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Buda, D (2015) Tourism in Conflict Areas: Complex Entanglements in Jordan. *Journal of Travel Research*. ISSN 1552-6763 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287515601253>

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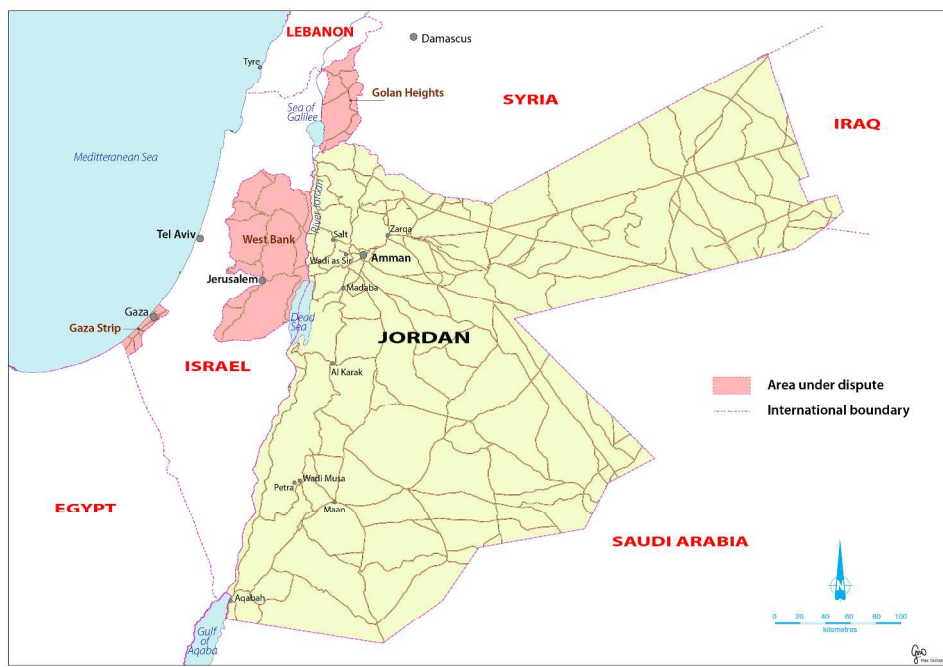
Journal of Travel Research

TOURISM IN CONFLICT AREAS: COMPLEX ENTANGLEMENTS IN JORDAN

Journal:	<i>Journal of Travel Research</i>
Manuscript ID:	JTR-14-07-09.R3
Manuscript Type:	Empirical Research Articles
Keywords:	danger, conflict, safety, Jordan
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Review

TOURISM IN CONFLICT AREAS: COMPLEX ENTANGLEMENTS IN JORDAN

Abstract

In this article the workings of tourism in areas of socio-political turmoil are critically examined. In so doing the aim is to scrutinize interconnections between tourism, safety and conflict as I contend that tourism, tourists and the danger generated by ongoing socio-political conflicts are intimately connected. The empirical focus is on tourism in Jordan, a country in a region troubled by ongoing conflicts. Fieldwork for this project was carried out in 2009 and 2010. Data was collected from local tourism industry representatives and international tourists in Jordan. Findings indicate that a safety/danger binary is destabilized by industry representatives who operate a 'sanitization' process in Jordan meant to erase danger and conflicts from tourism spaces. Tourists in the region also disrupt this binary as they travel to the region in spite of the conflict and downplay violent incidents.

Keywords: danger; conflict; risk-taking; safety; tourism politics; Jordan.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper the workings of tourism in areas of socio-political turmoil are critically explored as I unravel interconnections between conflict, safety and security in tourism. I draw on Lisle's (2000, 2004, 2007, 2013) research to examine the ways in which tourism, tourists and ongoing socio-political conflicts are connected in powerful ways. Lisle (2000, 93) argues that entanglements between conflict and tourism "disrupt and resist the prevailing images of safety and danger that attempt to hold them apart". Scrutinizing these complex interconnections "prevents the hegemonic discourse of global security from completing itself, stabilizing its boundaries, and securing a totalized presence" (Lisle 2000, 93). This hegemonic discourse generates a separation between socio-political conflicts and tourism through frequent reminders of the necessity of safety and security in tourism (Hall et al. 2003; Pizam and Mansfeld, 1996). In this paper I draw on empirical ethnographical data gathered in Jordan to deconstruct entanglements between conflict, security, safety and tourism. Overlaps between seemingly unrelated, even antithetical, phenomena – tourism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in its different manifestations – are, thus, rendered visible.

Taking up Lisle's work and reimagining the conflict/tourism divide, the aim is to understand the workings of tourism in areas of (ongoing) conflict as I move beyond the simplistic idea that conflict and tourism are unrelated or even in opposition (Butler and Suntikul, 2013). To a certain degree, tourism exists during war and violent hostilities, and while "it may seem highly inappropriate to argue that there is a positive side for tourism as a result of war [this] is clearly the case" (Butler and Suntikul, 2013, 5). It is maintained that these two phenomena of war or ongoing conflict and tourism "were actually forged together in the aftermath of World War II" (Lisle 2000, 93). In this vein of interconnectedness between war, conflict, security and safety in Jordanian tourism, I argue the following.

1
2
3 First, representatives of the Jordanian tourism sector engage in a process of ‘sanitizing’
4
5 Jordan from the conflicts in the region, be they in Iraq, at the Israeli-Lebanon border, or along
6
7 the Palestinian-Israeli demarcations. This sanitization process refers to efforts to clear and
8
9 erase (perceived and/or imagined) danger and conflict in Jordan. My claim is that this process
10
11 confirms the powerful connections between tourism, danger and conflict. If anything, the
12
13 sanitization process produces an *illusion* of safety through efforts of ridding the country of
14
15 conflict and danger. Second, tourists in the region assert and disrupt discourses of safety and
16
17 danger as they engage with conflicts in Jordan. Some tourists, I argue, are not deterred by the
18
19 danger and conflict in these places, since they travel to Jordan in spite of the ongoing regional
20
21 conflict. They cross the safety/danger boundaries ‘back and forth’ as they engage with
22
23 manifestations of the ongoing regional conflict.
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28 This study on tourist experiences in a place of socio-political turmoil also contributes to
29
30 existing debates on risk perceptions and uncertainties in tourism (Mansfeld, Jonas, and
31
32 Cahaner, 2014; Williams and Baláž 2014), as well as perceived crime and violence (Simpson,
33
34 Cruz-Milán, and Gressel 2014). More specifically, it supports the argument that in the current
35
36 securitization of tourism, some people are not necessarily deterred by perceptions of risk or
37
38 violence and that “destinations potentially embrace the full tourism experience” (Williams
39
40 and Baláž 2014, 8). With respect to the geographical context of Jordan and the wider region, I
41
42 agree that insufficient research has been conducted regarding several tourism related issues,
43
44 including tourist experiences and destination image in the Middle East (Stylidis, Belhassen,
45
46 and Shani 2014).
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51 Understandings generated by this study have the potential to contribute to planning and
52
53 development of Jordanian tourism in more socially and politically sustainable ways. Conflict,
54
55 safety and security in tourism, arguably, represent important issues for those who aim to
56
57 understand the connection between tourism and sustainable development (Hall et al. 2003).
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3 The concept of sustainability, however, should be considered “an ever-moving concept ...
4
5 which has to adapt to time and place, not just in terms of the setting of the natural
6
7 environment but also with respect to human culture and expectations” (Simpson and Simpson
8
9 2011, 8). This is even more apt in Jordan, a country where people have lived in the proximity
10
11 of ongoing conflicts for well over six decades. Whether in times of peace and stability, or
12
13 during intensifications of conflicts, local residents should be able to participate in decision
14
15 making processes, and be empowered to mould social, economic and political initiatives in
16
17 tourism despite the ongoing conflict in the region. This empowerment can come from
18
19 understanding the workings of tourism in a sensitive and contested place where conflict,
20
21 danger, safety and security are intricately entangled. In this complex entanglement, danger
22
23 and conflict are not always deterrents for tourism, however paradoxically this may seem at
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25 first blush.
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30 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: CONFLICTS, SAFETY & SECURITY IN TOURISM 31 32 POLITICS 33

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35
36 It is maintained that in spite of the numerous political dimensions of tourism, interconnections
37
38 between politics and tourism are still insufficiently explored (Hall 1994, 2010; Suntikul and
39
40 Butler, 2010). Matthews (1978) and Richter (1983) are the first to mark the importance of the
41
42 relationship between politics and tourism. Some dimensions of the tourism-politics
43
44 relationship have been tackled mostly from economic, business and managerial perspectives,
45
46 for example: political risk analysis in tourism development (Poirier 1997), political crises
47
48 management (Elliott 1997), politics and the public sector’s management of tourism (Sönmez
49
50 1998; Sönmez and Graefe 1998), tourism planning and development in political borderland
51
52 areas (Timothy 2001), political marketing of destinations (Beirman 2002), the impacts of
53
54 terrorism on tourist motivation and demand (Bhattarai et al. 2005; Henderson 2007).
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3 Examining security and safety aspects, at the interface of the tourism-politics connections,
4
5 four concepts connected to international security are identified (Hall et al 2004). These are:
6
7 first – collective security, whereby states work together to ensure international law; second –
8
9 collective defense pointing to traditional alliances and based on national interests; third –
10
11 common security derived from the 1982 Palme Commission and centers on individual safety;
12
13 and fourth – cooperative security focusing on reciprocal reassurances between states. Security
14
15 discourses in tourism are also examined by Lisle (2013 129) who argues that these “operate in
16
17 pernicious ways and unforeseen registers, which sets the context for how we might begin to
18
19 understand ... even the trivial life-worlds of leisure, travel and relaxation”.

20
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23
24 Within an increasingly complex socio-political environment, further explorations of the
25
26 connections between conflicts and danger in tourism can lead to understanding the “greater
27
28 politicization of tourism” (Suntikul and Butler 2010, 1). Socio-political conflicts, violence
29
30 and danger manifest in different contexts such as bombings, civil or international wars, coups,
31
32 terrorism attacks, assassinations, acts of guerilla warfare, purges, riots and revolutions (Hall
33
34 and O’Sullivan 1996; Neumayer 2004; Seddighi et al. 2000). These forms of social and
35
36 political instabilities are considered to be antithetical with planning, development and
37
38 management of viable and prosperous tourism (Araña and León, 2008; Causevic and Lynch,
39
40 2013; Paraskevas and Arendell, 2007; Sönmez 1998; Wahab 1996).

41
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44
45 A series of case studies illustrate the impacts, mostly negative, of conflicts, danger and
46
47 political instabilities on tourism, such as: 1987 coups in Fiji; 1989 Tian-An-Men incident in
48
49 Beijing; 1990 political turmoil in Kashmir; 1992 coup in Thailand (Hall 1994); several
50
51 terrorist attacks in 1992 and 1993 in Egypt (Wahab 1996); the 1994 uprising in Chiapas,
52
53 Mexico (Pitts 1996); the 1992-1995 conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Causevic and Lynch,
54
55 2013); the conflict in Northern Ireland (Simone-Charteris and Boyd, 2010); and the terrorist
56
57 bombings in Bali in October 2002 and 2005 (Smyth et al. 2009). The dominant academic
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1
2
3 discourse is that tourists need to feel safe while traveling abroad, they want to spend their
4
5 money in a place that can offer them peace and tranquility. Safety, security and stability are,
6
7 therefore, considered vital prerequisites for tourists choosing a destination, and for the
8
9 development of the much needed tourism infrastructure (Hall 1994; Pizam and Mansfeld,
10
11 1996; Hall et al. 2003; Henderson 2007). It is high time this discourse was scrutinized.
12
13

14
15 In her remarks on the relationship between tourism, conflict and terrorism, Lisle (2013 217)
16
17 maintains that these seemingly antithetical practices are in fact intimately entangled. The
18
19 2002 Bali bombings represent “inaugural moments in the post-9/11 securitization of the
20
21 tourism industry”. This becomes evident in the counter-terrorism responses, which have
22
23 “brought the everyday lives of tourists and tourism workers, as well as the material
24
25 infrastructure of the tourism industry, within the orbit of a global security apparatus waging a
26
27 ‘war on terror’” (Lisle 2013 217). Indeed, political instabilities and (imagined) danger, can be
28
29 a double-edged sword. On the one hand it can deter mass tourists from visiting ‘dangerous’
30
31 places, on the other hand it can attract some tourists. As a result of the terrorist attacks in
32
33 Egypt in 1992-1993 tourism in the country was reduced, yet other countries in the region like
34
35 Israel, Cyprus, Turkey and Jordan experienced an increase in tourist arrivals (Wahab 1996).
36
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39 More recently, Uriely et al. (2007) investigated the process of voluntary risk-taking of 58
40
41 Israeli tourists who visited resorts in the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, one to seven weeks after
42
43 the October 2004 terrorist attacks. In another study, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is
44
45 considered an enticing factor to visit Jerusalem (Brin 2006). Three types of politically-
46
47 oriented tourists in Jerusalem are discussed: first, solidarity tourists, who show their support
48
49 for one of the sides involved in the conflict; second, activist tourists who join organizations
50
51 that actively promote peace; and third, the intrigued tourists for whom the conflict is an
52
53 attraction (Brin 2006).
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3 Politically-oriented tourists (Brin 2006), conflict tourists (Warner 1999), danger-zoners
4
5 (Adams 2001), and war tourists (Pitts 1996; Smith 1996) are considered types of dark tourists
6
7 who travel “to places made interesting for reasons of political dispute” (Warner 1999, 137).
8
9 War tourists, as noted by Pitts (1996 224), are the ones for whom political conflicts represent
10
11 the principal factor for travelling in a region and their main motivation is to “experience the
12
13 thrill of political violence”. Pitts (1996 221 quotation in original) in a study on tourism in
14
15 Chiapas, Mexico, immediately after the Zapatista uprising in 1994, found that besides
16
17 journalists who rushed to the scene, a considerable number of war tourists flocked to the
18
19 place: “just like drivers on the interstate stretching their necks trying to get a glimpse of ‘what
20
21 happened’ at a wreck scene, these individuals wanted to be part of the action”. Pitts’s choice
22
23 of terminology could be confusing. War tourism was initially used by Smith (1996) and
24
25 referred to visiting places of past wars such as cemeteries, battlefields, and military zones
26
27 connected to World War II. These tourists pay reverence to the dead, satisfy their curiosities
28
29 and learn more about an ended war or conflict. War tourists in Pitts’s research share more
30
31 similarities with conflict tourists and danger-zoners defined by Adams (2001).
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38 Danger-zoners travel to areas of danger ‘for’ and ‘during’ the conflict, show interest in the
39
40 ongoing political clashes of a region and experience ongoing conflicts first hand. Danger-zone
41
42 tourism is defined as “tourism that thrives in tumultuous times” (Adams 2001, 266). The
43
44 author draws on the fiction literature of Alex Garland to explain the mindset of danger-zone
45
46 tourists: “being in a riot was something I pursued with a truly obsessive zeal, along with being
47
48 tear-gassed and hearing gunshots fired in anger” (Garland cited in Adams 2001, 266). This is
49
50 not to glorify such tourist endeavors, which in effect show many of the structural inequalities
51
52 entrenched in ‘doing’ tourism. I also do not advocate for the ‘innocence’ and ‘victimhood’ of
53
54 such ‘courageous’ danger-zone tourists, since they may be “guilty participants, even agents,
55
56 of global exploitation and corruption” (Phipps 2004, 83). My aim is rather to explore, in more
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1
2
3 depth, the workings of tourism in countries, like Jordan, located in an area of ongoing socio-
4
5 political conflicts and to critically understand tourist experiences in such places.
6
7

8 2.1 LOCATING JORDAN 9

10
11 Jordan has often found itself in the middle of regional conflict and crisis in the modern
12
13 Middle East. It has been an important protagonist in the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars
14
15 (Robins 2004). Since the turn of the third millennium, Jordan has witnessed: one Palestinian
16
17 uprising in 2000; three wars (2001 in Afghanistan, 2003 in Iraq, 2006 in Lebanon); and
18
19 several terrorist attacks (2005 suicide bombings in Amman; gunfire exchanges between
20
21 Lebanon and Israel in October 2009 and August 2010; more minor rocket attacks in April and
22
23 August 2010 in Jordan). In 2011 and 2012, Jordan and other countries in the region such as
24
25 Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen
26
27 were rattled by violent and non-violent protests known as the Arab Spring. In early 2011
28
29 Jordanians protested on the streets of the capital, Amman, and other large cities and
30
31 demanded that the Prime Minister Samir Rifai step down and a new prime minister be elected
32
33 rather than appointed by the King (BBC 2011). The King accepted the resignation of Samir
34
35 Rifai and named another Prime Minister. This is to point out that Jordan's turbulent socio-
36
37 political environment provides opportunities to scrutinize the interconnections between
38
39 tourism, conflict, safety and even peace.
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45
46 In spite of the instabilities and conflicts in the region, United Nations World Tourism
47
48 Organisation (2006, 9) describes the Middle East as exhibiting "very strong performance over
49
50 the past couple of years ... with the increase for 2005 estimated at 8%". Jordan itself
51
52 registered a growth of 5% in international tourism arrivals. Regarding tourist arrivals in 2007
53
54 "the Middle East continues to be one of the tourism success stories of the decade so far and
55
56 leads the growth ranking of arrivals ... with an estimated 16% rise to almost 48 million
57
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1
2
3 tourists” (UNWTO 2008, 8). During 2011 and 2012 “the region showed some very mixed
4
5 results by destination” (UNWTO 2013, 12) with Egypt rebounding with an increase of 18%
6
7 and Jordan 5% in 2012. Jordan’s economy is dependent on tourism income (Neveu 2010) and
8
9 to capitalize on this, the country has to be presented safe, stable and sanitized of the conflicts
10
11 in the region, thus perpetuating that hegemonic discourse on safety and security.
12

13 14 15 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

16
17
18 Fieldwork for this project was conducted in April 2009 and from July to October 2010. In
19
20 2009 I travelled to Jordan and contacted tourism industry representatives and governmental
21
22 officials. This had implications on two levels. First, I became more familiar with my research
23
24 setting and the tourist sites in Jordan (see figure 1). Second, it helped me set up a network to
25
26 recruit more participants in the following year. This represents an important step in
27
28 ethnographic fieldwork. Through snowballing technique, arguably the most widely employed
29
30 recruitment tool in tourism studies (Noy 2008), I managed to interview a total of 43 local
31
32 Jordanian tourism stakeholders including guides, owners, managers and directors of travel
33
34 companies, as well as governmental officials. Interviews were conducted with six Jordanian
35
36 governmental officials: a spokesperson from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, both
37
38 the director and assistant director of Bethany Beyond Jordan – the Baptismal Site, the director
39
40 of Tourist Police Department, the director of Jordan Tourism Board, and a commissioner for
41
42 the Petra Archeological Park. Further interviews were undertaken with directors, managers
43
44 and owners of private tourism companies in Petra and Amman. In addition, I interviewed tour
45
46 guides working at five tourist locations across Jordan: Petra, Aqaba, the Baptismal Site and
47
48 Wadi Rum, and organized one group interview with tour guides in Petra (see figure 1 for
49
50 locations).
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56
57 [insert figure 1]
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2
3 I also interviewed 26 tourists in Jordan. Some of them were recruited through online
4
5 advertising using purposive sampling. Thus, I posted a short blurb about my research in
6
7 June 2010 on forums Trip Advisor and Thorn Tree (affiliated with the Lonely Planet Travel
8
9 Guides). International tourists planning to be in Jordan during my fieldwork responded to the
10
11 online post. Another sampling tool used was 'recruiting on site', that is approaching tourists
12
13 without any prior contact and inquiring after their willingness to be interviewed (Longhurst
14
15 2009). Using these techniques, the profile of international tourists became diverse, regarding
16
17 country of origin. Thus, tourists in this project originate from Australia, China, France, India,
18
19 Japan, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Switzerland, United States of America,
20
21 amongst other countries. All of them are aged between mid-20s to mid-40s, with the exception
22
23 of two couples from Australia in their early 60s. Most of them were independent tourists, out
24
25 of which twenty men and six women.
26
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28

29
30 Interviews were conducted in English, as tourists and local Jordanian respondents were able
31
32 and willing to converse in English. Before turning on the digital recorder I would first hand in
33
34 the project information sheet and agreement to participate form. Interviewees were assured
35
36 that anonymity would be preserved if they wished so, or a pseudonym will be employed. The
37
38 interviewees had ample space to share their views on tourism, conflict and danger in Jordan
39
40 within the space of around one hour for individual interviews, and two hours for group
41
42 discussions. This was followed up by a second round of interviews in some instances, and
43
44 continued electronic mail communications in other instances. As I wanted to explore and
45
46 understand the socio-political workings of tourism in areas of (ongoing) conflict, questions
47
48 were asked to prompt discussions about: the political situation in the region and its impacts on
49
50 Jordanian tourism; curiosity, enticement and/or deterring factors to visit Jordan in spite of
51
52 regional instabilities; thoughts and feelings about the conflict and its possible dangerous
53
54 manifestations;
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2
3 Individual in-depth and semi-structured interviews are considered excellent qualitative
4 methods to delve into sensitive topics that may not be discussed during group interviews
5 (Longhurst 2009). To prompt wider debates, group interviews are favoured. These generate
6 interactions between group members, and researchers can take note of different statements
7 and positions as well as attending to “the ways in which they are deployed in relation to one
8 another” (Secor 2009, 200). Group interviews organized for this project comprised three to
9 four participants and were held in a hotel restaurant, in a tourist camp in the Wadi Rum desert
10 and in a meeting room in Petra Visitors Center. Given the sensitivity of the topic, I organized
11 smaller and thus more manageable group interviews. Rather than seeking ‘insider’
12 knowledge, the individual and group interviews are considered as co-constructions and co-
13 performances of knowledges (Crang 2003). Within research encounters between myself as the
14 interviewer/researcher and the interviewees, attention was paid to feelings and sensitivities
15 circulating during interviews. During the fieldwork I reflected on the discussions with
16 participants in order to assess the extent to which my initial research questions could be
17 addressed.

37 3.2 REFLECTIVELY POSITIONING, ANALYZING & WRITING DATA

38
39
40 The data analysis process commenced during fieldwork while I made reflective notes
41 listening back to the interviews. After the fieldwork, interviews were formally transcribed,
42 coded thematically and then interpreted. While interpreting the data, interconnections between
43 tourism, safety, danger and the ongoing conflicts in the region emerged. To interpret the data I
44 followed three steps. First, familiarization with the data; second, coding, conceptualization
45 and ordering; and third, enfolding the literature.

46
47 Familiarization with the data refers to initial transcription of the material and making detailed
48 annotations. Interviews were transcribed, followed by a process of data reduction, that is
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3 selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the information (Miles and
4
5 Huberman, 1994). I listened to the interviews over and over again, read the notes jotted down
6
7 during and immediately after each interview. Data reduction in my case was a necessary
8
9 process of filtering the information to 'get to' the keywords and aspects I wanted to tackle,
10
11 such as regional conflicts and their socio-political implications in tourism.
12
13

14
15 During the second step, through coding, keywords were identified and data was divided into
16
17 concepts and categories. I engaged with the data by listening to each interview several times
18
19 as I was holding a printed copy of the transcript and highlighting key words such as 'conflict',
20
21 'danger', 'risk', 'peace', 'war', 'politics' 'tour guides'. I also highlighted different tourist
22
23 locations such as Petra, Aqaba, Amman, Baptism Site. This initial process of open and then
24
25 axial coding allowed me to identify, and make connections between and among keywords,
26
27 concepts and categories. Topics, categories and sub-categories 'piled up' and were organized
28
29 in two clusters: tourist, danger, risks and warning; and tourism industry representatives,
30
31 conflict, war and peace. Emergent concepts, themes and relationships were compared and
32
33 contrasted with the extant literature during the third step of enfolding the literature. This
34
35 allowed me to identify and tie together similarities and differences that emerged from the
36
37 material (Altinay and Paraskevas, 2008).
38
39
40
41

42
43 This article is written from an outsider/insider's standpoint, that of a tourism researcher
44
45 conducting fieldwork in Jordan and an intrepid tourist intrigued by places of political
46
47 conflicts. Like Crang (2003 496), I am weary of "work that divides positionality formulaically
48
49 into being insiders (good but impossible) and outsiders (bad but inevitable)". In this project I
50
51 attempted to 'write my self in' the research process, as one avenue of encouraging reflexivity
52
53 is "writing-IN of qualitative research ... by the use of personal pronouns (for example, I, we,
54
55 my, our)" (Mansvelt and Berg, 2005, 257 emphasis in original). My own positionality in the
56
57 field as a white, Christian Orthodox, eastern, single, young and able-bodied woman in a
58
59
60

1
2
3 moderate Muslim country, somewhat destabilizes the powerful researcher/researched
4
5 dichotomy in the research process (Mansvelt and Berg, 2005).
6
7

8
9 The power relations between 'first world' researchers and 'third world' 'researched subjects'
10
11 (Longhurst, 2009) have been discussed within tourism studies and the wider social sciences. I
12
13 feel my position destabilizes this dichotomy. I carry out my research within an economically
14
15 developed 'first' country, but I was born and raised in a developing, eastern European
16
17 country. Further, I blur the boundaries of the dichotomy as "[i]t cannot be assumed that
18
19 interviewers will always be in a position of power over their interviewees" (Longhurst 2009,
20
21 583). The example Longhurst (2009) mentions of a relatively young graduate female,
22
23 interviewing a wealthy middle-age businessman, fits my context and position very well. In the
24
25 field, I was a young woman who had to negotiate her position as a 'serious researcher'. More
26
27 than dressing myself appropriately and presenting myself as such, I also had to pay attention
28
29 to gender issues that sometimes ensued within a male-dominated public life in a
30
31 predominantly Muslim country.
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36 4. DANGER AND SAFETY IN 'SWITZERLAND OF THE MIDDLE EAST'

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38

39 Jordan is, I call it, Switzerland of Europe, because we are friends with everybody and
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41 we don't have any enemies. It's a very safe country. Jordan is the same [as
42
43 Switzerland] in the Middle East. We are surrounded by crazies, you know the east is
44
45 Iraq, west is Palestine, Israel is south, north is Lebanon. See, they are all crazy and
46
47 they are all trouble makers, but if you think about Jordan and the relationship between
48
49 Jordan and the west it can't be any better, it just cannot be any better. (Arfan,
50
51 interview, October 3, 2010)
52
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54

55
56 This strategic position of Jordan, being 'Switzerland of the Middle East', 'friends with
57
58 everybody' and 'having no enemies' in a region 'of crazies' allows for an interesting interplay
59
60

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3 between tourism, danger, safety and conflict. I scrutinize the “Switzerland of the Middle East”
4
5 or “oasis of peace” images of Jordan employed in the process of sanitizing this country of the
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7 conflicts in the region. My intention is to challenge the readiness with which some tourism
8
9 industry representatives consider that ‘selling’ an idyllic Jordan, untouched by the ongoing
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11 conflicts in the region would entice more tourists and therefore generate more economic
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13 benefits. The sanitization of conflicts in Jordan is partly operated by workers in tourism and
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15 partly through mass media accounts. *The Lonely Planet Guide* (2009) reassures tourists that:

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Despite being squeezed between the hotspots of Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Israel and the
Palestinian Territories, Jordan is probably the safest and most stable country in the
region. Regardless of your nationality, you'll be greeted with nothing but courtesy and
hospitality in this gem of a country. (Lonely Planet, para. 3, 2009)

In an interview with *Condé Nast Traveler* the King of Jordan states: “to have Arabs - whether
Iraqis, Lebanese, or others - flooding toward Jordan to escape violence shows that Jordan is
secure” (Hack 2007, 2). According to these accounts danger and conflict are erased from
Jordan as the present is being sanitized. Hospitality, safety and friendliness are, supposedly,
all one will find in Jordan, irrespective of one’s nationality one is welcome with warmth and
courtesy. Safety and stability are underlined by the fact that people in neighboring countries
flee into Jordan when conflict and violence in the region intensify. Anwar, for example,
director of a Jordanian tourism company, explains that “safety and security are the main
selling points for Jordan. People come here and they can stroll at midnight in the streets and
they are safe” (Anwar, interview, July 28, 2010). This tourism director explains that while
problems still exist in Palestine and Israel, Jordan’s main attractive points are its safety and
security. This stance solidifies the temporal and spatial displacement of conflict from tourist
spaces. Danger and conflict are seemingly ousted; safety, security and stability take center
stage in Jordanian tourism. The country is portrayed as a passive and safe space of spillovers

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3 from the conflicts in the region. Jordan is, however, also an active place where the conflicts
4
5 manifest, according to some other Jordanian tourism industry representatives interviewed for
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7 this project. In this area of socio-political turmoil, emphasizing safety and security as the
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9 ‘main selling points for Jordan’ actually reveals a perpetual condition of living with danger,
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11 conflict and war.
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15 Insisting on safety and security in Jordan presents itself as a conundrum. There is still a
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17 longing for (real) peace in the region, “everybody’s wish is for peace ... it’s a dream of the
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19 people living in this part of the world”, melancholically explains Anwar. Mohib, another
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21 manager of a tourism company explains the need to emphasize peace in Jordan:
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25 In a sense it’s [peace] still our ... dream. Now for people who are still in the U.S. or in
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27 the U.K. or in Australia even, when you tell them to travel to the Middle East they
28
29 think of the Middle East as a troubled area. So that’s why I think, we want to stress the
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31 point that we are a peaceful country. ... We want to have them [tourists] thinking
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33 “Now, this is a peaceful country, it is peaceful.” You have to understand, okay Jordan
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35 as a country is peaceful, but the problem is that we had separate wars in the past; so
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37 we were involved in wars in the past. So this means that we have to keep on stressing
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39 that we are a peaceful country [now]. (Mohib, interview, July 29, 2010)
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44 The temporal distancing of the ‘separate wars in the past’ from the peaceful present reveals
45
46 itself as a powerful sanitization practice attempted in Jordanian tourism. Jordan is now
47
48 peaceful, temporally secure from the dangers of past wars. The country is safe for the
49
50 ‘western tourist gaze’ (‘U.S., U.K. or even Australia’), which seems to treat the Middle East
51
52 as a unified, troublesome region. This gaze, in Mohib’s opinion, needs to be corrected by
53
54 stressing the peacefulness, safety and stability of Jordan. In the excerpt above, Mohib
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56 explains that (the wish for) peace has to be made visible by ‘stressing that Jordan is a peaceful
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3 country.' The 'western tourist gaze' should not be a gaze upon an unsafe country, but a gaze
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5 informed by feelings of peace. Tourism and tourists can play an important role in promoting
6
7 peace and bringing about "'dialogue' for peace" to unmask the dialectical and reciprocal
8
9 negotiations involved in intercultural communication" (Blanchard and Higgins-Desbiolles,
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11 2013, 4). Following Blanchard and Higgins-Desbiolles (2013), tourism in relation to peace is
12
13 envisioned in the context of human rights, justice and international citizenship. In this
14
15 context, through tourism, the personal or individual is connected to the cultural and
16
17 multicultural. In Jordan and neighboring areas, peace and tourism should relay the dynamics
18
19 of intercultural interactions with peace being understood beyond the absence of war and/or
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21 ongoing violent conflict, as living in harmony and having harmonious relationships amongst
22
23 neighboring countries.
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27 As part of the *conflict-peace-safety-tourism* entanglements, the 'western' tourist's quest for
28
29 something different and new seems to play an important role, according to Safi, owner of a
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31 tourism company:
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35 Jordanians as people are very welcoming. But of course in the back of their [tourists']
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37 heads they are always, you know they think they are coming to somewhere that's not
38
39 completely safe. ... Most people travel a lot nowadays and most people have been to
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41 Europe, the States and so on. They want to see something different. We offer that, I
42
43 mean as far as the countries [in the Middle East] involved, the quality of the sites are
44
45 world class, so I think that the moment they feel that this area is safe they'll come here
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47 even more than they do now. It's more about them wanting to experience something
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49 different, something new. (Safi, interview, August 11, 2010)
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54 Positioning Jordan as 'something different and new' seems to validate the us/them dichotomy
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56 whereby the capacity of the tourist gaze to consume 'new and different otherness' normalizes
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58 the dominant/subordinate relationship of power inequalities. This perpetuates post/colonial
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3 legacies in the region. Such an example also shows that “tourism runs the risk of ... silencing
4 the heritages of the host communities” (Whyte 2013, 49). Tourism, then, instead of promoting
5 safety, security and peace becomes a “mutually beneficial exploitation” (Whyte 2013, 49).
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9 Jordanian tourism industry representatives feel that tourists, mostly ‘westerners’ from
10 economically developed countries with a sizeable disposable income, are enticed by
11 ‘authentic differences’. For them, the country has to be sanitized of danger, conflict and
12 presented as safe, secure and peaceful.
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19 In our interview Safi continues: “it’s a region that has problems, has issues but Jordan, I think,
20 that as a country we’re looked upon favorably by the Europeans and the Americans” (Safi,
21 interview, August 11, 2010). He downplays danger saying that there’s “nowhere in the world
22 that is completely safe, you know? Be it London or Madrid, whatever. Anywhere it is a bit
23 dangerous”. Indeed, in a growing number of places, the orbits of danger, conflict, security and
24 tourism collide in explicit ways. Terrorists, tourists and soldiers occupy the same space (Lisle
25 2007). At tourist sites in Jordan, conflict, security and tourism orbits collide as tourist police
26 officers and soldiers roam around in plain sight. Anwar explains that:
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38 tourist police are well educated into the tourism hospitality business; meaning that it
39 can help people. It’s all there to support them [tourists] and make them feel secure. ...
40 they help in a way to complement the safety and security of our guests. (Anwar,
41 interview, July 28, 2010)
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48 This spatial collocation of tourists, police and soldiers orbiting the same space implies a
49 temporal collapse as well. It is argued that “tourism and its related mobilities are heavily
50 policed, controlled and regulated” in spite of an “apparent lack of ‘law’” in relation to tourism
51 mobilities (Simpson and Simpson, 2011, 24). This is more obvious in Jordan where the
52 ongoing nature of the neighboring Palestinian-Israeli conflict has turned the region into an
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3 enticing danger-zone. In this zone, the supervisory and surveilling force of the tourist police
4 gaze meets the self-policing gaze of tourists lured to Jordan by imageries of exotic difference.
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6 The juxtaposition of tourists, tourist police officers and soldiers attest to the current ease of
7 travel and makes it possible for areas in (close proximity to) an ongoing conflict, a danger-
8 zone of sorts, “to immediately re-enter the orbit of the tourist gaze as the next hotspot” (Lisle
9 2007, 340).
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17 5. INTREPID TOURISTS? 18 19

20 The rocket that hit Aqaba yesterday [2 August 2010] morning does not stand to affect
21 tourism in the Red Sea resort, officials and tourists stressed on Monday. A rocket
22 “from outside Jordan” struck the coastal city on Monday, killing one Jordanian and
23 injuring four others. ... Although this is the third rocket that has struck Aqaba since
24 2005, tourism has not been affected, with figures indicating a growth in the number of
25 tourists visiting the city. (Malkawi and Qatamin, 2010, 1-2)
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34 On August 2nd 2010 several rockets were launched from the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt
35 supposedly aiming Eilat in Israel, one of those rockets accidentally fell near Hotel
36 InterContinental killing one local taxi driver. Immediately after this incident Jordan Tourism
37 Board posted on its website assurances that it was an isolated incident with no effect on
38 tourism. Daily newspaper *The Jordan Times* published an article in its August 3rd edition
39 “Rocket incident unlikely to affect Aqaba tourism” (Malkawi and Qatamin, 2010, 1). To
40 support this claim reporters cited the newly appointed tourism minister assuring “[w]e arrived
41 in Aqaba after the accident and tourists are still there going about their business.
42 Some of them are on the beach and others are in hotels as usual” (Afanah as cited in Malkawi
43 and Qatamin, 2010, 4). The Jordan Hotels Association also confirmed there were no
44 cancellations and two tourists were interviewed to express how safe they felt.
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3 The illusion of safety in Jordan is produced to the extent that tourists often attest to the
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5 country's safety and stability even in the midst of "rockets raining on resorts" (Waikato
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7 Times, 2010, para. 1). *The New York Times* interviewed a Polish tourist about the incident,
8
9 who said that he had been sleeping on the roof of a hotel in Aqaba when he was awakened by
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11 two explosions. The tourist then "looked out at the city and I saw the smoke and took two
12
13 photographs. I went to have a look but I couldn't see anything because of all the soldiers and
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15 police" (Polish Tourist as cited in Farrell and Kershner, 2010, 11).
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19 On the same incident, *The Jordan Times* quotes a Spanish tourist (as cited in Malkawi and
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21 Qatamin, 2010, 7) saying "I've visited Aqaba more than once and I will not let such
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23 accidental happenings spoil my enjoyment. I went shopping and spent good times and I will
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25 visit Aqaba again". A Russian tourist (as cited in Malkawi and Qatamin, 2010, 11) condemns
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27 the attack and names it an act of terrorism, "[t]his is a criminal attack, and terrorism incidents
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29 are everywhere. [It] will not prevent me from coming back to Aqaba, as I have lots of nice
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31 memories in this city".
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35 Accounts of such tourists, danger-zoners in Adams' (2001) words, are capitalized on by the
36
37 local mass media and tourism governmental bodies to prove that tourists still perceive Jordan
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39 as safe and stable even after the August 2nd rocket incident. They also attest to the complex
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41 connections between tourism, conflict and safety. These tourists are reportedly not deterred by
42
43 the conflict and the danger in the region; they vouch not to be scared off and visit the place
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45 again. The boundaries that separate safety/danger are blurred by tourists who consider Aqaba
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47 - a city reportedly being targeted by rocket attacks in 2005, April and August 2010 - a "place
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49 with lots of nice memories" (Russian Tourist as cited in Malkawi and Qatamin, 2010, 11).
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54 By positioning tourism alongside incidents illustrative of the ongoing conflict in the region
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56 these safety/danger blurrings are exposed. The rockets that hit Aqaba are representative of the
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3 ongoing nature of the neighboring Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Thus, tourism, tourists and
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5 tourist activities in Aqaba are juxtaposed with the danger of the ongoing conflict in the
6
7 region. Tourism and conflict are placed side by side, safety and danger collocate as some
8
9 tourists report not to be deterred by such 'terrorist attacks'.
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11 12 5.1 FLIRTING WITH DANGER – IGNORING TRAVEL WARNINGS 13

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15 Travel warnings, those "ominous announcements" meant to alert tourists (Noy and Kohn,
16
17 2010, 206), have the function of regulating, sanitizing and securitizing travel and tourism in
18
19 most economically developed societies. If analyzed in detail, these warnings "construct
20
21 multilayered spatial–visual representations of tourist destinations" (Noy and Kohn, 2010,
22
23 206). In this article, I am not directly concerned with the semiotics of these warnings, but with
24
25 the ways tourists acknowledge, ignore and transgress them. Discourses of safety and security
26
27 reflected in travel warnings and advisories, are intended to shape tourist activities and
28
29 contribute to understanding how tourism, safety, conflicts and danger are entangled. The
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31 focus here is on tourists who choose to defy them and travel to a place sanctioned by travel
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33 warnings as a danger zone.
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39 Hyun, a tourist in his late 20s from South Korea and interviewed for this project, decided to
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41 go ahead with his plans of diving in the Red Sea six weeks after the rocket incident in Aqaba.
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43 He did so despite a travel warning issued by the U.S. Embassy in Amman on the same day of
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45 our interview, September 16th 2010. *The Jordan Times* newspaper quotes the official travel
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47 warning: "[t]he U.S. embassy recommends that all non-official and personal travel to Aqaba
48
49 be deferred for at least the next 48 hours. For those citizens resident in Aqaba, the downtown
50
51 and port areas should be avoided if possible" (U.S. Embassy as cited in Omari, 2010, 4). After
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53 reading about the rocket incident and the U.S. travel warning, Hyun opined that "I feel more
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55 cautious" (Hyun, interview, September 16, 2010). He, however, chose not to cancel his plans
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3 of travelling to Aqaba, because the adventure of diving in the Red Sea was one of the main
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5 purposes of his trip in Jordan. He also informed me that he decided not to tell his family about
6
7 the August 2nd rocket incident “because I don’t want them to worry about me [mild laugh]”
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9 (Hyun, interview, September 16, 2010).
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11
12 Monty, another tourist in his early 40s from the U.S. travelled to Jordan and the neighboring
13
14 Palestine/Israel from June 18th to July 2nd. That is one month before the August 2nd 2010
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16 rocket incident, but seven weeks after the previous rocket incident on April 22nd 2010 when
17
18 no casualties were recorded. Monty was aware of the volatility of the region, but explained
19
20 that he did not “shy away from countries which my government (U.S.) advises one avoid
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22 (e.g.: KSA [Kingdom of Saudi Arabia] ... and probably most of the Middle East, for that
23
24 matter)” (Monty, online interview, August 10, 2010).
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30 Like Hyun and Monty, some Israeli tourists in a study conducted by Uriely, Maoz and
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32 Reichel (2007) ignore official travel advisories issued by the Israeli government, specifically
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34 those that concerned travel to the Sinai Peninsula within one to seven weeks after the multiple
35
36 terror attacks that occurred on October 7th 2004. For them, tourism represents “an adventurous
37
38 domain of life, in which risk taking is less threatening and ... more appealing” (Uriely et al.
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40 2007, 3). Israeli tourists, most of them in their early 20s, were not forthcoming to their parents
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42 about their travel plans to Sinai (Uriely et al. 2007, 5). It is further argued that these young
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44 tourists felt “relaxed and unafraid”, but also reluctant to talk about their fears. This can be
45
46 interpreted as part of their desire to be perceived courageous and not “‘weak’ or cowardly
47
48 tourists” (Uriely et al. 2007, 5).
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52 The same could be argued for a family from the U.S., David, Marge and their two teenage
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54 daughters, who also travelled to Jordan two weeks after the rocker incident. When I asked
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56 them about danger, possible terrorist attacks, safety and security Marge said:
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3 sometimes it makes a place even more secure, because I know that when I went to
4 Bali, it was right after the bombings in Bali. And it occurred to me, yeah, that there
5 were bombings, but I felt that it was so random that, because it just happened, it
6 probably wouldn't happen again. (Marge from the Cheung family, small group
7 interview, August 14, 2010)
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15 While Marge and her family did not plan to travel to Aqaba, she downplayed the chances of
16 another rocket incident in Aqaba or other parts of Jordan, thus disrupting the safety/danger
17 boundary. Likewise, her husband, David, emphasized the randomness of such an attack and
18 asserted that "it wouldn't necessarily deter me, because I've been to places before, I mean,
19 where there have been terrorist acts, but that's me. But the other thing I realize is, terrorist
20 acts can be very random" (David from the Cheung family, small group discussion, August 14,
21 2010). Both of them think terrorist attacks are random and cannot be predicted, and
22 maintained that they would travel to a region that had been bombed "because it just happened,
23 it probably wouldn't happen again" (Marge and David, small group discussion, August 14,
24 2010). This seems to be the gamblers fallacy that Wolff and Larsen (2014) explain in their
25 study on tourist risk perceptions and worries. The gamblers fallacy is explained as "a well-
26 known cognitive bias where people assume that chance is a self-correcting process in which
27 deviation in one direction makes deviations in the opposite direction more likely for the
28 equilibrium to be restored" (Wolff and Larsen, 2014, 206). The authors analyze tourist
29 perceptions before and after the July 22nd 2011 terrorist attacks in Oslo/Utøya in Norway.
30 They 'paradoxically' ask whether terrorism makes tourists feel safer. Indeed, their findings
31 maintain that tourists believe Norway to be a safe destination, probably slightly safer after the
32 attacks.
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56 In a similar vein, of gamblers fallacy and coin tossing, Lakshmi and Reni from India said
57 about the rocket attack in Aqaba that "it does not make me concerned about my trip ... it
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3 sounded like a stray incident or at least in a limited location” (Lakshimi and Reni, interview,
4
5 October 2, 2010). These two women travelled to Jordan at the end of September 2010. During
6
7 our set of interviews, before and while on the trip, they insisted that the ongoing conflict in
8
9 the region and the attack in Aqaba did not effect their decision to visit Jordan and Egypt. They
10
11 think such attacks are stray, with limited spatial-temporal effects on tourism. In relation to the
12
13 attacks in Bali in October 2002 and October 2005, researchers have maintained that these
14
15 only have a transitory effect “on the growth path of tourist arrivals from major markets and ...
16
17 Bali’s tourism sector is sustainable in the long run” (Smyth et al. 2009, 1367). Australian
18
19 tourists are ready to return to Bali in spite of travel warnings. Indeed, the Australian
20
21 government issues such travel advisories and warnings, but they tend to be ignored by
22
23 Australians because they are overly cautious and conservative, “they play it safe”, as
24
25 mentioned by two senior couples who were interviewed for my study (Four Australian
26
27 tourists, group interview, October 5, 2010). These tourists travelled to Jordan eight weeks
28
29 after the August 2nd rocket attack in Aqaba and explained that the incident and the
30
31 accompanying travel warning did not deter them from their travel plans.
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37 All the above-mentioned tourists interviewed for this project travelled to Jordan and some of
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39 them to Aqaba one to eight weeks after the August 2nd rocket incident. They explained their
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41 intrepid attitude as willingness to take the risk. The incident felt less threatening either
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43 because it just happened, therefore the place tends to be ‘even more secure’, or because it
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45 seemed to be an isolated incident in a limited area, or because the risk was a calculated one.
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49 6. CONCLUSION

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52 In this paper I argue that the workings of tourism in areas of ongoing socio-political turmoil
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54 can be better understood if the interconnections between tourism, conflict, safety and security
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56 are more fully scrutinized. Conflict proves not to be a unilateral deterrent for tourism; and
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3 security discourses that “reproduce a liberal order” (Lisle 2013, 139) can be critically
4
5 contested. Through the spatial and temporal displacement of conflicts, a sanitization and
6
7 securitization process is attempted in Jordanian tourism that reproduces a hegemonic
8
9 discourse of global security for the maintenance of tourism-sector revenue.
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12 Understanding the ways in which securitization and sanitization *in* and *of* tourism are
13
14 operated, can shed light on ‘travel economies of desire’ and their accompanying geopolitical
15
16 imageries. These shape tourism destinations in relation to safety and danger, and “the
17
18 affective mobilization of fear, anxiety and danger that circulate in particular destinations”
19
20 (Lisle 2013, 139). Lisle alludes to the affective and emotional ‘turn’ in critical social sciences.
21
22 This ‘turn’ can offer tremendous potential to explore and understand tourist experiences in
23
24 areas of turmoil, beyond judgmental considerations of morbid engagements with places of
25
26 conflict and/or violence (Buda & McIntosh, 2013; Buda, d’Hautesserre, and Johnston, 2014).
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31 Lisle (2013, 135) argues that tourism industries are subordinated “to a security calculus”
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33 whose function is to curtail tourist fantasies, direct and regulate their physical movement. My
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35 findings show that this security calculus does *not* exert a curtailing influence on some
36
37 undeterred tourists. Tourists in areas of ongoing socio-political turmoil engage with the
38
39 conflict, they are not put off by it. This was evident in the above discussions about the rockets
40
41 incident in Aqaba in 2010. The process of sanitization and securitization operates not only on
42
43 an affective and discursive level, but also on the level of physical and material infrastructures
44
45 in tourism. These have been altered to incorporate security barriers, metal detectors, security
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47 personnel and CCTV cameras. Future research on Jordanian tourism could engage with such
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49 aspects to explore the biopolitical connections between humans and non-human materials.
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54 Further avenues to better understand tourism in Jordan can focus on the peace aspect, on ways
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56 tourism can contribute to peace building efforts in the region. As it was briefly evident in my
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3 discussions with Jordanian tourism industry representatives, peace is not static and utopian,
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5 but dynamic and permeable, with as many interpretations of peace as there are cultures
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7 (Salazar, 2006). Taking this view, specific routes should be explored of how and in what
8
9 ways tourism can contribute to bringing about lasting and sustainable peace in the region. For
10
11 this, perhaps, tourism researchers ought to engage more critically with the concept of socio-
12
13 political in/stability. It is maintained that there is no agreed definition of political stability as
14
15 such (Poirier, 1997). The idea of change is important to stability whether political, social or
16
17 economic, and should be factored in tourism planning and management. In this respect
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19 Wilson (2002, 203) argues: “a crucial and paradoxical element in stability: [is] change.
20
21 Although change is the logical opposite of stability, some change appears to be necessary for
22
23 political stability”. An initial gesture towards tackling the connections between political
24
25 in/stability and tourism was undertaken by Butler and Suntikul (2013) via the concept of
26
27 political change.
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33 In Jordan, and other countries of continuous turmoil, tourism is understood to exist, develop
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35 and be managed only if conflict and danger are erased. But tourism coexists with conflict.
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37 They are not mutually exclusive. Accepting this does not render all conflict ridden
38
39 destinations as unsafe and dangerous; just the contrary, tourism planning, development and
40
41 management can become more socially and politically sustainable, if it adopts a more
42
43 nuanced approach. In the context of more sustainable tourism planning in an area of
44
45 continuous turmoil, the concept of destination governance may be useful (Beritelli et al.
46
47 2007). A destination governance approach could offer ways to develop rules and mechanisms
48
49 for policies and business strategies by involving different governmental, non-governmental
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51 and private institutions, as well as individuals. Such destination governance rules and
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53 mechanisms should be adaptable to the volatile, often changing political environment, in
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55 Jordan and the surrounding region.
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3 Understandings of destinations put forth by Saraniemi and Kylanen (2011, 133) as units “of
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5 action where different stakeholders, such as companies, public organizations, hosts, and
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7 guests interact through cocreation of experiences” are helpful in exploring tourism
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9 development avenues in Jordan and other politically unstable countries. Such explorations are
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11 needed in settings, like Jordan for example, where ongoing, often violent conflict either inside
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13 Jordan or spilling over from neighboring Palestine/Israel, Iraq and Syria, co-exists with
14
15 tourism. In terms of destination management, the geographical positioning of Jordan and its
16
17 neighboring conflict work to “stress the role of local factors, emphasize engagement with and
18
19 impact on residents, and highlight the way in which destinations are places transformed by
20
21 and for tourism” (Pearce 2014, 150). Taking a destination management approach to
22
23 understanding the complexities of tourism, conflict and politics in Jordan and other such
24
25 countries would mean to employ “a more holistic approach, reflect local particularities, and
26
27 be more dynamic and agile” (Pearce 2014, 150).
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33 This paper has sought to deconstruct the complex entanglements between safety, security,
34
35 conflict and danger in tourism studies. It has also proposed another way to unpack seemingly
36
37 antithetical terms such as peace/war and safety/danger, for example. That is to recognize
38
39 binaries as social constructs of power relations and to question who has the resources to
40
41 construct taxonomies and name the world. The binary thinking often employed in tourism
42
43 studies obfuscates insights from critical social sciences on shared experiences and identities.
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45 This project attempts to stimulate debates about productive hybrids that allow middle ground
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47 for shared experiences and identities, that bridge either/or approaches and incorporate critical
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49 perspectives.
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Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank the participants in this research project. Their willingness to share their time, insights and stories have made this study possible; because of them I have formed strong emotional attachments to Jordan and the whole region. I am grateful to Dr Barbara Porter and all the staff at the American Centre for Oriental Research where I was hosted during my fieldwork in Amman. The staff at the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem also deserve special thanks for their hospitality during my stay in Al Quds/Jerusalem. Max Oulton at the University of Waikato helped me with cartographic work, and I thank him deeply for the map used in this article. I am also indebted to my colleagues Anne-Marie d'Hauteserre, Lynda Johnston, Gareth Hoskins, Jelmer Jeurig and Koen Salemink for having commented on initial versions of this paper. I am also very grateful for the anonymous reviewers' useful comments provided on an earlier drafts of this article. Sincere thanks go to the Editor for prompt handling of communication.