

Tourist Development and Local and National Politics: Analysis of the “Nazareth 2000” project.

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In this paper I would like to present the complex relations between the Central government and the Local Government and their impacts on tourism development in an historic city. The case study of this research is the city of Nazareth (Israel) during the years 1992-2002. Nazareth is a main focal point for tourism and Christian pilgrimage, however, much like other small historical towns, Nazareth suffers from the fact that most visitors to the city arrive for a visit of only several hours and then tend to leave the city, without making almost any economic contribution. For the past ten years, the Municipality of Nazareth has striven to change this situation entirely. In 1993, after thirty years of discrimination, the newly elected Labor Party, headed by the late Itshak Rabin, took up the challenge and decided to lend financial support to the project. Since 1993, the different Israeli governments allocated an estimated sum of \$100 million to the project. The private sector added an estimated sum of \$120 million (the construction of four large hotels as well as renovation of several others). However, such massive investments and detailed central planning by the Jewish State in a Christian city that is inhabited by a large majority of Muslim Arabs led to a series of problems in the city between the different religious groups and between the local government to the central government. One well-known example is the mosque that was built and later demolished on the site of the planned touristic piazza in front of the Basilica of the Annunciation. This paper will analyze the relations between the local government and the central government in the different stages of the project and their political and social on the city.