

# Tourguiding: An Analysis of the Israeli and Palestinian Interpretation *some preliminary thoughts*

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# Content

- Introduction
- Problem statement & Research questions
- Method & Data collection
- Results & Discussion
- Preliminary conclusion & **YOUR**  
Recommendations

# Problem statement & Research questions

**To what extent do tourguides contribute to bridging the gap between the Israelis & Palestinians in the tourguiding Israeli & Palestinian contexts?**

- 1 Is the interpretation of the tour guides one-sided or two-sided?
- 2 Does their interpretation match the history as drafted by the Israelis?
- 3 Does their interpretation match the history as drafted by the Palestinians?
- 4 To what extent are the tours difficult with regard to their interpretation?
- 5 Are tour guides fuelling the conflict (i.e. are they contributing to 'non-peace')?

- Most touristic situations involve organizations, groups and individuals who are consciously engaged in the task of creating representations of 'the place' or 'the culture'

- Guides' mediatory significance has often been recognized through reference to them as 'culture brokers'

But

- Del Casino and Hanna (2000: 29) even argue that tourism workers are so much part of the performance of a site that they in a sense 'become' it.

- More specifically, 'culture broking' is classified by Cohen as a form of 'communicative mediatory' work, a 'sphere' which also includes 'selection' (indicating that which is worthy of touristic attention), providing 'information' and, sometimes, 'fabrication' (inventing accounts or deceiving tourists).

- According to Kelly Askew (2002), ‘[t]he term “mediation” – which together with “media” derives from the Latin *medius* meaning “middle” – assumes two or more poles of engagement’ (p. 2). Thus, in looking at tour guiding as a form of mediation, we are prompted to consider the different engagements involved, and the particular *positioning* of those involved in the engagements.

- In the tour guiding literature, there exist different types of tour guiding, some intentionally political, others private, and a few are themed
- So as there are different types of tours, there are different types of tourguides

# Method & Data collection

- Field trip to Israel/ Palestinian territories
- Research method: qualitative design
- Research procedure: Randomly selecting two guided tours in Jerusalem and analysing the interpretation of different guides
  - Tape recording the guides' interpretations
  - Transcribing the interpretations
  - Proceeding through theme filtering











# Results & Discussion

Compare and contrast the transcripts and assess to what extent the interpretation of the guides contributes to peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians

- Measurement
- The content of the tours
- Highlighting “success stories” that tell positive tales
- A content analysis of the text: (examples)
  - Counting the number of times the word “peace” has been mentioned
  - Counting the number of times the word “conflict” and synonyms have been used

# Selection of quotes

- *“The golden dome that you see over there is the traditional side where Mohamed rose to heaven. Ok as I told you on the bus I’m not going into that now (I may have ears here that will shoot me afterwards...) It is a very old building it’s been there for the last 1400 years. You heard right.” (Israeli quote)*
- *Tourist: “Jewish are also allowed to marry other religious people without convincing them to become Jewish?”*  
*Guide: “Who told you? Listen, if I was a Moslem and I want to marry you, you have to be Moslem. At least in 90 percent, they will convince you. So, you will be Moslem and stay so. So, if you read the history from Sala Mahan, then you see that they force people to be Moslem. You will not find that in the Jewish history that they forced somebody to become Jewish, you will find that in the Moslem and in the Christian history.” (Israeli quote)*

# Quotes

- *Tourist: “Doesn’t it hurt you when they go and sing like this? No?”*  
*Guide: “No, because I can sing, too. I can sing I can do whatever they do. I was born here; I used to meet different kinds of people. Jews, Jordanians, Palestinians.....” (Palestinian quote)*
- *„In Israel we have 200.000. They came during the Sharon reign. He brought us many Jews. They opened the gates to come all the Jewish from all over Europe, so many came from Europe. “*  
*Tourist: „What do you think about that?”*  
*Guide: “It is not good. Because that is Palestine and that is Palestine in two... and you know everybody knows that.” (Palestinian quote)*

# Preliminary conclusions

- History: unbiased, more objective
  - Guides seem to be well trained to answer “problem” questions
  - Nevertheless, there is a tendency to emphasize more the own positive side of history

- If they do not contribute directly to peace, let's say that, at least, they don't contribute to the on-going discourse of conflict

# Your recommendations

- NOW

# Any further questions?

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