.

38 Manar Makhoul, Staged Authenticity: The Israeli 'Annexation' of Palestinian Religious Tourism in the 1967 Occupied Territory (Alternative Tourism Group, 2016).

39 Rami Kassis, The Palestinians & Justice Tourism: Another Tourism is Possible (Bethlehem TEMPUS Programme 2006).

Global Setting

The right to maintain one's culture and beliefs is recognized as a basic human right under international law.[40] Article 27 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that, "everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits."[41] However, globalization and the spread of Western capitalist ideals in countries around the globe are, in particular, threatening the culture and social fabric of developing countries.[42]

As Deborah McLaren, Director of the Rethinking Tourism Project, wrote, "the globalization of tourism threatens indigenous knowledge and intellectual property rights, their vision, technologies, religions, sacred sites, social structures and relationships, wildlife, ecosystems, economies and basic rights to informed understanding reducing indigenous peoples to simply another consumer product that is quickly becoming exhaustible."[43]

As an example to counter such a trend, an initiative was founded in Africa to discuss plans for the preservation of African culture and traditions by developing a cultural tourism program around the Slave Route which would be designed to raise awareness of the history of this period without resulting in a cultural sell-out.[44]

In the Palestinian context travelers and tourists are explicitly invited to come and see the political reality on the ground. The ATG co-authored the Come and See call from Palestine for tourists and pilgrims to visit

40 See International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Preamble, Arts. 18(4) and 27.

41 Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

42 See Robert C. Mings, Puerto Rico and Tourism: The Struggle for Cultural Autonomy among Developing Nations: The Case of Puerto Rico and Its Tourist Industry (Caribbean Quarterly, Vol. 14, No. 3 (September 1968), pp. 7-21). See John Shoup, The Impact of Tourism on the Bedouin of Petra (Middle East Journal, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Spring, 1985), pp. 277-291).

43 Christine Gudaitis, Tourism in Developing Countries - Panacea or Poison? (Miami Int'l & Comp. L. Rev. 265 2000-2001).

44 Lia-Alexandra Baltador and Camelia Budac, Sustainable Development: Case Study Area of the Danube Delta. Retrieved January 2017 at http://conferinta2013.academiacomerciala.ro/_VOLCONF2013PDF/volumconferinta/SUSTAINABLE%20DEVELOPMENT%20CASE%20STUDY%20E220%93%80%TOURISM%20IN%20THE%20PROTECTED%20AREA%20OF%20THE%20DANUBE%20DELTA.pdf.

the "living stones" in Palestine. The Come and See document, inspired by Kairos Palestine, was launched in 2009 by Christian leaders in order to raise awareness of the daily realities of life under Israeli occupation, to act as a call upon Christians and churches worldwide to bear witness to these realities, and to subsequently take appropriate action. "In order to understand our reality, we say to the Churches: Come and see. We will fulfill our role to make known to you the truth of our reality, receiving you as pilgrims coming to us to pray, carrying a message of peace, love and reconciliation. You will know the facts and the people in this land, Palestinians and Israelis alike. At the same time we call on you to say a word of truth and to take a position of truth with regards to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land."[45]

45   Alternative Tourism Group, Come and See Guidelines (2009). Retrieved January 2017 at http://www.atg.ps/resources/file/pages/Guidelines.pdf .

The Way Forward

This paper invites all relevant stakeholders – including professionals and volunteers operating in the tourist sector in Palestine; local communities, Palestinian national institutions, tourism networks, tourist operators offering trips to Palestine worldwide, tourists and travelers and all those interested in the change and development of Palestinian tourism – to rethink strategies so as to include sustainable just principles into the Palestinian tourism sector. Ways to challenge Israel's tight grip on Palestinian tourism must be sought and found, coupled with a renunciation of solely money-oriented tourism. As outlined above, Israel pursues a two-tiered strategy: firstly, it invests millions of dollars into its own tourism market in order to attract the maximum number of visitors; and secondly, it seeks to cripple the Palestinian market.[46] A Palestinian national tourism strategy must be developed that includes a vision and narrative to counter the Israeli-dominated discourse both locally and internationally. This could be achieved through the introduction of appropriate language and terminology and to educate Palestinian officials, tourism agencies and tourist guides accordingly. The idea would be to develop terms which are truly reflective of the present reality on the ground without bowing to external pressures and without framing the situation in a manner of Israel's choosing.

Based on the four pillars, this vision would necessarily include the preservation of natural heritage and resources, as well as ensuring that tourism plays an important role in raising standards of living, education, and health for the local population. Moreover it would see tourism promoting respect for – and the strengthening of – human rights and equal opportunities for all in society, and contributing to the protection of their social fabric.

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46   Amjad Alqasis and Dafer Kassis, Status of Tourism in Palestine (Alternative Tourism Group 2015).

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