



## Jordan: Tourism and conflict with local communities

Ahmed Abu Al Haija<sup>\*,1</sup>

Philadelphia University, Faculty of Engineering, P.O. Box 1, Jordan 19392, Jordan

### A B S T R A C T

#### Keywords:

Jordan  
Tourism local community development  
Economic benefits  
Social satisfaction  
Appropriate habitat

The inevitable socio-cultural conflict between the tourism industry and local inhabitants in Jordanian historic towns challenges the tourism development process.

The level of interrelation between government, residents and foreign visitors is critical in several circumstances, mainly due to the available instruments of territorial planning dealing with tourism policies, the local community benefits specifically from the social and economic point of view, the respect of natural resources and authentic culture of place.

Methodologically, comprehending the environmental context in order to connect tangible (physical and material aspects) and intangible (perceptual, tradition or living heritage) factors could contribute to set a suitable and a holistic planning policy to tackle with tourism inconveniences. This is recommended in alleviating some conflict generators, taking into consideration the investors' interests, tourists and local community satisfaction.

© 2010 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### Introduction

Jordan has many iconic tourist attractions; its moderate and comfortable temperature throughout the year, its important world heritage sites, such as Petra (which was selected in 2007 as the second world wonder), the Dead Sea, Madaba (Church of the Map), Nebo Mountain, Jerash, and the Baptism site in the Jordan Valley. It is also attractive to tourists because of its political stability which, for as long as 40 years, has been considered one of the safest countries in the region.

Tourism is of vital importance to the national economy of Jordan. It is the second largest private sector employer and it is the second highest producer of foreign exchange. Tourism contributes US\$14,190 million to Jordan's economy and accounted for 14.7% (compared with only 10% in 2004) of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2008 (Statistical Department of Jordan, 2009).

Most of the approximately 6 million Jordanian inhabitants are located around important historical sites and natural landscape in the country such as Amman, Madaba, Kerak, Shobak, Petra, the Dead Sea, Ajloun, Jerash, Pella and Um Qais. This concentration of local population creates direct contact between tourists and host communities.

The Jordanian Government in 2009 published further data regarding the tourist sector, which emphasized the importance of

tourism for the Jordanian economy and showed the increasing number of tourist facilities in the last few years. The data show significant development in terms of visitors and tourist infrastructures in relation with economic advantages. In terms of how many tourists Jordan hosts, the total number has increased in the last 6 years, going from 2,384,474 tourists in 2002–7,100,503 tourists in 2008.

The most important tourist places in Jordan, in relation to the tourist numbers are Petra, Jerash and Nebo Mountain accounting respectively for 813,267, 351,508 and 326,702 tourists in the year 2008. Statistics show that the Arab tourists generally prefer to stay in Amman, the Aqaba coast and the Dead Sea. Amman has occupied the first position of number of stays with 1,019,142 nights, followed by Petra with 555,998 nights, Aqaba with 301,568 nights, and the Dead Sea with 214,859 nights (Statistical Department of Jordan, 2009).

These data show that tourist interests are essentially concentrated on exotic, religious and archeological sites of attraction, rather than on traditional villages, which generally have less tourist facilities. Consequently, the major part of public works are more concentrated on tourist needs and satisfactions, rather than on local infrastructure and public services, which causes strong sense of dissatisfactions and in some cases a conflict between the host community and local authority.

The Jordanian Government has different constraints, some of which are the shortage of local resources and deficiency of the internal product exportations (agriculture and industry) which affect their policies, consequently leading to collaboration with the private sector for the development of plans in all fields, such as

\* Tel.: +962 799674727; fax: +962 64799037.

E-mail address: [ahaija@fastwebnet.it](mailto:ahaija@fastwebnet.it)

<sup>1</sup> Member of the Italian Association of Architects "Ordine degli Architetti delle Province di Milano". Member of the Jordanian Engineering Association.

housing, education, health and transportation, especially in the last decade. "I do not set the strategies. In Jordan the economy is private sector led so we challenge the private sector to propose the strategy for their sector and we respond to and facilitate their requirements." (King Abdullah II, 2004)

Involving the private sector in government projects has had positive effects in solving problems related to bureaucracy and competency in substitution of the central state. Due to the problems caused by a lot of red tape in the past for instance, the Government had difficulties to support efficiently the primary social and productive sectors. However, the conflict between private profits and public interest is one of the major problems that the Jordanian population suffers from in the light of inefficient governmental control and management. Therefore, a sustainable approach in planning the tourism sector could contribute to a better distribution of profits. In fact, the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2004) includes environmental, economic and socio-cultural problems in a holistic approach to alleviate poverty and different consequences which could aggravate the impact between the local community and tourists (see also UNWTO, 2009).

The WTO highlighted the importance of sustainable tourism which: (i) makes optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity; (ii) Respects the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance; (iii) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Therefore, Lansing and De Vries (2007: 83) consider that environmental, economic and socio-cultural problems due to tourism development cannot be alleviated following only a sustainable tourism as defined by WTO, but a "suitable balance should be aimed for: a balanced view on tourism development, the gains that can be accomplished by implementing sustainability measures, and its far-reaching consequences on different levels. Also, sustainability should be reviewed as a criterion that can be applied to industry in its entirety, instead of a small niche."

This research provides evidence from some cases of Jordanian communities marginalized in favor of tourist economic aspects, particularly in old centers, which caused conflict between the nature of tourism and local public interest. This problem is determined because of several generator factors, followed by lack of attention to their consequences. Some conflict generators will be discussed, as well as some statistical information and governmental tourism strategies.

The objectives of the research concern mainly the investigation of the conflict causes, in order to alleviate undesirable consequences on both the tourists and Jordanian host community.

Methodologically, due to the shortage of research and documentation in the field of cultural heritage settlements in Jordan, this study is based on large scale analyses of a quantitative type, supplied from existing data banks, and specific tasks through different contacts with tourists and local Jordanian residents, in order to read their observations, reflections and opinions. Comments of both tourists and local residents were fundamental to the purpose and feedback of this research. Therefore, significant case studies of some important historic centers were carefully selected in order to explain relevant problematic circumstances, which contributed to the cause of these conflicts.

The conclusion of the research outlines a comprehensive approach in developing the tourism sector, in accordance with

the WTO recommendation, but concerning particularities of the Jordanian situation, such as the conservation of natural resources, the fair distribution of tourist benefits, the economic incentives for urban rehabilitation and eco-tourism activities, the local planning concept in relation with the community and spirit of place, the local awareness toward the own culture and tourist awareness toward the Jordanian culture.

### Policy of the government and investments

The Jordanian Government, by taking advantage of its historical and natural landscape, adopted mainly the following policies for the last decade:

- 1- Improving tourism infrastructures (airports, streets, hotels, facilities) in tourist zones.
- 2- Rehabilitation of some selected old centers targeted predominantly to tourist needs.
- 3- Increasing the involvement of the private sector in tourism projects.
- 4- Formation of Special Economic Zones or Economic Development Zones in some Jordanian areas, concentrating mainly on the development of tourist sectors.

The modest Jordanian potential for the promotion of tourism (compared with Israel which established a modern mechanism of communication networks, publicizing and creating an innovative system of infrastructure) (Abdel-Salam, 2006), and its limited geographic territory compared with other important competitive countries like Egypt and Syria, reduces the benefit of tourism as tourists tend to view it as a country of passage rather than one for a long-stay visit. Therefore, significant improvements have been made to increase the tourist's time of stay in the country from 1.5 nights in 2002 to about 3 nights in the year 2008. In fact, the number of hotels increased in the last 6 years to more than 56% translating to 22,507 rooms compared with 17,400 rooms in 2002. Accordingly, an increase in the number of restaurants and tourist facilities also occurred (Statistical Department of Jordan, 2009).

The Jordanian Central Bank indicates that in the year 2008 the tourist sector income was 2089 million Jordanian Dinars. Petra for instance determined that 82% of the city's total income from tourism was derived from ticket sales in 2008, which was 15,474,296 JD (US\$ = 0.71 JD). A further increase in tourist-related income is inevitable as in the year 2010 about US\$2.5 billion are going to be invested in hotels and tourist services, where the government is supposed to create 25,000 new employment opportunities. The major part of these investments is concentrated mainly in Amman building 5 five star hotels and 10 four and three stars, and the Aqaba Economic Special Zone, building 15 five star hotels, as well as 4 four star hotels and motels. While at the Dead Sea, which is the Economic Special Zone since 2008, they will build 5 five star hotels, and 6 three and four star hotels (Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Official Web Site).

The investments for the near future are concentrated particularly on hotels for a certain class of tourists and will be realized mainly by private and international investors. Similar projects to enhance the tourism sector have been implemented by the private sector in the last decade; therefore the impact on the social community is worth carefully observing, because the profits of investors seem to be, in some scrupulous circumstances, excessively dominant on the public interest, which penalize not only the local community, but also an effective development of tourist activities. The case of Aqaba's tourist projects could be an appropriate example, where more than US\$7 billion (Abu-Mattar, 2008) was invested in the last 7 years in 5 star hotels and tourist facilities,

while no significant intervention was made to improve the primary infrastructure's rehabilitation of the urban residential areas and slum quarters. The effects of all of these investments on the Aqabite labor force were irrelevant; therefore, according to the [Ministry of Planning Report \(2002\)](#), the percentage of unemployed people in the Aqaba Region in 2002 was about 15%, in comparison with unemployment at the level of Jordan which was only 7.14%. The estimated number of unemployed in the Aqaba Region for the year 2007 was about 11.7% ([Sbeikat, 2008](#)) which remains high in comparison with the capital invested in the region, and the small population of Aqaba, which is about 85,000 inhabitants [Jordanian General Census of Population, 2007](#) (see also [Halaseh, 2008](#)).

The governmental policy for developing the tourism sector caused in the last decade:

- Scarcity of benefit to the host community.
- Transformation of rural and Bedouin habitat.
- Displacement of some communities from the original habitat.
- Conflict of interest between private sector, foreign aid and public services.

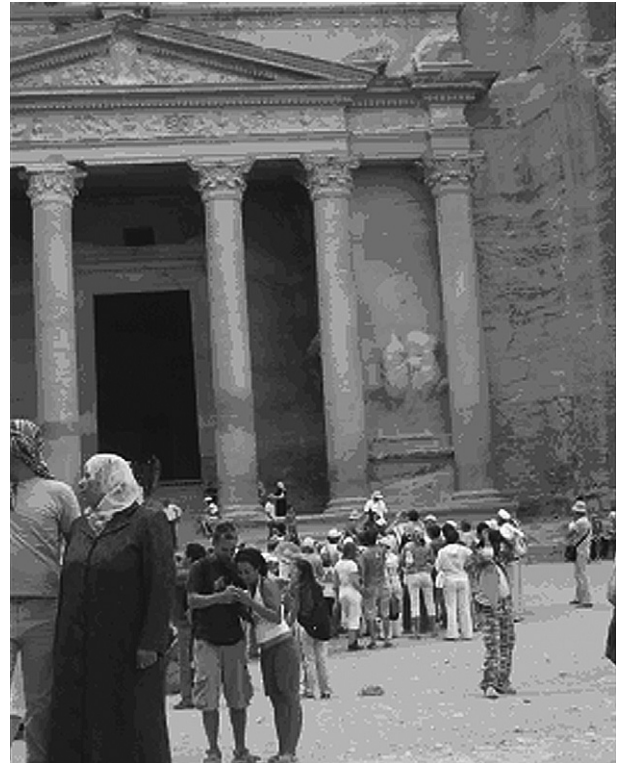
These four critical aspects are considered the main conflict generators between some Jordanian social communities and central government. The following section analyses some important cases of these aspects.

### Conflict generators

Culture and economic conflicts generally imply some degree of incompatibility between individuals, and between societies and local authorities; [Robinson and Boniface \(1999: 7\)](#) state that, "Conflict itself generates dramatic images of battle and armed struggle; however, with regard to tourism it seldom results in violence or even aggressive behavior. But cultural conflict do occur on a regular basis on differing levels and between the different interest groups within tourism...In a structuralist vein, the interface between the tourism industry (which would include the physical mix of accommodation behind these: tour operators, travel agents, hotel developers, government agencies as promoters and regulators) and the host community is also a rather obvious source of potential conflict."

The Jordanian culture is heavily influenced by the Islamic religion, where about 92% of the Jordanian population is Muslim. Considering that several principles of Islam encourage a general attitude of respect and tolerance to other cultures, ([Kalisky, 1972: 146](#)) it established some urban principles which regulate the development and organization of neighborhoods ([Benevolo, 1993: 101](#)). Behavior that goes against these principles must be interpreted carefully. For instance, the prohibition of some kinds of food, such as pork meat and liqueur drinks, the way people dress, especially uncovering delicate parts of the body ([Fig. 1](#)). Not respecting such customs may irritate the local conservative communities thus creating different forms of hostility.

The Jordanian society, especially in the desert and the rural zones, is also governed by a restrictive, conservative tradition, where the mentality of inhabitants, especially women, has a strong tendency to protect ancestral habits and customs. Their timidity and shyness leads them to withdraw in order not to be observed by others. Instead of such a culture influenced by religious principles, habits and customs, a sense of generosity and welcoming characterize the Jordanian society in general, offering as much as possible kindness and hospitality, especially in the desert and rural zones. Therefore, there are several conflicts generated not substantially by the host community against tourist, but by central and local authorities, which can be illustrated as follows:



**Fig. 1.** Arabs and foreign tourists in Petra. Source: Image is taken by the Author himself, October 2009.

### *Scarcity of benefit to the host community: the case of Jerash, Madaba and Petra*

Theoretically, tourism assists and stimulates traditional skills. The local communities benefit from tourism directly by buying services and commercial articles through hotels, transportation, traditional craft goods (souvenirs) etc., and indirectly by receiving improvements in infrastructure, urban rehabilitation and conservation of some proper historic sites. In Jordan the local communities differ in terms of how they benefit from tourism depending on the tourist's areas distributed with respect to the host community's location. In the city of Jerash, for example, the Roman archeological site is separated from the urban area by a regional street which passes through the middle of the archaeological and the urban areas ([Fig. 2](#)).

Tourist's facilities and services such as bus parking, rest areas, commercial crafts, etc. are designed in a complex entirely organized for tourist purposes and located close to the archeological site, so the tourists' tour is programmed solely in that area, preventing visitors from passing into the urban center at the other side of the regional street. The case of Jerash expresses a real state of misunderstanding toward the impact of tourist potentiality on the local community's economy; keeping the tourist tours far away from the local community meaning that the locals are not able to benefit from the booming industry. Therefore, the percentage of unemployment in Jerash Province was 16% in 2007 ([Shtewi, 2008: 11](#)), which, together with Madaba Province (18%), represents the highest percentage of unemployment in all of Jordan's provinces.

The case of Madaba's old center represents a different situation from Jerash's. Tourists are obliged to enter the city center because all the historic buildings are located within the center – such as the Church of the Map. In this case the [Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities](#) authorized in the last 5 years infrastructural



Fig. 2. Jerash City Center. Source: Google Earth (US Dept of State Geographer, on Internet Site, 2009), with clarification made by the author.

interventions which are taking place on different sites in the city such as: street pavements, landscaping, and façade beautification. Kahla (2009) conducted an ethnographic study investigating the current tourism situation in Madaba's old center from the perception of the locals, and concluded that the locals are generally not satisfied with these interventions because they are targeted mainly at the comfort of tourists, more than the host community.

Local dissatisfaction with tourist-targeted improvements is not quelled when the economic benefits derived from tourism are not fairly distributed throughout the community. The example of Petra demonstrates how the local community has minimal benefits from the income derived by ticket entry to the archeological sites. In fact, the leaders of the Petra clan (*Shiukh*) denounced the Petra Region Authority, during the *Jordanian Engineering Association Workshop* (2009) for not being transparent in the distribution of profits made through tourism. Petra was visited by 813,267 tourists in 2008 (*Statistical Department of Jordan, 2009*), it made about US\$15 million in the year 2008 solely from ticket prices into the archeological site. Meanwhile, the Petra Region Authority invested in the last 5 years US\$23 million in the development of streets, gardens and services (*Hamdouni, 2009*). For the local community of Petra these projects were related mainly to the tourist sector, ignoring the pressing needs of the infrastructure of the city of Wady Musa in terms of its hydrogeology, rehabilitation of slum areas and public services of the traditional town. In fact, the serious infrastructural problems of the Petra urban area are also highlighted by some researches presented to the workshop organized by the Jordanian Engineering Association in Petra in May 2009. Therefore, the host community of Petra does not receive, due to this planning approach, suitable attention concerning their needs or possible benefits.

#### *The transformation of the rural and Bedouin habitats*

The policy of urbanization in rural areas has characterized the country's planning approach in the past few decades. Just a few years ago, the main Jordanian social structure was composed

essentially of Bedouins (nomads) (see *Shryock, 1997*), semi-nomads and rural people.

The consequences of the governmental territorial policy to urbanize agricultural lands (such as the area of Amman, Madaba, Jerash, Salt, and Irbid), also caused the diminution of agriculture labor, passing to different activities such as tourism. *Shtewi (2008)* stated: "In the year 1973 the percentage of occupation in Jordan was 16.8% in the agricultural sector. The major part of these was Jordanian workers. In 2006 the percentage of occupation fell to 3.1% in the agricultural sector, 24% of these were workers coming from other countries."

The Jordanian government has also supported a policy of urbanization in some desert areas; adopting different initiatives to settle nomadic population (about 1% of Jordan) in urban zones, providing housing, education, health care, sanitation and involving them fundamentally in some tourism activities, in Wadi Ram and Petra archeological site for example (see: *Bin Mohammad, 1999*). In The *UNESCO Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* Bedouins (Bedu) of Petra and Wadi Ram have been included in the list in the year 2005. UNESCO recognized their "rich mythology which is manifested in various forms of oral expression, comprising poetry, folktales and songs that are closely linked to particular places and the history of these communities". Therefore, UNESCO recommended that: "The increase of desert tourism and its demand for "authentic Bedu culture" should not be allowed to further degrade the intangible heritage of the Bedu in Petra and Wadi Rum" (*UNESCO, Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, Web site*).

Unfortunately, jobs in tourism radically changed the major part of the Bedouin and rural style of life, transforming them into a stationary people, living close to tourist villages. Bedouins, attracted by the relatively easy jobs, try to work in different tourist activities, selling souvenirs and drivers of guides for tourists (see *Shbeeb and Awad, 2009*). Considering the character particularity of this population accustomed to live in open spaces and in direct contact with animals and a homogeneous culture of people, it means that their life style and oral expressions have developed over the course of the millennia. The researcher observed personally the paradoxical contradiction between men and women of some Bedouin communities after the experience of working with western tourists in the Petra area. Men use western clothes, speak different languages, and use western modes of communication, while the women continue to wear the traditional dress, speak only the Bedouin dialect and communicate according to their conservative culture and form of expressions.

From the researcher's observations, the main conflict derived from tourism starts in the Bedouin communities from the inside – from the family core, where the men, being exposed to something foreign, now have slightly different values from their female relatives who have not faced the same exposure.

#### *Policy of displacement*

Recently, the governmental tendency is geared toward rehabilitating some traditional urban centers due to the fact that they have become important to the development of tourism. These initiatives indicate that urban and architectural conservation in the historic centers is going to be planned essentially according to the tourist needs, transforming if necessary, private buildings and social agglomerations into tourist resorts, without adequate attention to the traditional social structure and neighborhoods. This kind of intervention is similar to the Solider Society's project where they reconstructed the major part of Beirut's historic center that were

bombarded during the Israeli–Lebanese war in 1982, mainly for capital accumulation purposes (Rahif, 2008).

Entire populations of some Jordanian villages were uprooted from their home to other zones in order to conserve the physical aspect of these villages (such as Taybet Zaman, Kherbat Al Nawafleh and other few villages in Jordan), modifying the traditional houses into hotels, restaurants and handcrafts shops, etc. This situation caused detachment from the original social and urban context congealing buildings, spaces and the authentic spirit of place.

There are some people who are critical of the transformation of these villages into luxurious tourist attractions. The Director of Tourist Office on the Um Qais site (S. Fayyad, Personal communication, 2009) has a different opinion as he considers this change to be useful for the public interest.

The village of Taybet Zaman located about 10 km away from the archeological site of Petra was used as a tourist village after transferring its residents to a different location. As a result, some Jordanian community representatives (Throughout the Jordanian Engineering Association Workshop, held on May 2009 about Petra infrastructure and Tourism) evaluated this experience as negative. The former residents felt as though they were expropriated from their social environment. In fact, many of the former residents of regenerated villages were very angry with the changes – more with the authorities than with the tourists. “One of these former residents in Taybet Zaman was offered a low income job cleaning and doing custodial work on his old property” (Daher, 1999: 35). Therefore, in these cases, tourism became an origin of conflict as well as a cause of deprivation from the residents’ own environment.

As said previously, these types of interventions prioritize tourists. Ironically however, interviews conducted by the researcher with tourists in Petra showed that visitors to the Petra site are generally of the opinion that the local community should conserve local original tradition and its genuine life. It appeared that some of tourist interviewees in Petra in 2009 are not only interested in archeological sites, but also in the exploration of the culture of people, their mannerism, and lifestyles. However, these characteristics are completely altered in both Taybet Zaman and Umm Qais tourist villages.

There are numerous other kinds of villages under risk of transformation, not only because of a governmental intervention of displacement, but because there are no available infrastructure or public services to keep life going in these places, such as Dana (Fig. 3), Samad, Um Husban, Namte, Rhab, and many rural villages which necessitates appropriate rehabilitation programs, keeping possibly the original inhabitants (Abu-Al-Hajja, 2009).

The case of Dana Village is one of the most critical of these villages. The Government encouraged the displacement from the village in the 1970s, realizing a residential quarter distant about 3 km from the village. About 1500 persons transferred to the new quarter called Al Qadisiyya abandoning the historic village built during the Ottoman period (about 1500–1920 AD). Recently the government is trying to rehabilitate the village through an NGO organization called “Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature” which manages and uses state-owned land on behalf of the government. The program of work is not yet published, but the Royal Society called the owners of the village to sign an agreement, to rehabilitate the village for tourist purposes, the owners are requested to contribute at the 50% of the total cost of intervention which can be paid in 10 years. Therefore, some representatives of the original inhabitants (such as Abnaa’ Dana and Al Qadisiyya Local Community – Ecotourism Cooperative, which includes about 80 families of Dana village members) are opposing at this initiative because they are afraid to be victim of a new Taybet Zaman project, where the original inhabitants lost their properties without appropriate economical benefits (A. Al Khawaldeh, President of Abnaa’ Dana and Al Qadisiyya Local Community – Ecotourism Cooperative, Personal communication, 2010). The importance of the village due to its geographical position which confine to a National Nature Reserve (308 km<sup>2</sup>) which contains a remarkable diversity of landscapes, that range from wooded highlands to rocky slopes within drops by 1650 m–50 m below sea level, providing habitat for a rich fauna and flora. Dana is located closed to the Regional tourist street (Kings Road) which connect a principle tourist Jordanian tour: Petra, Shobak and Kerak.

The inhabitants of Dana are mainly semi-bedouins, they used the area for grazing. Consequently to the declaration of Dana



Fig. 3. Dana Village. Source: Image is taken by the Author him self, November 2009.

Nature Reserve in the year 1993, several restrictions in grazing rights and the ban on hunting, their source of income became dependent mainly on government and cement factory employment (UNESCO, 2004: 59), which established about 3.5 km from Dana. Warth (2002: 4) states concerning the institution of this reserve: “the stated objective was to protect biodiversity. The implementation of this goal started in the traditional style: Nature conservation without the participation and compensation of the population, in fact even against their will. As a consequence there was violence against material assets”.

Several problems irritate the local community with the government such as their limitation to graze freely in the nature reserve and their marginal benefits from tourist for the restrictive number of employment in the tourist activities (Al Khawaldeh, 2004).

The case of Dana warrants a detailed analysis therefore for what concerning this research is to highlight a shortage of faith in the governmental intention, which creates serious detachment between the interventions for tourist purposes and the concrete participation of the host community, especially in terms of decisional process, finance and labor force.

#### **Conflict of interest between private sector, foreign aid and public services**

According to what was mentioned before, increasing involvement of the private sector in the diversification of the product and in investing in tourism projects is one of the most important points in the National Tourism Strategy in Jordan (2004–2010). Prioritizing the capital investment in some Jordanian localities determined a monopoly over urban and environmental resources, which generated social conflicts as a consequence of the development approach, creating a more advanced level of life compared with the poor quarters located close to the tourist areas. The case of Aqaba could be a suitable example in such a situation, especially after the transformation of the tourist city of Aqaba into a Special Economic

Zone. This policy is oriented to accelerate the economic development in Aqaba by mobilizing public resources and private investments (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2004; see also Najarian, 2008).

But Aqabites are concerned marginally regarding the transformation of Aqaba into a tourist special zone (Fig. 4). The Aqabite Bateer Wardam writes, “The visitors of Aqaba don’t know, looking from their five star hotel rooms that the poor Aqaba’s natives can’t reach the coast to swim and enjoy time with family without paying a hotel the price of a ticket to get in the coast. The Aqaba northern coast is completely occupied by hotels, and the first available public clean coast is located about 15 km south of Aqaba. The rest of the southern coast is sold to Arab and foreign investors, transforming the coast occupation only on a high economic class” (Abu-Al-Hajja & Al Faqih, 2008).

On the other hand, the shortage of economic resources induces the government to not only depend on the private citizen sector but also on foreign aid, especially, taking into consideration the lack of local technicians and experts in the field of archaeological sciences. Consequently, the major part of archeological and architectural heritage projects have been elaborated and implemented by foreign funds and experts; particularly American, German and Spanish (R. Haddad, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, personal communication, 2010). The shortage of conservational guidelines and technical norms at the macro and micro level induced a variety of planning and conservational approaches depending on the cultural and technical experience of the foreign architects, engineers and archeologists. The local community has become victims of such anarchy in the controlling of the rehabilitation and conservation projects. Their natural habitat was manipulated primarily according to the interest and policy of external organisms. Architect Daher was involved as a consultant on some of these projects and he states: “There is a blind dependency on foreign aid funded projects; very few projects are initiated out of governmental concern or with local funding mechanisms and efforts. Still



Fig. 4. Simulation of “Al Aqaba Development Project”. Source: Al Mohandes Al Ordini, 2009: 97.

many projects are never executed; they remain reports on the shelves of governmental agencies and institutions while foreign debts increase... most of the foreign aid was wasted on holding meetings and design reviews and on unnecessary funding dynamics and mechanisms.” Daher (2000: 114) considers that there is a price that Jordan and Jordanians have to pay in return, mentioning what Zatter and Harnza state: “Foreign aid has to be re-evaluated and assessed not by using traditional and conventional project-evaluation methodologies, but by linking macro-level international interest (aid agendas, geo-strategic objectives) with macro-level grass root variables.” Therefore, the general opinion is that several projects conducted essentially by international organizations and donors were seen by politicians as the optimum solution to the various problems of historic city cores in Jordan. But, these regeneration projects in Jordan concentrated mainly on the beautification of physical aspects (e.g. tourists’ trails, pedestrianisation of public plazas, adaptation of old houses into heritage museums, tourist panoramic lookouts, streetscapes, and signage). “This is a one-off limited intervention in the form of architectural cosmetics on the historic urban fabric of the city without serious attempt to address the establishment of heritage tools, systems, or practices that ensure the continuity of urban regeneration and community involvement on the long run.” (Daher, 2005: 300)

### Conclusions: reflections to alleviate negative conflicts

The conflict among government, tourism and the host communities in Jordan needs a comprehensive approach of thinking. Therefore, taking into consideration the modest economic situation of Jordan, alleviating the conflict generators previously discussed could be possible, hopefully by means of the following reflections and recommendations:

- The Jordanian regional and urban planning system should be reviewed in order to diversify the level of intervention according to the local particularities and needs. Unbalanced distribution of investments at regional level enlarged the economic difference between provinces and cities. In fact, Amman, for example, make up for 71% of the total figure of Jordanian employees involved in the business, followed by Aqaba with 10% of employment and Petra only 4% (Statistical Department of Jordan, 2009). This data demonstrate the importance of tourist infrastructural facilities in Amman, compared with other Jordanian cities with more tourist attractions. Petra has the smallest percentage in terms of employment, but with major income derived from tickets entry to the archeological sites. Therefore, instead of its economical importance, the modern city of Petra called “Wadi Mousa”, closed to the old Petra, suffers, as mentioned before, as one of the major Jordanian urban problems in terms of hydrogeology, infrastructure, open spaces, building deteriorations. In November 2009 the Authority of Petra Region was dissolved creating a new Authority “Mufaw-wadiyya” similar to ASEZA (Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority), in order to encourage foreign investments mainly for tourist purposes. Therefore, Abu-Al-Haija and Al Faqih (2008) stated concerning ASEZA experience in Aqaba: “More than US \$7 billion are invested in Aqaba in the last 7 years, used mainly in the development of tourist sectors. But the existing inefficient infrastructure of the city center, the shortage of public facilities and the degradation of popular residential quarters, laid shadows on the economic success of ASEZA”.

Regarding the condition of the Bedouins; no one can deny that the functional urban centers concept is very different from the

Bedouin society’s organization while living in the desert. While it is essential to adopt suitable and appropriate instruments to organize the urban places in view of the complexity of modern productive systems, in other Jordanian areas (rural and Bedouin) it is more appropriate to keep the original structure of life to evolve naturally and have nothing imposed by external planners. The recommendations of UNESCO regarding the Bedouins of Petra and Wadi Rum must be respected, therefore the life style of Jordanian Bedouins and semi-Bedouins scattered in the Jordanian territory is also worth respect.

Therefore, the tourism sector in Jordan has a serious risk regarding it’s over dependence – especially in the rural and Bedouin communities. With regard to the safety and political situation of the region, a bomb or insignificant reaction of an extremist against tourists would significantly compromise the productivity of tourism for months or years (The most dangerous attack was on 9 November 2005: suicide bombers attacked three major hotels in Amman simultaneously, killing 57 and injuring 115. This type of action is rare in Jordan, but it reflects the vulnerability of the city). The sustainability of this sector depends mainly on a stable political condition in the Middle East, where Jordan is directly involved in the historical Arab–Israeli conflict. The sensibility of western tourists at the geopolitical problems in the Middle East is justified, freighting from any sort of antagonism against them in case of escalation of this conflict. Thus, maintaining the traditional economic model of rural people and the Bedouins is essential to keep these communities alive, conserving their natural habitat, territory and capacity of production.

- The significance of space seen by locals is different from the Jordanian municipality’s or government technicians; for locals the spirit of place is conserved in its historical layers, including all kind of materials, forms and spiritual memory, which is in continuous evolution and transformation according to their specific needs. For technicians the beautification of facades, gardens and public spaces is imperative practice to ensure their role according to a modern urban planning approach, which assumes to be more significant than the conservation of authentic local sentiments or public relationship.

Nowadays, the restitution of built environments to the locals is important, but, the question concerns their capability in self organizing and managing their own space. The answer to this question cannot be generalized depending on several factors regarding history, geography, culture of people, level of education, etc. Therefore, the local community can be invited to rehabilitate the own environment, by using appropriate policy, gradually introducing bottom up upgrading programs from a social, economic and technical point of view, considering that the more the local community is involved in building up its proper environment, the better conserved and developed the place would be, and an acquired sustained living history, which consolidates the sense of belonging, social cohesiveness and respect to the social identity.

- The juxtaposition among tourists’ objective to find relaxation, good weather, and new adventure (culture, traditions, etc.) and the central government to accumulate more capital, and the host community’s search for social peace, respect, and work, could be helpful to equilibrate the interest of both sides. A holistic approach previously mentioned to alleviate undesirable conflict takes into consideration:

- Innovative management and organizing system, including development of modern structure of tourism where culture, sport, religion, etc. can be improved and well organized, in order to be an alternative target of tourism.

- Diffusion of awareness toward the own culture is a substantial as well as an important governmental policy in disseminating knowledge and information, identifying their history and values not only to the intangible aspects but also to the tangible one.
- Diffusion of Arab culture, scientists, historic places, and intangible values could increase the awareness and respect of western visitors toward the culture of Arab people.
- Diffusion of tourist's information and tours (through modern and traditional systems of communication) taking into consideration historic, traditional and modern urban places. Tourists should be able to self organize the trip and tours independently from the tour operators, for this purpose suitable road signs and practical map plans should be prepared. This is an opportunity to make tourists freely have contacts with the local population.
- Introducing technical training courses for both women and men in the field of conservation and tourist services, especially in Bedouin and rural areas. This could be useful to local economic benefits optimizing services involving mainly the local community.
- Regarding the urban planning aspects, a tourism strategy should be adopted to reduce poverty, without consuming non-renewal energies and agricultural lands. Limitation of the urban expansion on fertile zones, which represent only 3.1% of the Jordanian territory, which have been reduced to less than 3.1% in the last two decades years (Al Ghazo, 2008: 135). On the other hand, people's irritation is justified by other reasons not mentioned previously, such as the consumption of drinking water. Water supply in all arid Jordanian regions is in a critical state. Jordan is one of the ten most water-scarce nations on earth (Potter & Darmame, 2010). In Amman, for example, water is pumped into neighborhoods one time or maximum two times a week. Jordan's per capita of water for the year 2005 was 146 m<sup>3</sup> compared with the 846 m<sup>3</sup> of the Arab world. (Jordanian Government Report, Web Site). People pay for drinking water through cistern supply, with excessive costs, (see Potter & Darmame, 2010: 118) while water in luxury swimming pools is replenished regularly at the five star tourist hotels.
- Jordan needs appropriate legislations with particular attention to economic incentives (e.g. tax exemption) that can be used to encourage urban rehabilitation, eco-tourism activities and the conservation of historic centers. Setting clear criteria of intervention, where the revitalization of the old centers includes not necessarily beatification of urban landscape, facades, and building museums, but through the interaction of residents, supplying suitable instruments and possibilities of involvements.

A self organizing approach is requested, leaving the proper space in rural and desert areas, in order to maintain the traditional life style of rural and Bedouins. Therefore, it is strongly recommended a strategic approach of territorial planning at extra-urban and urban level, developing the tourism sector in parallel with other productive, services and residential sectors.

## References

- Abdel-Salam, M. (October, 2006). An analytical study of Israel tourism master plan in the Costa region Ashdod – Askalon. *Journal of Al Azhar University Engineering Sector*, 1(1), 1287–1309.
- Abdullah, H. (2004). (his Majesty King of Jordan) in: Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Official Site [www.tourism.jo/inside/Strategy\\_ar.asp](http://www.tourism.jo/inside/Strategy_ar.asp) Dublin.

- Abu-Al-Haija, A. (2009). Historic and traditional urban centers in Jordan: the physical transformation of architecture and landscape. In the 12th International Seminar de Forum UNESCO – University and heritage, April 2009, Hanoi.
- Abu-Al-Haija, A. & Al Faqih, S. (2008). Tourism development in Aqaba and Human sustainability. 6th conference on science and technology in archaeology and conservation, Rome.
- Al Ghazo, P. (2008). *The engineering environment, Vol. 1*. Amman: Maktaba Watan-niyya. (trans.).
- Al Khawaldeh, K. (2004). *Ecotourism based on the society: Dana natural reserve, anatomy of social movements*. Egypt.
- Abu-Mattar, A. (2008). Investment in people. In <http://m.ankido.us/news.php?action=view&id=1842&phpsessid=4283855115a395e5afa8f7b4f10f>.
- Al Mohandes Al Ordini. (2009). *Fifty years of foundation*. Amman: Engineering Association Press.
- Benevolo, L. (1993). History of city (trans.) Editori Laterza Roma-Bari.
- Bin Mohammad, G. (1999). *The tribes of Jordan at the beginning of the twenty-first century*. Amman: Turab.
- Daher, R. (1999). Gentrification and the politics of power, capital and culture in an emerging Jordan heritage industry, traditional dwellings and settlements review. *TDSR*, 10(11), 33–45.
- Daher, R. (2000). Dismantling a community's heritage "Heritage tourism: conflict, inequality, and a search for social justice in the age of globalization". In M. Robinson, N. Evans, P. Long, R. Sharpley, & J. Swarbrooke (Eds.), *Tourism and heritage relationships: Global, national and local perspectives* (pp. 105–127). University of Northumbria Press.
- Daher, R. (September, 2005). Urban regeneration/heritage tourism endeavours: the case of salt, Jordan "Local Actors, International Donors, and the State". *International Journal Heritage Studies*, 11(4), 289–308.
- Halaseh, I. (2008). *Woman and labour force, labour force in Jordan and future horizons*. Seminar proceeding. Jordan: Philadelphia University.
- Hamdouni, H. (2009). *Petra region and transportation (trans.)*, in the workshop of Petra infrastructure and tourism. Jordan: Jordanian Engineering Association.
- Jordanian Engineering Association Workshop. (2009). *Petra infrastructure and tourism* (trans.). Niqaba Press.
- Jordanian general census of population*. (2007). (trans.). Amman: Official Press.
- Jordanian Government Report. Water in Jordan, (trans) in [http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos\\_home\\_a/water.htm](http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_a/water.htm).
- Jordanian Ministry of Planning. Jordan National Tourism Strategy 2004–2010. <http://www.mota.gov.jo/Home/index.htm>.
- Kahla, M. (2009). *Developing indicators for socially sustainable tourism in the historic center of Madaba*. M.Sc./MA Theses. Jordan University of Science and Technology.
- Kalisky, R. (1972) (trans.). *History of the Arab world, Vol. I*. Verona: Bertani Editore.
- Lansing, P., & De Vries, P. (2007). Sustainable tourism: ethical alternative or marketing ploy? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 72, 77–85.
- Ministry of Planning. (2002). *Jordan: Socio economic existing situation in Aqaba region for the year* (trans.). Jordan: Reports Press.
- Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. (2004). *Jordan: National tourism strategy 2004–2010* (trans). Jordan: Reports Press.
- Najarian, J. (April, 2008). Next stop: Aqaba, Jordan Property, (17).
- Potter, R. B., & Darmame, K. (2010). Contemporary social variation in household water use, management strategies and awareness under condition of water stress: the case study of Greater Amman, Jordan. *Habitat International*, 34, 115–124.
- UNESCO Project Document. (2004). Jordan: Dana biosphere reserve sub-project.
- Rahif, P. (2008). The historic cities – challenges and legislations (trans.) In 1st engineering Balka conference on heritage and constructions, Salt.
- Robinson, M., & Boniface, P. (Eds.). (1999). *Tourism and cultural conflict*. New York: Cabi Publishing.
- Sbeikat, G. (2008). *The results of employments and unemployment in Jordan in 2007, in the seminar*. Jordan: The Jordanian Labor Force and Future Philadelphia University.
- Shbeeb, L., & Awad, W. (2009). Petra tourists' satisfaction (trans.) *Jordanian engineering association workshop, Petra infrastructure and tourism*. Niqaba Press.
- Shryock, A. (1997). *Nationalism and the genealogical imagination: Oral history and textual authority in tribal Jordan*. University of California Press.
- Statistical Department of Jordan Annual report (trans.), Statistical Department Press, Amman (2009).
- Shtewi, M. (2008). *Overview on labour force in Jordan, in the seminar: Labour force in Jordan and future horizons*. Jordan: Philadelphia University.
- UNESCO Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, Proclamation 2001, 2003 and 2005. In <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001473/147344E>.
- United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). (2009). *Guidelines for policy-making and planning*. <http://www.unwto.org/sdt/fields/en/policy.php>.
- Warth, H. (2002). In <http://www.studienkreis.org/engl/wettbewerb/todo/02jordan.html>.
- WTO Web-site. (2004). In Lansing, P., & De Vries, P. (2007). Sustainable tourism: ethical alternative or marketing ploy? *Journal of Business Ethics*. 72: 77–85. <http://www.jordanzad.com/jordan/news/117/ARTICLE/21673/2009-08-20.html>.