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**'Helping nature, helping people'? Negotiating local development (through ecotourism) and government in Dana village, Jordan**

This paper looks at the politics of development in and about Dana village, a remote hilltop village in Tafileh governorate, Jordan. Since its establishment in 1989 politics and prospects of development in the village have been tied to the presence of the Dana Nature Reserve, the flagship protected area of Jordan, managed by the 'Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature' (RSCN). Dana Reserve has turned into a showcase for advancing ecotourism as a means to sustain RSCN conservational goals and simultaneously promote local development. This strategy is currently pushed on by a USAID-funded project to restore the old derelict houses in the village, seeking to turn it into a 'living heritage village'. The project faced considerable opposition by various local actors who felt sidelined by the RSCN's increasing focus on profitable ecotourism initiatives for the sake of conservation, which they perceived as contradicting a commitment to actual local development. After major confrontations that almost led to the cancellation of the project, it is now implemented under revised conditions.

The paper explores the discourses and practices of conservation, (eco-)tourism and local development established in and around Dana village and analyses how they are reified, negotiated and challenged by competing actors and institutions on different scales. It also reflects on notions of government and the role of the various state, para-state and non-state agencies involved. It argues that whereas life around Dana village has been significantly transformed by the discourse and practices of conservation *cum* ecotourism, this has not led to a total restructuring of previous ways of living, thinking and doing politics. Actors feeling marginalised by this discourse promote diverging concepts of tourism and draw on regional, national or transnational networks in order to advance their ideas of local development. Whereas the role of the central state seems to be diminishing behind the assumption of state functions by a 'Royal NGO', the state-as-provider stays an important point of reference and source of livelihoods. Conservation and ecotourism can thus be analysed as a project of government that shapes life and politics in and around Dana village, but not as a homogeneous and all-dominating one. This implies recognising that the 'green neoliberal governmentality' associated with Dana Reserve is actually fragmented, articulated with other state projects and subject to contestation. The Dana case shows that frictions between fragmented and overlapping governing agencies can provide entry points for significant resistance and adaptations.