

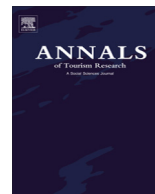


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## Feeling and tourism studies



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### ABSTRACT

Drawing on critical social and spatial theories of emotion and affect this article offers a contribution to the concepts of danger-zone and dark tourism through a focus on feelings. Research findings on tourism in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the West Bank (of the river Jordan) in Palestine are presented to argue that exciting challenges are available to tourism research when closer attention is given to the embodied emotionality of tourist places in areas of ongoing socio-political conflict. The article discusses the conceptual implications when attention turns to emotions and affects, and then describes how tourists and tour guides *feel* in areas of ongoing conflict. Considering emotions, affects and feelings opens up new research avenues for tourism studies.

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## Introduction

This article argues that tourism studies should pay closer attention to the politics of feelings. To do so the article engages in the exciting implications that a critical social and spatial theoretical framework of emotions and affects has for tourism studies when considering embodied feelings. We take up the work of Ahmed (2004a, p. 25) and ask “how do emotions work to secure collectives through the way in which they read the bodies of others?” The intensification of tourism encounters in specific sites of Jordan and the West Bank (Palestine) allows a focus on *feelings*, power and identity for tourists

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and tour guides. In tourism areas of ongoing political instability emotions work to bring some subjects into political alignment, while other subjects are marginalised.

Emotions, it is argued, play a crucial role in tourism encounters yet they tend to be neglected in tourism studies, which is surprising given that tourist encounters are lived through feelings such as fun, fear, excitement, joy, pain and so on. Theorising emotion and affect challenges assumptions that embodied feelings are a private matter, or that they simply begin within—and belong only to—individuals. Emotions are bound up with how bodies inhabit and move through place. By considering how tourists and tourist guides feel, we seek to expand understandings beyond the current danger-zone and dark tourism literature with its conventional parameters of empirically based, yet under theorised, studies. While most tourists travel to Jordan and the West Bank for historical, cultural, and religious reasons, these areas are, nevertheless “tumultuous locations, places that are not necessarily the sites of declared wars but . . . sites of *on-going* political instability, sites where there is at least an imagined potential of violent eruptions” (Adams, 2001, p. 268 emphasis in original).

We frame our discussion on emotions, affects and feelings within the sub-field of dark tourism as we employ the concept of danger-zone tourism. Using the theoretical concepts of dark tourism and danger-zone tourism is not an *a priori* assumption for the type of tourism phenomenon encountered in Jordan and the West Bank, but our hypothesis supported by literature reviewed in more detail in the following section, and by information collected in the field. Danger-zone tourism is defined as tourism to potentially dangerous places of ongoing socio-political conflicts (Adams, 2001). According to Lisle (2007) the dark tourist is represented as passively consuming commodified exhibits of death, disasters

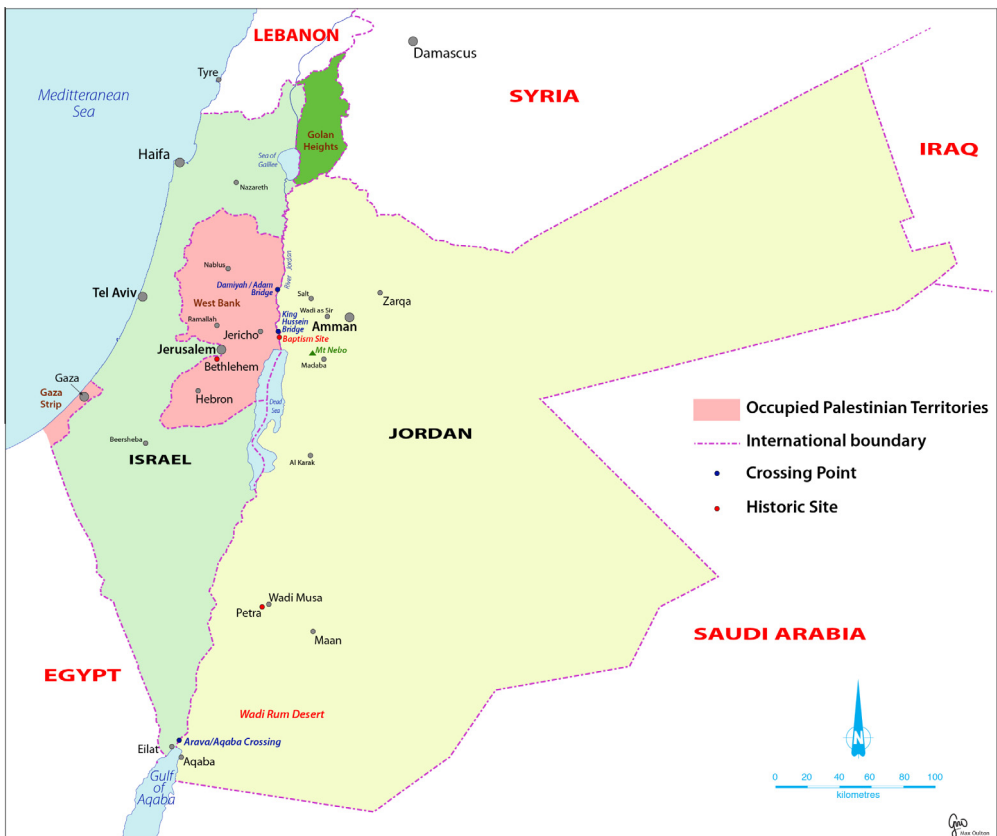


Fig. 1. Map of Jordan, Israel and the West Bank. Source: Max Oulton, 2012.

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