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Recent Trends in the Development of Jewish Life and Heritage Tourism in Trani, Italy

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This paper focuses on the recent revival of Jewish religious and cultural activities in the coastal town of Trani, in Southern Italy, after several centuries of substantial interruption. The specific events which led to the re-establishment of an institutional Jewish community and the restoration and reclamation of the local synagogues, along with the renewed visibility of the well-preserved Jewish district, of Medieval origins, are unique to this case study. However, at the same time, they reflect similar phenomena of restoration of Jewish sites and revival of Jewish communities in southern and eastern Europe, and beyond. As the case study analysis shows, Jewish-themed tourism has been growing as a consequence of this religious comeback, and it works as a stimulus and magnet for public projects and private investments aimed at further developing (or even capitalising on) this trend, for various purposes. The management of heritage and cultural tourism is closely connected to the complex identity of religious minority groups, where different components tend to produce different visions and practices. Actors, discourses, and reasons behind the management and promotion of Jewish culture will be highlighted and the representations and visions of the various stakeholders and groups involved will be portrayed, with the aim of contributing to the discussion about the complexity of managing minority heritage in tourist destinations.

Key Words: Judaism, Jewish heritage, tourism, local development, multiculturalism, Italy

Introduction

This study contributes to the ongoing discussion on the management of cultural heritage and the promotion of cultural tourism in the context of the complex identity of minority groups, where constant interaction with the broader social, economic, political, and cultural context presents both opportunities and threats.

The case of Jewish heritage in Trani, southern Italy, will be examined. This case is relevant to the discussion because Trani is a seaside cultural destination where a Jewish community was re-established in 2004, almost five centuries after its expulsion. Since then, religious life has flourished, and there have been public and private efforts to preserve and promote this specific heritage. These initiatives are part of broader strategies to diversify the local economy and strengthen cultural tourism. The development of Jewish religious life is surrounded by multi-layered social, economic, political, and cultural dynamics, which make this case particularly intriguing and distinctive. The actors, discourses, and rationales

behind the management and promotion of Jewish culture are portrayed, and the representations and visions of the various actors and groups involved are presented. The objective of this study is to examine the management of cultural heritage and the participation of religious minority groups in shaping local cultural policy. It also considers the inherent risk of niche tourism development processes to paradoxically exclude or marginalise the community that created this heritage in the past.

Both the presentation of the case study and its theoretical framework aim to promote a critical approach to minority heritage tourism. This approach recognises that the management and promotion of such tourism can potentially create or worsen issues, as its management and promotion can potentially create or worsen issues of commercialisation, dispossession, and misinterpretation. At the same time, this form of niche tourism can also present opportunities for economic diversification, rediscovery of the past, acceptance of religious and cultural diversity, and inclusion of specific minority groups.

Heritage and Cultural Diversity

This theoretical framework will focus on the diversity of minority communities and their impact on cultural heritage management and the development of cultural tourism. Indeed, different, and sometimes contradictory economic, political, and social uses of heritage can often be observed among both majority and minority groups.

Cultural heritage is usually seen, perceived, described, and ultimately managed at either local or global levels according to different values, priorities, and goals (Ashworth, 2011; Graham, 2002; Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Different and sometimes conflicting approaches to heritage and tourism depend on a variety of complex factors, such as ethnicity, religion, social class, political orientation, and individual or collective experiences and narratives that can divide the communities involved (Ashworth *et al.*, 2007). Relics and traces of the past are typically acknowledged and interpreted according to current needs and future aspirations (Graham & Howard, 2008; Hall, 2008; Harrison, 2010; Wall, 2009). Indeed, heritage can be seen as the utilisation of memories and artifacts in accordance with present-day cultural, social, and economic circumstances. This is done to construct social or ethnic identities, validate political authority, or promote the growth of tourism (Ashworth, 2011).

Heritage selection, management, and promotion are typically carried out according to the narratives and objectives of various groups. In particular, dominant groups that hold demographic, ethnic, political, social, economic, or cultural power can easily assume a leading role in order to achieve their goals (Smith, 2006).

Recent studies on tourism marketing emphasise the advantages of embracing cultural diversity for the development of tourism destinations (Hoffman, 2003; Castro *et al.*, 2007; Ma & Hassink, 2013; Krakover, 2012). The multicultural heritage of the past or present can be a powerful asset for the development of niche tourism products and for the diversification or renewal of the image of a given destination (Caffyn & Lutz, 1999; Dinis & Krakover, 2016). However, as noted earlier, dominant groups can retain or take control and impose their own interpretations, narratives, and goals, regardless of their ethnic background and personal or emotional

connection to heritage itself (Bendix, 2002; Diekmann & Smith, 2015; Novelli, 2005). Thus, complex questions arise about authenticity, commercialisation, community participation, social inclusion / exclusion, and recognition of diversity (Chambers, 2005; Leite, 2007; Lowenthal, 1998; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006).

Timothy and Nyaupane (2009) use the term 'contested heritage' to emphasise conflicts between various social groups regarding the ownership of specific places and memories, where each group (or even subgroup) claims them as their own heritage, interprets them differently, and seeks to utilise them for different purposes. Graham and Howard (2008) note that the significance of cultural heritage as a territorial resource is primarily derived from its meanings and representations, rather than solely from the value of its tangible or intangible aspects. Thus, heritage can be used to politicise culture by projecting certain desired images of a territory and conveying ideas and constructs of inclusion and exclusion (Ashworth & Graham, 1997; Peckham, 2003).

Studies of Jewish heritage in the diaspora illustrate these problems very clearly, as the complex relationships among various stakeholders, including Jewish minorities and non-Jewish majorities, can give rise to a wide range of scenarios, ranging from virtuous cooperation to intense competition (Gruber, 2002).

Jewish cultural tourism has evolved in recent decades. It began as a marginal niche segment and gradually acquired typical characteristics of mass tourism in many destinations (Gruber, 2002; Krakover, 2013).

Jewish culture, or what is perceived or defined by various groups as Jewish culture, has become a visible part of 'heritage' and 'identity', even in countries where Jews themselves are a small minority or have disappeared altogether (Leite, 2007). Numerous travel guides, brochures, websites, and other materials dedicated to Jewish heritage have been published in recent years, and many travel agencies have specialised in organising Jewish-themed tours. The commercialisation and commodification of Jewish heritage are often associated with exploitative and opportunistic businesses but can also be linked to a widespread sense of guilt about the Holocaust (Ashworth, 2002). In many other cases, the

rediscovery of Jewish history and culture relies on the metaphorical interpretations and attributions of value by non-Jews (Petrevska *et al.*, 2018). Indeed, the rediscovery of Jewish history and culture, along with the remembrance of the Holocaust, can serve as a catalyst for reevaluating and redefining both individual identity and national or local history, both consciously and unconsciously.

Jews themselves are not immune to this phenomenon, as the embrace of Jewish culture by mainstream society has gone hand in hand with efforts by Jews themselves to recover and redefine their personal roots and identities and to revitalise or enrich Jewish communities, life, religion, and culture in different countries (Krakover, 2016). The history and memory that are revived are often distorted or codified to meet specific local and personal needs (Flesler & Pérez Melgosa, 2010). Promoting Jewish life and culture from the past can thus meet the symbolic expectations and cultural aspirations of non-Jews and promote the diversification and development of business and tourism products and destinations (Corsale & Krakover, 2018). However, approaching this heritage without a connection to a living and developing Jewish dimension raises issues of cultural authenticity, interethnic dialogue, community participation, and historical interpretation that should be analysed in depth (Chhabra *et al.*, 2003; Goulding, 2000; Hallam & Street, 2000; Sandri, 2013; Wang *et al.*, 2015). At the same time, there are multiple and diverse views on the phenomenon of commercialisation of Jewish heritage, both among Jews and non-Jews (Gruber, 2009). This plurality can lead to dissonance and conflict in the relationship between Jews and non-Jews regarding historical narratives, interpretation, and management of heritage. In fact, both tangible and intangible heritage, whether referring to a distant past or the present, can be authorised and represented in various ways by different actors. This can result in deliberate use for economic or political gains, which may not align with a shared vision within the Jewish world.

Study Method and Area

Since the main objective of this study was to understand, analyse and compare the visions and actions of the stakeholders related to Jewish religion and heritage at the local level, a qualitative research method was chosen, based on observations, interviews, and consultation of

secondary sources. The town of Trani was chosen because of the presence of a recently re-established Jewish community, the preservation of significant and diverse Jewish relics from the Middle Ages, a unique process of restitution of two churches to their original Jewish meanings, and the involvement of various stakeholders in the development of Jewish heritage tourism.

Between November 2021 and September 2022, during repeated fieldwork, the author undertook a total of twelve interviews, both in person and over the phone, with key stakeholders from the Jewish community of Trani, local public authorities, experts dealing with cultural heritage management and promotion, and local tourist operators who work in this specific tourism segment. The main questions of the interviews focused on how the various stakeholders, both Jewish and non-Jewish, envision the management and promotion of Jewish heritage for tourism development, and how public authorities and private operators relate to it. The interviews started with a presentation of the research aims to the participants, were conducted in Italian, and varied in duration from 10 to 60 minutes.

Direct observations were also undertaken. This included visits to the main cultural highlights and neighbourhoods associated with the historical and current Jewish presence in Trani. All the pictures included in the article were taken by the author on those occasions.

The author conducted a literature review on the management of heritage tourism and territorial identity to establish a comprehensive academic framework for the research. A range of secondary sources was consulted, including historical and recent statistical data on the demography and economy of Trani and its surrounding area, and materials that directly or indirectly address Jewish history, culture, and Jewish heritage tourism. Brochures, maps, and other publications prepared for free distribution by the Municipal tourism office were collected and analysed to evaluate the coverage of Jewish-related attractions in the town's printed materials. Likewise, this coverage was later examined on the official websites of the Municipal and Regional authorities. This allowed for an understanding of how Jewish tangible and intangible heritage in Trani is valued and represented by non-Jewish stakeholders. This supported the interpretation of the

discourse surrounding its management and promotion, by evaluating its visibility within the cultural and tourist image of the town as promoted by public authorities.

The subsequent paragraphs will present a comprehensive summary of the case study. Subsequently, an analysis of the research results will be conducted, followed by a broader conclusion.

Jewish History and Heritage in Trani

The town of Trani is located on the Adriatic coast, in the region of Apulia, Southern Italy. Probably founded by the Romans, it rapidly developed between the 11th and the 12th centuries as one of the main ports along the East-West trade routes (Figure 1).

A Jewish community emerged here in the 12th century through immigration from southern Italy, Spain, and France, and prospered by engaging in commerce, baking, craftsmanship, and financial activities. Religious life was particularly active, with at least four synagogues and a long-standing and renowned tradition in Torah and Talmud studies. Jews mostly lived in a specific district, now commonly known as ‘Giudecca’, situated in the centre of the town, near the harbour, the cathedral, and the main streets and squares. Over the centuries, periods of tolerance and peaceful interaction with the Christian population alternated with discrimination and violence. At times, sections of the Jewish community converted to Christianity in order to avoid restrictions, although this did not always protect them from long-term prejudice and suspicion.

Figure 1: Some of Trani’s Main Sites (the Cathedral, the Castle, and the Fishermen’s Harbour)



Source: Author

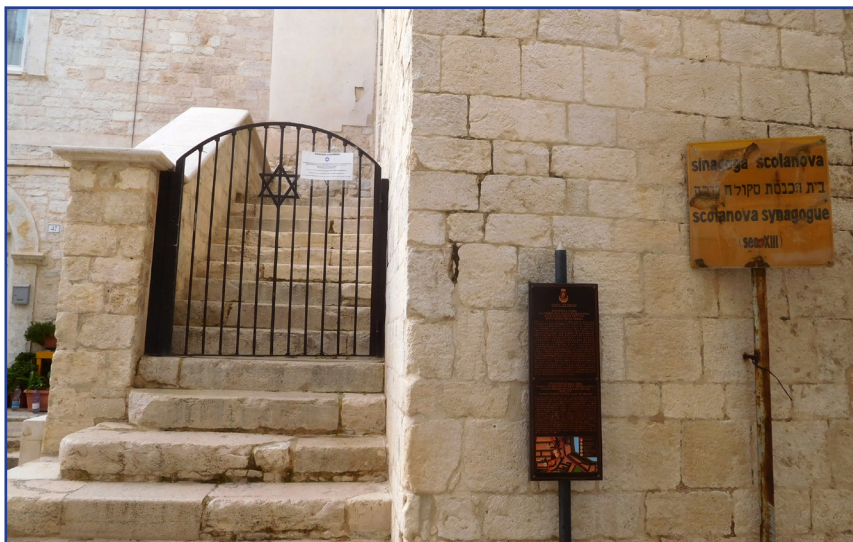
The situation for the Jewish population in southern Italy, including Apulia, deteriorated between the 14th and 15th centuries due to increasing hostility and discrimination. As had already occurred in Spain in 1492, the Jews of Trani were ultimately expelled in 1541 by Emperor Charles V. A significant number of them migrated to the Ottoman Empire, while others chose to remain in Trani and convert to the Catholic faith, although they were closely monitored and viewed with suspicion by The Inquisition. While the urban structure of the former Giudecca survived intact, Jewish symbols and inscriptions in Hebrew mostly disappeared, and the former synagogues were converted into churches.

The complex history of the Jews in Trani, including tangible and intangible traces, has been thoroughly

researched in recent decades by historians and archaeologists, and several publications, mostly in Italian, are available for consultation (Bertagnin *et al.*, 2003; Colafemmina, 2001; Colafemmina & Gramegna, 2009; Gianolio, 2008; Mascolo, 2012; Sacerdoti, 2003; Scaltrito, 2017).

A Jewish presence in the area of Trani has re-emerged in recent years through the conversion to Judaism of several local families, many of whom can still trace their origins back to the original community. Between 2004 and 2006, with the assistance of the Jewish community of Naples, which had and still has authority over the entire Jewish population of southern Italy, the community of Trani was formally re-established. The Municipality granted the community free use of the church of Santa Maria di

Figure 2: The Scolanova Synagogue (exterior, interior, and entrance)



Source: Author

Scolanova, a former synagogue that had belonged to the Jews between the 11th and the 16th centuries. The building is now being used as a synagogue according to repeated renewals of the agreement with the Municipality, and has undergone a complete refurbishment, including the addition of Jewish symbols, furnishings, and sacred objects. Its sober stone façade is topped by a belfry which houses both Christian bells and a Jewish Star of David, a nearly unique feature. Due to the limited size of the local Jewish population, the community still functions as a sub-group within the larger Naples community, with the hope of future further growth. Jewish holidays, such as Hanukkah, as well as weddings and cultural events, like the annual European Day of Jewish Culture, are typically held in and around the synagogue, which is open to visitors within defined timeframes (Figure 2).

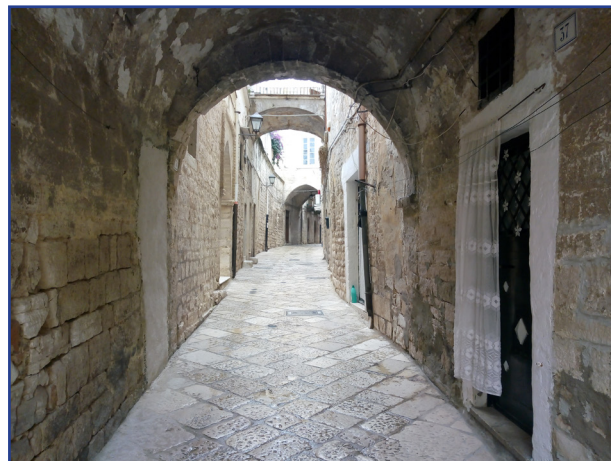
The revival of Jewish culture in Trani has extended beyond the Scolanova synagogue. In fact, starting in 1992, another former synagogue (known as ‘Scolagrande’), which had served as the church of Sant’Anna for centuries, underwent a gradual restoration to its original appearance and structure, in accordance with the Diocese, which still owns the building, and was finally transformed into a Jewish museum in 2009. Its exterior maintains the basic appearance of the medieval synagogue, with the addition of a Christian bell tower, while its fascinating interior houses several explanatory panels, Christian frescoes and furnishings, and Jewish objects, tombstones, and the probable remains of a Jewish mikveh (ritual bath) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The Scolagrande Synagogue (formerly St. Anne’s Church) and Jewish Museum (exterior, interior, and entrance)



Source: Author

Figure 4: Typical Streets in the Former Jewish Neighbourhood (on the left, the entrance to the former St. Leonard's Church, originally a medieval synagogue)



Source: Author

Two other former synagogues, which are now private properties integrated into regular houses, have been identified and marked with tourist signs, and traditional place names have been restored and emphasised, such as Via la Giudea, Via Sinagoga, Via Scolanova, and Via dell'Ebreia. Several aspects of Jewish heritage, history, and culture are also highlighted through tourist panels, brochures, dedicated webpages, both private and institutional, and the names of accommodation structures and restaurants, such as 'La Giudecca', 'Scolanova', 'Sinagoga', and 'Giudea'. Additionally, a popular

ceramics handicraft and souvenir shop, located in front of the Jewish Museum, sells a variety of Jewish-themed items, among other typical Apulian handicrafts (Figures 4-7).

Some local guides have specialised in Jewish tours, and all guidebooks (e.g., Lonely Planet, Rough Guide, Touring Club Italiano) invariably mention the Jewish sites of Trani as must-see places, receiving high ratings on review platforms such as Tripadvisor and Google.

Figure 5: Jewish-themed Handicrafts for Sale in the Old Town



Source: Author

Figure 6: Jewish-related Place Names in the Former Jewish Neighbourhood



Source: Author

Local tourist guides and other stakeholders, including the Jewish-themed souvenir shop, the restaurants located near the Giudecca, and the tourist office, have confirmed that the Romanesque cathedral is still the most popular and well-known attraction. However, the synagogue and

other Jewish sites are also significant draws, especially for cultural tourists, organised groups, and religious tourists, including Jewish visitors from other parts of Italy, Europe, North America, and Israel (Figure 7).

The reconversion of two churches to the original Jewish religion and culture is an exceptional event in the world of the Jewish diaspora. At the same time, Trani, despite its rich heritage including the Romanesque cathedral, the medieval Swabian castle, and its picturesque old town and harbour, still faces persistent socio-economic problems which have deep and complex historical roots. The province recorded, in 2022, an unemployment rate of 11%, much higher than the Italian average of 8%, and a GDP per capita of 18,100 Euros, in 2018, much lower than the national level of 29,300 Euros.

Aims and Views

Tourism is often seen as a panacea for stimulating local development, reaping economic benefits, and escaping marginalisation. The town of Trani is already widely

Figure 7: Tourist Map on a Municipal Panel Showing the Scolanova Synagogue as one of the Main Attractions in Trani



Source: Author

Figure 6: Accommodation Facilities with Jewish-related Names in the Former Jewish Neighbourhood

Source: Author

known as a cultural tourism destination, thanks to key assets such as the Romanesque cathedral, the medieval castle, the picturesque old town, and the traditional fishermen's harbour. However, Apulia has many towns with similar attractions that are already well-known and popular among both domestic and international tourists. The presence of a significant, visible, tangible, and recognisable Jewish heritage is a much rarer asset. In fact, since Jewish communities in southern Italy basically disappeared several centuries ago, the preservation of the Giudecca district, with its four synagogues, two of which are restored and visitable, with local multilingual staff specialised in Jewish culture, is almost unique. The fact that two synagogues were converted into churches and then peacefully returned to being Jewish realms adds to this uniqueness. Given the prominence of these sites on maps, websites, brochures, and tourist signs and panels, there appears to be a wide consensus regarding the cultural and economic importance of this heritage, as well as a sense of pride and inclusion in the local identity, which further solidifies its significance.

However, during the interviews, some relatively divergent approaches, visions, and projects came out. The key points that emerged during the encounters with the main stakeholders will be briefly portrayed and discussed below.

The Jewish Community

Jewish religious life in southern Italy, including Apulia, has never recovered since the expulsions and persecutions of the 15th and 16th centuries. Today, only one Rabbi regularly assists the community of Naples, where religious rites are performed regularly. There are no other rabbis in the entire southern Italy, where the Jewish communities struggle to conduct regular religious ceremonies due to their small size and dispersed membership. The situation in Trani appears contradictory. The Scolanova synagogue is fully structured, equipped, and furnished. However, due to having fewer than ten active members living nearby, regular rites cannot be held; only major festivals and occasional weddings are celebrated. For the most part, the synagogue primarily functions as a cultural monument and tourist attraction. Its members have voluntarily converted to Judaism in the past decades and tend to be deeply religious. Hence, their main focus is on religious life, particularly within their homes, and support and encouragement for occasional new conversions. During the interviews, they expressed positive views on tourism as a way to keep the synagogue open and visible, and to demonstrate to the local population the advantages of religious diversity and tolerance.

They are proud to portray Judaism as an integral part of local history, identity, landscape, and heritage since ancient times. However, they do not directly engage

with tourism and visitors. Instead, they prefer to conduct their rites and holidays in a more private and reserved dimension, keeping cultural and educational aspects, as well as tourism itself, separated from religious life.

The Municipality

Over the past few decades, the town of Trani has been governed by alternating left-wing and right-wing coalitions and currently has a left-wing mayor and council. All of these administrations continued to collaborate with the Jewish community and ensured the continued free use of the synagogue owned by the Municipality, despite occasional bureaucratic complications.

The interviews with the current administration revealed a strong awareness of the cultural and economic significance of local Jewish history and heritage, as they emphasised the importance of including and integrating this history into the unique identity and landscape of Trani. At the same time, other dimensions and representations emerged during the encounters, as the Municipality emphasised the recent growth of immigrant Muslim and Romanian Orthodox communities, which coincided with the re-establishment of the Jewish community. In fact, the Jewish, Muslim, and Orthodox religious communities, cults, and places of worship are portrayed as part of a larger phenomenon of growing multiculturalism, and Trani is depicted as a diverse, welcoming, tolerant, and open township. Some of the tourist trails promoted by the Municipality, through brochures distributed in the tourist office and other places, highlight a 'multireligious Trani' and a 'cradle of religions' where the Giudecca is one element alongside the Romanian Orthodox church (established in 2008 in a formerly unused Catholic medieval chapel) and the mosque (located since the 2010s in a small typical house in the old town).

According to the official tourist brochure jointly published and freely distributed by the Municipality of Trani and the Apulian Regional Administration:

While wandering through the streets of the old town, you can encounter different faces, hear various sounds, and read writings that belong to worlds and stories of peoples that may seem distant from us, but are all united in the same hope, and indeed in the certainty of a life that extends beyond the earthly realm ... In the

historic centre of Trani, we are confronted with the simultaneous presence of four religious confessions, each living their own experience of faith within a few meters of each other ... In the Giudecca, the spectacle of faith is renewed day after day: it is possible to encounter Muslims going to the mosque on Via Romito to listen to the imam proclaiming the Suras of the Koran, or Christians of the Orthodox rite who, walking along Via Beltrani, deviate from their path to attend Sunday Mass at the church of San Martino, and the Jews, engaged in reading the Torah at the magnificent Scolanova synagogue, which has recently reopened for worship after almost five centuries of oblivion.

The Jewish presence is thus clearly juxtaposed with Muslims and Orthodox, alongside the dominant Catholic faith, in an idealised portrait of a multicultural town (Figures 9-11).

The Cultural Institution

A slightly different approach emerged during the interviews with Trani's main cultural institution, the 'Polo Museale'. This institution is a network of museums and cultural sites owned by the Catholic Church and operated by an independent foundation. The network includes the Diocesan Museum, the Typewriter Museum, the multifunctional Lodispoto Mansion, and the Synagogue Museum of Sant'Anna (also known as the Scolagrande synagogue). The staff emphasised the

Figure 9: The Catholic Faith still Characterises the Landscape of the Old Town, as in this Typical Corner



Source: Author

Figure 10: The Medieval St. Martin's Church, Recently Granted to the Romanian Orthodox Church and Renovated in Accordance with their Religious Beliefs



Source: Author

Figure 11: Via Romito, in the Old Town of Trani, Where a Mosque has Recently been Established Inside a Private Property



Source: Author

uniqueness of Jewish heritage in Trani, with a particular focus on the architecture, exhibits, and characteristics of the Scolanova synagogue and the Jewish museum housed within it. Thanks to their specific and academic skills in history, archaeology, and art, the Foundation's staff focuses on the Jewish roots of medieval Trani and the contribution made to the local heritage and landscape. The Foundation maintains a positive relationship with both the current Jewish community and the Municipality, and occasionally collaborates with both parties to organise events and venues. However, it is important to note that the Foundation does not necessarily have the same visions, goals, and methods. In fact, according to the respondents, the presence of new Muslim and

Orthodox communities and places of worship does not have the same significance and impact on local heritage as the medieval Jewish presence does; at the same time, they also do not believe that recent conversions to Judaism and the re-establishment of a Jewish community can restore the glorious and unique features that Trani once had in the past.

Discussion

The legacy of a multicultural past and the increasing cultural and religious diversity of the present often overlap and emphasise the complexity of territorial identities. While the coexistence of different cultures and religious sites can sometimes result in dissonance and intolerance, the intense competition for cultural tourism often transforms multicultural heritage into an economic resource and a valuable asset that showcases the richness and distinctiveness of a specific destination.

Different stakeholders, however, may have different goals and may adopt and promote different representations and interpretations of the same heritage. This often occurs in places where Jewish religious life has been revitalised after a very long hiatus, as recent (re)conversions to Judaism tend to prioritise spiritual, ritual, and social activities within the community itself. The synagogue is open to the general public and highlights important aspects of Jewish religion, culture, and identity, but tourism and staged appearances are not the primary objectives of the community, as demonstrated by the Trani case.

Instead, non-Jewish stakeholders are directly interested in increasing the visibility of this heritage and engaging with locals and tourists. Their goals are different and sometimes divergent. They focus on cultural activities (such as interfaith dialogue, exhibitions, events, and venues), economic benefits (including the growing opportunities for local guides, restaurants, accommodation facilities, and souvenir stores), and political messages (portraying Jewish heritage and religion as one of several elements that contribute to a multicultural, tolerant, and liberal environment that is open to immigrants and minorities).

These different visions are quite compatible with each other and can coexist easily and peacefully without any

conflicts. However, the interviews reveal disagreements regarding decision-making and priority-setting dynamics.

Heritage issues are also related to the various approaches of Jews themselves towards Jewish identity and organisation at the local, national, and transnational levels. These orientations can vary, encompassing religious, secular, institutional, or self-determined perspectives. They can range from actively advocating tourism development to showing little or no interest in tourism. Another dimension of dissonance arises from the non-Jewish interest in Jewish niche tourism, whether from authorities, private operators, or tourists themselves, who may take a rather superficial and utilitarian approach, viewing it as a vague and distant echo of a bygone 'golden age' characterised by multiculturalism and tolerance, forcing it to conform to the description of contemporary urban societies. The dissonance does not manifest itself in the form of tensions between the non-Jewish majority and the Jewish minority. On the contrary, according to the interviewees, the local population and stakeholders express pride and interest in this aspect of local history, and the current main initiatives to promote the past Jewish history are being led by non-Jewish locals. The themes are strictly linked to utilitarian objectives, which include reaffirming the tolerant nature of the local society and promoting Trani, Puglia, and southern Italy as significant and diverse cultural tourism destinations.

The official narrative, strongly supported by the authorities and private tourism operators, is that the expulsion of the Jewish population in the 16th century and the subsequent 'dark' times of The Inquisition are essentially attributed to external forces, while the Apulian population and culture are portrayed as being characterised by tolerance and pluralism. As noted above, however, the Jewish religious community and high-profile cultural activities and organisations (especially the 'Polo Museale' and its associated foundation) are critical of or indifferent to this slightly utilitarian interpretation and approach, even if it is benign and well-intentioned.

As is often the case with niche tourism development strategies, non-Jewish stakeholders tend to emphasise Jewish attractions in order to diversify the destination's tourism offer (Krakover, 2016). This strategy attracts new categories of domestic and international visitors, extends

the tourist season, and ultimately reaffirms the image of a multicultural, cosmopolitan, tolerant, vibrant, and open-minded town, contrasting with its persistent socio-economic marginality. This willingness demonstrates that promoting the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities does not always lead to tension or conflict (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996).

Indeed, the recognition of Jewish history and heritage plays a key role in this virtual recollection of a past golden age and in the construction of a future projection that heavily relies on cultural tourism. The main decisions, policies, and actions to promote Jewish cultural tourism in Trani are made and controlled by local non-Jewish actors, reminiscent of the case of Jewish heritage restoration in Portugal and Spain (Krakover, 2013). Very few aspects of Jewish culture and history are presented in tourist sites related to Judaism, and the narrative is often superficial and not supported by adequate studies. What is being advertised is essentially a reflection of a past and distant Jewish presence that is essentially unconnected to present-day Jewish life. Among the consequences of this rather superficial approach is that the relationship with Jewish visitors is compromised by the lack of kosher food or appropriate religious-friendly accommodation facilities (Dinis & Krakover, 2016).

An analysis of school projects available online shows similar approaches, with the choice of emphasising an ideal model of town in which Jews, Muslims, Catholics, and Orthodox coexist peacefully, as in a mythologised Mediterranean medieval golden age. Citing materials published by the class of a local middle school in 2019, following their visit to the old city:

The educational excursion was very interesting and stimulating because first of all it seemed to us that we were traveling to distant countries without going too far from home ... we also understood that peaceful coexistence between religions is possible (<https://ilsantarellino.wordpress.com/2019/05/19/luscita-didattica-a-trani-i-momenti-piu-significativi-ed-emozionanti/>).

In fact, the evidence of the medieval Jewish presence has been mixed with the current use of the synagogue and with the recent opening of Muslim and Orthodox places of worship, with a strong emphasis on the contemporary world. The main objective, is that the knowledge of

religious and cultural diversities and the promotion of tolerance and respect for the other, is meritorious and seems to have been achieved; the problem of a rather nonchalant historical narrative seems to remain in the background because, in reality, the Middle Ages were often a time of prejudice and bloody clashes between different religions, and local history also tells stories of intolerance, repression, and oppression; otherwise, after all, the medieval Jewish community would not have disappeared as it did.

Furthermore, it should be noted that, while there is now a museum dedicated to local Jewish history and culture, focusing mainly on the medieval period, there are no local museums, exhibitions, or educational spaces dedicated to Islam or the Orthodox faith in the town, and this can generate interpretation problems.

Conclusions

The research shows that power relations can have a significant impact on heritage management and interpretation. A shared emphasis on promoting Jewish culture, based on local heritage and perspectives of cultural tourism development, can manifest in various ways and highlight different aspects for different purposes. The emphasis can shift from relics of ancient heritage to contemporary life and identity of minority groups, as well as to broader discussions about cultural diversity, depending on the circumstances, objectives, and influence.

This study aims to contribute to the discussion on the complexity of cultural tourism dynamics in contemporary multicultural societies. This necessarily involves the significant territorial implications that arise from the existence of diverse identities, visions, and goals in terms of planning and management. In fact, the past is constantly being reinterpreted and utilised to meet the needs of the present and the aspirations for the future.

Further research on this topic should focus on the immigrant communities that have recently settled in Trani, with predominantly Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic religious backgrounds, in order to understand whether they actually feel or envision any connections, similarities, or empathy towards Jewish history, cultural

activities, and religious practices in the local context. This would help verify the claims made by official institutions.

In more general terms, research in this field should consider the key role of interpretation within practices and strategies of promoting heritage and minority heritage for cultural, educational, and tourism development purposes. Widely shared, inclusive, and unquestionably well-intentioned visions and projects can still manipulate and distort historical, ethnographic, and archaeological domains. This is likely unavoidable, as every individual and group use present-day lenses to look at points of reference across time and space. However, this should be considered when discussing authenticity, inclusion, and pluralism.

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