The Influence of Social Entrepreneurship in Tourism on an Arab Village in Israel

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Abstract This chapter explores how social entrepreneurship in tourism can convey societal benefits in an underserved Arab community in Israel. This analysis draws from three theoretical perspectives (i) social sustainability, (ii) theories associated with tourism, development, and economic empowerment, and (iii) the growing body of scholarship on tourism and peace-building efforts, and also includes an empirical case study situated in the Israeli village of Jisr-az Zarqa. The study focuses on the development of the village's first commercial guest house, which is operated through a special Arab-Jewish partnership. This study employed qualitative research methods such as participant observation and in-depth, open-ended interviews. Findings revealed three categories associated with the influence of social entrepreneurship in tourism in Jisr az-Zarqa. The first category is largely descriptive and identifies the barriers to tourism development in the village. The second category analyzes the role of social entrepreneurship in tourism through the special Arab-Jewish business partnership that operates the guesthouse. The third category offers insights into the impacts associated with Jisr az-Zarq's first commercial guesthouse.

Keywords Social entrepreneurship in tourism • Community-based tourism • Arab-Jewish tourism partnership in Israel • Jisr az-Zarqa

1 Introduction

The chapter draws from three theoretical perspectives—and an empirical case study—to explore how social entrepreneurship in tourism can convey societal benefits in an underserved Arab community in Israel. Our first theoretical lens is

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rooted in concepts of social sustainability (Ateljevic, 2009; Mak, 2004; Mowforth & Munt, 2009; Tribe, 2007). Much of this literature emphasizes justice tourism and its social contribution, which are critical issues for Arab communities in Israel and the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Our next theoretical lens draws from theories associated with tourism, development, and economic empowerment. Various scholars have advanced theories about how community-based initiatives in tourism can address poverty reduction (Alter, 2006; Hall & Brown, 2006; Spenceley & Meyer, 2012), and this perspective is important because Arab communities in Israel experience significant economic disadvantage compared to their Jewish counterparts (Chernichovsky & Anson, 2005). Our third perspective comes from the growing body of scholarship on tourism and peace-building efforts (Haberstroh, 2011; Haessly, 2010; Jafari, 1989; Kelly, 2012). While scholarship on the effects of tourism and peace tends to be mixed (some studies suggest that tourism can promote peace, while other studies conclude the opposite), the agenda of tourism and peace lies at the heart of the Israeli-Arab community included in our study.

This chapter aims to provide a critical analysis of tourism development as social entrepreneurship in an underserved Arab community in Israel. It will outline how social tourism can be used as a development strategy in a systemically underserved community characterized by deep cross-cultural conflict. From this point of departure, the chapter will present new data and offer insights into the potential for social entrepreneurship in tourism to provide community benefits within the challenging Israeli-Palestinian context and conflict. We conclude by discussing the implications of this approach more broadly.

This study utilizes qualitative research methods and an exploratory case study design. The study site is the recently opened guesthouse—"Juha's Guesthouse"—in one of Israel's poorest villages, the Arab community of Jisr az-Zarqa. The guesthouse is operated through an Arab-Jewish business partnership that seeks to use tourism as a primary development strategy. Data were collected during field visits between July 2013 and January 2016, which included semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and extensive document review. Data were then coded and analyzed for explanatory themes.

2 Tourism as a Resource for Peace-Building

The first time peace and tourism were the joint topics of an international conference was in 1988 at "The First Global Conference on Tourism—a Vital Force for Peace" (the conference was held in Vancouver Canada). The report from the conference described tourism as a uniting force for cross-cultural cooperation and tolerance worldwide (Jafari, 1989). Today a growing body of scientific literature and policy discourse advocates tourism as an effective global tool for promoting peace.

Because peace is a complex issue, Haessly (2010) argues that it is important to conceptualize peace beyond the definition of the absence of conflict, violence and war. This view of peace depends upon what peace constitutes as well as what is needed for the creation of "sustainable peace", not only in the present but also into

the future. In this sense, peace stretches beyond the absence of structural violence into a more holistic construct. Thus, peace is a liberation on personal as well as societal levels, where the potential of every human being to care for themselves, others, and all of creation can be reached. Haessly (2010) states that in such a world basic human needs are considered as basic human rights in which each person has the right to live in freedom and with dignity.

It is obvious that non-peaceful actions affect the tourism industry and negatively impact the economic livelihoods of those dependent on the tourism sector. At the same time, it is important to note that the tourism sector is often recognized for its ability to foster cross-cultural understanding and support peaceful relationships amongst people. For example, Haberstroh (2011) highlights this potential by referring to the tourism industry as “The Peace Industry”, because of the sector’s potential for serving as an effective cross-communication tool among cultures.

A growing body of research suggests that tourism should focus on the grassroots level—especially the host-tourist encounter—in order to be an effective peace-fostering tool. For example, Kelly (2012) stresses that such personal encounters may have positive impacts on reducing anxiety towards dealing with unfamiliar issues (for instance awareness of conditions in less developed countries). Other positive impacts include the pursuit of status equality between hosts and visitors by enhancing the similarities between them (i.e., by connecting people from the same religion, age-group or profession). Haessly (2010) and Kelly (2012) also stress that focusing on the role tourism can play in promoting reconciliation between hostile groups (within or across national borders) may in fact encourage initial policies for cooperation and/or connections between former or present enemies.

Another perspective is offered by Kassis’s (2006) treatment of justice tourism. According to this view, justice tourism as highly place-specific and aims to address specific problems at specific destinations. The idea is that tourism can be used to raise awareness around specific issues, and tourism-related activities can then be designed to directly meet the needs and interests of local people. In this way, specific issues (e.g., poverty, environmental pollution) do not necessarily have to be linked to tourism. Rather, tourists become linked to the issue at the destination and the associated injustices. Four attributes of justice tourism have been identified by Scheyvens (2002) that stress how travelers can be a part of the process towards building empowered and just communities. These four attributes of justice tourism are: (i) building solidarity between visitors and those visited; (ii) promoting mutual understanding and relationships based on equity, sharing and respect; (iii) supporting self-sufficiency and self-determination of local communities; and (iv) maximizing local economic, cultural and social benefits.

3 Social Entrepreneurship in Tourism

Entrepreneurship is closely linked to innovation and creativity and is defined as “the capacity and willingness to develop, organize and manage a business venture along with any of its risks in order to make a profit” (Business Dictionary, 2014). Similarly, the ‘entrepreneur’ is commonly seen as a business leader and innovator of new ideas and business processes (Investopedia, 2014). For example, Veeraraghvan (2009) states that the main characteristics of entrepreneurs include the “ability to take risks and indulge in creative destruction (when new inventions destroy old structures) and innovation” (p. 14). Success depends highly upon an entrepreneur’s ability to spot opportunities, create a team of talented co-workers who compensate one other’s skills, access to various types of capital (technical and human), and the ability able to operate in an environment that supports innovative activities. In this sense, innovation refers to a new way of doing something in which the innovator is providing the idea while the entrepreneur develops that idea into a commercial activity.

Social entrepreneurship is generally described from a private sector perspective or a third sector [or non-governmental organization (NGO)] perspective. From the profit sector perspective, social entrepreneurship refers to activities that emphasize the importance of being socially-engaged and the benefits that accrue to entrepreneurs that “do well by doing good”. From the third sector perspective, the concept refers to activities that encourage more entrepreneurial approaches in the nonprofit sector in order to increase organizational effectiveness and foster long-term sustainability (Hibbert, Hogg, & Quinn, 2002). Despite its growing popularity, social entrepreneurship has received little scholarly attention within the field of tourism. However, several studies have been published in recent years. For example, van der Weppen and Cochrane (2012) have noted that social enterprises have a considerable impact on local economic development as those businesses tend to act in a socially responsible manner (e.g., local employment, support for external projects that benefit society more broadly, etc.). In addition, these authors suggest that while social entrepreneurs have the typical entrepreneurial mind-set, they also tend to have additional characteristics such as passion and confidence in people’s capacity to contribute to individual and societal development. Thus, social entrepreneurs have the potential to use tourism ventures as a way to address a wide range of social challenges.

Another example is the work of Spenceley and Meyer (2012), in which these authors argue that social businesses seek to meet the needs of local people while also remaining commercially profitable. In this way, social businesses are becoming increasingly involved in reducing poverty within the communities in which they operate. These authors further suggest that work on tourism and poverty reduction in less developed countries, as well as in the tourist-generating countries, should focus on integrating the private sector into these efforts. Spenceley and Meyer (2012) conclude, however, that there needs to be a mentality shift towards poverty

reduction within the private sector so that “it becomes the norm rather than the exception within the tourism industry” (p. 311).

In summary, the role of social entrepreneurship in the tourism sector has only recently received scholarly attention. These early studies have largely focused on how social entrepreneurship in tourism can serve as a catalyst for creating societal empowerment and enable marginalized people to build their capacity to turn ideas into business. This chapter extends earlier studies by examining how the tourism activities of social business actors are blending entrepreneurship, empowerment and poverty alleviation in an underserved Arab community in Israel.

4 Arab Communities in Israel

The geographical area that today constitutes the State of Israel is, unarguably, contested and under constant international scrutiny. The dispute, which is often referred to as the Arab-Israeli conflict, has its roots in a long history of conflict over territorial control, which continues to be fueled by colonial, ideological, religious, and political motives.

For example, one result of what is now considered the first Arab-Israeli war (the war that occurred in 1948, which is associated with the establishment of the State of Israel and the Palestinian Nakba) was the displacement of over 700,000 Palestinians. The vast majority of these refugees ended up in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Only refugees in Jordan were granted Jordanian citizenship, whereas those in other areas are still today living in refugee camps. During this time, about 150,000 Palestinians stayed in Israel and became Israeli citizens. Today, these people are commonly referred to as Israeli Arabs or Palestinian citizens of Israel (Margalith, 1953; Waxman, 2012). Despite numerous efforts to bring peace between the State of Israel and the Palestinians (e.g., the Oslo Peace Accords), the issue of Palestinian refugees is still not resolved and remains a key subject at every peace negotiation regarding the broader Arab-Israeli conflict. Today, the Arab minority in Israel's constitutes about 20 % of country's population.¹ Despite holding Israeli citizenship, Israel's Arab population has been chronically and systematically underserved compared to Israel's Jewish citizens.

In terms of tourism, Israel attracts travelers from all over the world, in large part, because of the country's linkage to the three major Abrahamic religions; Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Israel Ministry of Tourism, 2014). With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, tourism broadened from purely spiritual travelling to also include leisure and recreational tourism (Israel Ministry of Tourism, 2014). Along with its religious, cultural and historical attractions, the country today offers

¹The authors refer here to the internationally recognized boundaries of the State of Israel, which excludes the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

a diverse tourism product that highlights the pleasant climate, diverse landscape, modern leisure offers, and international events; all within the small geographical area of the country (Gelbman, 2008; Israel Ministry of Tourism, 2014). Despite the wealth of tourism sites and opportunities in Israel, many of Israel's Arab communities lack the capacity and ability to fully participate in the tourism sector, which has resulted in a substantial gap compared to other communities in the country.

5 Methods

Study data were collected using qualitative research methods over the course of three separate study visits: July 2013, March 2014, and January 2016. In each of these visits, researchers used participant observation techniques and conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews. Participant observation included observations of staff meetings, interaction with the guesthouse'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.

Researchers also conducted several in-depth interviews with the hostel's senior management staff, which represents a form of purposeful and key informant sampling strategies. These interviews focused on understanding the guesthouse's special Arab-Jewish ownership and management partnership and how the guesthouse's owners/operators view their work in the context of tourism development and the cross-cultural dynamics in the Israeli-Palestinian context.

6 Juha's Guesthouse in the Village of Jisr az-Zarqa

The former fishing village of Jisr az-Zarqa (Arabic for 'Bridge over the Blue') is located on the coastline between Tel Aviv and Haifa, just north of the historic site of Caesarea. The village lies in close proximity to archeological remains, a nature reserve, and is crossed by the 'Israel National Hiking Trail', which stretches 1000 km from Eilat in the south to Dan in the north. Jisr az-Zarqa dates back 500 years and was first settled by people who lived in the swamps of the nearby communities of Hadera and Binyamina, and as a result, the residents were known as 'the swamp-people' (Picow, 2011). The village remained intact during the violent periods leading up to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The residents of Jisr az-Zarqa have largely peaceful relationships with the neighboring Jewish communities although these relationships mirror the tensions and conflicts associated with the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Jisr az-Zarqa consists of a Muslim-Arab population of 14,000 inhabitants, and the community is geographically isolated from the other Arab communities on the

coastline of Israel. The village's infrastructure is poor and is serviced by only two bus lines (as of March 2014). In addition, there are only two entrances to the community, which are accessed from the nearby highway. As a result, the area has been referred to as "a poverty-stricken paradise" (Arad, 2014) and, according to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz (Haaretz 2008, 2010), Jisr az-Zarqa had some of the lowest monthly incomes and highest school dropout rates of any Arab village in Israel, and was later placed at the bottom of the national list of average grades on matriculation exams (Arad, 2014). In Jisr az-Zarqa, 80 % of the population lives below the Israeli poverty line of \$7.30 per person per day, unemployment hovers around 30 %, and crime rates are high (Miller, 2013).

Jisr az-Zarqa is an example of how poverty manifests itself not only through a lack of financial means, but also in apathy towards one's own existence. Such apathy results in low self-esteem about one's ability to fully live in accordance with one's capacity (Hanien & Juha, personal communication, March 20, 2014). In terms of Jisr az-Zarqa, El-Ali (2013, as cited in Miller, 2013, p. 1) noted that the village "exists under impossible conditions. The people know what cards they are holding, but they don't have the education or the initial capital to start a business, nor the ability to raise the capital needed, or the knowledge of how they skip over the bureaucratic hurdles". The village's situation is exemplified by, and made worse from, the nearly five meter-high earthen embankment between Jisr az-Zarqa and the neighboring town of Caesarea. Erected in 2002, the stated purpose of this partition is to create a barrier that prevents noise and theft from Jisr az-Zarqa from reaching the residents of Caesarea. From a critical standpoint, the embankment was regarded as another racial separation wall, marking the border between one of Israel's wealthiest Jewish settlements and the country's poorest Arab community (Herzliya Museum, 2009; Miller, 2013).

In 2011, the village sought to promote tourism development through an initiative by the local municipality and the NGO, Sikkuy² (Picow, 2011). Yet because Jisr az-Zarqa has the reputation of being one of the poorest communities in Israel, tourism development has proved difficult due to perceptions of isolation, neglect, and poverty (Picow, 2011). Despite these challenges, two entrepreneurs from different cultural backgrounds (Neta Hanien, a non-local Jew and Ahmad Juha, a local Muslim) formed a business partnership and opened Juha's Guesthouse in the center of the village in January 2014. Along with operating a successful business, these two entrepreneurs sought to erase old stereotypes about Jisr az-Zarqa and help the village and its residents through engagement in the tourism industry (Miller, 2013).

Juha's Guesthouse is situated in the heart of the village and is the first tourist accommodation venture in Jisr az-Zarqa. The guesthouse opened in January 2014. The idea to establish a guesthouse in the village originated from Neta Hanien, who in 2008 had visited the village for the first time and felt that the village had

²Sikkuy, which means "opportunity" in Hebrew is a "shared organization of Jewish and Arab citizens, working to implement full equality on all levels between Arab Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel" (<http://www.sikkuy.org.il/about/?lang=en>).

Fig. 1 Juha's Guesthouse in Jisr az-Zarqa, March 2014 (photo by Alexandra Stenvall)

significant potential as a tourist attraction. She looked for a business partner for half a year until she was introduced to Ahmad Juha, a local entrepreneur with previous experience in the tourism sector. Together they chose a locale owned by Mr. Juha for the prospective guesthouse (see Fig. 1).

The entrepreneurs launched a crowd-funding campaign in late summer of 2013 through an Israeli website. This campaign aimed to raise NIS 60,000 for initial renovations but instead generated over NIS 90,000 (N. Hanien & A. Juha, personal communication, March 20, 2014). The business idea for the guesthouse was largely inspired by the Fauzi Azar Inn, which is another guesthouse located in the Old City of Nazareth (Gelbman & Laven, 2015). Ahmad Juha and Neta Hanien attended several mentoring workshops at the Fauzi Azar Inn where they received guidance from one of the owners, Maoz Inon (N. Hanien, personal communication, July 10, 2013). In the spirit of (Muhammad Yunus, 2007; Yunus Social Business, 2013) concept of social business, the owners of Juha's guesthouse sought to reinvest their profits into other social entrepreneurship and development initiatives in Jisr az-Zarqa. The mission of the guesthouse is "to welcome all travelers and hikers and create a social business that enriches society" (Juha's Guesthouse, 2014) by working with local residents to stimulate that local economy as well as to initiate volunteer projects that benefit the village.

At the time of this writing, Juha's Guesthouse offers 12 beds, a shared common room and kitchen, and two bathrooms (including showers). A simple breakfast is served every morning, and guests are offered a rich itinerary of suggested activities

that are available in the area. In addition, a map and website has been created that promotes the village's fishing heritage, pristine beach, and other attractions in an effort to connect visitors with local residents.

7 Findings: Observations About Social Entrepreneurship in Tourism as a Development Strategy for Israel's Underserved Arab Communities

Our data set can be organized into three exploratory categories: (i) barriers to tourism development in Jisr az-Zarqa, (ii) social entrepreneurship in tourism and an Arab-Jewish business partnership, and (iii) impacts associated with Jisr az-Zarq's first commercial guesthouse. The remainder of this section discusses these themes.

7.1 Barriers to Tourism Development in Jisr az-Zarqa

The most dominant category from our data set consisted of issues of sustainability, development, and empowerment for Israel's Arab minority. Respondents emphasized these concerns at the individual as well as community level. The interviews also revealed interesting dynamics between development and the geopolitical context, shedding light on historical as well as present tensions associated with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, the interviews revealed that sustainability is viewed primarily from a social and economic aspect, rather than the traditionally environmental point of view. Development is mainly perceived as community-focused and highlights the potential for tourism and related entrepreneurial activities. Importantly, nearly every study participant referenced the importance or desire for greater empowerment in order to address the needs of oppressed and chronically underserved segments of Israeli society.

Another key theme that emerged from the data was the negative perception of "self" among residents, which has resulted in low self-esteem. An important element of this theme is the fear that many Israeli Jews have about visiting Jisr az-Zarqa because of its status as a poor and unsafe Arab community. The ongoing waves of cross-cultural violence have exacerbated this fear, and it is obvious that the geopolitical conflict serves as underlying emotional baggage that hinders the ability for each side to engage each other in healthy terms. Furthermore, the interviews confirm the general perception that Arab communities in Israel experience significant institutional and social oppression and repression.

The notion that residents of Jisr az-Zarqa suffer from a negative self-image is supported by observations from one of the founders of Juha's Guesthouse, who describes the situation as "they don't believe in themselves" (N. Hanien, personal communication, July 2013). In addition, data gathered from several other

interviewees suggest that due to Jisr az-Zarqa's geographical location, the village has become isolated from other Arab communities in the region and therefore has not had the opportunity to expand or develop in the same way as neighboring Jewish communities. Local resident and co-founder of the guesthouse, Ahmad Juha, notes that living in Jisr az-Zarqa is comparable to living on an isolated island; underprivileged in comparison to its neighboring communities (personal communication, March 21, 2014). This observation is further supported by the NGO Sikkuy, which claims that Jisr az-Zarqa has been neglected by both the Israeli government as well as the other Arab communities in Israel (personal communication, March 19, 2014).

Along with issues of low self-image, study participants also described the failure of several efforts from external NGOs that were designed to empower local residents through the development and acquisition of tourism related skills. Several respondents noted that these efforts were unsuccessful due to their top-down approach, which failed to address the needs of the village and its residents. Neta Hanien was very clear about this issue: “[---] an outsider NGO coming and trying to educate the community to do something or to develop something, it wouldn't work” (personal communication, March 21, 2014).

Another challenge described by study participants E. Ben-Yeminy, N. Hanien and A. Juha (personal communication, July 15, 2013) is how Jisr az-Zarqa suffers from high rates of school drop-out. These respondents wish to address the issue by introducing tourism education into the curriculum of the local secondary school. Their argument is that tourism education could have a positive impact on the village by providing skilled labor to ventures like Juha's guesthouse.

Another constraint identified by study respondents is the lack of funding from government development initiatives. Study participants generally perceived that this lack of funding is a direct result of the guesthouse's location in an Arab community. In addition, study participants reflected on how local power relations influence the process of community development. For example, local political allegiances may ease or aggravate the establishment of new businesses and initiatives depending on which municipal political party (or mayor) holds office at a given time. However, study participants also noted that shared municipal interests can function as a unifying force and create cross-party political traction: “The bottom-line is that an economic interest is something that brings people together” (Hanien, personal communication, March 20 2014).

7.2 Social Tourism Entrepreneurship and an Arab-Jewish Business Partnership

Arab-Jewish business cooperation is not a unique or new phenomena in Israel. However, such cooperation largely occurs in heterogeneous settings and is rare in communities that are solely Arab or solely Jewish. In discussing their business partnership, N. Horowitz and A. Hamdan explain that it is important that the

guesthouse is in an Arab community because this will help promote economic growth and attract financial investment. From their perspective, tourism has the potential to be a powerful tool to bring about change because of the growing interest among many visitors in efforts that promote Arab-Israeli equality (personal communication, March 19, 2014).

When asked to reflect on their business partnership, and the relationship between tourism and peace more generally, A. Hamdan and N. Horowitz note that tourism can promote peaceful coexistence between Israel's Arab and Jewish citizens by serving as a "neutral unifier" in which people from "both sides" come together. Importantly, tourism in Israel's Arab communities can also help preserve tangible heritage assets and their associated narratives. Such preservation is critical because Israel's Arab (or Palestinian) heritage is largely excluded or ignored from the discourse associated with Israel's national identity as a Jewish state (personal communication, March 19, 2014).

One of the co-founders of the guesthouse does not want to comment about the venture's role in promoting peace. She emphasized that the political aspects of the cooperation is nothing that she thinks about, and that she does not want to view their "Arab-Jewish cooperation" as the main purpose of the project. She is clear that the main purpose of the project is to serve human needs. Nevertheless, N. Hanien speculates that only by being aware of the existing gaps between Arabs and Jews in order to start a process towards mutual understanding. She states, "Yes, I think that is the only way we can [...] finally be able to live together. You need to co-operate and then you will understand each other. [...] Maybe the thing [road to peace] starts with small co-operations that do not involve a big risk [...]." (N. Hanien, personal communication, March 25, 2014).

7.3 Impacts Associated with Jisr az-Zarq's First Commercial Hostel

During the researchers' first study visit in July 2013, study participants in Jisr az-Zarqa noted that while the village's tourism potential is enormous, it still has not been recognized by local residents. During the second study field visit in March 2014, the same study participants shared that local residents have started to understand the village's tourism potential. In addition, governmental institutions expressed interest in contributing to the process of developing tourism in the village (Hanien, personal communication, March 20, 2014). Such interest reflects a growing recognition that tourism development can contribute to socio-economic growth as well as help communicate the story and culture of Jisr az-Zarqa. Every study participant stated that Jisr az-Zarqa's most important resource (or tourism pull factor) is the village's rich and authentic Arabic cultural experience.

According to several study participants, the accommodation business is considered to be the most efficient way of generating tourism flows to the village.

For example, one study participant stated that “[visitors] need to know that there is a place to stay so they have time to wander around [---]. In this kind of small and poor village no one will start a big business if it is not an accommodation that will start [---] to pull [---]” (Hanien, personal communication, March 21, 2014). The two co-founders of Juha’s Guesthouse agreed that the development process in Jisr az-Zarqa has started with the introduction of the guesthouse, and that backpackers and trekkers on the Israel Trail are the most promising customer segment to push the village’s positive development trend.

Despite the challenges of the current geo-political climate, tourism has made important contributions to the development of the village. Previously, for example, visitors usually came with a guided group and headed directly to the beach because they were afraid of spending time in the center of the village. Since the establishment of the guesthouse, however, tourists are spending more time in the village center with local people. According to A. Juha, “[the guesthouse] had a great effect already, because everything that was on the media, and all the people, the guests coming [---] and going to the local businesses is completely new. It never existed before” (personal communication, March 20, 2014).

The three study visits to Jisr az-Zarqa conducted by the researchers reinforce Mr. Juha’s perception. One of these visits occurred before the guesthouse was established and two of the visits occurred after the guest house opened. Observations conducted during these visits suggest that some development has taken place as a result of tourism associated with the guesthouse. For example, researchers observed that a new restaurant as well as a new coffee shop opened, other buildings located adjacent to the guesthouse were renovated, cleaning of streets has become more routine, and residents have begun to describe a shift in the village from “bad” to “good”. It appears that the new guesthouse helped put Jisr az-Zarqa “on the map” (e.g., more than 200 overnight tourists in the opening year). Despite this early success, the village still suffers from isolation and poor infrastructure (personal observations, July 2013; March 2014).

Not surprisingly, community leaders have identified business development as the pathway for the socio-economic development of Jisr az-Zarqa. Within this context, Juha’s Guesthouse is seen to be an important catalyst or facilitator of such change. According to study participants, the guesthouse is one of the most successful steps towards empowerment of local residents. In fact, several study participants expressed the opinion that all socio-economic and community development is inter-connected (E. Ben-Yeminy, personal communication, July 15, 2013), and that empowerment happens on different levels; self-image, local relationships, external relationships, and, economic aspects (N. Hanien, March 20, 2014). In order to encourage local residents to start their own businesses, the co-founders of Juha’s Guesthouse believe that there must be an example or model; some kind of inspiration that helps to open a path for others to follow. The owners note that encouragement is a powerful method for helping other local residents to pursue their own business ideas. Study participants were also careful to note the importance of respecting the community, especially when balancing development with the preservation of local traditions (E. Ben-Yeminy, personal communication, July 15, 2013).

8 Conclusions

This study generally reinforces previous observations about the socio-economic imbalance between Israel's Arab and Jewish populations. Representatives from the organization Sikkuy argue that such "policies of exclusion" are also creating tensions at the personal level between Israel's Arab and Jewish citizens. Such dynamics underscore the importance of creating opportunities for the different actors involved in the conflict to engage each other, express their own narratives of the conflict on equal terms, and ultimately create a shared story (N. Horowitz & A. Hamdan, personal communication, March 19, 2014). Juha's Guesthouse represents an interesting and important example of how such cross-cultural engagement can be possible within a tourism context.

Although previous research on the relationship between tourism and peace is mixed, this study suggests that social entrepreneurship in tourism can serve as a business-based bridge between Israel's different cultural groups. This "bridging" function appears to be an important element for reframing the relationships between these different groups into healthier inter-dependencies, which is a dynamic that has been generally absent in the Israeli-Palestinian context. Interestingly, similar approaches are underway in other settings characterized by deep cross-cultural conflict (e.g., the Balkans), and consequently, understanding these approaches, and how to design policies to support their wide spread implementation represents an important next step in this line of inquiry.

Questions

1. How can tourism development address some the basic socio-economic development needs in places like Jisr az-Zarqa?
2. How can the business survive during times of crisis (e.g., surges in Israeli-Palestinian violence) when tourism essentially stops?
3. How is this model transferable to other settings?

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