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## Tourism, heritage and politics: conflicts at the City of David, Jerusalem

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### ABSTRACT

This article analyses the development and progress of conflicts at the “City of David” heritage-tourism site in Jerusalem, Israel and the reciprocal relations between heritage sites and conflicts. It offers a comprehensive examination of the development of a major tourist attraction in Israel. Our research is based on the following two methods of qualitative research: (1) in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 43 key stakeholders; (2) textual analysis of current written materials and historical documents. The study investigates the relevant processes and decisions, stakeholder perceptions, the role of the archaeological excavations, and their relationship to the development of conflict. On a broader level, this study formulates a theoretical and practical framework for analysing the development of heritage tourism sites in conflict zones.

### KEYWORDS

Heritage tourism; conflicts; religiosity; archaeology; Jerusalem; politics; Israel; framing; political tourism; heritage conflicts

### Introduction

Heritage tourism is one of the most rapidly increasing and significant sectors in world tourism today. Conflict is second nature to many heritage tourism sites, often stemming from the tourist activity taking place at the site (Weidenfeld & Ron, 2008), but also from a wide range of factors such as social and cultural (Timothy & Boyd, 2003; Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996), economic, religious and most have elements of all categories (Collins-Kreiner, Shmueli, & Ben-Gal, 2013, 2015).

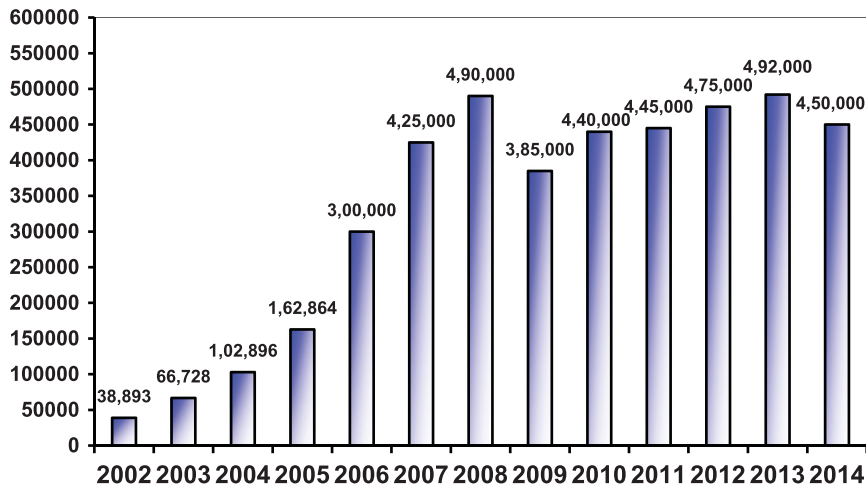
Research on heritage tourism has called on scholars to focus on the relationship between conflicts and heritage tourism sites (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2015; Poria & Ashworth, 2009; Shmueli, Collins-Kreiner, & Ben Gal, 2014). Although numerous studies have been conducted in the field of heritage tourism, the development processes of heritage tourism sites in areas of conflict have yet to be sufficiently explored (Poria & Ashworth, 2009). How does one affect the other? Why are they interrelated? What are their common forms and patterns? (Collins-Kreiner, 2016; Collins-Kreiner et al., 2015). Clarifying such hitherto unexplored questions can help us develop theoretical

frameworks for analysing conflict development, which is the aim of this study.

This article offers a comprehensive examination of the development of the City of David, Jerusalem, currently a major tourist attraction in Israel (Figures 1 and 2). The site was developed as a heritage site in a conflict-ridden area and within two decades emerged as one of the most significant sites in Jerusalem, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. Its importance, thus, derives from the Bible’s central point of identification for people all around the world (Levine & Mazar, 2001; Shilo, 2012).

Today the site is part of the National Park that surrounds the walls of Jerusalem and as a tourist site it offers tours, presentations, a visual display, a coffee shop and a souvenir shop. It is situated in the residential area of the village of Silwan (an Arabs village). Almost half a million domestic and international tourists of different tourist segments visit the site annually (Figure 1).

Our research focuses on the processes of development of the heritage site and on the factors influencing its development. In addition, we focus on how



**Figure 1.** Number of visitors to the City of David over the years.

conflicts have affected the development of the site and on the reciprocal relations between the heritage site and conflicts in the area. The study's three main research questions are as follows: (1) How, through what processes, and based on what decisions was

the site developed, from a historical perspective, during the period under study (1986–2014)? (2) How do the various stakeholders perceive the site's development, function and significance vis-a-vis the religious, national and political conflict? (3) What role



**Figure 2.** A picture of the modern City of David, 1997. Source: The City of David archive

did these archaeological excavations play in the construction of the tourist site, and what has been the relationship between these excavations and the development of the conflict? On a broader level, this study seeks to formulate a theoretical framework suitable for analysing the development of heritage sites in conflict zones around the world.

### Heritage tourism and conflicts

An extensive school of thought holds that heritage tourism is often used for economic and political purposes and is prevalent in conflict-ridden areas (Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2015; Poria & Ashworth, 2009). Poria, Reichel, and Biran (2006), Poria, Biran, and Reichel (2007), and Hewison (1987) notes that unlike other tourism sites, heritage tourism providers (whether operating independently or under the auspices of the statutory authorities) are not necessarily motivated by economic interests. This notion has been supported by other researchers, such as Poria, Butler, and Airey (2003, 2004), Poria, Reichel, and Biran (2006), Poria, Biran, and Reichel (2007), Timothy and Boyd (2003) and Cohen-Hattab and Shoval (2015). It is often asserted that tourism providers have numerous incentives, including political importance (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996; Howard, 2003; Palmer, 1999), social-cultural importance (Ballesteros & Ramirez, 2007; Biran, 2008), scientific importance (Biran, 2008), educational importance (Austin, 2002), and economic importance (Edgell, 2006).

Tourist sites are known to have spurred countless conflicts of different kinds: political, economic, social, religious and cultural. Most of the researched cases have elements of all, as by bringing to the site more groups, tourism changes and complicates the possibility and character of the conflicts. Cultural, political and social conflicts imply some degree of incompatibility between local and national authorities, individuals and societies (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2015; Deery, Jago, & Fredline, 2012; Dredge, 2010; Robinson & Boniface, 1999).

Our study adopts the approach of Kenneth Thomas (1992), who defines conflict as a state of interdependence between two or more interacting forces due to a situation of dispute and disagreement, the actions of which affect one another. This broad definition is consistent with our interpretation of the term "conflict", as expressed by the various stakeholders who defined Jerusalem, our arena of research, as a conflict-ridden site.

Heritage sites often tend to be the focus of conflict, as exemplified by many sites in Israel (and elsewhere). For example, the Western Wall and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are contested heritage sites in Jerusalem where conflict occurs (Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2015; Olsen & Ron, 2013), and Mount Zion is another major heritage site in the city that is in a constant state of conflict.

Due to Israel's multi-cultural and multi-religious character, the region itself is rife with conflict. This is true of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (Luz, 2004), the Shihab al-Din Mosque in Nazareth (Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2007), the Mormon University on the Mount of Olives and the Baha'i Gardens in Haifa (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2015). The Israeli-Palestinian national conflict finds expression in the tourism narratives of Israel's War of Independence heritage sites, which typically articulate only the Jewish-Zionist narrative, without reference to the Palestinian or Arab-Israeli narrative. Many tourism studies deal with conflicts relating to site development vis-à-vis occurrences in the region in the last decades (Beeton, 2006; Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997).

### The framing framework

"Framing" (Shmueliet al., 2014) is one of the most commonly used frameworks for dealing with conflicts and has been recognized by several studies as an effective tool for analysing and understanding conflicts around religious sites (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2015). Frames are "mental filters," or "screens," through which we conceive the world as they are used as constructions to "understand" information in everyday life and especially in conflicts.

Framing research has been used in order to understand how individuals perceive their world. Since its introduction in the 1970th it has progressed into a valuable method that has generated substantial research in different fields, such as environmental studies and disputes, linguistics, communication, psychology and sociology (Shmueli, Elliott, & Kaufman, 1996).

Current research in the tourism arena using framing is focused mainly on narratives, language and discourse, activities and marketing (Buzinde, Santos, & Smith, 2006; Noy, 2008). This study will try and use framing in order to offer an original and thought-provoking perspective for conflict investigation in tourism studies.

## Tourism, archaeology and conflicts in the City of David

Based on its history, the area of Israel (Palestine) is distinguished by its particularly rich religious and cultural past and its unique historical heritage, which, since ancient times, have attracted large numbers of visitors (Cohen-Hattab, 2010). Many sites endured sanctification in accordance with the stories of the Bible and the New Testaments, making them magnets for pilgrims and visitors visiting Israel for religious reasons. This process of site sanctification reached its height in the city of Jerusalem, which the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) view as their holy city, perceiving the land itself as "Terra Santa" (Ben-Arieh, 2001). Jerusalem has been Israel's main pilgrimage destination, with its sacred sites attracting tourists from different communities and religions (Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2015) from around the world. Like the tourism industry, archaeological research has undergone rapid development in the country since the nineteenth century, arousing considerable interest throughout the world and in Jerusalem, which, as a focus of attention and research, began to generate increasing international interest (Ben-Arieh, 1977).

The site is located outside the walls of Jerusalem where many biblical events took place (Reich, 2011; Reiter & Lehrs, 2013; Shilo, 2012). With the launch of archaeological digs in the area in the 18th, the ancient site was exposed and since it has been excavated by the Ottomans rule through the British Mandate, the Jordanian rule and the "Israel Antiquities Authority" (Reich, 2011; Reiter & Lehrs, 2013; Shilo, 2012).

Since its discovery, the site has been a magnet for archaeologists. Archaeological research first got underway with the work of biblical scholar Edward Robinson in 1838 and continues today (Reich, 2011). An examination of the literature in the field indicates that the archaeological excavations have themselves constituted a central factor in the conflict over Jerusalem. These archaeological controversies revolve around the question of the historical reliability of the biblical stories and archaeology's ability to prove or disprove their veracity, in part or in their entirety (Mazar, 2008).

As a central force in the ongoing exhausting struggle over the political future of Jerusalem, the archaeological dispute regarding the City of David has political, national and religious dimensions (Gold, 2007). As the different parties to the conflict employ

archaeological interpretations to bolster their claims and political worldviews, it is a dispute that is inextricably linked to other conflicts regarding the area. Studies have noted that the site, which promotes Jewish-Israeli, Zionist heritage (Noy, 2012), developed into a heritage tourism site in its present location as a result of archaeological excavations (Shilo, 2012) (Figure 3). The touristic use of the name "City of David," as opposed to the site's Arabic name "Silwan," has been a focal point of the national-political friction that is characteristic of East Jerusalem (Noy, 2012).

The development of the archaeological research conducted in the area of Jerusalem in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was accompanied by a steady rise in the number of travelers and tourists visiting the Israel in general and Jerusalem in particular (Cohen-Hattab, 2010). Archaeological discoveries from the excavations of the site and its area were published in scientific journals and later found their way into the popular guidebooks of the period, which contributed to the growth of a touristic demand to visit the site (Shilo, 2012).

Between the onset of Israeli rule over the site in 1967 and 1985, when it was first officially established as a touristic site, the well-known architectural undertaking known as "Hezekiah's Tunnel" attracted a few thousand travelers per year (Shilo, 2012). From 1979 to 1985, a comprehensive archaeological excavation was conducted under the direction of Professor Yigal Shilo. The significant change in tourism to the site took place following the completion of excavations in 1985, when Mayor Teddy Kollek charged the East Jerusalem Development Company (PAMI) with developing the site as a major archaeological attraction in Jerusalem (Baruch, personal communication, 2015). Within a short time, regular tourist infrastructure was established, and the site began to receive visitors in ever increasing numbers, reaching a peak of 100,000 visitors per year (Malka, personal communication, 2015; Ya'acobi, personal communication, 2015).

In the literature review, we addressed the topics that are essential to our research, reviewing the subject of heritage tourism and considering the issue's multi-disciplinary and multi-faceted complexity. We also briefly examined the subject of conflicts in the broader world of tourism, presenting examples of conflicts at heritage sites; presenting the history of the research and tourism in the site, with an emphasis on archaeological excavations and tourism development in the area; and considering the different conflicts pertaining to the site. We now turn to the questions and research



**Figure 3.** An old photo of the City of David, 1900. Source: Collection of the US Library of Congress

methods used to examine the development of heritage tourism sites in conflict zones, with a focus on the analysis of the present case study.

## Methods and methodology

### *Research approaches*

To contend with the subject's complexity and to uncover and understand the motivations of stakeholders, we employed a wide-ranging integrated qualitative research approach that combines methods from the social sciences with historical research methodology from the humanities. Our approach also highlighted the significance of the phenomenon as perceived by the interregees themselves. Naturally, such research deals with exposing stakeholder narratives: subjective stories told from the narrators' perspective that reflect their basic values, worldviews and norms, and their interpretation of situations in the region.

Historical research methodology was also employed to uncover past events that led to the development of the site. Over the course of its existence as a field of study, and ever since the time of Herodotus, the Greek historian who recorded history in the fifth century BCE, historical research has undergone numerous fluctuations and vicissitudes. One hundred years ago, even historians of great stature believed that facts were objective pieces of information just waiting for historians to discover and investigate them. Recent decades have witnessed the emergence of a critical research approach that maintains that history is also a subjective field of inquiry deeply influenced by the attributes of the researchers themselves. Today, it is widely accepted that facts no reside in the "Temple of facts" – a "Holy of Holies" of some kind – but rather are, themselves, part of a process of subjective narrative interpretation, which is an element of the historian's work (Carr, 1964). History, then, can be considered a critical evaluation of the evidence available to the researcher and

the historian's re-examination of the writer's accounts, reflections and descriptions of the past. On this basis, philosopher Karl Popper's notion that: "... there can be no history of 'the past as it actually did happen'; there can only be historical interpretations, and none of them final," is currently the prevailing approach to the field of history (Popper, 2003, p. 470).

### Research methods

Our research employed the following two methods of qualitative research, which provided it with its reliability and stability.

- (1) **In-depth, semi-structured interviews** with 43 key stakeholders between the years 2014 and 2016. These interviews enabled us to trace the views of the stakeholders who influenced the site tourism project and to understand the motivations for their actions in light of their perception of the nature and intensity of the conflict. These participants were the ones involved in planning or developing the site or were influenced by it. The interview included questions referring to the decision-making process and to the final decisions that had been made. The questions focused on the historical chain of events, the development of the conflict; key issues and main interests.
- (2) **Text analysis** - We analyzed archival material surrounding the site, as well as current materials published. Two kinds of text were analyzed:

*Current written materials:* This analysis helped provide the research with stability and reliability, as the texts themselves allowed us access to the worldviews of stakeholders who refused or were unable to be interviewed for the study. The texts by the stakeholders, which appear in various publications, reflect their viewpoints, their beliefs, their comprehension of their surroundings, and their respective narratives.

*Historical research:* Integrating historical methodology has helped to expose processes and to understand the events that took place during the development of the heritage site. By examining historical documents such as certificates, contracts and agreements, meeting protocols, plans and archival documents, we were able to confront the findings of the interviews with written testimonies documenting events and processes that took place in the research area.

### Data analysis

The data and information collected during the open interviews was recorded, transcribed and typed. The data was analyzed in order to determine the different categories. Each quotation was read in search of the answer to the repeated question: "What is this about? What is being referenced here? To what frame category does this belong?"

Categories were abstracted and topics were coded according to colors and to the emphasis within the raw text of each interview. While one of the authors coded the texts and identified the frames, the second author reviewed the coding in order to confirm the findings.

We thus analysed the conflict using a four-tier analysis: (1) analysis through the prism of time; (2) analysis of the stakeholders; (3) analysis of the conflict within archaeology and tourism; and (4) analysis according to the framing framework that was presented earlier in this paper.

### Findings

#### Key periods in the development of the City of David tourism site

One of our research questions sought to characterize key periods in the site's development. According to our research, the development of the City of David can be broken down into five distinct consecutive historical stages, providing us with a framework in which to analyse and understand the processes that affected each stage:

- (1) 1985-1986: "Before the Deluge" – During this period, the site was operated by East Jerusalem Development, Ltd. (PAMI), which was then constructing its first ever tourist infrastructure, and began receiving a large number of visitors (until tourism was halted in December 1987 by the events of the Second Intifada in Jerusalem).
- (2) 1986-1991: "How It All Began" – During these initial years, the Elad Foundation was established by retired army officer David Be'eri. Initially, Elad's primary goal was to identify and locate former Jewish properties in the City of David and to return them to Jewish ownership.
- (3) 1991-1995: "From Vision to Reality" – These were years of Jewish settlement, during which an increasing number of Jewish families took up residence in the City of David (Silwan). Tourism was

- scarce during this period, as the site was neglected and the tourism infrastructure inadequate.
- (4) 1995-2005: "Digging for the Truth" – This period witnessed the renewal of excavations after years of neglect, the onset of Elad's development of the site, and the gradual return of tourist traffic.
  - (5) 2005-2014: "Designing Reality" – This period has been characterized by a shift from excavation and settlement to heritage tourism. As archaeological digs and settlement continued, Elad ran dozens of educational and tourism programs in the area, assigning increasing priority to bringing visitors and tourists to the site and establishing the City of David's heritage in the region. This activity was carried out in full cooperation with state institutions and the Jerusalem municipality, which were enlisted to help disseminate the site's Jewish-Zionist national heritage.

Overall, we found that stakeholder motivations for the establishment and development of the site changed over time. At the site's inception in 1985, the main stakeholders were the local government and national authorities, whose motivation was mainly cultural and economic. Following changes in the region in the late 1980s (the First Intifada and its aftermath in East Jerusalem), new stakeholders with primarily nationalist and economic motivations began to get involved.

Interviewees referred to the various stages of the site's development, as well as to the concurrent development of conflicts in the area. Conflicts in the area appear to have influenced and been influenced by the development of the site, as specified in the following section.

### Stakeholder perception typology analysis

We examined the perception of the many stakeholders operating today in the area, and that operated there in the past, using the different methods described above. The analysis reveals the significant gaps in the perceptions of the various stakeholders regarding the development of the site, as well as their perception of the role and significance of the site in the religious, national and political conflict.

The stakeholders were divided into four main groups as there were found to be a high level of consensus among group members and low levels of consensus between groups: (1) Elad Foundation

members, including a variety of present and past senior officials; (2) Representatives of Israeli statutory authorities, including the Israel Antiquities Authority, the Jerusalem Municipality, Government and security elements, and the Nature and Parks Authority; (3) Local residents of Silwan (who did not agree to be interviewed), left-wing organization activists, peace activists and human rights activists (represented by a variety of organizations whose primary focus is political opposition to the situation in Silwan/the City of David), who work in diverse ways against Elad and its activities in the region; (4) Past and present archaeologists of the City of David.

The existence or non-existence of conflicts in the City of David, and the nature of these conflicts, are perceived by each group in very different ways. Indeed, we found the viewpoints espoused by the various stakeholders to have been shaped almost entirely by their personal political narratives, resulting in significantly differing perspectives and descriptions of conflicts. The resulting broad range of narratives made it difficult to achieve consensus on this issue among the stakeholders. For example, according to one peace activist, "... the site operates as if it is completely detached from its surroundings. It is foreign to the neighbourhood in all aspects" (Sulimani, 2015). In response to the same question regarding the site's physical appearance, another stakeholder stated:

... The site does not conflict with the local form of the village but rather completes it. It also fits into the landscape and the [local] architecture, even in terms of its sanctity ... They always make sure that all development processes are integrated into the visitor's experience ... (Amitay, personal communication, 2015)

There was consensus among most stakeholders that the City of David is a heritage site of local, national and international importance. At the same time, some stakeholders protested the ways in which the heritage site is presented, as well as the hegemony of the Zionist, Israeli, Jewish-national narrative, which is the sole perspective promoted at the site (see, for example, Abu-Dayeh, personal communication, 2015; Greenberg, personal communication, 2015; Oppenheimer, 2015; Mizrachi, personal communication, 2014).

Some stakeholders (opponents of Elad such as Daniel Seidman, Rafael Greenberg, Yonatan Mizrachi, and others) view the conflicts over the City of David as the focal point of the discussion and completely disregard elements of tourism and heritage, as reflected in the following statement: "... I see Silwan as the



centre of the volcano ... Axis Mundi ... the core of the struggle ... There is the territorial struggle, the narrative struggle, the religious struggle ... " (Seidman, 2015).

Other stakeholders, who also view the national and political struggle over the site as the focal point of the conflict over it, challenge the very legitimacy of operating a tourist site in the area. From their perspective, the site's existence in its current format, as a tourist and heritage site, does injury to the basic rights of residents who wish to live their lives in peace and security, without the threats posed by City of David heritage site (Abu-Dayeh, personal communication, 2015; Massalha, personal communication, 2015; Oppenheimer, 2015). This view has been widely expressed among peace activists such as Yoni Mizrachi, who has asserted: "... I definitely think that the tourist development of the site ... as well as the last 20 years of excavations should never have happened ..." (Mizrachi, personal communication, 2014).

One interesting finding of our study is that, despite their clear support for developing the City of David as a heritage site, the Elad Foundation and the Israeli statutory bodies do indeed try to be sensitive to the daily lives of local residents and the current fabric of life in Silwan, and some have even emphasized the importance of protecting the rights of Palestinians in the neighborhood (Be'eri, personal communication, 2015; Goldstein, personal communication, 2015; Mazar, personal communication, 2015; Pinsky, 2015). This attitude is reflected in Reuven Pinsky's assertion that "... the Israeli government and the Jerusalem municipality should carry out projects for the benefit of the local population ..." (Pinsky, 2015). In a similar spirit, stakeholders testified to the fact that Elad's management preferred to employ local villagers from Silwan (Mazar, personal communication, 2015), to preserve the rights and property of their neighbors, and to help repair shared infrastructure problems and other damages in the area (Ragonis, 2015). David Be'eri (personal communication, 2015) had the following to say about the approach of the Elad foundation:

...From the beginning we conducted our project together with the local neighbours ... we offered them jobs and we enabled them to open coffee shops for the visitors ... locals viewed us as a great blessing for the neighbourhood. We brought in environmental development, cleaning and infrastructures ...

Despite these stakeholders' demonstrated sensitivity to aspects of everyday local life, they take little interest

in the past, the historical heritage, and the national identity of the residents of Silwan, and therefore regard it as undeserving of attention as a tourist attraction. It is therefore not surprising that Palestinian identity and heritage and the Palestinian narrative are not represented at the City of David site.

Analysis and interpretation of the statements made by stakeholders on both sides of the divide reveal profound disparities. Many stakeholders, including archaeologists, peace activists and statutory bodies, believe that they possess the rights to heritage and history in the region. They share a common political agenda and believe that the Israeli-Palestinian national conflict can end with an agreement in which the City of David is not part of Jerusalem under the hegemony of the State of Israel. These parties believe that this territory is the focal point of the conflict, which can be resolved by returning the area to the Palestinians within the framework of a political agreement. As explained by journalist Nir Hasson: "... It would have been better if Israel had not have carried out this project ... It would be better to have it under an international umbrella or Palestinian-Israeli cooperation ... It should be something else ..." (Hasson, personal communication, 2015).

The opposite position is espoused by representatives of the Elad Foundation, as well as stakeholders among the statutory bodies that strongly support their right to hegemony over the City of David. They secure their hegemony over heritage through archaeological research that links the past and Jewish history to Jewish settlement in modern times. According to Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat (personal communication, 2015):

... Anyone walking through the tunnels of the City of David with Bible in hand realizes that this is real. It is the best example of the Jewish way of life some 3,000 years ago. It is a great and dramatic experience ... Those who visit are deeply inspired and touched, as they connect with our roots in the city of David ...

Analysis of the statements of the stakeholders generates a complex and multifaceted picture. Despite some gaps, most of the stakeholders appear to share the common view that the City of David has the right to exist as a major national heritage tourist site. At present, therefore, the number of those opposed to the heritage site in its current form is significantly lower than those who support it.

## Archaeology and conflicts in the City of David

With regard to our third research question, which speculated a connection between the archaeological excavations and the conflicts over the site, we found that the stakeholders' perspectives of the excavation's impact on the conflict stems mainly, if not solely, from their own political narratives. Indeed, we ascertained that one fundamental question remains at the heart of the matter: What is the desired future political solution for the City of David? Primarily, it is a question of sovereignty over the heritage site, which in itself constitutes a cause of formidable conflict.

In the responses to our question, we found that the more the stakeholders identify with the liberal left wing of the political map, the more clearly, they view the connection between the excavations and the conflicts in the area. This dynamic is reflected in the words of archaeologist Raphael Greenberg (personal communication, 2015), who maintained that the political needs of the Elad Foundation are dictating the archaeology of the City of David: "... Most of the excavations are not carried out for research reasons, and also not for tourist reasons ..."

Conversely, the more the stakeholders identify with the political right wing, the more they perceive the conflict as an existing fact with various political and national causes, and the more they view the excavations as unrelated to the conflicts. "In my opinion", explains the excavating archaeologist, "the main issue was the political problem that was constantly hovering above ... If we disregard the political pressures from above, then there is no problem with the archaeological site ..."

Based on the study's findings, it can be argued that both support for and opposition to the excavations in the City of David are based on political worldviews regarding the question of sovereignty over the region in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All stakeholders are well aware of the importance of the archaeological finds at the site and appreciate the heritage that the findings represent. However, those who oppose the excavations claim that "the right of the present prevails over the right of the past" (Greenberg, personal communication, 2015). In other words, in their view, the promotion of excavations and heritage violates the rights of the residents living in the area today, which greatly detracts from the importance of excavating.

In conclusion, the discrepancy in the narratives among the stakeholders appears to be most evident regarding the issue of archaeological excavations. Based on an analysis of stakeholders' statements, each side describes its own subjective-narrative reality, which coexists with the subjective-narrative reality of the other side. The excavations represent another aspect of the conflict, and the stakeholders use them to justify their arguments. Naturally, archaeological produce findings regarding the past, and in so doing they constitute a broad field of interpretation used by stakeholders to prove and claim ownership of heritage in the geographical sphere.

## Discussion: using frameworks for understanding conflicts in tourism sites

To deepen our discussion, we first chose to use different conflict analysis frameworks to provide additional insight and to analyse the findings. We found the most suitable framework to be "framing" (Shmueli et al, 2014), which has been recognized by a number of studies as an effective tool for analysing and understanding conflicts of "spatial transgression" surrounding religious heritage sites (Collins-Kreiner, 2008; Collins-Kreiner et al., 2015; Collins-Kreiner et al., 2013; Gatrell & Collins-Kreiner, 2006).

The proposed framework identifies three levels of understanding to be pursued in a conflict-zone.

**The physical space** – Our research has identified significant gaps between stakeholders' differing views of the actual physical space. Each group of stakeholders presents a certain picture that correlates with its narrative, which at times contradicts that of other stakeholders. The stakeholders from Elad and the Israeli statutory authorities spoke of the space in warm and sympathetic terms, describing an aesthetically pleasing, clean, pleasant and attractive site, whereas peace activists and leftist organizations described the space using negative and uncompromising terms and portraying the City of David as a crude and unethical site detached from its surroundings.

**The decision-making process** – On this issue, there is a fundamental lack of agreement between the stakeholders, as each side describes a different process of decision-making and development regarding the site. While stakeholders from the Elad Foundation and the statutory bodies describe

orderly, transparent, legal and legitimate processes, the left-wing peace activists describe obscured, clandestine decision-making processes, lack of transparency, and difficulty obtaining data. The archaeologists have no unified stance on the issue, which does not appear to be on their agenda. Indeed, they appear to be interested primarily in the research itself and less in the aspects of the prevailing conflict.

**Transcending “values”** – Values that transcend the site itself were articulated on both sides of the divide, although peace activists and members of left-wing organizations used value-laden terminology more than others. Second to them were members of the Elad Foundation. Whereas both presented their understanding of the values involved as supreme, the first group (left wingers) emphasized more universal values, whereas the second group (Elad members) highlighted values that were more Jewish and personal in nature. A concern with values emerged less in the remarks of members of the other groups, although all stakeholders presented their personal values as a significant factor in their perception of the conflict in the area.

Analysis according to these elements reveals that the parties with clear political affiliation – i.e. members of Elad on the one hand, and the peace activists and members of left-wing organizations on the other hand – hold opposing views, which are clearly derived from their political worldview. The statutory authorities and archaeologists presented a more balanced and moderate view. Accordingly, the officials in the region appear to be more likely to operate on a professional level and to be less influenced by their political worldviews. Their motivations are portrayed first and foremost as professional, and only then do they give way to their personal political views.

A discussion of our findings in relation to other studies in the field reinforces the approach of Poria and Ashworth (2009), who argue that heritage sites are a contemporary source of conflict and that their very existence intensifies and perpetuates disputes. Our findings are also consistent with the approach of other heritage researchers, who claim that the City of David attraction uses tourist activity to promote political goals (Cohen-Hattab & Shoval, 2015; Noy, 2012). The interactive relationship between conflicts and heritage sites has also been pointed out by other studies, such as Luz (2004) and Reiter and Lehrs (2013).

We too maintain that the development of heritage sites may constitute fertile ground for the emergence of groups of stakeholders whose entire focus is resistance to this development. An analysis of our findings vis-à-vis the literature suggests that more credence should be given to the perceptions of stakeholders in the development of heritage sites than has in the past.

Our primary conclusion is that stakeholders’ narratives, in conjunction with the nature of their personal motivations, may determine the pace of site development and the nature of the development of the heritage at the site. Stakeholders’ motivations and narratives may also have a significant impact on the intensity of the conflicts prevailing at heritage sites.

### Summary: analysing conflicts at heritage tourism sites

The conclusions of our study have led us to propose a framework for analysing the development of heritage sites in conflict zones. The framework involves the following four stages:

Stage 1: Thorough examination and mapping of the factors influencing the development of the heritage, including type of heritage; the process of heritage production; the category of heritage and the sense of place and the local identity of the main stakeholders;

Stage 2: Mapping of stakeholders in the area, characterization of their motivations, and documentation of their actions.

Stage 3: Construction of a timeline of site development and characterization of periods using distinct historical attributes.

Stage 4: Identification of the conflicts existing at the site and in the surrounding area; ranking of the conflicts while examining their intensity; identification of the central conflict and analysis of its impact on site development.

Our research offers a theoretical approach for analysing the development of conflicts at heritage tourism sites. This framework is the product of our own interpretive development, based on relevant literature and new insights that have emerged in our findings. We hope that in future studies, researchers will use this framework to examine the development of different sites in the world. The use of this framework requires researchers to take into consideration

and understand the different narratives of different individuals involved in policymaking processes.

The main limitations of our research are its use of historical methodology, which usually requires decade-long gaps between events to provide a historical perspective for interpretation and insight. Such perspective is absent from our study, which addresses events that began approximately 30 years ago and that continue today. A second limitation is our study's examination of only one heritage site. Notwithstanding, we view our study as a first step in a much longer journey for heritage tourism researchers seeking to examine the development of heritage sites around the world. It is our hope that other scholars in this field will use the approach employed in this study to explore sites elsewhere in the world.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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