



FACULTY OF ENGINEERING

Ecotourism and Cultural Landscape Conservation
"Bani Na'im Wilderness/Hebron"

السياحة البيئية و الحفاظ على المشهد الثقافي
"برية بني نعيم- الخليل"

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The author is solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in the publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Birzeit University.

Dedication

To my parents, sisters and brothers, who are the best supporters ever

To my friends and colleagues, who have encouraged me in so many ways....

To you all I dedicate this humble work....

Acknowledgement

I owe thanks to many people for their support and encouragement along the whole journey of doing my thesis. Without their kind support, guidance, encouragement and assistance, I would not have been able to finish my thesis

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List of Abbreviations

ARIJ: applied Research Institute- Jerusalem

BNW: Bani Na'im Wilderness (Al Masafer)

ECOS: Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GIS: Geographic Information System

IBA's: Important Bird Area's

IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature

MOPIC: Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.

MOTA: Ministry Of Tourism and Antiquities

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

OPT: occupied Palestinian Territory

PACE: Palestinian Association for Cultural Exchange

PCBS: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

PLO: Palestinian Liberation Organization

PNA: Palestinian National Authority

PTB: Palestinian Tourism Board

PWLS: Palestinian Wild Life Society

ROS: Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

TIES: The International Ecotourism Society

TOS: Tourism Opportunity Spectrum

UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

Abstract

Ecotourism is widely accepted as one strategy to provide environmental, socio-economic and cultural benefits at both local and national levels. The major underlying assumption of ecotourism is that visitors can provide the necessary economic incentives to achieve local conservation and development.

How could ecotourism be promoted to enhance the cultural landscape conservation? This study seeks to assess the ecotourism opportunities in the Palestinian context and contribute to the fundamental knowledge about ecotourism and cultural landscapes conservation.

Bani Na'im Wilderness (BNW) in Hebron Governorate in the West Bank was chosen as a case study. A qualitative method, which included primary and secondary data, was utilized. Various tourism stakeholders including tour operators; governmental institutions officers; non-governmental organizations members and local residents were interviewed to determine the ecotourism potential of the study area through applying the Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum (ECOS) framework.

Results indicate that there is a potential to develop ecotourism in BNW. Natural and cultural resources and abundant human resources in the area will strengthen the development.

However, In order for the ecotourism development to be successful, a set of key issues were identified and a number of useful recommendations were offered to enable managers to further develop ecotourism opportunities within BNW. Among these are the management and conservation of BNW cultural landscape as an ecotourism resource, management of tourism impact, interpretation and education, promotion and marketing, in addition to declare the site as a protected national park.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Cultural Landscape, ECOS, Bani Na'im Wilderness.

المخلص

تعتبر السياحة البيئية من الإستراتيجيات المتداولة على نطاق واسع لتوفير منافع بيئية واجتماعية واقتصادية وثقافية على المستويين المحلي والوطني. و الفرضية الرئيسية في هذا السياق هو انه يمكن للزوار تقديم الحوافز الاقتصادية اللازمة لتحقيق التنمية المحلية و الحفاظ على المشهد الثقافي.

تسعى هذه الدراسة للإجابة عن كيفية تشجيع السياحة البيئية لتعزيز الحفاظ على المشهد الثقافي عن طريق تقييم فرص السياحة البيئية ضمن السياق الفلسطيني، والمساهمة في المعرفة الأساسية حول السياحة البيئية و الحفاظ على المشهد الثقافي.

وقد تم اختيار برية بني نعيم في محافظة الخليل في الضفة الغربية كحالة دراسية. وقد استخدمت طريقة البحث النوعي ، الذي يتضمن استخدام البيانات الأولية والثانوية. وأجريت مقابلات مع عدد من المهتمين بالأنشطة السياحية، تضمنت منظمي الرحلات السياحية، موظفي الهيئات الحكومية، أعضاء المنظمات غير الحكومية والسكان المحليين لتحديد إمكانات و فرص السياحة البيئية لمنطقة الدراسة من خلال تطبيق سلسلة فرص السياحة البيئية ECOS.

تشير نتائج الدراسة إلى أن هناك إمكانية لتطوير السياحة البيئية في برية بني نعيم ، فتوفر الموارد الطبيعية والثقافية وكذلك الموارد البشرية تساهم في تعزيز هذا التطور. هذا و قد حددت الدراسة مجموعة من القضايا المهمة في تنمية و نجاح السياحة البيئية في برية بني نعيم . و كذلك، تقدم الدراسة مجموعة من التوصيات الرئيسية من اجل زيادة فرص تطوير السياحة البيئية في منطقة الدراسة بشكل خاص، و في السياق الفلسطيني بشكل عام. من ابرز هذه التوصيات إدارة المشهد الثقافي في برية بني نعيم و الحفاظ عليه كمصدر للسياحة البيئية، وإدارة أثر السياحة، التدريب و التعليم، الترويج والتسويق، بالإضافة إلى إعلان الموقع كمحمية طبيعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السياحة البيئية، المشهد الثقافي، سلسلة فرص السياحة البيئية ECOS، برية بني نعيم.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Palestine, as part of the Eastern Mediterranean region, constitutes one of the richest ecosystems in the world, with a large variety of wildlife resources and rich base of flora and fauna. The extent to which historical Palestine has attracted the combined attentions of world civilizations has been source events of its ecological richness. Hence, remarkable range of ecological variation, biodiversity and unique geographical location character, in addition to prolonged influence of human activities, all have contributed to its unique cultural landscape (Sultan, 2000).

There is a dynamic interaction between tourism and the landscape. This interaction challenges societies as they seek an appropriate development policy that would not affect the environment, and would ensure the potential for tourism development within the framework of the sustainable development strategy (Coccosis, 2003).

Ecotourism is one of the applications for this concept.

Hence, this study seeks to shed the light on the natural, cultural, aesthetic and unique values of Bani Na'im Wilderness (BNW, (Al-Masafer) landscapes along with the ecotourism opportunities through requesting the local participation. These values and opportunities are potentials for developing new integrated guidelines for the

conservation of cultural landscapes and its biodiversity through promoting the ecotourism as an important economic tool.

1.2 Research Problem

Nowadays Palestinian cultural landscape and biodiversity are under threat; several factors are driving to biodiversity loss and irreversible change in landscape integrity, authenticity and land-use (UNESCO, 2008). Natural ecosystems are destroyed to make way for agricultural, industrial, or housing developments; and growing population pressure has led to unsustainable utilization of natural resources and pollution of the environment. However, due to the belligerent military Occupation, environmental management in Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) is complicated and hampered. Furthermore, Israeli Colonization policies have added to population pressure, as settlements continue to grow in the Occupied West Bank. Straining of natural resources, environmental pollution, and the construction of settlements, the bypass roads, and the Segregation Wall have all created further land fragmentation and ecosystem destruction. Thus, the Israeli Occupation amplifies and exacerbates existing environmental problems, and hampers and impedes efforts to ameliorate them. If steps are not taken to overcome this problem, environmental degradation will continue and worsen in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) and as a result many unique species may be lost (Isaac & Gasteyer, 1994).

Thought, the lack of an integrated approach and unified legislative framework to landscape and biodiversity conservation is the main cause of the current deterioration of the Palestinian environment and nature resources. Different laws are applied in different areas of the West Bank and, as clearly revealed by the “Desk

Study on the Environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory” carried out by UNEP in 2003, there is lack of coherence and overlap amongst these laws. The lack of an environmental policy and legal framework leads to the poor planning of land uses (e.g. rampant urban development; exploitation of forestry, mining and quarrying activities, illegal dumping of solid waste etc), and is creating an increasing need for the establishment and enforcement of a methodology for the conservation and management of cultural landscapes and its associated cultural and natural values (UNESCO, 2008).

The protection of natural and cultural assets is still in the background and only very few spatial plans pay sufficient attention to these aspects. Therefore, there is a need for the cultural landscape interests to play a stronger role in planning in order to achieve sufficient attention towards conservation of the cultural monuments and landscapes.

On the other hand, the concept of ecotourism is not a new innovation to the Palestinian context; yet, the awareness of the vital need of ecotourism on both local and national level is increasing and spreading rapidly (Anani, 2000). Developing ecotourism could provide a system of environmental awareness and develop a sense of aesthetic importance of the landscape, if merged with an institutional framework and public participation. Moreover, the economical income of ecotourism for locals and tourists will be of much interest to a large portion of the market (Anani, 2000).

Therefore, this study will additionally, help guide the decisions of those interested in promoting ecotourism. This includes tour operators and local entrepreneurs interested in additional sources of income and for government agencies and policy makers designing strategies to promote and implement ecotourism. As well as, this

helps the decision makers who are responsible for the efforts of conserving and protecting the cultural and natural landscape.

1.3 Research Objectives

The thesis focuses on determining existing and potential ecotourism activities, and identifying a set of key factors needed for successful ecotourism operations, including barriers to their success. It also focuses on seeking the participation of different stakeholders in hope of affecting future policy decisions. This can be achieved through:

- Investigation of the opportunities and constraints for ecotourism promotion in the Palestinian context, so as to increase cultural landscape conservation.
- Examination of Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum (ECOS) framework as a strategy through which enhancement of the relationship between ecotourism and cultural landscape conservation can be achieved.

1.4 Research Questions

The research main question is:

- **How could ecotourism be promoted to enhance the cultural landscape conservation in Bani Na'im Wilderness (BNW) in Hebron Governorate?**
(Solution-oriented question)

This main question can be divided into the following sub-questions:

- **What** are the opportunities and constraints to develop successful ecotourism in BNW? *(Analytical question)*.

- **How** can ECOS be applied in the Palestinian Context? (*Process-oriented question*)
- **What** are the key issues in ecotourism development? (*Auxiliary solution-oriented question*).

1.5 Research Significance

Landscape and cultural landscape studies have been introduced in many natural and social science disciplines. These studies have become important assets in planning, conservation, recreation, agriculture and humanities. Connecting between the cultural landscape and ecotourism is a new trend in the world, and yet hasn't take place in the West Bank. However, there are inspiring initiatives in the field of alternative tourism such as Rozana Association new tourism concept in Birzeit town; Abraham Path trail; Alternative Tourism Group (ATG) in the field of cultural tourism; in addition to some activities of Palestine Wildlife Society (PWLS). The notion here is that most of these initiatives are not following the concept of pure ecotourism; and can be considered as applications not studies. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the ecotourism opportunities in the Palestinian context and contribute to the fundamental knowledge about ecotourism and cultural landscapes conservation taking Bani Na'im Wilderness in West Bank as a case study. In an attempt to develop new integrated guidelines for the conservation of cultural landscapes and its biodiversity through promoting the ecotourism as an important economic tool.

1.6 Research Methodology

One of the main purposes of this study is to assess the ecotourism opportunities in the Palestinian context and contribute to the fundamental knowledge about ecotourism and cultural landscapes conservation. Qualitative analysis was deemed most appropriate given the exploratory nature of the research. Indeed, qualitative approaches have a history of use in tourism research within certain disciplines (Decrop, 1999). Interviews, observations and secondary sources are the main vehicles of inquiry used in this study.

The study is based on qualitative data which include series of semi-structured interviews with local residents, tour operators, ministries and governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations members who have interest in this topic. Furthermore, observes the physical form in relation to the cultural landscape and ecotourism activities at Bani Na'im Wilderness. Other techniques have been used such as photos and maps for the site are systematically analyzed.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into eight chapters, as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction: This chapter is presented in the form of introductory background to introduce the following parts of the thesis: It includes an introduction for the study; research problem, study objectives, research questions, research methodology, research significance and organization of the study.

Chapter Two: Contextual Background: This chapter gives a general background about the Palestinian landscape, topography and biodiversity. While at the same time has a deep view on the tourism in Palestine.

Chapter Three: Cultural Landscape and Ecotourism: This chapter represents the literature written about the two main aspects; cultural landscape and ecotourism. Presenting many related studies in this field.

Chapter Four: Methodology: This chapter provides an overview of the case study approach. The field observations that has been undertaken, and the selection of data (primary and secondary) that have been analyzed, compounded by the limitations of this method are all discussed, as a part of the proposed methodological framework.

Chapter Five: The study Area: Bani Na'im Wilderness: This chapter is a general background on the study area; it covers the site definition and boundaries, the physical characteristics, the socioeconomic status, history and biodiversity.

Chapter Six: Ecotourism Opportunities in Bani Na'im Wilderness: This chapter concerns with resulted data from fieldwork that help in investigating ecotourism opportunities and constraints in the study area taking into consideration different stakeholders involved in this process.

Chapter Seven: Key Issues in Ecotourism Development: This chapter concerns with discussion and analysis that are conducted qualitatively based on the collected data from the observations and interviews.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Recommendation: This chapter is a conclusion which is the outcome of the discussion of the results, and then recommendations for the future projects and the studies related to the research subject.

Chapter Two

Contextual Background

This chapter provides a contextual background for Palestine. The chapter is mainly three folds. The *first* covers the landscape of Palestine, and pay attention to the climatic zones that divide the West Bank into four distinctive regions. The *second* part examines the biodiversity status in Palestine. Whereas the *third* part scantily discusses the current status of tourism in Palestine and reveals the factors and conditions that influence its development.

2.1. Palestinian Landscape

The Palestinian Territories (PT) is located to the east of the Mediterranean Sea between 29° and 33° North latitude and between 35° and 39° east longitude. The (PT) refers to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, see [Map \(2.1\)](#).

Palestine, as it stands now, is divided into two distinct regions covering a total area of approximately 6,065 km² (6 million dunums). The larger of these two areas is called the West Bank (covering 5,700 km²), with the Gaza Strip covering only 365 km² ([Isaac & Gasteyer, 1994](#)). The research scope will be within the West Bank.

30% of the West Bank is agricultural land ([MOPIC 1999](#)). The land of Palestine is unique for its Bio-geo-diversity, which is nurtured by the sharpness with which

climatic zones desert, steppe, and Mediterranean wood land, adjoin one another in this compact geographical area of Palestine (Arij, 1999).



Map (2.1): Palestinian West Bank and Gaza Strip in the Current Regional Context.
Source: The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ), 2007

There are places where the buffer zone between desert and wood lands is too narrow that the difference in landscape and scenery can be clearly distinguished.

Generally speaking, Palestine climate belongs to the Eastern Mediterranean, with a short rough humid winter and a long dry moderate summer, while autumn and spring

are not quite visible. The average annual rainfall differs drastically between the different regions of Palestine due to various factors, like the distance from the sea and height. On the highlands of Palestine the mean annual rain fall could reach 650 mm, while it is nearly 100 mm per year in the Dead Sea shores in the great Jordan Rift (Ministry of Environmental Affairs, 1999).

As part of the African Asian great rift, the topography of Palestine is unique with its scenic and qualitative diversity, ranging from plains, hills, mountains, valleys, and desert. The succession of the geological ages and changes in topography had produced a variety of soil types and rocks, depending on the parent material, the climate and age of formation. This unique virtue was the reason behind the existence of the biodiversity and the variation in landscape and visual elements of the Palestinian natural environment. As a result, the West Bank can be divided into four major topographical zones: the Jordan Valley, Eastern Slopes, Central Highlands and Semi Coastal Plane zone (Anani, 2000).

A. The Jordan Valley Zone

The Jordan Valley extends along the western bank of the Jordan River from the village of Bardala in the north to the northern tip of the Dead Sea in the south. Elevation ranges between 200-300m below sea level and approximately 100- 200m above sea level. The climate is semi-tropical characterized by hot summers and warm winters. Annual rainfall ranges 100-200mm. The soils are sandy and calcareous, which enables the region to grow off-season vegetables and semi-tropical fruit trees such as bananas and citrus. Some of the indigenous plants are

mainly *Ziziphus spina-christi*, *Acacia raddiana*, *Acacia tortilis*, *Tamarix galica* and *Atriplex halimus* (Sultan, 2000; ARIJ, 1994).

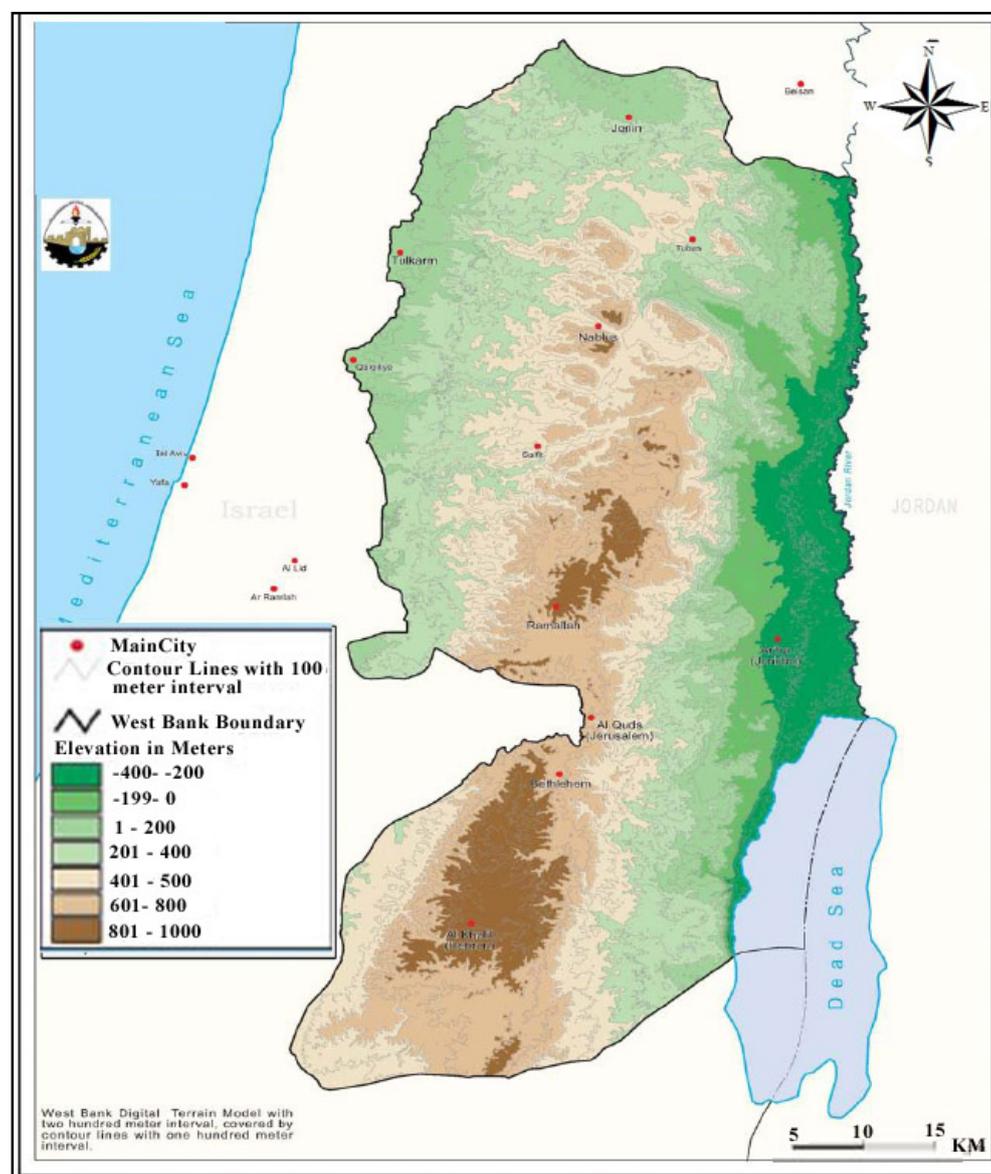
B. The Eastern Slopes Zone

The Eastern Slopes extend along the eastern side of the West Bank, stretching across all of the districts except for Tulkarem, from Jenin in the north through Hebron in the south (ARIJ, 1994). Elevation ranges between 600m above sea level and approximately 200m below. The climate is semi-dry with low annual rainfall varying between 200-400mm. Dominant soils are the Grey calcareous steppe soils and alluvial soils in valleys and plains. Native plants include some trees and shrubs, among these are *Ceratonia siliqua*, *Pistacia lentiscus* and remnants of *Pistacia atlantica* (in the northern parts) and *Sarcopoterium spinosum*, *Thymus capitatus*, *Artemisia herba alba*, *Ononis natrix*, *Ballota undulata*, *Hordeum bulbosum*, *Poa bulbosa* and *Capparis* species. This area is used mainly for grazing of sheep and goats (Sultan, 2000).

C. The Central Highlands Zone

The Central Highlands run across the center of the area crossing from Jenin in the north to Hebron in the south. It is mountainous with some areas exceeding an elevation of 1000m above sea level. It has a good average of annual rainfall ranging between 400-1000mm (ARIJ, 1994; Isaac, Gasteyer, 1994). Soils in the valleys and between the hills are alluvial soils, whereas in the mountains the dominant soils are Terra-Rosa soils, and Rendzina soils on the eastern and southern slopes. Indigenous

plants include Aleppo Pine forest and Maquis, Evergreen Oak Forest, Carob-Lentisk Maquis, Garique and Batha. Unfortunately all these forests were destroyed and only scattered trees are found. The vast majority of the cultivated area in the highlands is rain fed. Of the total agricultural area, olives and grapes predominate, with almonds and fruit trees occupying 60%. Winter cereals, grain legumes etc., are cultivated on 35% of the area, whereas vegetables are the main crops in the remaining 5% (Ishatayia 1995; Sultan, 2000).



Map (2.2): West Bank Digital Terrain Map which indicate the topographical zones
Source: The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (Arij), 2007

D. The Semi-Coastal Zone

The Semi-Coastal region is an extension of the Palestinian Mediterranean Coastal region. It comprises parts of Jenin and Tulkarem. Elevation varies between 100-300m above sea level. The average annual rainfall is about 600mm (ARIJ, 1994; Isaac, Gasteyer, 1994). Much of the soils are alluvial heavy Terra-Rosa. Endemic plants are mainly remnants of *Quercus calliprinos* and *Pistacia palaestina*, along with some shrubs like *Sarcopoterium spinosum* and *Thymus capitata* (Sultan, 2000).

2.2. Biodiversity

As a treasure chest of biodiversity, Palestine holds a large variety of plants and animals that are of great importance to humanity. It lies at the crossroads of the European, Asian, and African continents, the Mediterranean and Red seas, and a number of botanical zones. This unique environment nurtures Palestinian biological diversity through the meeting of various geo-climatic conditions that include the Mediterranean Sea, the desert, the woodlands, and the Jordan Rift Valley. The topography and its variable ecosystems create rich floral and faunal associations (Isaac & Miller, 1992; ARIJ, 1994; Sultan, 2000).

Palestinian dissected ecosystems, with their wide range of ecological and climatic conditions, draw a natural map for the floral and faunal path in the Palestinian Territory. The topographic variation is directly reflected on the climate as well as the distribution and diversification of plant and animal species and their density - from the Jordan Valley, the lowest area in the world, to the arid valleys, to the mountains,

back to the semi-humid valleys, and up to the sea (Isaac & Miller, 1992; Alon, 1969).

Palestine is characterized by a large variety of wildlife resources and represents a rich base of flora and fauna where the natural biota is composed of about 520 species of birds reside or migrate through this compact ecological area (Zohary, 1962), 95 species of mammals, 7 species of amphibians, and 93 species of reptile that inhabit Palestine (Ishtayia, 1995; Shmida, 1995). Consequently, this contribution to the rich diversity of Palestinian flora and fauna has long captured the interest of ecologists and scientists alike (Isaac & Miller, 1992).

Furthermore, despite its small size, Palestine has over 2,720 species (Zohary, 1962) of wild plants with new ones discovered each year. Approximately 800 of these plants are considered rare, and around 140 are endemic. In comparison, Great Britain, although far larger, is home to only about 1,750 plant species. At least 95 species of wild mammals are found in Palestine, and its reputation as a geographical and ecological crossroads is reinforced by the fact that 520 different species of birds can be identified there. This number, within such a small area, again becomes significant when compared with countries such as Britain, France or Spain in which only 400 to 440 species can be found despite their far greater size (Alon, 1969).

2.3. Tourism

Palestine has a long tradition in tourism. The tourism industry is one of the few sectors that have grown conceivably under the prevailing and uncertain political and economic environment. Israel has been able to monopolize the tourism industry over the past thirty years of occupation, and still placing obstacles that have a dramatic effect on the development of the Palestinian tourism sub-sectors such as hotels, restaurants, tourist transport companies, travel agents, guides, souvenir shops, handcraft businesses, and tourist guides (Anani, 2000).

At present, although the tourist potential is largely untapped and hampered by political uncertainty, there is movement happening to change this situation given that Palestine has a number of potential attractions. Such attractions are its wealth of religious, cultural, historical, archaeological and natural sites; a history with links to many cultures of the world; an excellent cuisine; a welcoming climate; a friendly and hospitable population; an energetic workforce that is eager to learn and work; good access from many international markets; and relatively inexpensive tourism facilities and services (Toubassi, 2006).

Definitely, between 1994 & 2000, at its peak, tourism contributed 7-10% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and directly provided jobs for nearly 12,000 people (MOTA, 2006). During this period private sector investment in tourism alone topped US 750 million – through this support new tourism infrastructure, facilities and operators network were created in the main Palestinian pilgrimage locations (UNESCO, 2008).

The past ten years of political instability has had a devastating effect on the tourism industry. The year 2002, marked the worst year in decades and the tourism industry

has been unable to cope with the ongoing crisis, restriction and occupation. While today there are signs of recovery and cautious optimism, the Palestinian tourism industry remains vulnerable to Israeli actions and mobility restrictions (UNESCO, 2008). Palestinian tourism infrastructure system today is able to compete on a regional level however Palestinian reliance on Christian pilgrimage tourism proved to be an intolerant strategy as this travel segment is highly seasonal and the majority of pilgrims visit the Holy Land through pre arranged group packages which do not include visiting other sites in the West Bank (UNESCO, 2008).

If the Palestinian tourism has to be developed, the offer has to be diversified. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA) is aware of that; therefore the objectives of the new National Tourism Development Plan revolve around increasing the number of visitors, their length of stay in Palestinian areas and most importantly increase the spending of tourists in the West Bank. This strategy will require MOTA and the private sector to develop the Palestinian tourism offer and target new niche markets and travelers segment. Cultural tourism, domestic tourism and ecotourism are among the priority market to attract. The cultural diversity in the West Bank, if developed, packaged and promoted effectively and strategically, has the potential to contribute significantly to the tourism industry (UNESCO, 2008).

2.4. Summary

The topography of Palestine is unique with its scenic and qualitative diversity, ranging from plains, hills, mountains, valleys, and desert. This unique virtue was the reason behind the existence of the biodiversity and the variation in landscape and

visual elements of the Palestinian natural environment. As a result, the West Bank can be divided into four major topographical zones: the Jordan Valley, Eastern Slopes, Central Highlands and Semi Coastal Plane zone.

The topographic variation is directly reflected on the climate as well as the distribution and diversification of plant and animal species and their density - from the Jordan Valley, the lowest area in the world, to the arid valleys, to the mountains, back to the semi-humid valleys, and up to the sea.

This unique topography and landscape along with the rich biodiversity can be a very important asset to develop new trends in tourism such as ecotourism.

Chapter Three

Cultural Landscape and Ecotourism

The review and discussion of the literatures are based on the research main keywords; Cultural Landscape and Ecotourism. The main objective of the review process is to gain a deep knowledge about the cultural landscape and ecotourism, and to understand the relation between the two terms trying to find the optimal case where ecotourism supports the conservation of the cultural landscapes. This helps in data analysis to have an adequate answer for the main research question.

3.1. Cultural Landscape

3.1.1. Cultural Landscape Definition

Cultural Landscapes have been defined by the World Heritage Committee as distinct geographical areas or properties uniquely "*..represent the combined work of nature and of man*" (UNESCO, 2005, p83).

Another definition carried by (Taylor, 1989) is that "cultural landscapes are rural and urban settings (spaces) that people have settled or altered through time. They include cultural and natural elements of the ordinary, familiar, everyday landscape. He considered the cultural landscape as a mosaic consisting of: natural features and elements; physical components from a number of historic periods resulting from

human activity and modification to the natural features, and patterns created in the landscape over time; these are layers in or on the landscape” (Taylor, 1989:16-17).

From different perspective, the landscape and the cultural landscape in particular, is seen as one such dynamic expression of the change in natural processes due to human activity (Wascher & Jongman, 2000). The changing structure and dynamics of a landscape is often a first sign and indicator of social and economic transformation and evolution (Pinchemel & Pinchemel, 1988).

In the light of these discussions, a working definition of a cultural landscape for the Palestinian context is adopted: *“A cultural landscape is a physical area with natural features and elements modified by human activity resulting in patterns of evidence layered in the landscape, which give a place its particular character, reflecting human relationships with and attachment to that landscape”* (Lennon & Mathews, 1996).

3.1.2 Nature and Culture

There is increasing recognition, both internationally and nationally, of the need to manage landscapes as composites of both natural and cultural influences (Lennon & Mathews, 1996). This holistic approach is not new, however owing much to the work of German, French and other geographers. For instance, as early as 1929 Carl Sauer wrote that: *“The cultural landscape is fashioned out of a natural landscape by a culture, group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium and the cultural landscape is the result. Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases ...”*(Sauer, 1929:46)

The reference here to a landscape passing through 'phases' underscores the multi-layered nature of meaning and history in a cultural landscape. It also shows that the cultural evolution of a landscape does not 'stop'.

The recognition of the interrelationship between culture and nature in landscape management has led to cooperative arrangements. In England, for instance, there has been increased cooperation since 1992 between English Heritage, English Nature and the Countryside Commission on the definition, assessment and conservation of historic landscapes (Fairclough, 1993: p24). This information assists in the design and implementation of management regimes for these areas that achieve both cultural and natural conservation objectives simultaneously.

Turning from terminology to practice, the critical issue is whether tourists see the landscape and culture of a particular place as a single inseparable item, so that tour operators and agents sell it as such; or whether they see the two as separate though co-located items, where it is perfectly possible to experience one without the other, and only one forms the primary attraction. At many destinations, tourists are lured by natural landscapes, including scenery, environment, and wildlife (Newsome, Moore and Dowling 2002). Many national parks (Eagles and McCool 2002; Lockwood, Worboys and Kothari 2006) and wilderness areas (Hendee and Dawson 2002) provide prime examples. In many destinations, tourists are attracted by cultural heritage, including dress and dance, arts and architecture, food and song. There are also commercial tourism products which include separate components based on natural and cultural attractions, respectively (Buckley 2000; Fennell 1999).

The proposition examined here is that there are also destinations and products where the key attraction is neither nature nor culture separately, but rather a modified rural

landscape including its inhabitants and their lifestyles, as a single integrated entity. Specifically, the proposition tested is that the design and marketing of commercial tourism operationsrecognize that the principal attraction is a cultural landscape (Buckley 2003).

3.2. Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a term that has been widely contested and extremely discussed by academics and professionals alike (Wall, 1997; Orams, 1995). Depending on one's perspective and priorities –government, tourist, entrepreneur, etc. – it can be viewed as a philosophy, a strategy, a product, a marketing tactic or a form of travel (Stone, 2002). The net result of three decades of discussion and experience is that there continues to be little agreement over what exactly ecotourism is (McDill, 1999; Murphy, 1994). In the following sections the evolution of the concept (3.2.1) and the ecotourism definition (3.2.2) will be discussed.

3.2.1. Evolution of the Concept

The beginning of a recession in the early 1970s has ended the outburst in tourism growth which took place after the World War II effectively, providing an opportunity to reflect on two decades of tourism experience (Murphy, 1985). The result was widespread criticism and the recognition that past efforts at tourism 'planning' had largely failed (Baud-Bovy, 1982; de Kadt, 1979). Reasons offered for this widespread failure include: a lack of integration of tourism into the whole economy; little attention to qualitative/social impacts; the inability of plans to adapt

to changing conditions (Getz, 1986); a focus on physical planning (Spandouis, 1982); and an ‘obsessional showing’ of the economic benefits (Travis, 1982).

The advancement of ‘integrated’ approaches to tourism planning during the 1980s was an effort to re-orient and more comprehensively define tourism (Gunn, 1988; Murphy, 1985). Ideas on integration that began in the 1970’s were more fully articulated during this decade. Baud-Bovy (1982) highlights three ‘interdependencies’ in tourism on which the success of plan implementation would be greatly improved – first, between tourism development and socioeconomic development; second, between the various elements of the tourism sector itself (resources, markets, infrastructure, people, etc.); and third, between tourism and outdoor recreation. He emphasized the potentially significant impact that tourism can have on culture and people as a cause for greater planning sensitivity and the involvement of all concerned parties in the planning process.

Subsequently, Murphy (1985) advocated a community-based approach to tourism, in which there was a shift from an expert driven, technocratic process to a more small-scale, humanistic one. This approach “expected and encouraged” public participation, recognizing that locals, as hosts and tourists themselves, could contribute a wealth of information to planning processes (p.171).

However, there was a growing emphasis being placed on the social, environmental and cultural aspects of tourism. The philosophy of ‘sustainable development’ that were hatched in the Brundtland Commission’s report on environment and development in 1987, was well suited to tourism, and had a major influence on how planning has been viewed. This is evident, to some extent, in the propagation of ‘alternative’ forms of tourism, including community-based tourism, cultural tourism,

sustainable tourism, nature-based tourism, ecotourism etc. that occurred during this period (Wall, 1997).

3.2.2. Defining Ecotourism

Ceballos-Lascurain, in the early 1980s, was one of the first writers to use the term 'ecotourism'. He defined ecotourism as:

“tourism that consists in traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas...” (Ceballos-Lascurain, cited in Boo, 1990, p.2)

More recently, Eagles (1997) has similarly defined ecotourism as “travel for the discovery of and learning about wild natural environments.” (p.2), this emphasis on travel to natural places has perhaps been the only consistent element in the debate over ecotourism. Some distinguish ecotourism from nature-based tourism is that the former should be small-scale tourism with limited negative impact, whereas the latter is not defined by scale but rather by its focus on nature (Brandon, 1996).

As ecotourism has matured, its impacts have become more evident, it is now generally thought to be more complex than “just tourism to natural areas” (Ross & Wall, 1999b), and is increasingly defined to include aspects of resource conservation and local development. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as: “*responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people.*” (Western, 1993, p.8). Numerous similar definitions that include a community development and/or conservation component

can be found in the literature (Cater, 1994; Norris, 1992; Whelan, 1991; Ziffer, 1989).

Depending upon the above definitions, for this study, I will adopt this definition for ecotourism: “*environmentally conscious travel to nature enjoyed by people interested in learning about the nature, history and culture of the area visited, while providing socio-economic benefits to host communities by expanding the community’s economic base, and contributing to natural resource conservation through nature interpretation and environmental education*” (McDill, 1999).

It is worth to mention that the word nature in this definition is returned back to the cultural landscape in light of the literature review about nature and culture (section 3.1.2). Since ecotourism entails understanding the culture and natural history of the environment, it can also be a means for conserving the area’s natural and cultural resources. Exploring cultural landscape conservation through ecotourism is main objective of this research.

3.2.3. Benefits of Ecotourism

Behind a comprehensive definition of ecotourism, like the one adopted in this study, lie high objectives for the generation of a wide variety of benefits. Those frequently associated with ecotourism include the following: Its ability to provide high quality tourism experiences; Its ability to stimulate national and/or local economic development (Wells, 1997); Its ability to diversify and complement the economic base (Notzke, 1999); Its ability to create social benefits and infrastructure improvements (Brandon, 1996); Its ability to generate funds for the management and conservation of natural areas (Weaver,1998); Its ability to provide economic

justification for protection of natural resources (Boo, 1990); Its ability to foster environmental awareness and values and support for conservation, among both local residents and tourists, through on-site educational opportunities (Ross et al., 1999a) and; Its ability to promote cultural preservation (Slinger, 2000).

3.2.4. Factors for Success in Ecotourism Design

To provide ecotourism, it is essential to make the resources that people need to get involved in ecotourism activities available. Ecotourism typically is provided by a network of businesses that, together, offer the different products and services needed by the ecotourist. This includes food services and food supplies, sports and outfitting equipment and supplies, lodging, and guide services. These businesses have some underlying characteristics that make them successful (McDill, 1999).

Table (3.1) presents a list of factors for the success of ecotourism based on the definition in section (3.2.2).

Part from the Definition of Ecotourism	Factors
“environmentally conscious travel to nature enjoyed by people interested in learning about the nature, history and culture of the area visited,	Natural Environment Culture Education Travel People
while providing socio-economic benefits to host communities by expanding the community’s economic base,	Economic Social Community
and contributing to natural resource conservation through nature interpretation and environmental education	Natural Conservation Resource Education

Table (3.1): Segmentation of ecotourism definition along with its related factors

Source: Adopted from McDill, 1999

Factors from Table (3.1), and those identified from the literature review are grouped into environmental, economic and social factors. These factors are described in the following paragraphs.

3.2.4.1. Environmental Factors

The environment is one of the primary concerns of ecotourism, which often involves travel to relatively undisturbed areas. Following [Mathiesen and Wall \(1982\)](#), environmental factors refer to the natural environment such as natural features and the ecological processes occurring in an area. Natural features, including scenic vistas and landscapes, climate, topography, wildlife and vegetation, which are important to the type and level of tourism in an area ([Bird and Inman 1968](#), [Mathiesen and Wall 1982](#)). Tourism can be important to natural resource conservation because part of the income from tourism can be re-invested into maintaining natural areas ([Budowski 1977](#), In: [Mathiesen and Wall 1982](#)). In this sense, tourism has enabled rehabilitation of old sites and creation of new ones, and has fostered administrative and planning controls such as restricted access to sensitive areas that maintain the quality of the environment. Additionally, the physical location of an area is an important factor in tourism demand. Usually rural locations relatively close to metropolitan areas are tourism locations in high demand ([Bird and Inman 1968](#), [Mathiesen and Wall 1982](#)).

The goals of ecotourism management strategies are to protect the environment and to provide the tourist with a great ecotourism experience. Ecotourists are motivated by ideas of wilderness, wildlife, parks, nature and physical activity and these ideas should underlie the management of ecotourism ([Eagles 1997](#)). Moreover, ecotourism should be managed toward a more active form so that activities contribute to the health and viability of the environment where they take place are maintained ([Orams 1995](#); [Cater, 1994](#)).

In many cases, and despite good intentions and attempts to reduce negative effects on the natural environment, tourism has been detrimental to the environment. Damaged vegetation, disruption to wildlife, soil compaction, water quality problems, air and noise pollution, are but a few of the negative environmental effects caused by tourism (Mathiesen and Wall 1982). Increasing the number of ecotourism activities can pose environmental problems because, despite being non-consumptive and low-impact, people engaging in ecotourism consume resources and generate waste (Office of Technology Assessment 1993).

3.2.4.2. Economic Factors

Based on Mathiesen and Wall (1982) (1982; Dharmaratne et al., 2000; Brandon, 1996), economic factors are those related to economic structure and economic development including the economic base, patterns of investment, and economic leakages. Tourism can help the stability of local economies by diversifying the economy through the creation of businesses providing tours and catering the tourist (Brandon, 1996). However, McDill (1999) emphasized that the existence of skilled workforce in the provision and management of tourism enterprises is key to tourism success. Also the existence of educational programs is fundamental in training these workers.

Nevertheless, such economic benefits and material wealth obtained by the local community may themselves lead to cultural changes in their way of life. The literature on ecotourism asserts that economic benefits should occur by the host community whilst at the same time *preserving* the environment and cultural way of life of that community (McDill, 1999).

Additionally, marketing and human resources play an important role in the success of ecotourism enterprises (Mandziuk 1995). Following Mandziuk (1995), for individual businesses, cooperative marketing is an affordable way to attract visitors to an area. For regional agencies, strategies based on symbols, images and other regional characteristics can attract visitors by setting the region apart from others.

It is widely agreed that the host population should receive economic benefits from ecotourism. Without economic benefits, the host community will have little reason to view the intrusion of tourists positively and will have little incentive to protect the environment upon which tourism depends (Bird, 1968).

3.2.4.3. Social Factors

Social factors are related to social structure and organization, including demographic characteristics, availability and quality of social facilities, attitudes toward tourists, and local traditions and culture (Mathiesen and Wall 1982). A friendly and cooperative host community enhances local business opportunities for tourism (Bird and Inman 1969). Focusing on impacts, Fox (1997) suggests that social factors are expressed by changes in values, relationships, life styles, quality of life, behavior and creative expressions in the setting (Fox 1977, In: Mathiesen and Wall 1982).

Great importance is attached to the need for local participation in ecotourism. According to Brandon (1996), ecotourism is a type of tourism that “maximizes the early and long-term participation of local people in the decision making process that determines the kind and amount of tourism that should occur” (p.850). There are important reasons for local involvement other than moral obligation to incorporate the people whom tourism will affect. The degree of control that the local population

has over tourism in their locality is generally perceived as being a significant element of sustainability. As was noted earlier, ecotourism is required to provide direct economic benefits to the local community and minimize negative environmental and socio-economic impacts. The most likely way these objectives can be achieved if the local community is actively participating in and empowered through ecotourism (Cater, 1994). Advantages of involving the local community in ecotourism projects were clarified by Drake (1991), p.134): Local participation functions as an early warning system, helping managers to avoid or plan for decisions that might otherwise cause conflicts with the local population. Also, including a participation program in the design stage of a project provides the opportunity for the local community to become educated about the purpose and benefits of the project, thereby increasing support for the efforts.

3.2.4.4. Other Factors

Moreover, education is an essential part in the ecotourism process. Wight (1993, p.40) asserts that ecotourism should involve education among all parties- local communities, government, non-governmental organizations, industry and tourists (before, during and after trip)". Guides should therefore have been taught conservation issues and the tourists should be told about local conservation efforts and why they are deemed important. Tourists should be made aware of the damaging potentials of their stay and should be properly informed on "ecotourism etiquette" and how to behave to reduce any negative impacts they might have (Cater, 1994, p.81).

Additionally, ecotourism should be locally defined and implemented in terms of specific activities and structures, and potential environmental, cultural, and economic effects for the host area (Nelson 1994). Visitor guidelines are vital in enhancing appropriate behavior of visitors to both cultural and natural areas. Ecotourism guidelines highlight expected behavior of visitors with respect to nature and to the host community and environmentally sensitive and low-impact activities (Mandziuk 1995). Two important factors for successful ecotourism destinations go beyond quality of services and facilities to include the quality of the experience itself and the positive host environment (Moore and Carter 1993).

3.2.5. Constraints of Ecotourism Success

Lack of information, the need for market analyses and liability concerns are important constraints to ecotourism opportunities. The information here is related to: management costs, labor needs, potential demand, fee structure, and competitors. However, the market analysis is necessary to determine the type of resources needed and how to reach potential visitors. Also, existing competitors should be identified, and what they offer and for how much. Marketing skills are essential to a successful recreation-based enterprise (Lynch and Robinson 1998).

Other barriers to ecotourism include no risk of damage to area such as trash, vandalism, trespassing and mistreatment of animals (McDill, 1999). Another important element is community attitude; a friendly and cooperative host community enhances local business opportunities for tourism (McDill, 1999).

3.3. The Impact of Tourism on Landscape

Tourism causes change in local societies and the environment. In this context, tourism affects natural and cultural landscapes. The quality of the landscape is a tourist asset, and a determinant of prospects for the development of tourism and recreation. Tourism growth causes the development of infrastructure and urbanization. This is often associated with increased development, and a loss of open space and agricultural land that diminish landscape quality. Thus, changes associated with growth of tourism often lead to a degradation of functions and basic characteristics of the tourist destination with adverse consequences for the local society that depends on tourism for a living (Coccossis 2003).

(Coccossis (2003) also asserted that the impact of tourism on landscapes should be seen in the context of a complex interaction between economy-society-environment. There should always be linkages between tourism policy and policies that favor landscape conservation. In fact, the development of tourism should be carefully planned in the context of a broader strategy for sustainable development; A strategy that recognizes the need for balance between the goals of economic efficiency, social equity and environmental conservation. Within this perspective, tourism policy has to be conceived as an opportunity for development, but also as a challenge to sustain local societies without eroding the very basis on which the prospects for future development are founded

Cultural landscapes are particularly important in this respect as they integrate cultural traditions and natural peculiarities (both assets for tourism development). Sustainable development for tourism involves the upgrading of environmental quality as a strategic element in strengthening local identity and regional

competitiveness on an international scale. This requires the adoption of a preventive approach in resource management by basing development on the capacity of local natural resources (Briassoulis & Van der Straaten, 2000).

3.4. Initiatives in Palestine

Following are some existing projects and initiatives that took place in Palestine in the field of alternative tourism and cultural landscape conservation.

- New hiking and walking routes have been emerging in Palestine, building on the great hospitality and kindness of the Palestinian people, and on the same caravan routes that people have been using for thousands of years (Rishmawi, 2009):

1. *The Nativity Trail:* The idea of retracing the steps of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem came from the Bethlehem 2000 project, and today, almost two thousand years after this historic journey, one can still walk the 160 kilometers from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Nowadays, two leading Bethlehem organizations are responsible for organizing the walks for internationals, tourists, and local people (Rishmawi, 2009).

2. *Masar Ibrahim al Khalil (the Abraham Path)* – an ambitious new tourism initiative, founded at Harvard University and supported by the UN's Alliance of Civilizations program, which aims to open of a long distance route of walking and cultural tourism which follows the journey made by the Prophet *Ibrahim* (Abraham) through the Middle East some four thousand years ago. The purpose of this initiative is to foster cross-cultural understanding, to

stimulate economic development in rural areas through sustainable tourism, and to generate positive media images of the Middle East. Since July 2008 the route has been walked by hundreds of people from Palestine and all over the world (Rishmawi, 2009).

- A special project focused on the identification and conservation of cultural landscapes which is a model conservation plan for the safeguarding of the “Land of Olives and Vines” cultural landscape (UNESCO, 2008).
- Within the *Cultural Landscape Project* launched in late 2005, a preliminary assessment of the current situation of cultural and natural landscape in the West Bank has been conducted, especially relating to the condition of terraced olive groves. The project aims at providing the Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage with safeguarding tools (*Guidelines for the protection and management of the Cultural Landscapes of Palestine*), in order to setup the basics for a real protection of this endangered ecosystem. A leaflet for awareness purposes and a technical report including recommendations were produced in this regard (UNESCO, 2006).
- UNESCO, in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and other local partners, prepared a comprehensive National Tourism Framework to encompass cultural projects and activities within a coherent vision. The flagship project,” titled “Developing Cultural Routes in Palestine: In the Footsteps of the Prophets,” is configured as an overarching framework for all UNESCO culture-related projects to be developed in Palestine as well as a multilateral venue for cooperation and donor investments. This framework is

believed to enhance dialogue between civilizations and contribute to peace and stability in Palestine (UNESCO, 2006).

- Raja Shehadeh in his book “Palestinian Walks” has shed the light on the vanishing landscape of Palestine. The six walks described by Shehadeh in this book span a period of twenty-six years; each walk takes place at a different stage of Palestinian history. The reader experiences the changing political atmosphere and physical transformation of the landscape (shehadeh, 2007).
- Rozana Association has launched a project in Birzeit near Ramallah Governorate which focuses on improving the socio-economic status of the local people, through promoting new concepts of tourism. The Rozana’s mission is to network the different capacities and utilize the available resources in the historic center of Birzeit and link it with its neighboring villages and the Palestinian countryside (Saadeh, 2009).
- Riwaq Tourism map: During Riwaq work on the old centers, they discover that such work is not enough, so they tried to connect between these centers and towns by focusing on the natural and cultural resources of those towns. Three main resources were identified: first, the old towns and the cultural heritage. Second, the individual historical houses. Third, the cultural landscape and the archeological sites.
- The work of the Alternative Tourism Group (ATG) through the tenets of “justice tourism”, that is, tourism that creates economic opportunities for the local community, encourages positive cultural exchange between host and

guest through one-on-one interaction and protects the environment and provides political/historical education (ATG, 2009).

- Palestine Wildlife Society (PWLS) through their work believes that Conservation Education is the main pillar in the conservation movement of any country. Therefore it has worked intensively in the field of awareness and education with different sections. Introducing ecotourism concept in the Palestinian Society by following many concepts such as bird ringing, bird watching, camel riding, hiking and educational trips (PWLS, 2009).

To conclude, most of these initiatives are rather applications for new types of tourism such as cultural, rural and domestic tourism. None of these cases can be considered as pure ecotourism initiative that covers all the factors for having successful ecotourism adventure.

3.5. Theoretical Framework

The concept and implementation of ecotourism vary according to the country (Lindberg and McKercher, 1997). And therefore, it is not surprising that there are also no universally accepted standards for ecotourism development. Suitable management for ecotourism development is essential in order to be able to maximize the positive impacts and minimize negative impacts in all aspects of tourism.

Since the 1960s, management of tourism development in natural areas has been widely discussed in tourism literature (Butler, 1996). The concept of carrying capacity was quickly accepted as a management tool for tourism development in natural areas (Butler, 1996). But, since the 1980s, the validity of this criterion has

been questioned. Instead, alternative management techniques have been developed and emphasis has shifted from determining the limits to identifying the opportunities within destinations. Ecotourism here is considered as a form of tourism which is different from other nature-based tourism, therefore, particular management techniques for ecotourism development is essential to achieve the goal of sustainable tourism development (Bi, 2005).

The first, and most widely adopted, framework was the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) by Clark and Stankey (1979) (Appendix, 2). Since its development, the ROS has been adapted to suit tourism, and then subsequently modified for specific types of tourism. Butler and Waldbrook (1991) developed the Tourism Opportunity Spectrum (TOS) with the rationale of the need to apply an existing framework (namely the ROS) to a tourism context (Appendix, 3). They applied it to adventure travel within the Canadian Arctic, using the framework to provide a background and setting against which tourism development and change could occur.

The purpose of the TOS was to provide a context and framework within which information and data can be examined prior to decision-making with regards to activities that should be allowed or prohibited, and the kinds of facilities that should be developed. Although no real test of the model was undertaken, Butler and Waldbrook, (1991) identified appropriate management factors applicable for tourism and not recreation (Fegance, 2001). As such, the TOS identified the following factors as appropriate: access, other uses, tourism plant, social interaction, acceptability of impacts, and acceptable regimentation. Many of these replicated management factors developed for the ROS, but with some variation. For example,

'non-recreational resource uses' within ROS was replaced with 'non-tourism resources uses' within the TOS. Other differences included changing 'on-site management' to 'tourism plant' and expanding 'social interaction to include that for both 'hosts' and 'guests'.

A particular management framework for ecotourism called the Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum (ECOS) was created by [Boyd and Butler \(1996\)](#), based on the Tourism Opportunity Spectrum (TOS). While the ROS (Recreation Opportunity Spectrum) has been applied in various locations, there has been little application made on the TOS and ECOS.

3.5.1. Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum (ECOS) Approach

[Boyd and Butler \(1996\)](#) modified the TOS to apply to ecotourism and labeled it Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum (ECOS). The ECOS model has been developed especially to cope with the peculiar needs of planning for ecotourism. The capture of ecological base-line data is the important first step. This data is then assessed or measured in terms of the capacity to be used in ecotourism, with the assessment focusing on eight important factors ([Fegance, 2001, Murphy, 1994](#)):

1. Accessibility to the ecotourism region
2. Relationship between ecotourism and other resources such as forestry.
3. Attraction in a region, their type and number
4. Presence of existing tourism infrastructure such as roads and accommodation.
5. Level of user skill and knowledge required, indicating whether it is a difficult or easy ecotourism product to undertake.

6. Level of social interaction expected between visitors and host community (ies).
7. Degree of acceptance of the local community of the impacts and controls associated with ecotourism products
8. Type of management needed to ensure viability of areas on a long term basis.

The significance of each factor will depend on the circumstances of where the ecotourism region and site are located. The intensity of existing or proposed ecotourism development and the nature of the development would also have an impact on any opportunity for ecotourism development (United Nations, 2003; Fegance, 2001). Moreover, there is evidence that ecotourism is a special form of tourism that depends on the basic requirements of general tourism, including infrastructure, accommodation, transport, support services, information, marketing and trained human resources.(united Nations, 2003).

3.5.1.1. Accessibility

Accessible tourism is the ongoing endeavor to ensure tourist destinations, products and services are accessible to all people, regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities, or age. Furthermore, accessible tourism enables people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments (Darcy and Dickson, 2009, p34).

In a tourism system, access is the result of a combination of physical transportation linkages as well as the accessibility provided by ease of purchase (Butler & Waldbrook, 2003). As stated by Boyed & butler (1996) the inclusion of information

in the access factor is a significant addition to that factor compared to (Clarke and Stankey's, 1979) original model of ROS. Information tends to be gained through word of mouth and social sources (friends, relatives). Travel books are usually historical and geographical descriptions of the area as well as accounts written by explorers. Trip reports may be verbal or written records passed along to others in the same social network. Independent travelers, in particular, have the flexibility to react most quickly to information. Once information is available, it is rapidly communicated until the particular event or location becomes institutionalized (Boyed & butler, 1996).

3.5.1.2. Relationship

The Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum presents the range of compatibilities between adventurous and non-adventurous developments in the destination area. The decision to be made is the level of adventure most appropriate at a particular location within the destination and the point at which each of the non-adventure developments overwhelm the area's adventurous appeal. Such impacts may be primary (for example, removal of trees through logging) or secondary (for example, access routes to resources) (Butler & Waldbrook, 2003).

3.5.1.3. Attractions

A tourist attraction is a physical or cultural feature of a particular place that individual travelers or tourists perceive as capable of meeting one or more of their specific leisure-related needs. Such features may be ambient in nature (eg. climate,

culture, vegetation or scenery), or they may be specific to a location, such as a theatre performance, a museum or a waterfall (Harris & Howard, 1996; Bird and Inman 1968; Mathiesen and Wall 1982).

The attractions are referred back to the types of ecotourism experiences, whether it is IN (tropical forests, mountain areas), OF (birds, trees, wild flowers, mammals), or BY (watching, filming, collecting) (Boyed & butler, 1996).

3.5.1.4. Infrastructure

Based on ECOS, the infrastructure includes two main components; the first one is the **Support infrastructure** which includes the transportation system, tourism transportation parking, infrastructure (water, electricity and telephone networks), toilets and signage for tourists. The second one is the **Support services** such as food services and food supplies, sports and outfitting equipment and supplies, lodging, guide services and shopping and entertainment facilities (Boyed & Butler, 1996).

From a tourism standpoint, this factor may be considered to be composed of the tourism plant, assumed here to include: accommodation (hotels, motels, campgrounds, and eco-lodges), shopping and entertainment facilities, and signage for tourists. These developments will vary in extent, visibility, complexity and in the actual number and type of facilities. Modifications to the destination area may occur in isolated discrete locations or they may be very extensive. Their visibility may be readily apparent, as in the forms of hotels and restaurants, or there may be no facilities whatsoever, as in the hard adventurous experience in the back country where the only facilities are temporary ones created by the wilderness traveler. Complexity also varies. Examples include a hotel with private baths and food

services compared to makeshift tent accommodation with no services. Facilities can cater completely to the convenience and enjoyment or safety of users, or may be nonexistent providing a true wilderness experience (Boyed & Butler, 1996).

3.5.1.5. User Pre-requisites

According to ECOS, the user pre-requisites include two main components; the prior skills and prior knowledge.

The public's appetite for information on the natural environment seems insatiable, and it is the responsibility of the managers to provide this information when and where it will be valuable and through a medium that will easily and readily be understood by the target audience (Bromley, 1994).

The importance of an educational element, especially in terms of providing adequate information about the attractions to educate tourists and to maximize their satisfaction is vital. Their understanding of interpretation is mostly restricted to guiding despite the fact that ecotourism is able to foster environmental awareness/values and support for conservation, among both local residents and tourists, through on-site educational opportunities (Ross et al., 1999a).

Furthermore, education is an extremely valuable tool for ecotourism managers in particular, and to tourism managers in general. It can enhance the tourist's experience, direct appropriate behavior, foster stewardship (Ross et al., 1999b), encourage tourists to return in the future or to donate money to continue educational and conservation programs (Lindberg, 1991).

Moreover, Marketing is also critical to attracting and securing a tourism market that matches the product offered at a destination (Ashley et al., 2001). The process of

representation through guidebooks, tour brochures, selective images and advertising creates a significant degree of expectation amongst tourists regarding the aspects of culture they will encounter (Urry 1990).

3.5.1.6. Social Interaction

According to ECOS, the social interaction reflect two main components: the level of interaction (with other ecotourists), and the level of interaction with local/host community. In the tourist system, there are two states of human interaction which must be considered. One is the interparty contact. This varies from the no-contact feature of the hard adventure experience to frequent interparty contacts more acceptable to the soft adventure traveler (Boyed & Butler, 1996). A second aspect of the ecotourism spectrum is the interaction between the host and guest (Smith, 1987). This may take the form of cultural adaptation or it may also reflect an increasing level of irritation felt by community residents as the number of tourists' increases to unacceptable levels (Boyed & Butler, 1996).

Frontier populations traditionally seem to produce more authentic souvenirs and handicrafts. As the level of adventure and novelty decreases at a destination, the authenticity of the tourist experience is perceived to decline. This may be a result of the increase in interpretation of the indigenous culture for tourists, leading to the provision of handicrafts and events solely for the tourist market (Boyed & Butler, 1996).

In an ideal ecotourism scenario there should be a symbiotic relationship between local residents (the host community) and the protected area, including both its resources and management paradigm. Local residents are more liable to support

conservation efforts, and may even act as stewards for the resource(s), if they benefit from protection through sustainable harvesting and the conservation of important resources such as forests and watersheds (Stone, 2002).

3.5.1.7. Visitor Impacts

As stated by Boyed & Butler (1996) when discussing the visitor impacts in ECOS; the purity of the wilderness experience represents an important resource for tourist businesses. The acceptability of impacts will depend on both the degree of impact and its prevalence throughout the region, and both must be utilized for an accurate forecast of the destination's overall image to the potential tourist. If the majority of tourists remain in one location, a wilderness area will soon reach its carrying capacity and result in forfeited potential in terms of numbers of tourists and financial return. If the full range of tourist opportunities is addressed, then many segments of the market may be serviced, leading to more efficient development of the region's tourism resources within its limitations.

3.5.1.8. Management

The management or control reflects the softening of the destination for ecotourism. Several aspects of management need to be discussed.

The first is related to flexibility of touring arrangements. As increased packaging promotes further development of tourism resources, flexibility in personal decision making does not have to be abandoned. The wide variety in types of tour packages has led to highly individualized packages with appropriate levels of free time.

Secondly, the level of management is an important aspect of the adventure travel experience. Third, the physical reality of the wilderness environment normally limits high levels of management for use, but paradoxically often requires strict controls for protection of wilderness attributes. The vagaries of weather can effectively undermine plans for scheduled travel. Finally, Careful managing of the tradeoffs between control and taste of freedom should ensure success in maximizing opportunities (Bulter & waldbrook, 2003).

Control and management of use and development in many tourist areas is often uncoordinated and frequently divided between several agencies, different levels of government and privately owned interests all with widely potentially differing goals and objectives. The lack of clearly defined responsibility for overall control can be, and often is, a major problem which may be reflected in incompatible scale and type of development. At the early stages of tourist visitation at least, those individuals catering to visitors are often very aware of this point. Anderson (1983) noted, for example, that wilderness tour operators exhibit a high degree of environmental awareness. Indeed, they have a certain self interest in this awareness as they realize that the resource base must be preserved intact to ensure a quality tourist experience. As development proceeds, the commercialization of opportunities and increasing market pressures may lead to overdevelopment and the loss of the resource base unless one or more specific agency has responsibility for controlling development (Bulter & waldbrook, 2003).

Following is table (3.2) that summarizes the ECOS factors and the opportunity indicators for each one.

Factors	Opportunity Indicators
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To the ecotourism region • To the site (access and circulation within the region)
Relationship	Between ecotourism and other potential uses of the same resource Complementarity, compatibility, integration, competition
. Attractions	Types of ecotourism experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IN (tropical forests, mountain areas) • OF (birds, trees, wild flowers, mammals) • BY (watching, filming, collecting)
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support infrastructure • Support services
User pre-requisites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior knowledge • Prior skills
Social interaction	Level of interaction (with other ecotourists) – sought, achieved Level of interaction with local/host community – sought, achieved
Visitor impacts	Consequences of visitor access Controls on visitor access, use
Management	Stakeholder involvement Decision process

Table (3.2): Factors used in the ecotourism opportunity spectrum assessment
Source: United Nations, 2003

3.6. Summary

This chapter has discussed literature related to cultural landscape and ecotourism, to find the relationship between the two terms and examine how ecotourism can support the conservation of cultural landscapes. I started by exploring the definition of cultural landscape, highlighted the relationship between nature and culture.

On the other hand, in the process of exploring the ecotourism, I began by examining the roots of ecotourism, showing that the concept evolved out of three decades of reflection, criticism and change within tourism theory and planning approaches. In

addition, it has highlighted the factors for success in ecotourism (Figure 3.1) and constraints which may face that success. Furthermore, the impact of tourism on the landscape has been discussed. Finally, a methodological approach was revealed by the literature review, that is, Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum (ECOS), using factors viewed as important to ecotourism: accessibility, relationship between ecotourism and other resource uses, attractions in a region, presence of existing tourism infrastructure, level of user skill and knowledge required, level of social interaction, degree of acceptance of impacts and control over level of use and type of management needed to ensure viability of areas on a long-term basis.

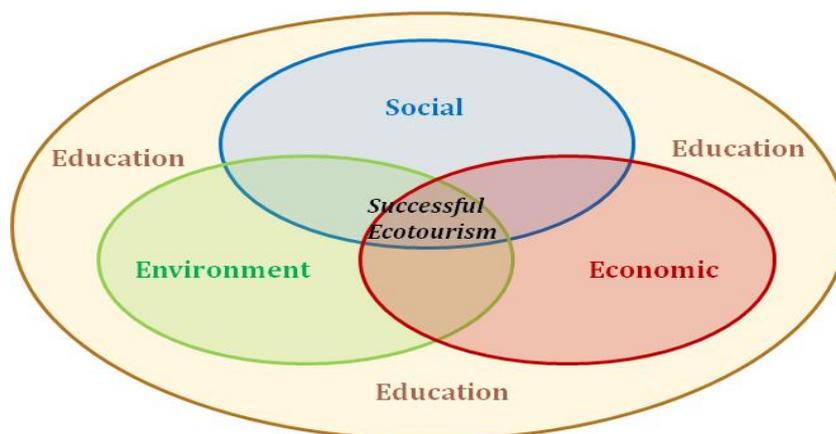


Figure (3.1): The relationship between the success factors of ecotourism
Source: the researcher based on the sustainability model.

The key points that can be illustrated from the review are:

- Ecotourism now is widely accepted as one strategy to provide environmental, socio-economic and cultural benefits at both local and national levels. The major underlying assumption of ecotourism is that visitors can provide the necessary economic incentives to achieve local conservation and

development.

- In theory, ecotourism generates revenue which will be used to protect and conserve the biodiversity and natural resources that draw visitors to a particular site.
- Ecotourism particularly satisfy several environmental, social, economic, and cultural objectives at multiple levels of society, it is obviously necessary to determine, measure, and analyze the factors of ecotourism opportunities to plan and manage it appropriately.
- The impact of tourism on landscapes should be seen in the context of a complex interaction between economy-society-environment. There should always be linkages between tourism policy and policies that favor landscape conservation. In fact, the development of tourism should be carefully planned in the context of a broader strategy for sustainable development.
- Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum (ECOS) can contribute in an important way to the promotion of Ecotourism planning and management, especially in areas of protected natural beauty, and to the integration of ecotourism into national tourism development agendas.
- Little studies were identified that focus on the planning for Palestinian ecotourism. Thus, studies such as this one are needed; it will focus on applying the ECOS framework in the Palestinian context and determine the factors related to successful ecotourism framework.

Methodologically speaking, this study follows a study case approach through semi-structured interviews to identify a set of key factors needed for successful

ecotourism operations, including barriers to their success through applying the ECOS framework.

To conclude, this thesis applies the ECOS framework. The objective of this study is to assess the ecotourism opportunities in the Palestinian context and contribute to the fundamental knowledge about ecotourism and cultural landscapes conservation taking Bani Na'im Wilderness in Hebron Governorate in West Bank as a case study. ECOS can help to the development of an integrated strategic plan for such destination, acknowledging that ecotourism is a significant part of protected natural beauty areas for sustainable development agenda, providing it with a framework for developing ecotourism policy.

Chapter Four

Methodology

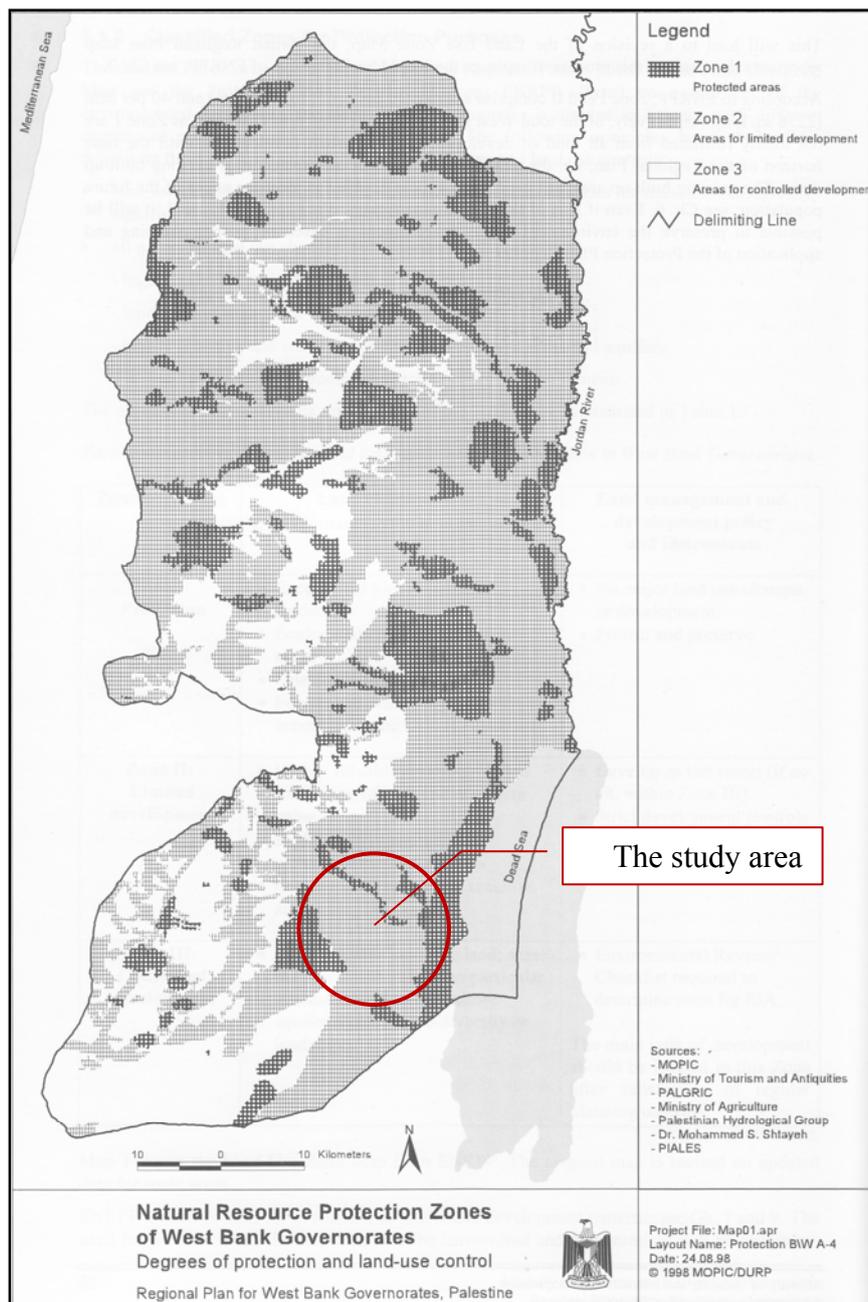
This chapter describes the methods used to carry out this study. The study area is mentioned and a rationale provided for its selection. The research paradigm and conceptual framework adopted are outlined before detailing the data collection process and methods. The phases were introduced linked to the methodological steps and methods, in addition to summarizing the outcome of every single phase. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's methodological strengths and weaknesses.

This study is an exploratory qualitative research which is useful when researcher does not know the important variables to examine. Within the exploratory research, qualitative methods are more likely to identify useful information (Creswell, 2003; Maxwell, 2005).

4.1. Study Area and Site Selection Rationale

The case study method was adapted for this study, according to Yin (1994), a case study is a useful method when the question of the research starts with "how" or "why".

The study area is Bani Na'im Wilderness in Hebron governorate, topographical speaking, it's a part of the Jerusalem wilderness in the Eastern Slopes in West Bank.



Map (4.1): The study area within the natural resources protection zones of the West Bank governorates
Source: Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC), 1998.

The area is characterized by being diverse in geographical features and abundant of natural resources. Many organizations offering or supporting ecotourism activities recommend the site to be studied since it contains rare species of animals and birds, a magnificent natural formation for rocks and archeological sites. Besides, it lies between two topographical zones: the middle mountain range and the eastern slopes

and extended to reach the Dead Sea. It is generously endowed with innumerable scenic spots. Additionally, the culture is very strong and represented in much of its residents' lifestyle. Moreover it can be a representative site for the Jerusalem Wilderness in the Eastern slope topographical zone.

Furthermore, according to the regional plan of the West Bank which was prepared by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MOPIC) in 1998, the study area is located within zone I (protected areas) and zone II (areas for limited development), as shown in [map \(4.1\)](#) of the natural resources protection zones of the West Bank governorates. All the above points encourage me to study the effectiveness of the study area as an ecotourism destination.

4.2. Conceptual Framework

The central purpose of this study is to examine the ecotourism opportunities in the Palestinian context and contribute to the fundamental knowledge about ecotourism and cultural landscapes conservation. Qualitative analysis was deemed most appropriate for the research. Indeed, qualitative approaches have a history of use in tourism research within certain disciplines ([Decrop, 1999](#)). Interviews, observations and secondary sources are the main vehicles of inquiry used in this study. Basic quantitative analysis is used to aid in the presentation and interpretation of interview results.

In light of the emphasis placed on community and local level impacts in this study, it was also deemed appropriate to take a participatory approach. To the extent possible, local residents, tour operators, tourist's guides, ministries and governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations were given the opportunity to

participate in this study through Semi-structured interviews. These stakeholders have a significant role in the collection of the information necessary for an assessment of ecotourism's opportunities and constraints in light with cultural landscape conservation, and have the opportunity to guide current and future research on cultural landscape as connected to the ecotourism industry, which is a complex economic, environmental and social issue.

Conceptual Framework

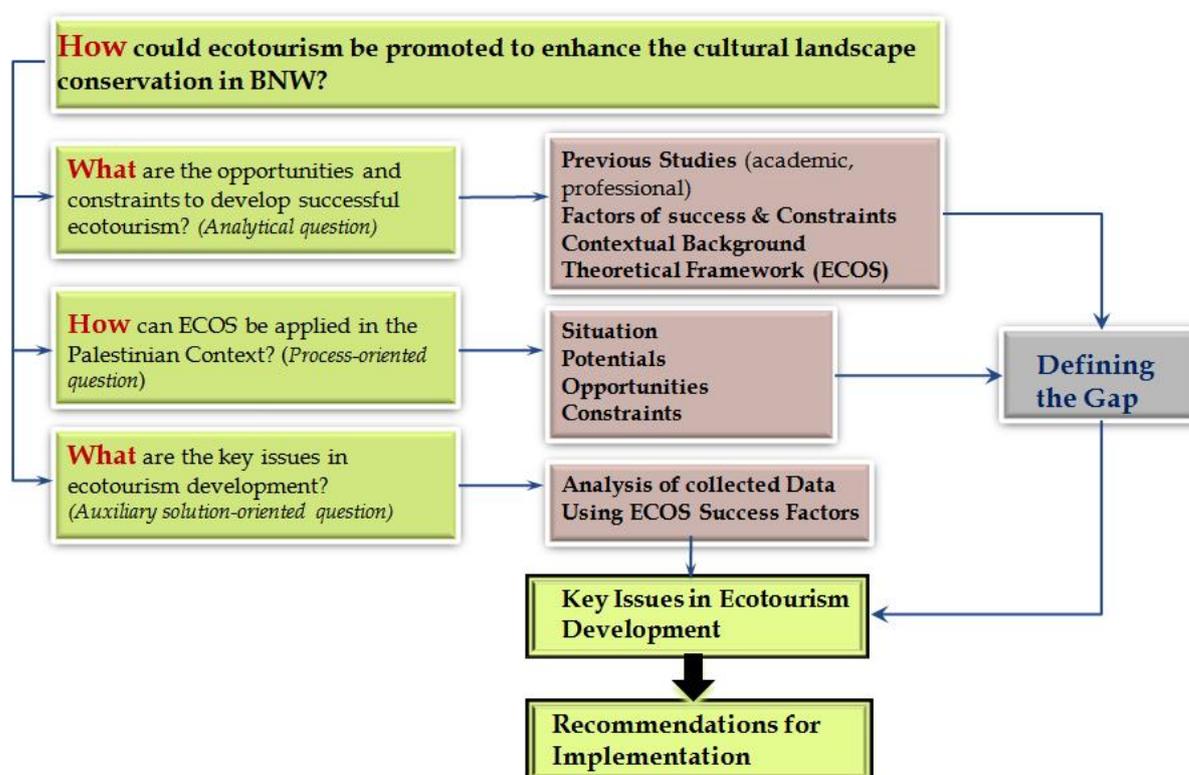


Figure (4.1): The Conceptual framework of the research
Source: The researcher.

Participants were encouraged to join the study in hope of affecting future policy decisions. Qualitative methodology provides greater credibility to the findings by allowing the study participants to present their own ideas in their own words

(Patton,1990). This methodology, therefore, seeks to include opinions and recognize their subtleties.

4.3. Research Methods

4.3.1. Data Collection

In this study, both primary and secondary sources of information are used. Primary sources included observations and interviews, and were complemented by a variety of secondary media, including academic literature, previous studies, government documents, statistical reports, demographic data and tourist promotional brochures. In terms of method triangulation – the use of multiple methods to study a single problem – this study employed collection of documentary evidence, observation, semi-structured interviews and quantitative interpretation of some interview results.

Document Collection: documents play an explicit role in any data collection for conduction of case studies. The first step toward achieving the study objectives was to conduct library and internet searches for relevant literature. The literature review provided a definition for cultural landscape and ecotourism, a framework for classifying the key elements of ecotourism, an initial list of the factors in favor of and barriers to ecotourism success, and a list of options for linking ecotourism to cultural landscape conservation. The existing projects which took place in Palestine was also mentioned; this include: Abraham Path trail, Nativity trail; UNESCO Cultural Landscape Project that launched in 2005; Riwaq Tourism map that connect several villages in Ramallah district through tour path and Rozana Association initiative for alternative tourism in Birzeit and the surrounding area. Information on

existing nature-based/ecotourism activities was gathered for the study area from different sources, including promotional brochures and travel guides from Alternative Tourism Group (ATG); Palestinian Association for Cultural Exchange (PACE); Palestine Wildlife Society (PWLS); Riwaq and the World Wide Web. Maps of the area were obtained from Applied Research Institute- Jerusalem (ARIJ). Wherever possible, observations and information from documents is used to support (triangulate) interview findings.

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews are adapted. Interviews can give an important insight of the current situation in addition to providing shortcuts to its prior history. The study involved four groups to be interviewed; the tour operators with interest of ecotourism and alternative tourism activities (n=5), NGO's with ecotourism-related interest (n=6), government tourism and environment officials (n=7) and nearby local residents (n=20). The main interviews were conducted in October 2009- January 2010 with a total number of 38.

A non-probability purposive sampling was applied. This method is relevant since this research is not concerned with generalizing from sample to the population (de Vaus, 1995). Key persons, who can provide useful information regarding the tourism in the area, are much more significant. As potential interviewees were identified, they were contacted by telephone. After a brief description of the study, they were asked to participate, and, if they agreed, the time, date and location for a face-to-face interview were identified. An interview instrument was designed to obtain the information base for this study in light with the eight factors in ECOS framework.

Interviews number was identified after reaching the point of repetition in data.

Therefore, the total taken interviews number was 38 interviews

Interviews questions were based on the research questions that aimed at investigating the ecotourism opportunities in the Palestinian context (appendix 4).

Observations: To complement the interview process, field observations were conducted by making visits to the study site and creating the opportunity for direct observations. I have observed the physical form (i.e. topography, rocks, land cover, land use, etc) in relation to the cultural landscape and ecotourism activities. Observations are documented and analyzed through text, maps and photographs.

4.3.2. Data Analysis

The data analysis fits the qualitative research framework perfectly as its diverse player's present diverse opinions based on an array of Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum (ECOS) factors. The interview transcripts were translated into English and combined with observation and field notes to provide reliable data for interpretation. Themes emerged during the interviews and observations were analyzed based on the key factors of ECOS. Multiple readings of the interviews allowed for identifying themes within one interview and then between all 38 to follow the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process allowed the researcher to develop an intimacy with the data, thereby, identifying themes, categorizing and synthesizing the comments (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) on the factors of which the ECOS is built on. The eight factors present: accessibility, relationship between ecotourism and other resource uses, attractions in a region, presence of existing

tourism infrastructure, level of user skill and knowledge required, level of social interaction, degree of acceptance of impacts and control over level of use and type of management needed to ensure viability of areas on a long-term basis.

4.4. Research Phases

The approach used here involves three phases, which may be referred to as: first, collecting and review of available literature; second, case study documentation and field work; while the third is analysis and discussion. Every phase has its own methodological steps and methods, in addition to particular outcome as shown in Figure (4.2).

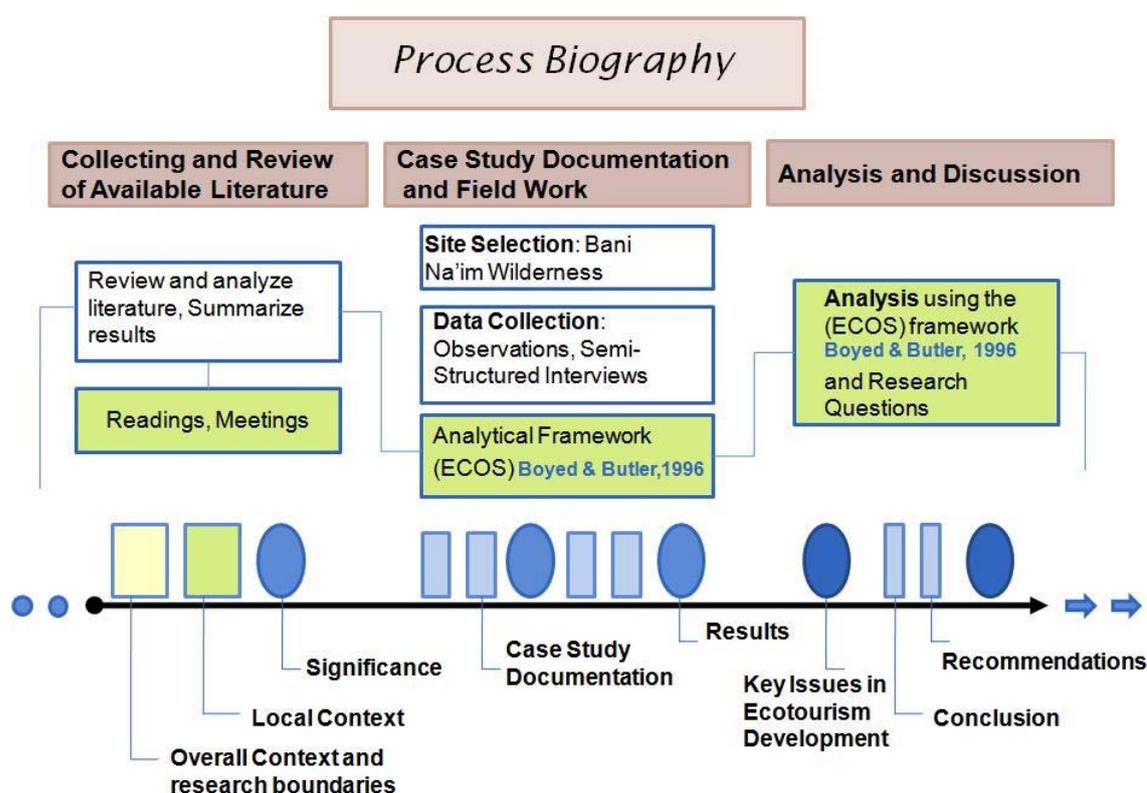


Figure (4.2): The phases through which the thesis follow to conduct the research

Source: The researcher

4.5. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study Design

This study employs interviews, observations and secondary sources to assess the ecotourism opportunities and constraints in Bani Na'im Wilderness. While the information collected and presented in this study is believed to be factual, reproducible and objective, a consideration of the study design's potential weaknesses and strengths is, nevertheless, important.

Translation of specific terms can be a significant barrier to obtaining good information. Using language that the interviewee would use in a day-to-day environment is important to assure the amount and quality of the information provided. It was important to minimize possible confusion about the intent of specific questions and to ensure that the interviewee feels comfortable talking to the interviewer (Henderson 1998).

While a number of potential weaknesses exist, the study design also has several strengths. This study is strengthened by the use of triangulation, in terms of both data sources (primary and secondary) and collection methods (interviews, observations and literature), to limit personal and methodological biases.

When assessing the status of ecotourism in the West Bank, it is necessary to consider the diversity of interests that exist. Recognizing this, the study sought to acquire participation from a broad range of groups with an interest in ecotourism. Local residents, tour operators, government tourism officials and academic researchers have contributed in some capacity to this research, thus strengthening the study.

Chapter Five

The Study Area: Bani Na'im Wilderness

This chapter introduces the study area which was chosen to carry out this research. The study area is Bani Na'im Wilderness in Hebron Governorate in the West Bank. The location and the physical characteristic are mentioned. This chapter also provides a brief description for the population, historical sites and the geo-political status. Yet, it ends up with a review for the biodiversity (flora and fauna) in the study area.

5.1. Background

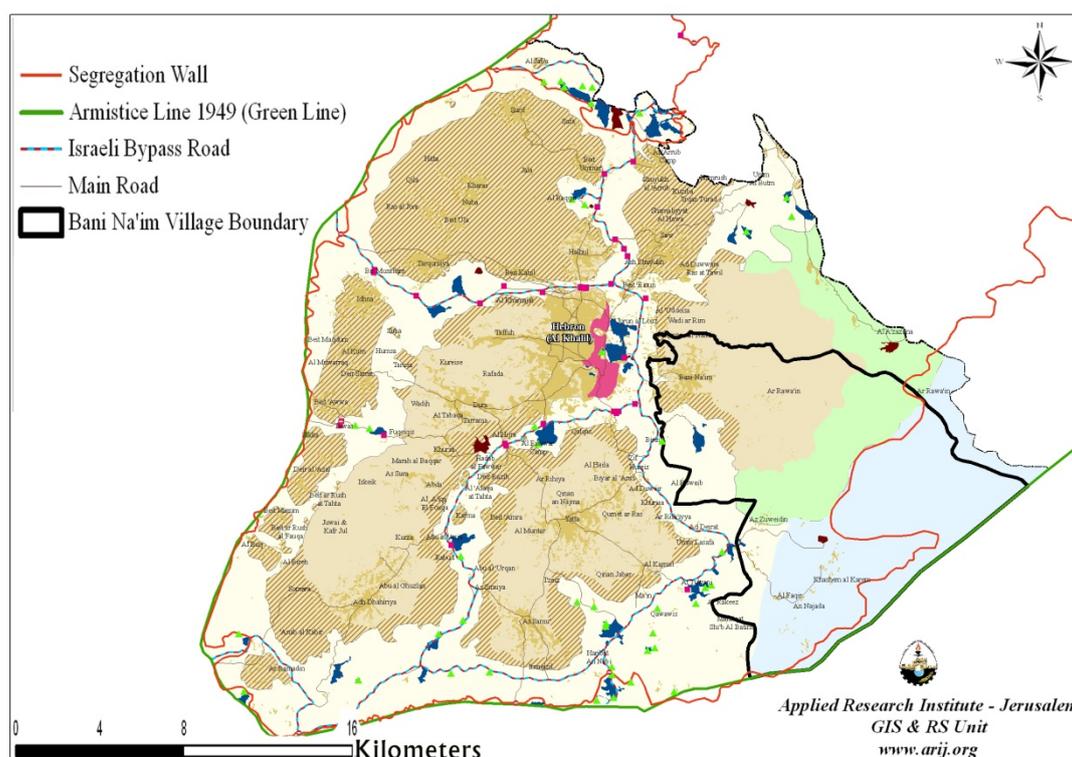
Bani Na'im Wilderness (BNW) is chosen as a case study area. It can be considered as a representative site of Jerusalem Wilderness which extends from the Qadron Valley in the north, runs through Al-Biqea'ah, Sa'eer Wilderness and Bani Na'im Wilderness, and reaches Yatta in the south. The Wilderness also extends east from the Bethlehem and Hebron Districts toward the shores of the Dead Sea. The whole area could be a beautiful reserve, especially if the natural vegetation, birds, and wildlife are preserved in a clean and soundly-managed way.

Jerusalem Wilderness is located into two vegetation zones; Irano-Turanian Semi Arid Zone and Arabian arid Desert Zone (Peregrine & Ember, 2002), with a mountainous desert habitat (Appendix, 1). Its unique geographic location and the

threatened species it contains make it one of the most Important Bird Areas in the Western Palearctic (Appendix, 2), according to Birdlife International criteria. Birds concentrate here in important numbers during breeding, on passage and in winter. The Jerusalem Wilderness is part of major migration routes for many bird species (Evans, 1996).

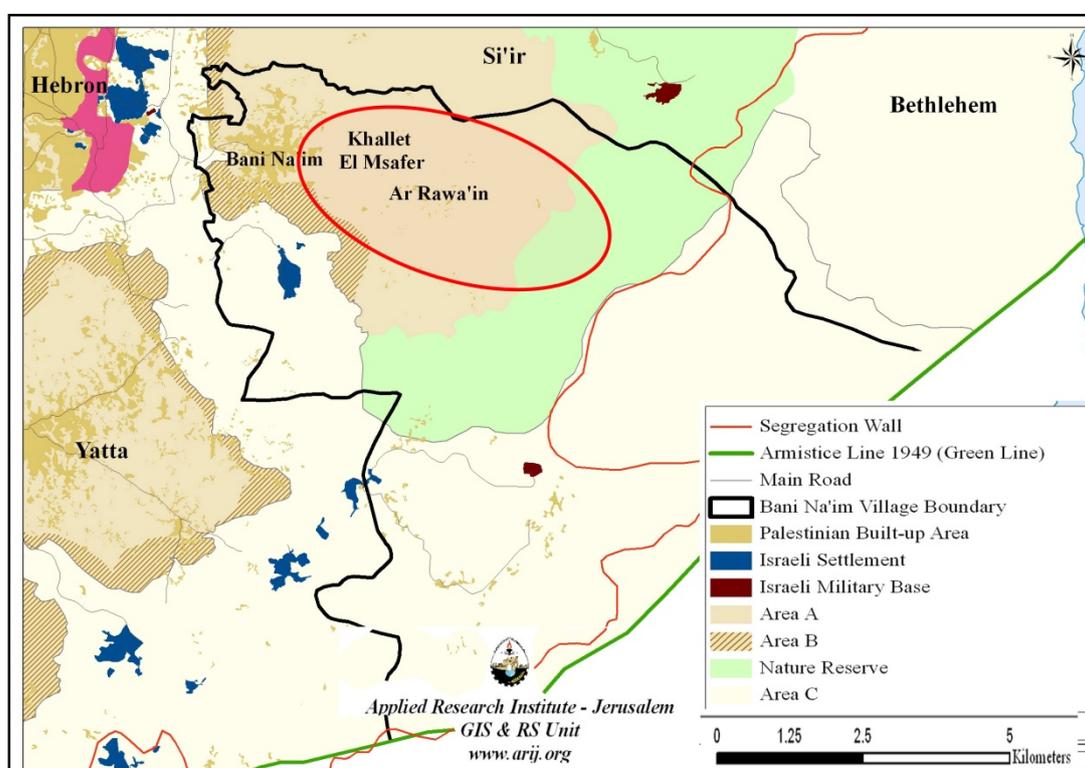
5.2. Location and Physical Characteristics

Bani Na'im Wilderness (E 35 19; N 31 42) is part of Hebron Governorate. Topographically it is part of the eastern slopes. The Wilderness is a semi-desert area with hills of irregular heights. It ranges from 800 m above sea level to about 150 m below sea level.



Map (5.1): Bani Na'im Wilderness within Hebron Governorate.
Source: The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ), 2009

From administrative point of view, the study area is part of Bani Na'im town lands in Hebron Governorate. Bani Na'im is a Palestinian town in the southern West Bank located seven kilometers east of Hebron Governorate. It is bordered by Ar Rawa'in areas to the east, Sa'ir and Ash Shuyukh towns to the north, Hebron City to the west, and Yatta town to the south. The village lands extend east to the mountains that overlook the Dead Sea. This area is contact with Ain Gedi region from the south eastern part region of the West Bank (See map 5.1, map 5.2)

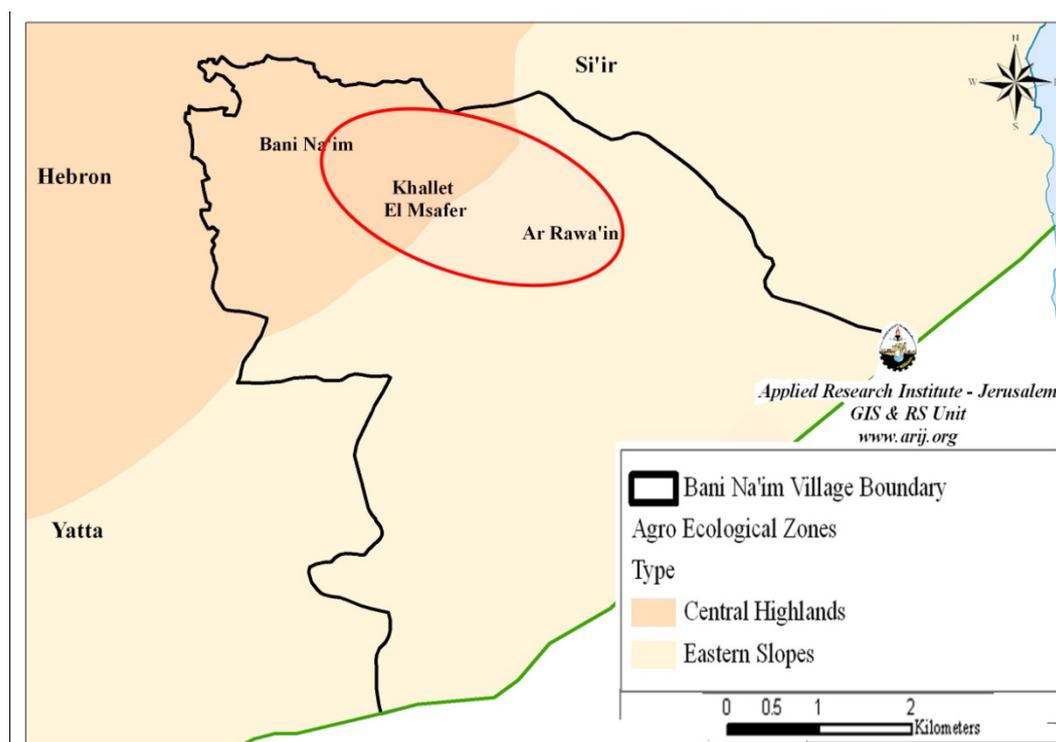


Map (5.2): Bani Na'im Wilderness (Khallet El Msafer) location within Bani Na'im Town
Source: The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ), 2009

Bani Na'im Wilderness extends over a mountainous area east of Hebron Mountains at an elevation of 958 m above sea level. The average annual temperature in the study area ranges from 29 C° in summer time to 12 C° in winter. Wind direction is usually from west and northwest, with a speed of 10-13 knots. From April to June,

hot *khamasin* winds with 3-5 knots come from the south carrying dust from the desert and causing a hazy atmosphere.

The study area falls between two climatic regions (Central highlands, eastern slopes) as shown in Map (5.3). The difference between both zones is obvious, whether in soil type or the land cover, in addition to the climate and rock formation.

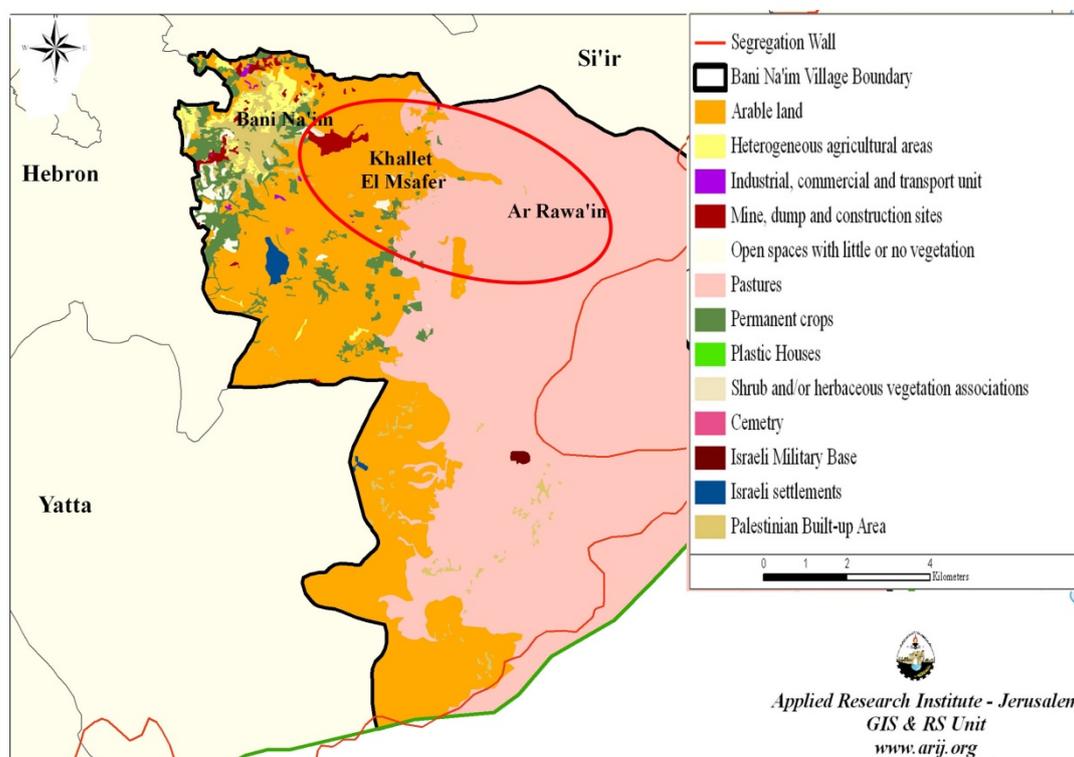


Map (5.3): The Site location according to the topographical zones
Source: The Applied Research Institute, Jerusalem (ARIJ), GIS Database, 2009

The region lies in the rain-shadow area of the central highlands and is classified as a hot area. It is characterized by semi-arid climate with a very low annual rainfall. The mean annual rainfall in Bani Na'im town is 369 mm, the average annual temperature is 16° C, and the average annual humidity is 61 % (ARIJ, 2009).

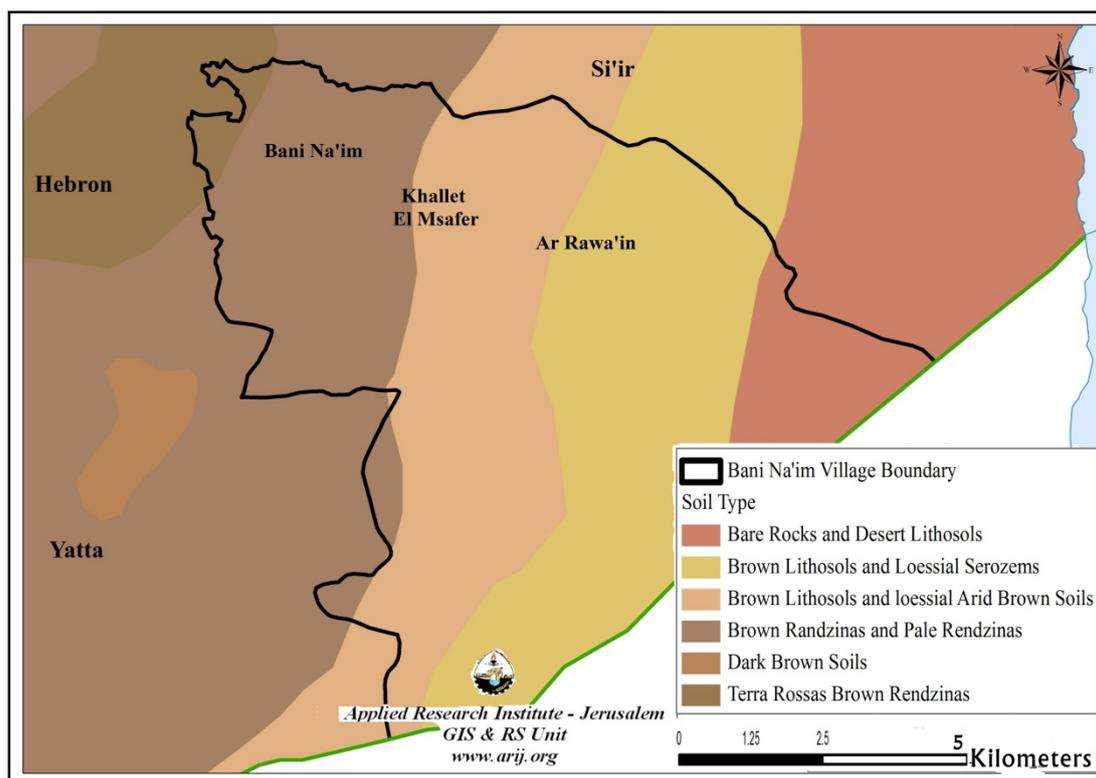
The study area consists mostly of open spaces and rangeland used as pastures, the rest is Arable lands including areas that contain permanent crops such as olive trees. (See map 5.4). It is suitable for grazing and for crop varieties, such as barley and

wheat that survive with little rainfall. Recently, some olive groves began to thrive on gentle slopes and in valleys where soil moisture can be retained (ARIJ, 2009).



Map (5.4): Land cover in Bani Na'im town and in the study area
Source: The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (Arij), 2009

From topographic point of view, steep slopes comprise most of the study area, but moderate slopes and small plateaus occur occasionally near summits and water divides. Surface water run-off is less than 15% of the total rainfall. The rocks are of calcite and sand constituents, thus hold little moisture, preventing high fertility of the herbs to grow on. Whereas, soil types in this zone are mostly from gray calcareous steppe series. The Pale Rendzina soil series is well represented. In the valleys, alluvial soil series are dominant. Terra Rosa may be found also in some patches, especially in the western sites of the studying area (Ministry of Environmental affairs, 1999), (See map 5.5).



Map (5.5): Soil Types in the study area

Source: The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (Arij), 2009

5.3. Population

According to the second Census implemented in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2007 by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the total population of Bani Na'im town was 20,301 persons, of whom 20,084 persons are living in Bani Na'im and 217 Bedouins living in Masaferet Bani Na'im (Bani Na'im wilderness) (PCBS, 2007). Bani Na'im is a vibrant town for commerce and many residents trade in carpets and stone (ARIJ, 2009). The 217 Bedouins who live in BNW have scattered tents in the wilderness; they raise livestock and breed domestic animals (ARIJ, 2009). The scarcity of water and animal fodder are the main people facing. Sheep and goat herding is the traditional economic preserve of the Bedouins; they have historically supplied the Palestinian market with meat and dairy products. Lack

of available land for grazing due to drought and the difficulty of access to land caused by mobility and access restrictions in the West Bank has forced many Bedouins to rely on purchasing fodder for their animals. Now, the price of fodder has gone up and some Bedouins have had to sell most of their flocks or even abandon herding altogether (Avendaño and Kenworthy, 2009).

If ecotourism is promoted in the area, this will give those Bedouins a great opportunity to rise up their economic status through being active suppliers for food and guide operations. Moreover, the type of the services and facilities will consequently be improved to cope with the demands of tourists.

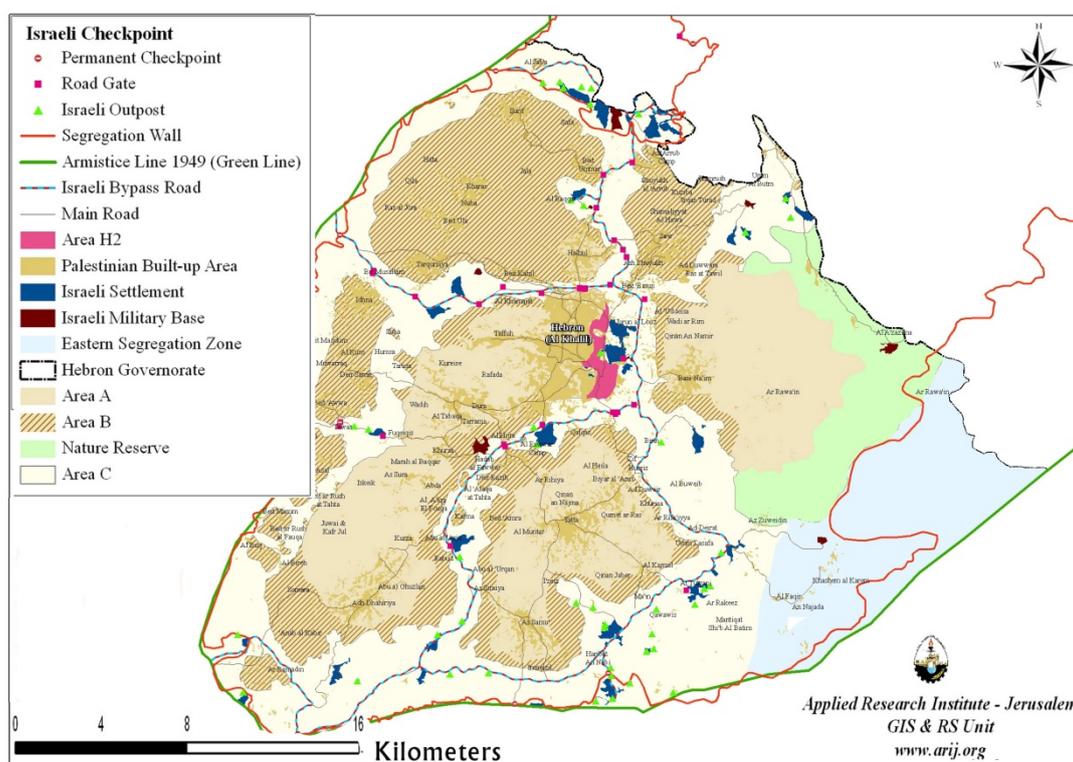
5.4. Historical Sites

The study area has many historical sites; one of the most important ones is Yaqeen site. *Yaqeen* site lies 3 km south of Bani Na'im village. This mosque was built on a hill top in 963 AD. Its eastern side faces the Dead Sea. This area is about 3638 square meters surrounded by olive orchards and other groves. This site is believed to belong to prophet Abraham's period. A carved footprint in a stone, which is believed to belong to Abraham, is found there (PWLS, 2003; ARIJ, 2009).

Historical sites are considered as added value to the study area in terms of identifying the history of the site and contributing to the educational process which is an important factor for ecotourism ventures success.

5.5. Geo-Political Status

Under the signed Oslo accords in 1995 between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, the Hebron Governorate was fragmented to areas (A, B, C). The study area locates into two zones; the first is “A zone” which would consist of territory to be placed under direct Palestinian control. The second part lies in the area that known as “Natural Reserve” according to Wye River Agreement between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, See map (5.6) (ARIJ, 2009).



Map (5.6): Oslo Accords Divisions (A, B, C) and the Natural Reserve zones
Source: The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ), 2009

5.6. Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna)

The Bani Na'im Wilderness is rich with the fauna species that include birds, mammals and reptiles. Many of these species are threatened or declining; among

these are the Egyptian Vulture, Lesser Spotted Eagle, (Nubian) Ibex. Nevertheless, many endemic plants are rooted in the study area.

Biodiversity is considered one of the main attractions for ecotourists who seek to learn about flora and fauna of the visited area.

5.6.1. Birds

Following the bird surveys that had been conducted to the BNW area by PWLS (2003), a preliminary checklist for bird species occurring in that area with their status had been prepared. Some of them are known to be of great conservative importance according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), or BirdLife International. (See tables 5/1, 2, 3).

Common name	Scientific name	Status	Convention	Arabic Name
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	Summer visitor	Appendix 2 of the Bonn Convention	العاسوق الصغير

Table (5.1): Globally Threatened Bird Species found in the BNW
Source: IUCN Red DATA Book, Palestinian Wild Life Society (PWLS), 2003

Common name	Scientific name	Status	Convention
White Stork اللقلق الابيض	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	Passage migrant	Appendix 2 of the Bonn Convention
Honey Buzzard الصقر العسلي	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	Passage migrant	Appendix 2 of the Bonn Convention
Egyptian Vulture النسر المصري	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	Occasional breeder	Appendix 2 of the Bonn Convention
Lanner Falcon الصقر الوكري	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	Passage migrant	Appendix 2 of the Bonn Convention
Saker الصقر	<i>Falco cherrug</i>	Passage migrant	Appendix 2 of the Bonn Convention
Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Resident	Appendix 2 of the Bonn Convention
Lesser Spotted Eagle النسر المرقط الصغير	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>	Passage migrant	Appendix 2 of the Bonn Convention

Table (5.2): Species Threatened or Declining throughout all or large parts of their range in the BNW
Source: Important Bird Areas in the Middle East 1994, Palestinian Wild Life Society (PWLS), 2003

Common name	Scientific name
Sand Partridge حجل الرمل	<i>Ammoperdix heyi</i>
Finch's Wheatear العصفور الابلق	<i>Oenanthe finchii</i>
Hooded Wheatear الابلق المقنع	<i>Oenanthe monach</i>

Table (5.3): Species with small total world ranges, with important populations in the BNW.
Source: Important Bird Areas in the Middle East 1994, Palestinian Wild Life Society (PWLS), 2003

5.6.2. Mammals

According to PWLS surveys, 14 species of mammals had been recorded in the BNW Site. Mammal surveys were restricted to direct observations, records and observations of local people. These provide knowledge about presence and distribution of large mammals. Relatively high densities of mammalian species found in Palestine in comparison to other Arab countries. This fact is due to Palestine's geographic location between three continents and the high diversity in soil and climate elements. These factors have helped species of different origins to settle and inhabit Palestine.

Through wildlife survey that conducted by the PWLS in the area, a preliminary checklist of animal species occurring in this area had been prepared, taking in mind the species of conservatory concerns according to IUCN red list, see [table \(5.4\)](#)

Scientific Name	English Name	Arabic Name	Status
<i>Capra ibex nubiana</i>	(Nubian) Ibex	البدن/الوعل	EN
<i>Gazella dorcas</i>	Dorcas Gazelle	الغزال الصحراوي	VU
<i>Gazella gazella</i>	Mountain Gazelle	الغزال الجبلي	LR
<i>Hyaena hyaena</i>	Striped Hyena	الضبع المخطط	LR
<i>Felis pardus</i>	Leopard	الفهد	R
<i>Meles meles</i>	Common Badger	الغريراء	LR
<i>Canis aureus</i>	Jackal	ابن أوى	R
<i>Canis lupus</i>	Wolf	الذئب	R
<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	Red Fox	الثعلب الاحمر	R

Table (5.4): Some of the mammals found in the Bani Na'im Wilderness Site, and their conservation status according to the IUCN Red List

R: Rare **VU:** Vulnerable **EN:** Endangered **LR:** Lower risk of rarity **C:** Common
Source: 1- PWLS Survey & Archive, 2-Mammals of the Holy Land-Dr. Mazin Qumsyiah

5.6.3. Reptiles

Reptiles are important elements in biodiversity. These organisms are highly active and have wide distribution in the ecosystem, besides contributing considerably to the functional roles in it. Moreover, reptiles play vital roles in the energetic pathways in ecosystem. Reptiles are a diversified group of organisms that have an impact on the intra and inter-specific interaction among individuals and populations. This status gives them a place in the ecosystem and the equilibrium of the ecosystem at large.

<i>Scientific Name</i>	English Name
<i>Ptyodactylus guttatus</i>	Spotted fan footed gecko ابو بريص مرقط القدمين
<i>Chamaelo chameleon recticrista</i>	European chameleon الحرباء الاوروبية
<i>Mesalina guttulata guttulata</i>	Small spotted lizard السحلية المرقطة الصغيرة
<i>Laudakia stellio stellio</i>	Starred agama الاجمة النجمية
<i>Coluber rhodorachis</i>	Jan's Whip Snake افعى سوط الجان
<i>Vipera palaestina</i>	Palestine viper الافعى الفلسطينية

Table (5.5): Some of the well-known reptile species recorded in the site.

Source: Palestinian Wild Life Society (PWLS), 2009.

5.6.4. Plants

According to Al-Eisawi (1998) The Eastern Slopes area, which constitutes close to 40% of the West Bank and wherein BNW is part of it, is a gold mine of biological diversity. Many of these are endemic to the Fertile Crescent; at least sixteen have been identified as economically important to pastoralists; others are known to have medical properties, and are often used by the local population.

Experts suspect that plant biodiversity and biomass in the eastern slopes has decreased substantially in the open areas since 1967. These estimates are based on the number and frequencies of range land species present in the area. Slightly more

than 200 species are rare or endangered in the West Bank. Some of these include important range land forages such as (*Colenta istria*, *Artamisia sieberi*, *Haloxylon persicum*, *Acacia albida*, and *Prosopis farcta*) (The Palestinian Institute for Arid Land and Environmental Studies, 1996).

Base on PWLS (2003) survey, a total of more than 120 species belonging to more than 40 families have been recorded, and it is expected that more than 250 species can exist within the site.

Families	No. Of Species
<i>Composite</i>	15
<i>Leguminosae</i>	10
<i>Liliaceae</i>	9
<i>Labiatae</i>	8
<i>Iridaceae</i>	7
<i>Ranunculaceae</i>	6
<i>Solanaceae</i>	6
<i>Chenopdiaceae</i>	4
<i>Caryophyllaceae</i>	4

Table (5.6): The most abundant families of the recorded species and their numbers
Based on PWLS Survey 2002/2003, **Source:** PWLS, 2003

5.7. Summary

The study area is characterized by being diverse in geographical features and abundant of natural resources. It also contains rare species of animals and birds, a magnificent natural formation for rocks and archeological sites. Besides, it lies between two topographical zones: the middle mountain range and the eastern slopes and extended to reach the Dead Sea. The study area has the potential to be a successful ecotourism destination. The next chapter gives a deep analysis for those potentials according to ECOS using six factors that are viewed as important to apply successful ecotourism adventure.

Chapter Six

Ecotourism Opportunities in Bani Na'im Wilderness

This chapter introduces the results of the field work undertaken based on the observations and semi-structured interviews. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the observations focus on the physical form of Bani Na'im Wilderness which includes the general status of the site in terms of rock formation, soil types, buildings, land cover. Furthermore, the biodiversity in the site has been intensely observed. The many species of animals and birds are recognized; the many kinds of plants are documented and observed. Finally, the observations were important to understand the use of the site.

6.1. Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum Factors

The semi-structured interviews¹ are analyzed in light of the eight important factors set in the Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum (ECOS) as mentioned in [section \(3.4.1\)](#) in chapter four. All the data was analyzed according to the Ecotourism Opportunity

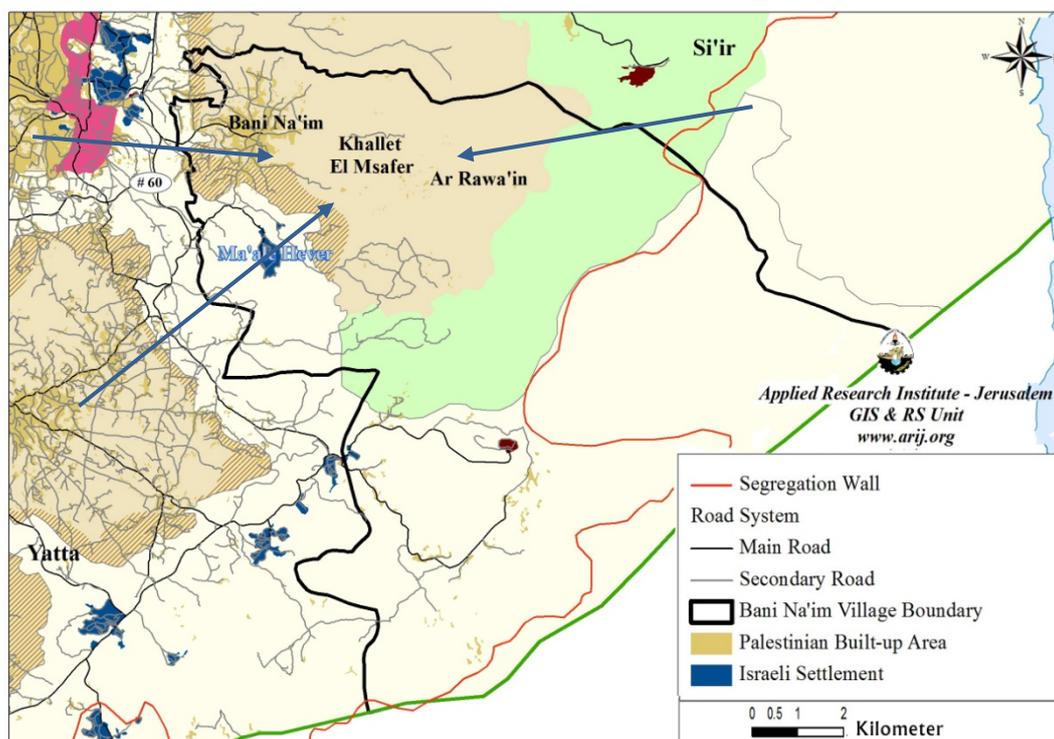
¹ Quantification of the results has three words to represent the quantity; the word “most” involves more than 60% of the interviewees, the word “some” involves 30%-59% of the interviewees, and the word “few” involves less than 30% of the interviewees.

Spectrum using factors viewed as important to ecotourism success. The results of transcribing these factors are described in the following paragraphs.

6.1.1. Accessibility

Observation on the accessibility in the study area shows that it's easy to access the site from Bani Na'im town, Si'ir, Shyoukh, Tqou' (Bethlehem), Yatta and Hebron either by car or by animals, or even by foot, see Map (6.1). This was asserted by the interviewees.

As stated by Boyed & butler (1996) the inclusion of information in the access factor is a significant addition to that factor. In this regard, information accessibility on the study area is poor; none but little promotion done for the site as an ecotourism destination.



Map (6.1): The accessibility to site from various places.

Source: The Applied Research Institute, Jerusalem (Arij), GIS database, 2009. Modified by researcher.

Under the signed Oslo accords in 1995 between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, the Hebron Governorate was fragmented to areas (A, B, C) (Arij, 2009). Administrative wise, the site is classified as “A” zone and “Natural Reserve” zone according to Oslo Agreement, wherein “A” zone is under full Palestinian authority and the “Natural Reserve” is under the Israeli authority. However, it is hard for the Palestinian authority to execute any projects in the natural reserve zone.

According to Bani Na'im municipality, the natural reserve is open for all people, they used to camp at the place called SAD which reveals a great scenic view for the Dead Sea [Figure \(6.1\)](#). The Israelis interfere only if there is vandalism or damage for nature through the over-hunting or over-grazing.



Figure (6.1): Nearby residents enjoying their time in front of the Dead Sea (SAD) area
Source: Bani Na'im Municipality, 2009

Nevertheless, there is a military watching tower near the (Pene Hever) ([Figure 6.2](#)) settlement where under such conditions visiting time of the region around is restricted. Also the Israeli soldiers sometimes prevent local people from reaching

their lands and crops in certain areas around the tower and near the settlement (Pene Hever).

For most of the nearby residents in BNW, they find the accessibility to the site easy whether by cars, animals or foot using the agricultural roads. Most of them stressed that the difficulty of accessibility locally and internationally is, respectively, settlements, Israeli closures, the Administrative divisions of the Oslo Accords (A, B, C) and the absence of Palestinian control on the borders.



Figure (6.2): Pene Hever Settlement on Bani Na'im town lands.

Source: www.Palestineremembered.com, Accessed: 20/5/2009

The lack of infrastructure like roads and lighting is the main problem concerning accessibility according to the NGO's members. The political situation and the checkpoints make the way to the tourism sites longer, while the settlements are considered to be an obstacle that prevent reaching to some sites *“Most of the problems are political ones; we need to be away from settlements”* (M9). However, few NGO's officers claim that it is not political issues, it is only a management matter: *“if we build our organizations the right way, determine our national priorities, and have a clear plan for the utilization of our resources then the problems will be less. After doing so, we can blame the occupation”* (M17).

On the other hand, the Israeli propaganda in the west has been mentioned by the tour operators as serious problem since many countries have the West Bank among the Negative Travel Advice list; *“the idea here is the West Bank is not a secure country. Unfortunately there are no sufficient contradicting programs, in addition to the weakness of the Palestinian marketing and promoting brochures”* (M10). Nevertheless, most of the governmental officers refer to the control on borders, settlements, Separation Wall and the political instability as the most evident problems in case of accessibility. *“We have no control on the borders, therefore our market is shared with Israel, most of our tourists are coming through Israeli tour operators”* (M6).

6.1.2. Relationship

The relationship here refers to the ecotourism and other potential uses of the same resource, whether it is complementarity, compatibility, integration or competition (Butler & Boyed, 1996).

The first compete use of the study area is quarrying. The quarrying industry in the area is dominant, especially within the western sites of the study area. Following the fact that the quarries are cutting the geographic continuity and increase diseases like asthma and eye diseases, the municipality of Bani Na'im town did many efforts to prevent residents from selling their land for quarrying. Furthermore, one of the obstacles in drawing the path of Abraham Path is those quarries. Recently a decision has been taken by the Council of the Ministry of Local Government to stop quarrying in the town. The municipality will provide the needed trees to rehabilitate

the quarrying areas; the work will be done until the end of 2010 (Mayor of Bani Na'im Municipality, interview, 2009).

However, the Israeli maltreatment is considered as the second competition use of the study area. The site has the evidences of the Israeli tanks and military equipments which return back to the period between the years 2000- 2008 when there was a military training in the site. The alterations in the landscape due to these actions are heavy, in addition to some military equipment as shown in Figure (6.3).



Figure (6.3): Photo 1,2 show some of the Israeli equipments found in the site due to military training.
Source: Bani Na'im Municipality, 2009.

On the other hand, habitation for Bedouins is one of the compatible uses of the study area. The site is used by the Bedouins tribes as place for living; they keep traveling from place to another asking for water and grass “*We live here since 1948, we came from bir seba’, we travel from place to another following the grass to feed our goats, we also choose to be in a place near the wells*” (M13).

Interestingly, the development of agriculture is another very dominant feature; “*many olive trees have been planted in the last ten years*” (M19). On the other hand, Pastoralists rely on that area for grazing. There is many animals living in the site, thus hunting is also trendy, “*there are some kinds of wa’el and gazal, but the escape from hunting to the settlements and the natural reserve. We arrested many people and punish them. The situation now is safer for the animals and plants*” (M20).

The study area consists mostly of open spaces and rangeland used as pastures (Figure 6.4), the rest is Arable land including areas that contain permanent crops such as olive trees (Figure 6.5).

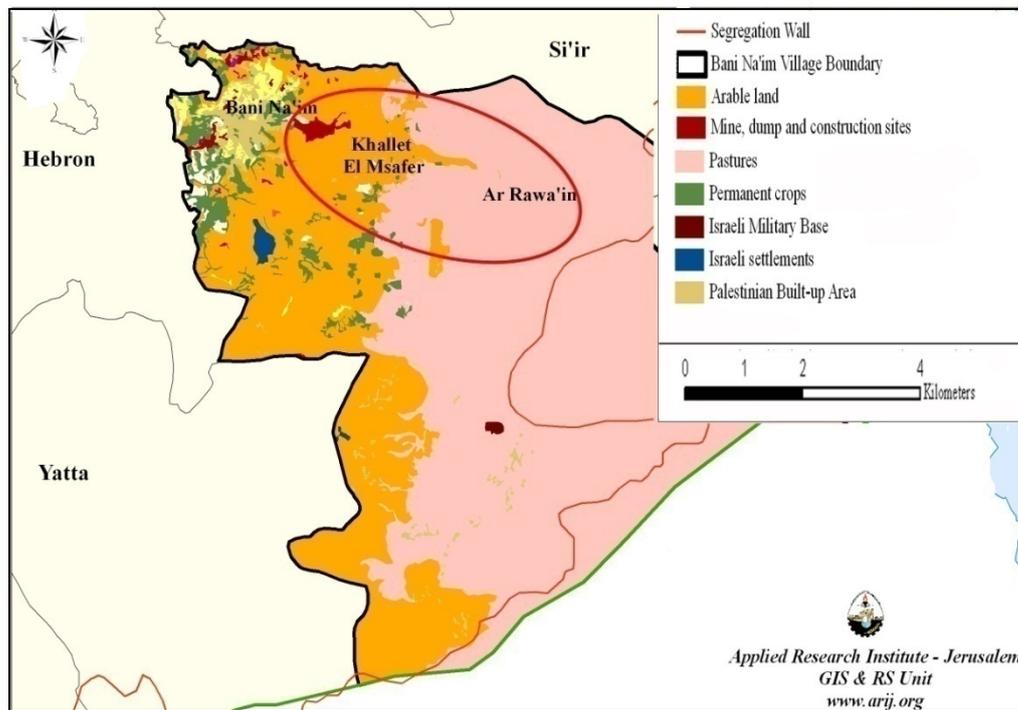


Figure (6.4): Animal grazing in the study area.
Source: Bani Na'im Municipality, 2009.



Figure (6.5): Quarrying in the study area (top), the olive trees (down)
Source: Bani Na'im Municipality, 2009

Map (6.2) shows the relationships between the various uses of the site.



Map (6.2): The relationship between the various uses of the study area.

Source: The Applied Research Institute, Jerusalem (Arij), GIS database, 2009. Modified by researcher.

Whereas, Some local groups from the neighbor towns and the city of Hebron come to visit the site between March until June as picnics and barbeque (Figure 6.6), then the temperature becomes high and the place takes the desert atmosphere, no one stay their but the Bedouins, “*Bani Na'im Wilderness is like the lung for Hebron governorate specially in springs, due to the charming scenic vistas and beautiful nature. Furthermore, sometimes youth camp here seeking entertainments*” (M12).



Figure (6.6): Local group is barbequing in the study area during spring time
Source: Bani Na'im Municipality, 2009

6.1.3. Attractions

The attractions are refer back to the types of ecotourism experiences, weather it is IN (tropical forests, mountain areas, desert), OF (birds, trees, wild flowers, mammals), or BY (watching, filming, collecting).

6.1.3.1. Environmental Factors

As mentioned in [section \(4.2.4.1\)](#), the environmental factor refers back to the natural features and the ecological processes occurring in an area. Natural features are important to the type and level of tourism in an area; these features include scenic vistas and landscapes, climate, topography, wildlife and vegetation, ([Bird and Inman 1968](#), [Mathiesen and Wall 1982](#)). Following this, a variety of such features embedded in the study area. The study area falls between tow topographical zone

types (Central highlands, eastern slopes) as shown in Map (6.3) and Figure (6.7). The difference between both zones is obvious, whether in soil type or the land cover, not to mention the climate and rock formation (see section 5.2) in chapter five.



Figure (6.7): The difference between the eastern slopes and central highlands topographical zones in the study area

Source: the researcher, 2009



Figure (6.8): General view for some kind of rock formation in the study area.

Source: Bani Na'im Municipality, 2009

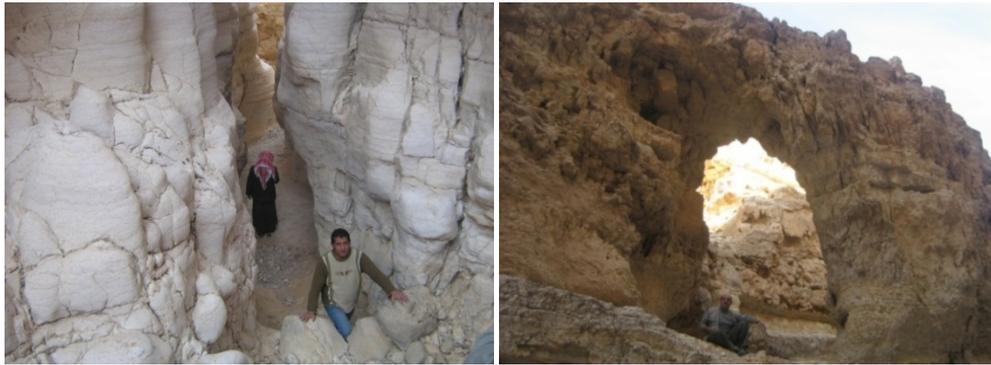


Figure (6.9): Photos (1,2) closer view reveals the types of rocks in the site.
Source: Bani Na'im Municipality, 2009.

6.1.3.2. Scenic Vistas

A diverse range of attractions was mentioned by interviewees. Scenic vistas were mentioned as an important attraction in the study area. Most nearby residents claim that the study area offers many scenic vistas that add a special beauty to the site, see [Figure \(6.10\)](#) that shows a magnificent view toward the Dead Sea, “*people camp at the place called SAD which reveals a great scenic view for the Dead Sea*” (M20).



Figure (6.10): Scenic Vistas; The view towards the Dead Sea from Bani Na'im Wilderness.
Source: the researcher, 2009



Figure (6.11): Scenic Vistas; The hills at Bani Na'im Wilderness.
Source: www.Palestineremembered.com, Accessed: 20/5/2009

6.1.3.3. Historic Sites

Furthermore, an archaeological site called “Al Qaser” has been mentioned by most of the nearby residents as one of the most attractions in the site. It is a Roman historical castle which dates back to the 1st century A.D. There are still some of the mosaics in some areas, see figure (6.12; 6.13). The castle is in bad condition and need rehabilitation and protection, “*during the Israeli period the castle was damaged and the mosaic was stolen by the Israelis. The municipality tries to conserve this historical place through the cooperation of the antiquities department in the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities*” (M23).

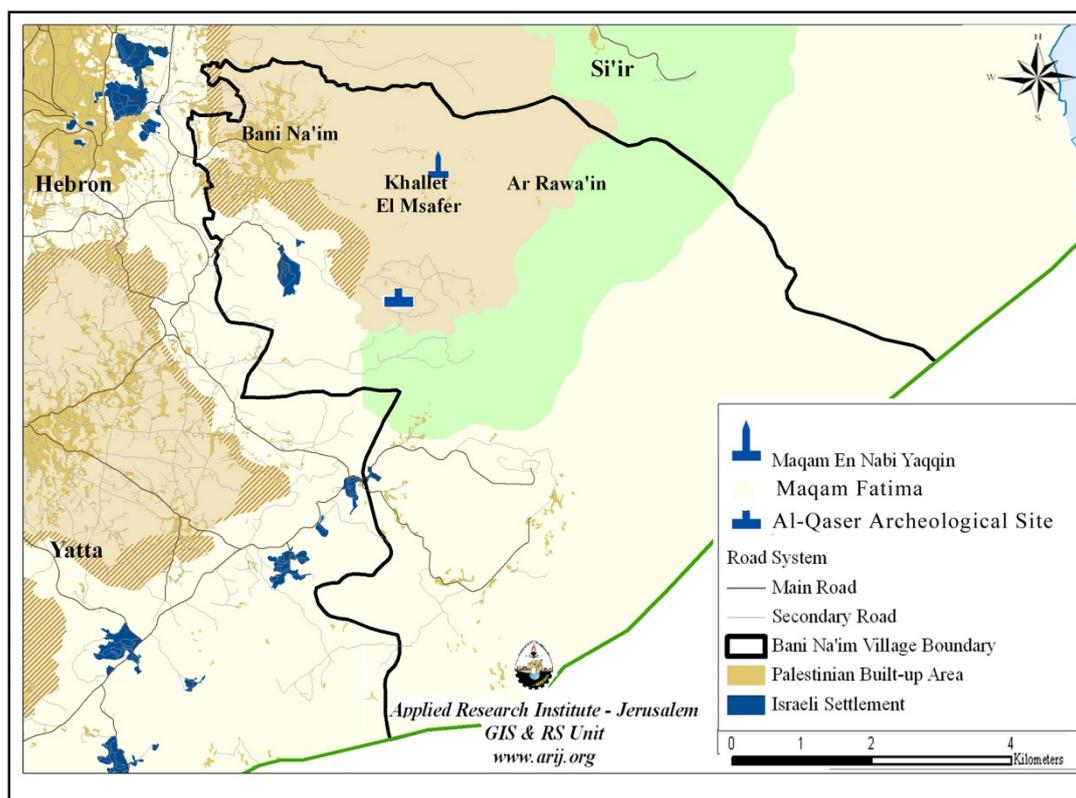


Figure (6.12): The archaeological site which locates within the study area (Al-Qaser palace).
Source: Bani Na'im Municipality, 2009



Figure (6.13): Close Photos in and around Al-Qaser palace.
Source: Bani Na'im Municipality, 2009

In addition, *Yaqeen* site that lies 3 km south of Bani Naim village. This mosque was built on a hill top in 963 A.D. Its eastern side faces the Dead Sea. This area is about 3638 square meters surrounded by olive orchards and other groves. This site is believed to belong to prophet Abraham's period. A carved footprint in a stone, which is believed to belong to Abraham, is found there (PWLS, 2003; ARIJ, 2009), see [map \(6.2\)](#). Nowadays, *Siraj* Center with cooperation of the municipality of Bani Na'im and Abraham Path Organization are working to include this site within Abraham path tour (Bani Na'im Mayor, interview, 2009).



Map (6.3): The historical and archeological sites within the study area of BNW

Source: The Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ), 2009

However, *Makam Fatima*-The Tomb of *Fatima* is a historic building that is three meters to the northeast of *Al Yaqeen* Wall. After entering it from its primary eastern door, an approximately ten square meter carved in rock cave revealed (PWLS, 2003). According to Bani Na'im municipality, before the second *intifada* which erected in 2000, the *shi'a* from Iran used to visit this site and consider it as a holy place for believing that the tomb of *Fatima bent Al-Hassan* is situated there. The place is under the custody of the Palestinian *Awqaf*.

6.1.3.4. Biodiversity (Flora and Fauna)

Wildlife observations have been carried out within different places in the study area. Literature review on both flora and fauna in the study area is shown in chapter three

(section3.6). The oldest, simplest, and most frequently used method of studying flora and fauna is by direct observation. Direct observation has contributed much to my knowledge of bird species found in that region through different periods of the year (September 2009- May 2010).

The wildlife and medicinal plants make the nature in the study area as treasure of biodiversity and add to the attractions there. Examples of wildlife are: birds, mammals and reptiles. Nevertheless, many endemic plants are rooted in the study area, such as *Sarcopoterium spinosum* and *Acacia albida*. Areas of fissured hard limestone are populated by plant communities of *Zygophyllum dumosum* and *Gymnocarpos decander*. On the soft rocks there are plant communities of the semi-shrubs *Suaeda asphaltica*, *Agathophora (Halogeton) alopecuroides*, *Salsola tetrandra*, *Retama raetam*, and others.

Following are some examples of the plants found in the study area. These include the Anemone coronaria, Salvia Dominica, Wada, Zuhaif, Tulipa stylosa and black iris.



Figure (6.14): Salvia Dominica in wild within the study area
Source: Dr. Khaled Sawalha, Bani Na'im Municipality website
<http://www.baninaim.ps/Biodiversity.htm>



Figure (6.15): Wada_ *Colchicum ritchii*

Source: Dr. Khaled Sawalha, Bani Na'im Municipality website

<http://www.baninaim.ps/Biodiversity.htm>



Figure (6.16): Zuhaif_ *Coridothymus capitatus*



Figure (6.17): Black Iris

Source: Dr. Khaled Sawalha, Bani Na'im Municipality website

<http://www.baninaim.ps/Biodiversity.htm>



Figure (6.18): *Tulipa stylosa*

The abundance of water from flash floods and permanent springs creates a natural diversity of desert habitat in BNW. This area is richer in breeding species than the other arid areas in the country. Twelve species of raptors, including Griffon Vultures, Egyptian Vultures, Golden Eagles, and Bonelli's Eagle breed in the many tall cliffs of the eastern slopes. (PWLS, 2003).

One might ask (why are birds important?) Birds are considered as an indication to the healthy environmental at which they exist, it also indicates the changes that might happen in the future to certain environment. Birds' watching is one of the most important ways to know the environmental conditions in the world. If any site

is being imposed to any negative effect, the birds, which reside in it, will be changed (Sultan, 2000)



Figure (6.19): Black Eagle observed and recorded in wild in Bani Na'im Wilderness– Eastern slopes
Source: Dr. Khaled Sawalha, Bani Na'im Municipality website
<http://www.baninaim.ps/Biodiversity.htm>



Figure (6.20): Bird watching in Bani Na'im Wilderness during spring days
Source: www.Palestineremembered.com, Accessed: 20/5/2009

The attractions in the site are somehow obvious relating on the conducted observation in the site in line with the literature review. Yet, it's important to include the interviewee's point of view.

When asked about the potential attractions of the region, most nearby residents said that “*natural cultural attractions*” had the most potential; most of them demonstrate that the clear geographical diversity and geological features are among the site attractions, in addition to the biodiversity richness and historical monuments.

Many potential ecotourism activities that can be implemented there such as hiking, tourism trails, school and entertainment trips and camping considered as the most promising activities by the most nearby residents. Some of them recommend studying the biodiversity, while few numbers were aware of the bird watching (Figure 6.20), bird ringing and camel riding as vital activities.



Figure (6.21): Camels found in the eastern part of the study area belong to Bedouins
Source: Bani Na'im Municipality, 2009

Yet, most of the NGO's members deemed that many attractions are existed in the site. Among these are the rich cultural landscape; that includes nature, terraces, archeological sites and the different topography, cultural and natural heritage. But all

are not utilized the right way. Some of them suggest activities such as camel riding, trails, hiking, bird watching, bird ringing, desert tours and cycling as extra attractions to the site.

However, government officials believed that the present situation of BNW tourist attractions might be improved by, for example, an encouragement of better coordination between tourism-related sectors, both public and the private. Those responses were exemplified in statements such as *“If there is a good co-operation between all related institutions, these attractions can be developed further”* (M6).

There are some attempts to preserve the biodiversity in the site; the municipality has cooperated with Paris Sixth University and Al-Quds University to preserve the biodiversity in BNW; furthermore, Dr khaled Sawalha from Al-Quds University has a project of replant all the endemic plants such as *zuhaif* “*Coridothymus capitatus*” (Bani Na'im Mayor, 2009, interview).

6.1.4. Infrastructure

Based on ECOS, the infrastructure includes two main components; Support infrastructure and Support services [see section \(4.4.1.4\)](#) (Boyed & Butler, 1996).

The nearby residents firmly believe that many kinds of support infrastructure are needed to establish a successful ecotourism in BNW. Most of them mention an efficient transportation system, general infrastructure (electricity, water, sanitary and communication) and toilets as vital services for the success of such activity.

No interpretive media are provided. Indeed, interpretive media and signage of any sort, regulatory, informative, etc., are evidently absent at BNW. In this regard most

interviewees highlighted this point. *“The infrastructure situation is a disaster, it’s almost not existed. No toilets and the restaurants have no facilities to serve big groups”* (M9).

Tour operators were also with the opinion that developing support services and facilities is important. Most of them emphasize on establishing a range of services and provide a variety of facilities in the study area. Among are a tourism guide center, a guest house to gather tourists for orientation meetings and receptions, an entertainment programs, first aid and regular security patrols.

One of the brilliant suggestions given by one of the NGO’s members in this regard was providing the site with eco-lodges that is environmentally friendly; *“the prices of the hotels are very high, if we have an eco-lodge in an ecotourism site with a quality of service, this would be great.”* (M15).

Likewise, another interviewee from (MOTA) explain this by *“, if we work on ecotourism trails, first we need to build the suitable infrastructure like toilets, resting and waiting areas, canopies, first aid and restaurants”* (M6).

Yet, government officers mentioned the *National Tourism Development Plan* that revolve around increasing the number of visitors, their length of stay in Palestinian areas and most importantly increase the spending of tourists in the occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). This strategy will require MOTA and the private sector to develop the Palestinian tourism offer and target new niche markets and travelers segment. Ecotourism, cultural tourism and domestic tourism are among the priority market to attract. Therefore, the strategy of MOTA now is to provide tourist’s sites with basic facilities and infrastructure that will enable visitors (both national and international) to access and understand the sites, and to expand the tourist offer of

leisure by combining the programming of cultural events (performing arts, music, agro-fairs, cinema festivals etc.) with the exploitation of sites of cultural and natural significance. This can be achieved by the enhancement of a private/public sector partnership.

However, the current state of infrastructure development raises some concerns; *“recently the municipality has completely provided the site with water and electricity, in addition to three ground water wells”* (M12).

6.1.5. User Pre-requisites

According to ECOS, the user pre-requisites include two main components; the prior skills and prior knowledge (Boyed & Butler, 1996). The respondents were asked to give their opinion on these components.

6.1.5.1. Prior skills

Concerning this component, delivering training to enhance the quality of human resources was highlighted by some tour operators and can be found in responses such as *“It is important that the people involved in the industry get appropriate education and sufficient training concerning tourism.”*(M14).

However, most tour operators and NGO’s members were with the opinion that developing ecotourism-based accommodation and traditional rural life were acceptable. Some suggestions related to the developments were provided including standard level of hygiene; adequate training of the villagers to run the business, as they might not be ready; and the need to retain traditional-style of houses to establish the accommodation. According to them, BNW has potential for ecotourism

developments in the future. However, several constraints such as lack of concerns about traditional cultural performances could contribute to the slow development of ecotourism in the site.

Some of the NGO's members suggest establishing hiking trips combined with the traditional food and historical sites. *“we can organize hiking trips connecting with the delicious traditional food like taboon, cheese, zeit o za'tar, zareb. Not to forget about the handicrafts like embroidery and carpets, and work on new design and packaging for the pieces. As well, we have to connect this with the historical sites and stories and the ancient civilizations that existed here”* (M15).

Most nearby residents mention the tourist's brochures to identify the site as an ecotourism destination; one of the nearby residents describes that by: *“the brochures give you complete information about the country and its culture”* (M32). Similarly, the tour operators mention the marketing brochures as a vital tool for promoting ecotourism in the site.

The governmental officers were also in opinion of the importance of the marketing through using the brochures; *“This is the responsibility of marketing where the brochures give you complete information about the country you are visiting and the direction that you should follow”* (M6).

6.1.5.2.Prior Knowledge

Most of the NGO's members stressed that a sound awareness among the community, stakeholders and politicians about cultural landscape values in the site is vital for the preservation, development and sustainable use of the cultural landscape. *“Awareness and understanding is a precondition for managing development in a sustainable*

manner which values the landscape and creates a strong sense of place for local people and visitors” (M17).

Government officers asserted that the ways to increase the awareness of local people is by all types of media which plays a great role in spreading desired information. This can be achieved by the cooperation of the various ministries, schools, TV programs and interviews. *“we should work with the local community through many types of media, tell them about the importance of tourism, and how it contribute to the economy, most of the rural areas are not aware of such issues” (M6).*

The development of ecotourism in BNW was hindered by the fact that guiding and interpretation mostly did not exist, although some tour operators believed they did. According to most of the tour operators, funding was one of the factors that is contributing to insufficient interpretation and education as represented in the following *“Well, in relation to education and interpretation, I do not think they are already adequate. We still have to increase quality” (M11).* Another response that supported the lack of education and interpretation was this *“We don’t have other forms of interpretation. The forms or techniques of interpretation are limited.” (M14).*

The lack of environmental information and specialized studies that are related to the treatment of biodiversity was highlighted by most of government offices and NGO’s members. Furthermore, most have pointed to the non-existence of the environmental protection areas in Palestine, and the refusal of Israel to submit these lands for Palestinian Authorities.

Incidentally, the Code of Conduct for Tourism in the Holy Land which was published in November 2008 as a Palestinian initiative for responsible tourism

(Appendix, 5), was signed by MOTA and a group of tour operators and NGO's working in the field of tourism and have programs for alternative tourism within the Palestinian community. One of the tour operators describe it by: *“The code introduced some recommendations for travelers to Palestine and the Palestinian tourism sectors considered as vital information before, during and after the trip for all parties”* (M10).

6.1.6. Social Interaction

As stated in ECOS, the social interaction reflect two main components: the level of interaction (with other ecotourists), and the level of interaction with local/host community (Boyed & Butler, 1996).

Local people attitudes toward the development of ecotourism programs were very satisfying. Actually, this is expected since the Palestinian inhabitants are known for their hospitality and cooperative behavior. When asked about the possibilities to host tourists and support ecotourism programs, most of the nearby residents stated that they had already hosted tourists in various times. On the other hand, most of them are willing to host tourists and to cooperate with ecotourism organizations thorough spreading the word among friends and family members, *“for sure we are ready to accommodate tourists with no return because our traditions prevent us from taking money in return. Otherwise, I will not be called a Bedouin anymore”* (M30).

The importance of local events was repeatedly mentioned by nearby residents as central to the success of locally owned businesses and of ecotourism ventures in general; nearly all of them (90%) believe that handcraft, festivals and cultural

meetings are essential in promoting the site for ecotourism locally and internationally.

Most respondents of tour operators and government ministries support the above results; they stressed on the hospitality of the Palestinian community which they had experience through working with them in many programs and projects. *“Well, the Palestinian people are very friendly; this is an important asset for the integration and the acceptance of the locals for such projects especially if we talk about foreign tourism”* (M9). Therefore, most of them strongly believe this would be the case with ecotourism programs concerning the site; the efforts in this regard should integrate the local community.

Some NGO's members suggest integrate the Bedouins in such projects indirectly; due to the fact that Bedouins refuse to take money for accommodating tourist following their culture: *“you can have a deal with one of them as a business, ask him to prepare a suitable place for my group to sleep and make it near your tents for security reasons, and supply me with the needed food, actually he will get this food from the local people who live there, so eventually they are involved and participated in this project”* (M15).

The nearby residents are not aware of the social effects of ecotourism; very few number claimed that it promotes the cultural attitude by protecting language, customs, and traditions, increases relations between local community members and with BNW, and finally, develops the academic institutions.

Some Government officers asserted that the local people will involve in ecotourism programs if they have personal economical benefits and being partners in process and decision making, otherwise, the idea will not be accepted. *“The resident will*

accept the tourism if he benefits personally from it, otherwise it's only a source of disturbance. He must be a partner in the whole process and in decision making otherwise he may not cooperate or accept the idea" (M7).

6.1.7. Visitor impacts

Respondents were asked to express their opinions whether there had been any efforts to conserve the Cultural landscape in BNW, and whether society members already had adequate concerns for the environments. The most noticeable themes of the nearby residents were inadequate concerns for the environment and hygiene and lack of government's commitment to conserve the landscape, biodiversity and the archaeological site within the study area.

Consistent with tourism impacts, most respondents believed tourism brings both positive economic impacts, such as providing job opportunities and additional income, as well as cultural impacts, such as preserving and revitalizing traditional culture. However, most nearby residents were unaware that negative impacts could impose on both socio-cultural and physical environments. One of the NGO's member emphasized on this point by this statement: *"I think the negative impact on environment is done by the local people not the tourist, so we have first to work with local people then tourists" (M2).*

When asked about environmental actions that could take place in the study area, most of them recommend rehabilitation of quarry sites to decrease the harmful effects on the environment. Few respondents of nearby residents consider that the ecotourism could contribute to the environmental and resources conservation by a series of procedures that include: land reclamation and planting, encourage

biodiversity studies (e.g. bird immigration), improve environmental conservation programs, public participation in conserving and protecting the ecotourism sites and decrease the pollution.

Economical impacts of ecotourism were discussed. Apparently, some of the Government officers and NGO's members argued that ecotourism contributes to the national GDP, decreases unemployment ratios, creates jobs and improves the standards of living. Whereas very few number of NGO's members pointed that ecotourism provides infrastructure services, promotes the traditional handicrafts and encourages the local tourism.

Nevertheless, there are few attempts to study the environmental impacts and contribute to the environmental management in the study area; for example Al-Quds University (Abu Dees) has organized a workshop on environmental management in Bani Na'im Municipality Park to study plants and animals biodiversity during spring 2006. The eastern slopes of Bani Na'im attract students of Al-Quds University; wild plants and natural specimens were collected for conservation, study and research, while at the same time guided ecotourism was performed ([Mayor of Bani Na'im Municipality, 2009; interview](#)).

6.1.8. Management

As mentioned in ECOS, management includes the stakeholder involvement and decision process. Control and management of use and development in the study area is uncoordinated and frequently divided between several agencies, different levels of government and privately owned interests all with wide and different goals and

objectives. The lack of clearly defined responsibility for overall control is the major problem which may be reflected in incompatible scale and type of development.

Yet, several weaknesses of management were identified by tour operators and NGO's members alike. Among others are inappropriate management, inadequate coordination, shortage of funding and poor training of tourism management and employees. The 'inadequate coordination theme' mainly consisted of lack of coordination between tourism-related components and private sector involvement. Inappropriate management style, lack of professional management and inadequate maintenance were considered to contribute to inappropriate management of tourist attractions in the study area.

Eventually, the state of land ownership in BNW which has two types ; first the private ownerships that handed down between family members over many years, the second is the public ownerships that belong to clans under the name of *mashaa'* which contain hundreds of dunums. Recently, the Ministry of Agriculture and Agriculture Relief Organization have a project to fence these lands and close it for five to seven years. The purpose of this project is to replant these lands with herbs and grazing plants that originally found there.

When asked about the administration requirements to run a successful ecotourism, some of nearby residents consider having qualified human resources, tourism acknowledged community, encourage the academic institutions involvement (universities, research institutions) in the environmental and tourism studies, and finally, the financial resources. Whereas, some of NGO's members has asserted that providing the essential tourism services at ecotourism sites and setting a strategic plan focus on ecotourism is important in this regard. Very few number of tour

operators considered the improvement of the ecotourism campaigns, comprehensive tourism media (equipments, community parties), and full coordination between all parties as vital management requirements.

Most of NGO's members and tour operators alike mentioned the strong and good relations with municipalities and local councils. They recommended empowering the local government institutions and decentralize system in many fields including tourism and cultural heritage. On the other hand, there is somehow a problematic relation with the government ministries. Most of them claimed that the governments should not execute ecotourism projects as an owner; *“the government role is supporting the other enterprises, hopefully with funds and control”* (M19).

Conversely, some of the tour operators describes the tourism in Palestine as family business, *“small and medium enterprises selling the guaranteed holy land package for more than 50 years”* (M10). Therefore, it's hard to convince them to sell new packages like ecotourism, unless the government develop and run such packages, and make the first step for marketing then the tour operators can involve.

Close to this approach, Most of the government officers believe that it's the responsibility of the government to establish and control ecotourism projects and to facilitate them with the required infrastructure. After doing so, the tour operators can sell packages for the possible activities in such projects (M6). However, some of them went beyond this and confirm that it's the government's responsibility to make the required marketing and connect the tour operators with the right target through the national and international channels, exhibitions and conferences (M5).

Herein, most of the NGO's members confidently believe that the government role goes beyond this; it is establishing the law and regulations that support the people and ecotourism sites and conserve the spirit of these places.

Most of the government officers tightly trust that the domination of the Israeli occupation on all aspects of the Palestinian life has tremendously affected the Palestinian tourism sector and has marginalized Palestinians' role as equal partners in the area. One means to fight this difficulty is by diversifying the tourism offer and by setting the ground for regional development that could be achieved through real cooperation and equal partnerships between the different partners' institutions involved.

6.2. Summary

The following [table \(6.1\)](#) summarizes the results of the semi-structured interviews and observations that are analyzed in light of the eight important factors set in the Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum (ECOS) viewed as important to ecotourism success in BNW study area.

Factors	Opportunity Indicators	Assessment
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To the ecotourism region To the site (access and circulation within the region) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locally: Quite easy Internationally: Hard due to Geopolitical conditions, Israeli procedures on land, Political instability No control on borders Information accessibility is poor
Relationship	Between ecotourism and other potential uses of the same resource Complementarity, compatibility, integration, competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Competition: Quarrying, illegal hunting and over-grazing. Israeli procedures Integration: Agriculture, picnics, place of living for Bedouin
Attractions	Types of ecotourism experiences:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IN (Mountain, Semi desert, Dead Sea) Of (Birds, wild flowers, medical herbs,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IN (tropical forests, mountain areas) • OF (birds, trees, wild flowers, mammals) • BY (watching, filming, collecting) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mammals, reptiles • By(watching, filming, studying) • Scenic vistas • archaeological and historical sites • needs development
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support infrastructure • Support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support infrastructure such as tourism transportation parking, (water, electricity, telephone networks), toilets and signage. • Absence of support services such as food services and food supplies, hotels, eco-lodges.
User pre-requisites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior knowledge • Prior skills • Equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of training to enhance the quality of human resources. • lack of concerns about traditional cultural performances • Lack of marketing and brochures. • A sound awareness among the community, stakeholders and politicians about cultural landscape values in the site is needed. • Guiding and interpretation mostly did not exist. • Lack of environmental information and biodiversity studies
Social interaction	<p>Level of interaction (with other ecotourists) – sought, achieved</p> <p>Level of interaction with local/host community – sought, achieved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitality and cooperative behavior of local people is satisfying. • Integration if the Bedouins indirectly. • Handcraft, festivals and cultural meetings are essential in promoting ecotourism. • Lack of awareness of the social effects of ecotourism • Local people partnership is essential for the success of ecotourism.
Visitor impacts	<p>Consequences of visitor access</p> <p>Controls on visitor access, use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of concerns for the environment and hygiene • Lack of government’s commitment to conserve the landscape, biodiversity and the archaeological site within the study area. • Lack of awareness that concern the negative impacts that could impose on both socio-cultural and physical environments • Economical impact
Management	<p>Stakeholder involvement</p> <p>Decision process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate management, inadequate coordination, shortage of funding and poor training of tourism management and employees. • Strong and good relations with municipalities and local councils • Problematic relation with the government ministries. • Government role is to set law and regulations.

Table (6.1): Summary of the ecotourism opportunities in the study area based on the ECOS factors
Source: The researcher based on the ECOS success factors of ecotourism (Boyed & Butler, 1996).

Chapter Seven

Key Issues in Ecotourism Development

This chapter introduces the discussion for the study based on the results in chapter six. This discussion aims to determine key issues which will help to make the ecotourism development in the BNW area successful, consequently support the conservation of the cultural landscape. It was mainly applied to the data presented in the results of primary data analysis as well as secondary data that collected throughout the course of the research and the fieldwork undertaken. The major issues underlying the opportunities of ecotourism in BNW were identified. This discussion is aimed at providing a better understanding about the possibility of developing successful ecotourism in the area. Some selected issues will be discussed in the following sections.

7. 1. The Management and Conservation of BNW Cultural Landscape: the Countryside as an Ecotourism Resource.

The physical reality of the wilderness environment normally limits high levels of management for use, but paradoxically often requires strict controls for protection of wilderness attributes (Boyed & Butler, 1996).

As tourism remains one of the strategic sectors in Palestine, significant efforts are being made to capitalize on the existing national assets. It sees that **attraction** is the key element in any tourism development. However, without sound management the attractions could be degraded. Therefore, management of tourist attraction as a source becomes a crucial issue in promoting sustainability and cultural landscape conservation (Wall, 1997). Findings of the study indicate that management of study area and its attractions emerged as the most significant topic to discuss as most respondents emphasized the subject.

Another problem is the fact that BNW lacks sound development planning. In the Palestinian tourism Development strategy (MOTA, 2006), the development programs are inadequate. There are only six issues underlined which include promotion and marketing; diversification of tourism product; the implementation of “tourism awareness”; enhancement of infrastructure and the government policy reform. As a part of the government policy reform, the new National Tourism Law that sets out the functions and powers of MOTA and its relationship to other ministries, advisory bodies and the private sector is in process. The new tourism law will define MOTA’s authority to license and regulate tourism enterprises (MOTA, 2005).

Most importantly, conservation of tourist’s attractions is not highlighted. Likewise, the management of tourism impacts is not addressed. Obviously, BNW tourism still lacks a clear management plan. This situation provides a potential warning about the degradation of the tourists’ attractions in the area. Consequently, the cultural landscape there will be affected. Equally, conservation of biodiversity assets provides significant cultural and social benefits for the BNW. The maintenance of a

high biodiversity value will often require the maintenance of a rich diversity in the cultural landscape. Conservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural landscape can thus be a symbiotic process which can be used to enhance people's appreciation of the region as a place to live and work in or to visit.

If ecotourism is to be established and developed, planners and managers are requested to realize what actually has attracted visitors to the countryside, furthermore, understanding current trends that international travelers prefer when speaking about ecotourism will encourage product diversification. Therefore, Orams (1995), Wight (1993), Boyd and Butler (1996), Herath (1996), Buckley (1994), Nelson (1994) state that in relation to ecotourism development, planners and managers have to maintain and adequately manage the interest including:

- Appreciation of nature as the primary motive to participate,
- Fostering conservation of the natural resource base on which it depends (which translates into protecting and minimizing negative impacts on the environment),
- Providing benefits to local hosts (which translates into economic opportunities),
- Hospitable residents; safety;
- Respect for local culture and minimizing social impacts, and
- Promoting environmental education to visitors.

In order to maintain and develop the attractions, an appropriate management style and professionalism in management of tourist interests are crucial factors. As each type of product has different characteristics, different management styles, appropriate to each attraction are required.

7. 2. The Management of Tourism Impacts

A strong point highlighted by the interview results was an absent of awareness on the negative impacts from tourism. Most respondents did not consider the negative impact tourism could impose on both socio-culture and physical environments, despite the fact that positive and negative impacts of tourism have been widely reviewed in the literature (Doan, 2000; Page & Getz, 1997; Sharpley & Sharpley, 1997). Furthermore, there have been many evaluations of the impact of tourism development on native culture (de Kadt, 1979).

The fact that most respondents had not yet considered negative impacts is certainly threatening the conservation of the cultural landscape in the area. This situation is worsening by the lack of sound tourism development planning. Whatever is the extent of tourism development, negative impacts should be minimized. Actions to anticipate the negative impacts both on cultural and natural environments are fundamental. Especially for BNW ecotourism, the need to conserve the biodiversity and the cultural landscape of the area is vital since they constitute the basic resources. An appreciation of the natural environment and an awareness of ecological issues are certainly very crucial. Therefore, it is essential that people involved in the tourism industry work to minimize the likely negative impacts. From the very outset, managers have to be aware of the fact that precautions to minimize negative impacts should be undertaken.

In order for tourism and the attractions to be sustainable, careful planning and sound management are critical. If the emphasis of tourist development is on the maximization of economic profits per se², it is doubtful whether the sustainability of

² Per se, a Latin phrase used in English to mean "in itself".

tourism in the area can be achieved. In the case of the potential of the region under study to develop ecotourism, local government as well as local people, have not put much emphasis on sustainability of both physical and socio-cultural environments, which are the basic attractions they are going to sell. If lack of concern about sustainability continues to occur, the viability and sustainability of the whole tourism industry in the region will be at risk. Finally, to foster sustainability in BNW tourism, impact management, especially in terms of the minimization of potential negative impacts, is the most crucial point to be given priority. Of equal importance in minimizing impacts is the effort to highlight tourism's potential role in helping to give greater value to these natural and cultural resources and hence make society more ecologically sustainable overall.

On the other hand, the impact of tourism on landscapes should be seen in the context of a complex interaction between economy-society-environment. As stated by [Coccossis, \(2003\)](#) there should always be linkages between tourism policy and policies that favor landscape conservation. In fact, the development of tourism should be carefully planned in the context of a broader strategy for sustainable development; A strategy that recognizes the need for balance between the goals of economic efficiency, social equity and environmental conservation.

Another focal point for the impacts of tourism in natural areas is the existence of direct management strategies, including zoning, required guides, citations and fines, campsite designation, limitation of visit duration, reservation systems, and visitor number limits ([Epler Wood, 2002](#)). However, [Giongo \(1993\)](#) notes that ecotourism and protected areas tend to avoid direct regulation of visitors as much as possible, preferring indirect management techniques.

Indirect management techniques include signs, patrols, tour operators, introductory talks, written material, displays, etc. These management approaches were highlighted in the interviews as essential techniques for providing the needed infrastructure and services in BNW in particular, and for the West Bank tourists' sites in general.

Given that biological diversity is a primary source of concern at the global level, and that the conservation of biological diversity is often a goal of donor projects (Epler Wood, 2002), some measurement of ecotourism's impacts on biodiversity should take place in order to measure the conservation impact of ecotourism.

7. 3. Interpretation and Education

As evident from the interviews, interpretation and education have received little attention in the region. It is apparent that interpretation is crucial to provide visitors with a high level of understanding and appreciation of the environment. The public's appetite for information on the natural environment seems insatiable. It is believed that the responsibility of the managers is to provide this information through a medium that will easily and readily be understood by the target audience (Bromley, 1994).

Moreover, in promoting sustainable ecotourism, interpretation and education are critical factors (Bromley, 1994). From all types of data collected, it can be inferred that the BNW has inadequate interpretation and education for ecotourism. Many people are not even familiar with interpretation. The importance of an educational element, especially in terms of providing adequate information about the attractions to educate tourists and to maximize their satisfaction, has not been considered. Their

understanding of interpretation is mostly restricted to guiding, despite the fact that ecotourism is able to foster the environmental awareness/values among both local residents and tourists, through on-site educational opportunities (Ross et al., 1999a).

The role of ecotourism in educating visitors and the community has been stressed throughout the world. Interpretation, which assists the visitor to gain a better awareness, appreciation, and understanding of and as a result, greater enjoyment from natural areas is an integral component of ecotourism (Charters and Law 2000).

A sound awareness among the community, stakeholders and politicians about cultural landscape values is vital for the conservation, development and sustainability. Awareness and understanding is a precondition for managing development in a sustainable manner which will create a strong sense of place for local people and visitors.

Furthermore, education is an extremely valuable tool for ecotourism managers in particular, and to tourism managers in general. It can enhance the tourist's experience, direct appropriate behavior, foster stewardship (Ross et al., 1999b), encourage tourists to return in the future or to donate money to continue educational and conservation programs (Lindberg, 1991).

However, one of the strong points in the Palestinian tourism industry is the code of conduct; the code introduced some recommendations which are considered as vital information before, during and after the trip for all tourism parties which include tourists, local people and tour operators (Appendix, 5). This orientation is supported by Wight (1994, p.40), she asserts that "ecotourism should involve education among all parties- local communities, government, non-governmental organizations, industry and tourists (before, during and after trip)".

7. 4. Promotion and Marketing

In terms of promotion and marketing, there is already coordination between the MOTA and the private sector. The Ministry of Tourism is aware of this important factor since it is illustrated in the Tourism Strategic Plan 2005. This is a strong point of the area's tourism marketing. However, much of the future opportunities of the region will lie in the appropriate management and strengthening of its existing attractions.

Furthermore, the decision taken by the Council of Ministers in 2005 which prompted MOTA to start plans for the establishment of a public/private body to be known as the Palestinian Tourism Board (PTB) is promising decision (Toubassi, 2006). PTB's board of directors will be made up primarily of private-sector members who represent various tourism-sector associations, in addition to officials from MOTA; it will be responsible for the survival, growth, and future sustainability of the Palestinian tourism industry.

Other coordination tasks include taking responsibility for promoting international and regional tourism to Palestine through mutual attendance at various worldwide tourism fairs and conferences; coordinating and facilitating private-sector promotion and awareness-raising efforts among Palestinians regarding local tourism; assisting the private sector in developing marketing, public relations, and related training programs that will improve the sector's competitiveness; and recruiting private-sector hosts for international and regional travel/trade familiarization trips to Palestine.

Selin (1994) discusses "how the power of marketing can be harnessed to protect natural areas and empower agencies responsible for managing these natural

resources.” (p.19). A marketing perspective encourages managers to treat tourists as clients, emphasizing the importance of managing people, not just resources. In determining client needs, identifying markets, and helping to develop programs and establish pricing strategies, marketing seeks to create a better fit between people and their environment (Knopf, 1990), and thus helps management to meet its objectives. Marketing is also critical to attracting and securing a tourism market that matches the product offered at a destination (Ashley et al., 2001).

In this regard, the media used within the tourism sector is highly instrumental in marketing. The process of representation through guidebooks, tour brochures, selective images and advertising creates a significant degree of expectation amongst tourists regarding the aspects of culture they will encounter (Urry 1990).

Another factor in the marketing is for Palestinian arts and crafts; entering the international market will require more of a demand driven approach where designs are market demand driven. Most interviewees firmly stressed on this point. Such a strategy will require extensive work and support on multiple tracks. The design, packaging and quality of the products need to be addressed and improved. Enhancing the quality of Palestinian arts and crafts can be through innovative training programs for creative sector professionals aimed at improving the conceptualization and design of selected marketable products.

7. 5. Accessibility

Accessibility to tourism sites in general and to BNW in particular, was among the factors highlighted by the interviewees. The geopolitical condition of the West Bank is complicated; the focus was on the physical accessibility to the West Bank; herein

the absence of control on borders, Oslo Accord administrative divisions (A,B,C), separation wall and the existence of settlements were the most emerged points. This situation is very critical to the development of ecotourism in NBW.

These conditions are not existed in the literature review as potential problems; this is a special case for the West Bank tourism development. Most of the literature focused on the physical accessibility to the cultural landscape and the fact that understanding of its values plays an important role, not only in developing sustainable uses, but also in raising awareness (Fairclough, 1994). Easy accessibility is a precondition for further development of ecotourism, which is an important economic factor; this is not the case of West Bank depending on the results of interviews.

7. 6. Social Interaction

Based on the results for the social interaction section (6.1.6), the positive attitudes for the local people to support ecotourism activities in BNW reflect the hospitality and cooperation of them. As stated in literature a friendly and cooperative host community enhances local business opportunities for tourism (McDill, 1999). Close interaction between tourists and locals creates conditions to dispel myths and stereotypes on both sides (Robinson & Bicard, 2006). An essential part of planning and managing low impact ecotourism is local participation in the process of planning and implementing. To maximize the positive impacts of ecotourism, locals must be included in the planning and development of ecotourism projects in the early stages (Boo, 1990).

Of critical importance at an ecotourism destination is the relationship between local community residents and tourism/tourists. If ecotourism is to develop successfully, community support must be strong. Positive local attitudes towards tourism depend on whether or not residents are receiving socioeconomic benefits or some form of compensation in return for restricted access to resources they may have been dependent on prior to ecotourism development. If residents are satisfied, there is a greater opportunity for enhanced tourist experiences through positive intercultural interactions with local residents (Stone, 2002).

As Wall (1994) notes, “poor people cannot afford to be conservationists” (p.8) and, therefore, if ecotourism is to benefit protected areas, it must also benefit local people (Cresswell et al., 2000; Boo, 1990). Indeed, it is now generally recognized that communities and protected areas cannot co-exist in the absence of local support for the conservation objectives of the protected area (McNeely, 1992). These considerations are particularly acute in developing countries (Stone, 2002). The result has been that tourism has come to be widely viewed as a positive means of improving people’s standard of living (World Tourism Organization, 1997), principally through the stimulation of economic growth in peripheral areas (Boo, 1990).

7.7. Summary

This chapter introduces the key issues that are important in ecotourism development in Bani Na'im Wilderness (BNW), as a result of applying the Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum (ECOS). These issues emerged as critical points in the

process of planning and promoting for ecotourism, particularly if we are seeking to enhance the cultural landscape conservation.

As tourism remains one of the strategic sectors in Palestine; significant efforts are being made to capitalize on the existing national assets. Findings of the study indicate that management of study area and its attractions emerged as the most significant topic to discuss according to respondents.

A strong point highlighted by the interview results was that most respondents did not consider the negative impact which tourism could impose on both socio-culture and physical environments, this certainly threatening the conservation of the cultural landscape in the area.

As evident from the interviews, interpretation and education have received little attention in the region. It is apparent that interpretation is crucial to provide visitors with a high level of understanding and appreciation of the environment.

In terms of promotion and marketing, there is already coordination between the MOTA and the private sector. The Ministry of Tourism is aware of this important factor since it is illustrated in the Tourism Strategic Plan 2005. This is a strong point of the area's tourism marketing. However, much of the future opportunities of the region will lie upon appropriate management and strengthening of its existing attractions.

Accessibility to tourism sites in general and to BNW in particular, was among the factors highlighted by the interviewees. The geopolitical condition of the West Bank is complicated; the focus was on the physical accessibility to the West Bank and the geopolitical situation that has been resulted from the Israeli restrictions on land.

Finally, based on the results for the social interaction section, the positive attitudes for the local people to support ecotourism activities in BNW reflect their hospitality and cooperation. However, if the ECOS is to be utilized effectively as a tool for planning destination areas and identifying areas of responsibility, it must be based on reliable data. In many destination areas a great deal of information may exist on market elements, such as visitor origins and profiles of current visitors. Such data are often collected and maintained by the individual actors in the tourism system. It is of critical importance that planning be based on reliable, current and comprehensive data.

However, if not properly planned and managed, ecotourism may bring problems of its own and may deteriorate environmentally significant sites. The study identified the following problems and barriers related to ecotourism:

- Lack of understanding about ecotourism.
- Lack of ecotourism development policies and strategies.
- Lack of training related to ecotourism.
- Lack of coordination among stakeholders.
- Land tenure system-individuals in community land ownership that may not conform to ecotourism development.
- Lack of incentives and support.
- Lack of interpretation and education.

If any one of these barriers is not addressed during the planning and policy making process without the full participation of all stakeholders, then it is not likely that ecotourism can succeed as a development strategy wherein the commitment of all stakeholders would be a crucial factor.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1. Conclusion

Bani Na'im wilderness was chosen to be the study area for this research, on which the Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum has been applied to assess the ecotourism opportunities in the Palestinian context and contribute to the fundamental knowledge about ecotourism and cultural landscapes conservation. Moreover the study was an attempt to develop new integrated guidelines for the conservation of cultural landscapes and its biodiversity through promoting the ecotourism as an important economic tool.

Obviously, the study area has the potential for ecotourism development; Cultural and natural resources are abundant. These resources could become remarkable assets to the ecotourism industry. A wide variety of potential attractions provides a major strength for the development. Similarly, sufficient human resources perform other strengths for tourism development in the region.

It offers a variety of natural resources to provide a base for ecotourism. This area is rich of biodiversity with a rare species of flora and fauna, archeological sites, and a variety of natural areas with different topography and climatic zones. It also has potential scenic vistas that provide opportunities for walking, hiking, cycling Camel's riding and picnic activities. These activities can be considered ecotourism if

they provide economic and social benefits to local community and support conservation of natural resources in the area.

The number of local businesses supporting ecotourism has increased in areas such as Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies. Also important in attracting ecotourism enthusiasts is the Palestinian Association for Cultural Exchange (PACE) and the Palestinian Wild Life Society (PWLS). However, much potential is yet to be realized in this area, particularly in terms of the network of local business needed to support ecotourism activities.

Despite the strong opportunities, some factors remain which retard the development such as inadequate coordination, lack of professional management of attraction, poor training of tourism management and workers and insufficient promotion and marketing. The most significant constraint is inadequate coordination between related sectors including the government departments and the private organizations. Actually, tourism coordination in the area is still relatively poor. For example, coordination in training is limited. Similarly, marketing coordination within the region is insufficient. In fact, co-operative marketing and promotion between public and the private sectors have not yet occurred.

If numerous potential assets of the region are maintained, managed and developed appropriately, they will provide great opportunities to the development as. By developing ecotourism, first, traditional arts and crafts will be revitalized as these are invaluable assets to be presented to tourists. Secondly, the local community will have the opportunity to generate economic profits through ecotourism operations and managers will have the opportunity to invent and expand new tourist product, which, in turn, will diversify tourist attractions. Thirdly, part of the income generated

through ecotourism could be utilized into the conservation activities of the cultural and natural assets.

The fact that tourism interpretation and education is inadequate could contribute to negative impacts of ecotourism. There are no diverse interpretation techniques and interpretation has been largely dependent upon guides. In fact, most quality of the guides is comparatively low. Therefore, this could expose ecotourism to risk.

Furthermore, the local community has not been involved adequately which might result in insufficient profits they obtain from ecotourism. If ecotourism does not provide benefits to the local people, local support is likely to diminish.

Finally, this study will additionally, help guide the decisions of those interested in promoting ecotourism in their areas. This includes tour operators and local entrepreneurs interested in additional sources of income and for government agencies and policy makers designing strategies to promote and implement ecotourism.

8.2. Recommendations

Based on the data presented in the results and discussion of primary data analysis, as well as secondary data that collected throughout the course of the research and the fieldwork undertaken, the following key recommendations are proposed.

8.2.1. General Recommendations:

- **Legislation and Regulation:** There is a need for a comprehensive review and development of Palestinian policy and legislation pertaining to conservation of

landscape, incorporating standards of accreditation, intellectual property rights, indigenous knowledge, training and research

- **Institutional Cooperation:** All governmental and non-governmental organizations working in the field of tourism, biodiversity, education, economy and environment must cooperate and take the necessary actions to deal with the conservation strategies of landscape.
- **Control of the Urban Development:** well informed and carefully considered spatial and physical planning can secure the cultural landscape values while meeting the needs of new settlement and industrial areas as well as of the related infrastructure.

8.2.2. Particular Recommendations for BNW

- Use many common ecotourism concepts, including the use of solar power, replanting of endemic vegetation, and construction materials made from renewable sources such as earth, leaves and stone.
- Take ecotourism initiatives a step further by getting involved with large cultural landscape conservation projects, establishing an interpretation center to promote cultural and natural values of site, and building a handicraft center for local communities.
- Other nature based programs and ecotourism initiatives on the area include: developing eco-tourist maps and eco-tours that use existing natural resources, eco-trails, documentation of local flora and fauna, and an analysis of ecotourism impacts on the environment. These will include nature policies, local community involvement, as well as cultural landscape conservation.

- Tour guide training programs are very important to mitigate negative environmental impacts by providing information and regulating tourists impacts in ecotourism sites.
- Public awareness and Training: The integration of biodiversity principles in educational programs on all levels; promoting knowledge and expertise through formal and non-formal education, ongoing research, and increased institutional capabilities, are all necessary.
- Work with local and international organizations to declare the site as a protected national park. Furthermore, establish and implement action plans for management of key species and habitat of the site, such as migratory and endangered birds, mammals, and vegetation.

8.3. Starting Points (policies) that Support Ecotourism

Based on (Epler Wood, 2002) starting policies that support ecotourism establishment and developments in the Palestinian contexts were set. The following points identify these points.

1. Establish an Inter-Ministerial Working Group that combines expertise of Ministries of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA), Ministry of planning and Administrative Development, Environment Quality Authority and the agency or agencies charged with rural development.
2. Empower and fund a secretariat of experts that work in the fields of natural resource management, community development and tourism.

3. Develop a participatory planning program that involves stakeholders from throughout the country or region, including rural and indigenous communities.
4. Establish objectives for a program based on stakeholder input, such as increased rural economic development, increased budgets for management of protected areas, and better management of visitors in fragile areas.
5. Develop training program for tourism ministry and other relevant government personnel.
6. Review transportation corridors, trail systems, small-scale non-commercial transportation systems and other infrastructure necessary to develop ecotourism. Develop a transportation plan that facilitates good ecotourism itineraries; stresses low environmental impact, low energy use, visitor safety, and scenic qualities; and provides quality visitor information.
7. Develop both policies to meet objectives and budgetary mechanisms to fund them. Seek legislative approvals where necessary.
8. Develop a visitor information program and niche market plan.
9. Develop a long-term community training program to develop community participation in ecotourism development.
10. Develop finance mechanisms for the development of small eco-lodges, which provide incentives to conserve land and train local people.
11. Develop an information base and best practice information through university research programs on issues of ethical delivery of ecotourism products, certification and visitor management plans.

12. Develop land-use planning capacity in local municipalities through exposure to the benefits of zoning and regulatory techniques. Limit dense development in buffer zones of protected lands and other important ecotourism attractions.

8.4. Implications for further Research

Much more research needs to be done on the types of travelers to a region. Tourist markets have a wide range, and the present research has only begun to outline the diversity of motivations of ecotourism in the study area for ecotourists. Continuous development of tourist's profiles types is important.

The Tourism Opportunity Spectrum (ECOS) includes both market demand aspects as well as elements of the tourism infrastructure at the destination. Resident attitudes towards development, business opportunities and constraints should be examined and placed within the context of the Spectrum.

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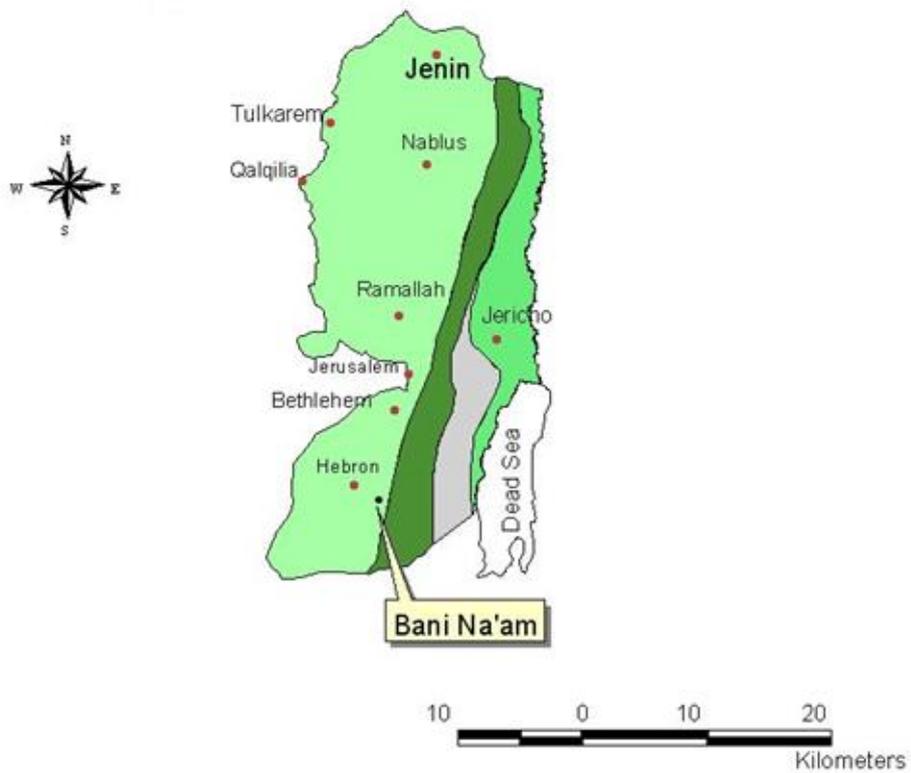
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Appendix 1

Climatic Zones in the West Bank



Legend

- Main Cities
- Mediterranean territory
- Irano-turanian territory
- Saharo-arabian territory
- Sudanian Penetration Territory

Source: Palestine Wild Life Society (PWLS). (2003). Jerusalem Wilderness (Bani Na'im Site) Study Plan, Jerusalem, Palestine

Appendix 2

Important Bird Area's (IBA's) in the West Bank

on the Site to see the Map:



IBA's

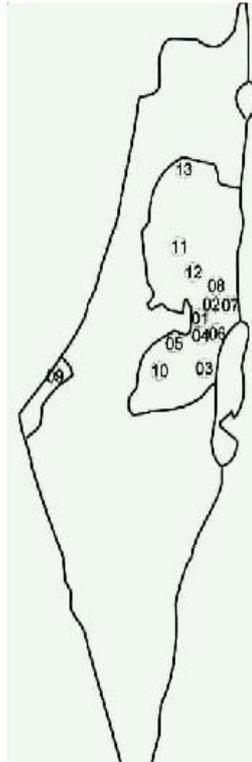


- [01-Jerusalem](#)
- [02-Wadi Al-Qilt](#)
- [03-Jerusalem Wilderness](#)
- [04-Wadi Qadroun](#)
- [05-Wadi Al-Makhrour](#)
- [06-Fashkha Springs](#)
- [07-Jericho](#)
- [08-Oja Springs](#)
- [09-Wadi Gaza](#)
- [10-Wadi Al-Quff](#)
- [11-Um Al-Safa \(Forest\)](#)
- [12-Qenya Springs](#)
- [13-Um Al-Rihan \(Forest\)](#)

[Workshop
Recommendations](#)

[General
Recommendations](#)

[The Sites](#)



Key to criteria

- 1- Regularly holds a significant number of globally threatened species.
- 2a- Regularly holds 1% or more of species' biogeographical or flyway or Middle Eastern population (water birds and seabirds only).
- 2b- Regularly holds 20,000 or more water birds.
- 2g- Migratory 'bottleneck' site: more than 3,000 raptors or more than 5,000 storks or more than 2,000 cranes pass in a season.
- 3- Regularly holds a significant number of a species which is threatened or declining within the Middle East. Only the top five sites for each such species in the country are considered to qualify as IBA's

- 4- Regularly holds a significant number of a species whose world population is wholly or largely restricted to the Middle East. Only the top five sites for each such species in the country are considered to qualify as IBA's.
- 5a- Representative example of a habitat, associated with a characteristic assemblage of bird species.
- 5b- Rare/threatened/unique habitat, associated with a characteristic assemblage of bird species
- 6- Site important for bird conservation through education/research/tourism.

Source: Palestine Wild Life Society (PWLS). (2003). Jerusalem Wilderness (Bani Na'im Site) Study Plan, Jerusalem, Palestine

Appendix 3: Proposed Tourism Opportunity Spectrum and Examples of setting Characteristics

Table 3.2. A proposed tourism opportunity spectrum and examples of setting characteristics. (Adapted from Clark and Stankey, 1979.)

Setting characteristics	Ecotourism	Nature-based tourism	Rural tourism	Rural-urban tourism	Urban tourism
Management goals	Preservation and protection of the resource	Conservation and resource management	Resource management and some development	Resource management and economic development	Economic development and enterprise
Accessibility factors (difficulty, access type, means of conveyance)	Very difficult or controlled access mostly by trails or water routes; may be very remote from human habitation	Difficult or controlled access by trails, water routes and secondary roads	Moderately accessible on secondary and primary roads	Accessible on secondary and primary roads; some public transportation	Easy access on highways and roads by vehicles and public transportation
Visual characteristics (acceptability of visitor impacts)	No readily apparent changes to the natural environment or very minimal localized user impacts	Primarily a natural-appearing environment and landscape but some human impacts are evident	Mix of natural and managed environment and landscape with evidence of human habitation	Moderately managed environment and landscape with evidence of human habitation	Extensively modified and man-altered landscape and environment for human habitation and enterprise
Visitor environmental impact factors	Very minimal user impacts and some concentrated user impacts (e.g. hiking trails and scenic vistas) but with few users	Minimal user impacts and localized to recreation activity areas and facilities (e.g. boat launch sites, campgrounds) but with low numbers of users	User impacts that are prevalent in small areas due to site development and management plus some concentrations of users (e.g. marinas, motels)	Moderate user impacts due to site development and management plus moderate volume of users (e.g. full service resorts, developed attractions)	High degree of user impacts due to extensive site development and management plus high volume of users (e.g. theme parks, retail store complexes)

Continued

Table 3.2. Continued

Setting characteristics	Ecotourism	Nature-based tourism	Rural tourism	Rural-urban tourism	Urban tourism
On-site management factors (existing infrastructure)	Very limited infrastructure (e.g. hiking trails); most supporting infrastructure is off-site but within the region	Minimal infrastructure to support visitor activities on-site	Some infrastructure and commercial development	Moderate infrastructure and commercial development	Extensive infrastructure and commercial development
Social interaction factors	In-frequent user-user or group-group interactions; managers expect highly ethical behaviour to other users and environment	Some user-user or group-group interactions; managers expect ethical behaviour to other users and environment	Moderate user-user or group-group interactions; managers expect ethical behaviour to other users and environment	Frequent user-user or group-group interactions; managers expect ethical behaviour to other users	Extensive user-user or group-group interactions; managers expect moderately to minimal ethical behaviour to other users
Visitor management factors (acceptable regulation)	Managed for non-motorized uses and non-consumptive recreational activities	Managed for non-motorized and some motorized uses and non-consumptive and consumptive recreational activities	Managed for motorized and non-motorized uses and non-consumptive and consumptive recreational activities	Managed for motorized and non-motorized uses and more consumptive recreational activities	Managed for motorized and non-motorized uses and more conspicuously consumptive recreational activities

Source:

- Dawson, Chad. (2008). Ecotourism and Naturebased Tourism: One End of the Tourism Opportunity Spectrum? SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, New York, USA
- Clark, R.N. and Stankey, G.H. (1979) The recreation opportunity spectrum: a framework for planning, management, and research. General Technical Report PNW-GTR-98. US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Forest and Range Experiment Station, Portland, Oregon, 32 pp

Appendix 4

Interviews questions

Interviewees are asked to give their opinions for the opportunities of ecotourism development in Bani Na'im Wilderness (BNW) in line with the Ecotourism Opportunity Spectrum (ECOS) success factors. The questions focused on gaining information related to the eight factors of ECOS. Yet, interviews are semi-structured; they involve some leading questions that orient interview process as follows:

1. **Accessibility:** Difficulty, Access system transportation, Means of conveyance transportation, problems, Access to the site (access and circulation within the region)
2. **Relationship:** What other uses found in the site? (Potentials, Constraints) Between ecotourism and other uses of the site?
3. **Attractions:** (Existing, potential, ecotourism.) What ecotourism opportunities are you aware of in the site? not currently being promoted? Have you heard of the term ecotourism? How would you define ecotourism?
4. **Infrastructure:** What kind of infrastructure is existed; needed? What are the facilities existed; needed?
5. **Pre-requisites:** How adequate are the support resources? Skills, knowledge; Services; Education, Training.
6. **Social Interaction:** (Help, problems, events.) Will the local community help ecotourism projects? In what way? Do you think the community makes any problems with respect to tourism activities? Examples. Level of interaction (Tourists, local community)
7. **Visitor Impacts:** Environmental impacts; , economic impacts; social impacts; environmental awareness Programs (What, How, Where);
8. **Management:** Relationships between stakeholders (Government, NGO's, Tour Operators, Local Community); Stakeholder involvement; Management Plans, Decision Process.
9. **Other Information.** Is there any other information you wish to share about your experience with tourism?

Appendix 5

A Code of Conduct for Tourism in the Holy Land

A Palestinian Initiative

Responsible and just forms of tourism offer communities opportunities to share their cultures, tell their stories, request solidarity and foster tolerance and greater understanding. This is the principle that has shaped this Code of Conduct which has been developed to inform pilgrims and tourists of the reality of Palestine and Palestinians and to seek their support in using tourism to transform contemporary injustices. At the same time, the Code aims to raise awareness amongst Palestinian tourism stakeholders of how tourism in Palestine can be transformed and enhanced to truly benefit both hosts and visitors.

Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism

The Context of Palestine

The establishment of just and responsible tourism for Palestine and Palestinians requires an understanding of political context and history, for it is these that set the constraints and barriers within which Palestinian tourism has to operate. The Code addresses these directly – and, by doing so, attempts to overcome them.

Palestine is a unique tourist destination – its long history, religious significance and natural beauty make it an amazing place to visit. Palestine's importance derives partly from the fact that it is home to the three monotheistic and Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Every year it attracts many pilgrims, people of faith and scholars who visit the holy places. Secular tourists come to explore the historical sites, Palestine's vibrant cities, rural life and nature reserves.

However, since the beginning of the 20th century Palestine has seen complicated changes in its political circumstances. These have included the creation of Israel in 1948 and the 1967 war. As a result of the latter, Israel occupied the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. These events have created catastrophic political, economic and social facts which have deeply affected the life of the Palestinian people, most of whom

became refugees. In many ways Palestine itself was simply wiped off the map, historic Palestine coming to be known as Israel. In this context tourism became a political tool in the supremacy and domination of the Israeli establishment over land and people, and an instrument for preventing the Palestinians from enjoying the benefits and the fruits of the cultural and human interaction on which tourism thrives. Despite the fact that Israel signed the Oslo Agreements with the PLO in the 1990s and recognised the establishment of the Palestinian Authority to administer some of the Palestinian territories, namely the West Bank and Gaza Strip, many areas of life in those areas are still under Israeli control. For example, Israel controls all access to Palestine (land and sea borders as well as access from the airport), most of the Palestinian water resources, and all movement of people and goods from, to and within Palestine. These facts have significant impacts on the development of tourism in the Palestinian territories and the dissemination of information to tourists. Jerusalem – the heart of tourism in the region – has been illegally annexed to Israel, filled with illegal settlements, besieged, surrounded by checkpoints, and encircled by the Apartheid Wall, all of which has resulted in the city's isolation from its social and geographical surroundings.

Despite all this, the touristic, historic, and holy places found in Israel and the Palestinian territories are united. They cannot be separated from each other. In this regard what we are asking tourists to visit both Israel and Palestine rather than choose to visit just one or the other. This is the route towards more fairness and justice. and the processes of the Israeli tourism industry. Our Code, on the other hand, seeks to contribute to a more general effort to re-engage the tourist with Palestinian to land and people in such a way that will do is benefit local communities, reduce over exploitation of a small number of iconic sites, and also reduce the pollution that results from coach driven mass tourism in the Palestinian towns and cities (especially Bethlehem).

Tourism in Palestine provides visitors with a particularly rewarding and enriching experience. Not only may the tourist discover the beauty, spirituality and hospitality of the country but also come to encounter some of the political, economic, and social facts on the ground that shape the daily lives of Palestinians. This is as it should be for much can be gained – both by tourists and by their Palestinian hosts – from a proper relationship between the two. Too often the contact is very slight, consisting of rapid, coach driven visits to the Nativity church in Bethlehem (with a souvenir shop on the way) – a style of tourism that derives from the fact that much of the itinerary is controlled by Israel

Therefore, we urge you, the tourist, to consider visiting the Palestinian cities, towns and villages and to allow time for encounters with the population living in these places. We believe that in this way, tourism will realise its potential for both you and us. At the same time, we call on the local community to interact positively and in a respectful way with pilgrims and tourists, and to renounce small-mindedness and exploitation of visitors. We should all remember that visits by tourists to the country are an opportunity for t cultural, social and human exchange.

The Vision of the Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism

The Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism (PIRT) is a network of organisations, associations and public bodies committed to work for responsible tourism to the Holy Land and to act as advocates for this approach to tourism.

We are committed to transforming the current tourism patterns in the Holy Land by encouraging pilgrims and tourists to include Palestinian cities, towns and villages in their itineraries in order to achieve a more equal distribution of tourism revenues to all people in this land.

Based on our belief that both tourists and hosts can be enriched by human encounters through tourism, we invite travellers to meet the Palestinian people and explore their culture.

We strive to create opportunities for local communities to become involved in tourism activities and to earn a fair income from the process. We believe that protecting and preserving the environment is of utmost importance, and thus we are searching for less harmful ways of providing tourism services.

We call on all service providers to commit themselves to responsible business practices and to renounce exploitative behaviour. Our objective is to promote a just and responsible tourism in Palestine that benefits the Palestinian people, pilgrims, tourists and all other stakeholders in tourism in the country without harming local communities.

The Code of Conduct

A. Travellers to the Holy Land

Preparation

To prepare your trip to Palestine, we encourage you to consider including the following in your preparation:

- 1 Choose an inclusive and balanced itinerary that allows you to visit and stay in different places.
- 2 Educate yourself by reading guidebooks, travel accounts and articles about current news and events.
- 3 Establish contact with Palestinians to get up-to-date information about the current situation, safety, local history, culture and customs.
- 4 Approach travelling with a desire to learn rather than just observe. Leave prejudices behind.

have different concepts of time, personal space, communication and society. Other values are not wrong or inferior, just different.

6. Your behaviour:

- Be aware of short-sighted emotional reactions, such as giving money out of compassion. This can be offensive.
- Make sure that you encounter and engage with the local communities who are struggling for the respect of their dignity.
- Support communities in a responsible way, without encouraging them to change their customs in order to adopt yours.
- When visiting holy sites, allow members of the respective religious community to guide you.

Your trip

Adopting a considerate attitude towards the people you encounter, the environment, and host communities when travelling in Palestine helps to make sure that your trip is beneficial both for you as a tourist and for the hosts.

5. Your attitude:

- Respect and learn about the local culture. Although taking pictures is in general welcome, be aware of people's sensitivity about being photographed: always ask first for their approval.
- Observe local customs. Respect local dress codes and dress modestly.
- Interact and spend time with local people. Be aware that your cultural values may differ from theirs. They may, for example,

7. Your use of natural resources:

- Co-operate with locals in conserving precious natural resources. Commit yourself to a moderate use when possible.
- Be open to experience local standards rather than expecting to find the same conditions as in your home town and/or country.

8. Support the local economy:

- Appreciate local expertise by paying adequately.
- Buy local products.
- Contribute to ensuring that tourism has a beneficial outcome for the local community.
- Use local transportation, guides, accommodation, restaurants and markets to benefit the local economy. Consider giving tips where customary.

9. Remember that the people you encounter have lived under military occupation for many years. Be sensitive when discussing related

topics and listen to their points of view.

10. Be inspired by the pilgrim's journey: take your time to live and experience the daily life of the local people.

Returning home

When you return from Palestine do not hesitate to share your experiences with friends and relations. Your Palestinian hosts will be very happy to know that you keep them in your mind and that you tell them and your stories. In this way, you can strengthen the human side of tourism and enhance its benefits to communities and individuals.

11. Share your experience:

- Think of creating links between your community and the community you visited.
- Tell the stories of the people you met.
- Discuss and debrief with other members of your group (if you travelled together with others).

- Share with your family; inform your community; write articles.

12. Stick to the commitments you made during your trip:

- Remember the promises you made to the local people you met and honour them.
- Keep the people in your thoughts, pray for them and act when your actions are needed.

13. Allow yourself to be enriched by learning experiences:

- Question your stereotypes/generalisations, both the ones you had before the trip and the ones emerging from your experience abroad.
- Address prejudices and injustice where you meet them.

14. Take action:

- Learn about the involvement and responsibilities of your home country in the Middle East. Expose and confront them when they have been unfair.
- Address statements you do not agree with, such as inaccurate tourism brochures, stereotyped views of Palestine in conversation and inaccurate or biased media portrayals.

B. The Palestinian Tourism Sector

Whilst Palestine has been a destination for travellers for many centuries, the development of a tourism industry that provides services to a large number of tourists is still rather recent. Indeed, the development has not yet been completed and new capacities are being added. Despite this, we believe that the time has come to work towards a more sustainable development of the sector. Therefore, as representatives of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and private companies, associations and civil society organisations, we call on all tourism stakeholders in Palestine to commit to the practices and policies introduced in this Code of Conduct.

Your behaviour towards tourists: treat them honestly and with respect

1. Respect the religious belief of visitors and the freedom of religious worship. Appreciate cultural diversity. Respect ways of dressing and food preferences of visitors.

2. Tour guides: Provide accurate and useful information to tourists that covers the religious, social and cultural dimensions of Palestine. Do not just tell stories that visitors want to hear and do not repeat stereotypes. Instead of doing this, challenge the visitors by presenting different interpretations. Be aware

of your unique role as a tour guide: visitors will draw conclusions about Palestinians from your behaviour.

- 1 Local communities, tour guides and employees in the tourism sector: Help tourists when they are in need. Be hospitable. Interact with visitors on a human level, do not limit your interactions to economic/financial exchanges.
- 2 Authority: The tourist police and other official bodies should deal with tourists in a respectful way.
- 3 Authority and local communities: Undertake efforts to prevent negative and irresponsible behaviour like begging from tourists and exploiting them.

Your responsibility towards local communities. Bear in mind that local businesses have a responsibility towards the people they employ and the communities whose resources they use.

- 1 Pay fair wages.
- 2 Distribute the income fairly amongst product producers, providers, sellers and intermediaries.
- 3 Sell national and local products and handicrafts to tourists. Consider adopting fair trade standards.
- 4 Develop means of communication and opportunities for interaction between Palestinians and tourists.

Engage in human and cultural exchanges for these can increase the benefits from tourism to Palestinian communities.

10. Create opportunities for local communities to participate in tourism.

11. Increase networking amongst churches and international organisations to explain the Palestinian narrative to complete the picture of people who are familiar with the more well-known Israeli narrative.

Improve Palestinian tourism opportunities by creating new and unique itineraries. In addition, research and develop special Palestinian package tours that can be promoted locally for visitors after they have arrived in the country.

12. Develop the competence of the workforce in the tourism industry and their knowledge of Palestinian identity and history. Further, train tour guides in contemporary issues. Develop the awareness of people interacting with tourists (guides, taxi drivers, host families, etc.).

13. Integrate culture and heritage into tourist programmes. Improve the image of Palestine through organizing festivals, conferences, workshops and use these cultural events to encourage tourists to spend longer periods of time in Palestine.

14. Improve marketing of local handicrafts and national products.

15. Raise awareness that programmes of Palestinian travel agencies should include all different aspects of Palestine, i.e. religion, politics, economics, cultural heritage and leisure.

Our responsibility towards the environment

16. Introduce environment-friendly principles to the operation of hotels, guest houses and restaurants and inform your guests about your standards. Increase the environmental awareness among Palestinians and provide a tourism that respects the environment.

Responsible business practices in the tourism industry

17. Increase transparency in business practices and engage in ethical competition which does not harm the value of tourism.

18. Tourists have the right to fair prices and full enjoyment of their trips.

Establishing the Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct has been drafted following extensive consultations both locally within Palestine and internationally with those organisations and individuals committed to responsible tourism and justice. It is a living document which invites engagement, comment and feedback for further improvement in achieving its objectives. You can help us to improve it by sending your feedback to pirt@atg.ps.

First signatories of the Code of Conduct

Alternative Tourism Group
Arab Hotel Association
Bethlehem University
Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association
Holy Land Trust
International Center of Bethlehem
Jerusalem Inter-Church Center
Joint Advocacy Initiative
Network of Christian Organisations in Bethlehem
Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquity
Siraj Center for Holy Land Studies