

Socio-Economic Development in Tunis Village: The Success Factors of a Heritage Tourism Destination

Sally Khalil¹ and Osama Ibrahim²

¹ Tourism Studies Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Fayoum University.

² Tourism Guidance Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Fayoum University.

'I never imagined this. There was nothing to imagine, things came about ... you don't decide things, they come about on their own'. Evelyne Porret

Abstract

Destination success factors have been identified and widely researched. Tourism destinations to a lesser extent have also been subject to success factor research. However, heritage tourism destination success remains often elusive. This paper investigates the success of Evelyne Porret, a Swiss potter, in her adopted village of Tunis in The Fayoum, an Egyptian Governorate, south-west of Cairo. Ecotour guides who accompany visitors to Tunis Village are always confronted by the questions of: Why this specific Egyptian village is economically, culturally, social, and environmentally successful? How villagers reached 0% unemployment rate? How and who utilized its unique natural heritage to overcome the enduring challenges facing other Egyptian villages? How villagers keep success sustainability? How one person, Evelyne Porret, helped achieving socio-economic development in this marginalized village?

To answer these questions, this study unpicks her story over four decades to highlight the success factors - small and large, minor and important - which impacted on her leading the transformation of her village into a world-class center for pottery making and a tourism destination *par excellence* offering socio-economic development opportunities for youth in Tunis village and their families. Her extraordinary success was serendipitous as she did not have socio-economic development in mind from the beginning, but she acted as a transformational leader to her students/children. This paper emphasizes the lessons in the form of a model that may lead marginalized rural communities towards successful socio-economic development.

Keywords

Socio-Economic Development, Heritage Tourism Destination, Handicrafts, Success factor, The Fayoum.

Introduction

Egypt, a few years after the so-called Arab Spring, still has to address major socio-economic dilemmas. In this regard, one of the struggling governorates in the country is The Fayoum –some 100 km south west of the Egyptian capital Cairo. It has over the years been to some extent marginalized in terms of tourism investment and infrastructure despite being recognized as an area of outstanding natural beauty, cultural significance and traditional lifestyle. The tourism potential and obstacles for The Fayoum region are clearly identified in The Fayoum Ecotourism Development Plan 2005-2015 (Environmental Design Group, 2006) and in a book entitled: *'Enhancing the Competitiveness of Ecotourism Destinations: The Fayoum Region in Egypt'* (Ibrahim and Jones, 2011).

The case study setting is Tunis village, which is a marginalized area, located in the western-most part of The Fayoum Governorate on the side of a hill overlooking the extreme south-western part of Qarun Lake. Despite its relative isolation it is considered one of The Fayoum's most charming villages. The village is mostly populated by farmers; although, it has gained notoriety as an artist's residence (Ibrahim and Jones, 2011). When the Swiss potter Evelyne Porret arrived in Tunis village more than forty years ago, she saw both the beauty and the poverty. She observed children working, tending their animals, and from time to time making toy animals to play with from the mud in the irrigation ditches. These children played with her own children at her house and were fascinated by her activity as a potter. Although they were from time to time a nuisance!, eventually Evelyne started a Pottery School to develop their natural skills.

Tunis village - as a result of Evelyne's efforts - has emerged as a successful tourism destination, albeit serendipitously. Now, the village offers a wide range of tourism products and activities varies from glazed pottery decorated with spontaneous environmental motifs, camel trekking, bird watching and islands exploration trips, horse riding, and tranquility (Ibrahim and Jones, 2011).

Although tourism encompasses environmental, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions, this paper explores how Evelyne and the Pottery School children have been catalysts and transformational leaders for socio-economic change in the local community. How did a small village, mostly populated by farmers, develop into a location for artists and members of the intelligentsia who live quietly alongside the local community? And how did Evelyne lead the students to be transformational leaders to other children?

This paper details the ups and downs over four decades of Evelyne's life and learns lessons from her and the children: a concrete example of leading transformation and achieving socio-economic development. Through Evelyne's experiences, this paper identifies success factors in terms of accelerators and brakes which led to her serendipitous success and extracts lessons which may help other marginalized rural communities aspiring to become tourism destinations. Therefore, this study aims to identify success factors and lessons learnt from Evelyne's story which allowed Evelyne to be a transformational leader to her students and finally achieved socio-economic development in a marginalized rural destination to become a tourism destination *par excellence*.

Literature Review

The Case Study: The Fayoum Region in Egypt

The Fayoum is an oasis that is located in the Western Desert of Egypt, about 96 km southwest of Cairo - the capital of Egypt - with unique features in terms of its environmental and natural assets. It owes its existence to Bahr Yusuf Canal that links the Nile to the Fayoum depression. Therefore, The Fayoum has three characteristic landscapes: its rural centre, the surrounding desert, and the shores of Wadi Rayan and Qarun lakes (Wafik *et al.*, 2011). Historically, The Fayoum has played an essential role in every culture that has swept through Egypt from the Pharaohs to the Greeks and Romans, the Coptic Christians and finally the Muslim Arabs. The Egyptians began to take an interest in The Fayoum as far back as the prehistoric and predynastic period (Siliotti, 2003).

Environmentally, the Fayoum has an outstanding flora and fauna. Birds are the most visible wildlife in The Fayoum. The area is a birdwatchers' paradise. The shores of Lake Qarun and the Wadi Rayan lakes have been distinguished by Birdlife International as an Important Bird Area (Ibrahim and Jones, 2011). Moreover, The Fayoum is the most populated, fertile and productive oasis in the Western Desert. It has a thriving handicraft industry that reflects the ecological diversity and abundance of the region (Wafik *et al.*, 2011). Geologically, the Greater Fayoum Basin holds a rich heritage of paleontological, archaeological and geological exposures. The Valley of Whales and Gebel Qattrany vertebrate fossil sites are among the most important fossil areas in the

world. The former is designated as a UNESCO natural world heritage site (Dolson *et al.*, 2002).

The diversity of landscapes and proximity to Cairo makes The Fayoum an attractive destination. The natural heritage assets of The Fayoum destination are plentiful and produce excellent ecotourist experiences through many superb tourism activities. These assets include: geology and paleontology; deserts and hills; rural life and handicrafts; flora and fauna; lakes and waterways; and natural springs (Wafik *et al.*, 2011).

Tourism Destination Success: Serendipity versus Planning

Destination in a tourism context is well documented in the literature. The theme of destination in terms of: management (Menning, 1995); branding and image (Gallarza *et al.*, 2002); competitiveness and life cycle (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003), are well discussed in the literature, particularly in journals such as *Tourism Management* and *Annals of Tourism Research*. This case study setting was not designed as a tourism destination, but it is attracting attention and visitors, on an international scale, so it could be described as a successful, albeit serendipitous, tourism destination.

Besides a review of literature concerning Tourism Destinations (Seddighi and Theocarous, 2002; Sainaghi, 2006; Dwyer *et al.*, 2008), it is appropriate to study the themes of rural tourism (Fleischer and Felsenstein, 2000; Briedenham and Wickens, 2004; Cawley and Gillmor, 2008), sustainable tourism (Hjalager, 1996; Hassan, 2000; Mihalic, 2006) and ecotourism (Ibrahim and Jones, 2011). Other themes associated with our case study are residents' attitudes (Andereck and Vogt, 2000; Boley *et al.*, 2014; Stylidis *et al.*, 2014) community and village networking and how actors/stakeholders interact (Komppula, 2014), including the dynamics of power. A less-researched area is leadership for tourism development and, in particular, informal tourism leadership and teamwork and the authors argue that this paper helps to address this gap. Another important issue is the identification of success factors.

Local community and sustainable tourism development have been well discussed in the literature. One focus has been on the importance of ownership by the community and measures taken to protect the host environment and culture (Menning, 1995; Andereck and Vogt, 2000;

Hassan, 2000; Scheyvens, 2002; Sofield, 2003). Another focus has been on the poverty alleviation potential of sustainable tourism in marginalized rural communities (Ibrahim and Jones, 2011).

Conventional wisdom suggests that tourism destination success results from careful planning. However, in this case it was serendipity rather than planning that was the key to success. There is a resonance between Evelyne Porret's leadership qualities, situational leadership and the notion of leaders and followers expressed by Goffee and Jones (2006).

What Evelyne was successful at was achieving socio-economic development in her local community. However, to do this in a lasting way requires leadership - transformational leadership - of a special order.

Transformational Leadership

James MacGregor Burns (1978) identified a facet of transformational leadership as leaders and followers making each other advance to a higher level –he mentions levels of morality and motivation. Addressing transformational leadership, Bernard Bass (1985) looked at the impact on followers, for example the trust, respect and admiration that transformational leaders receive from their followers. Bass and Avolio (1994) note four characteristics of transformational leadership: idealized influence (akin to charisma); inspirational motivation; individual consideration; intellectual stimulation (the four 'Is'). Five traits are identified for transformational leaders: extraversion; neuroticism; openness to experience; agreeableness; conscientiousness. Bass also speaks about authentic and pseudo transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Avolio *et al.*, 1991; Bass and Avolio, 1994).

Transformational leadership became of interest in the business world as a means toward, or a facilitator of, change. Johnson *et al.* (2008) in the context of strategic change note management styles: education; collaboration/participation; direction; coercion/edict linked to the type of transformational change needed.

In the context of rural tourism development, Haven-Tang and Jones (2012) show how a dynamic can be created whereby a transformational leader develops relationships and a culture of followership. Followers can be developed as exemplary followers and the leader and the followers change roles. A follower self-directs and actively engages to

become an exemplary follower and, ultimately, a leader –a transformational leader - in his/her turns.

An understanding of the dynamic that Evelyne Porret created is linked with the notion of transformational leadership. How did children in a rural setting making toys from mud in the fields, encouraged by this leader then become potters and create livelihoods for themselves, establish small businesses and create a ripple effect across the local community and beyond?

Methodology

This is a descriptive-exploratory qualitative study, which adopts a narrative approach. Yin (2003: 13-14) stated that a case study is: “*an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident*”. Carson *et al.* (2001), in addition stated that case study research methodology usually tends to address research problems within the interpretivist paradigm rather than the positivist paradigm. The research problem is, therefore, usually a “how and why” problem rather than a “what” or “how should” problem. It usually involves a relatively complex, social science issue about which little is known. Therefore, case study research can be explanatory and theory-building research, which incorporates and explains ideas from outside the situation of the case (Carson *et al.*, 2001). Moreover, case studies are the preferred strategy when the research has little control over events, and when the focus is a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. Such explanatory case studies also can be complemented by two other types – exploratory and descriptive case studies (Yin, 2003).

In this context, exploring how Evelyne and the Pottery School children have been catalysts for socio-economic change in the local population, and how Evelyne led the children to be transformational leaders with the Tunis village community involves a relatively complex phenomenon - a social science issue about which very little is known. The paper investigates this contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using data from multiple sources of evidence. Thus, case study was the best methodology to tackle this phenomenon and justify a set of relevant methods.

The main research method was an in-depth unstructured interview with Evelyne Porret of one hour and a half duration, supplemented by 11 in-depth semi-structured interviews (approximately one hour each) with two generations of artists (her former students and their students) who own separate workshops in Tunis village. Although building a workshop with an appropriate oven is quite an expensive activity, her students (the first generation) have established eight workshops with a ninth workshop owned jointly by two artists led and trained by the first-generation students (Evelyne's followers) rather than by Evelyne herself. They in turn now teach other children how to manufacture their distinctive style of glazed pottery (see Table 1). The reason that all Evelyne's students were interviewed was to understand how their circumstances have been improved socially and economically from her serendipitous development from their viewpoint.

Dawson (2002) asserts that qualitative data can be analyzed as the research progresses, continually refining and reorganizing considering emerging results. This is what the researchers did as the data collected from the unstructured interview with Evelyne was analyzed first. Initial inferences and themes were generated and used as a basis for the second phase involving semi-structured interviews with her students. Data analysis involved an interpretation of data meaning, implications and themes to reveal the psychological and social characteristics of Evelyne Porret's experience - as a transformational leader - with her children to help identify the brakes and accelerators, which led to her success.

Table 1: Interviewed Participants

Workshop	Participants	Gender	Age	No of Current students	
				Females	Males
First Generation					
Workshop 1	Participant 1 (P1)	Female	44	3	4
Workshop 2	Participant 2 (P2)	Male	41	4	2
Workshop 3	Participant 3 (P3)	Male	36	4	4
Workshop 4	Participant 4 (P4) Participant 5 (P5)	Males	41 41	-	1
Workshop 5	Participant 6 (P6)	Male	30	-	2
Workshop 6	Participant 7 (P7)	Male	40	2	1
Workshop 7	Participant 8 (P8)	Male	36	1	2
Workshop 8	Participant 9 (P9)	Female	27	3	2
Second Generation					
Workshop 9	Participant 10 (P10) Participant 11 (P11)	Males	38 42	-	-
Total (9 workshops)	11 participants			17	18

Evelyne's unstructured interview was in French and translated into English. The students' 11 semi-structured interviews were in Arabic and translated into English. Although the interview of Evelyne was only for one hour and a half, the data collected was very rich. It was timely for Evelyne to look back and describe the lessons she had learned. It is quite hard for an expert to articulate their expertise but the hour and a half unstructured interview in a comfortable environment and in Evelyne's first language seemed to create ideal conditions and Evelyne privileged us with her story. A full transcript was prepared and annotated to identify emerging themes and then the themes were regrouped into categories and ranked to form taxonomy of success factors. Then, accelerators and brakes were identified to build a model that can lead a marginalized rural community through a serendipitous socio-economic development towards a successful tourism destination. The final model and this paper were discussed with Evelyne to ensure that it was a fair interpretation and did not misrepresent her story. It was only possible to collect qualitative

data as no socio-economic quantitative data were available to identify socio-economic improvement and poverty reduction. However, qualitative data are enough to support research reliability with the creation of 9 workshops by 11 students of Evelyne who themselves are currently training 35 students.

Results and Discussion

Evelyne's Serendipitous Success

The presence of Evelyne Porret caused Tunis Village to develop from a traditional rural village in The Fayoum to a tourism destination *par excellence* through the Pottery School she established to help local children hone their natural skills. She and the children have been catalysts for change in the local community. The success of Tunis Village as a tourism destination is determined by the subsequent flow of other artists - both Egyptians and foreign expatriates in search of a rural and picturesque destination - to Tunis village during the past few decades. Today, Tunis is a home for artists who live full- or part-time in the village. Moreover, the village has become a retreat for many professionals and academics from Cairo who escape the pressures of the city for the rural simplicity and tranquility motivated by the fame of Evelyne and glazed pottery school, and by wonderful green areas with lush fruit gardens and fields along the shores of Lake Qarun which provide a rare insight into rural traditions and life.

This success is also determined by the nine pottery workshops that have been established in the village and the numerous pottery exhibitions attended by Evelyne and the Pottery School children in Cairo and abroad in Paris, Rome, Venice and the Gulf Area. Also, by the multiplier effect locally widening to Cairo too, as Evelyne and her husband Michel - an acclaimed designer of textiles and fashion - established a gallery in Dokki, one of the most expensive places in Cairo/Egypt, to sell their products.

Moreover, the establishment of ecolodges, hotels and restaurants through the village, provide a variety of hospitality services to visitors. Obviously, it would be hard to isolate the variables but certainly Evelyne has put Tunis Village on the tourism map.

Evelyne's success was accidental, and she never planned it to happen: *'I'm Swiss but not very organized. It worked but without much*

organization' (Evelyne). Without meaning to, she exemplifies a new theory as far as project planning is concerned. She relied on instinct and kept it simple and away from the complicated theories, as she explained: *'I never imagined this. There was nothing to imagine, things came about ... you don't decide things, they come about on their own'* (Evelyne). Through reading her interview transcript, it is easy to see that planning was not the key to the success of Tunis village and would have been difficult due to external factors.

A consensus of her students emphasized that Evelyne was a major factor for the development that happened in Tunis village: *'look at the villages around us; they come to us to find a job, because they didn't have EvelynePorret'* (P11).

Her students also asserted that she did not plan for this development to happen; *'she came to Tunis village to escape from pollution and to enjoy rural life of the countryside'* (P6). She wanted also to *'develop her glazed pottery work in the inspirational natural atmosphere'* (P3). One of them related how Evelyne was the major factor behind the serendipitous development of the village from the very beginning and even before she established the Pottery School *'When Evelyne settled here in Tunis village, she was always visited by her friends, including intellectuals, poets, artists. Some of them were fascinated by Tunis village and decided to buy a piece of land and build a villa here to enjoy their weekends'* (P1).

From the very beginning, Evelyne did not plan to engage the children in pottery making:

And the children, that was when the children came to play with our children and make little things, little games and I thought it was very good. After that...well nevertheless the children that came in our workshop that made me nervous, I had had enough so I sent them home. I couldn't cope (laughs). I didn't do anymore - they made their little things - I didn't do anything (Evelyne).

Evelyne concentrated on channeling the enthusiasm of the children and promoting self-reliance so that they could develop their art and make it marketable and exhibition worthy:

As the students now want a workshop for themselves, we help them a bit. Nowadays I say to them there's this gallery I don't need to go, you can go. Also, I know my profession. It is not something where I say: Ok that would be nice to do the expositions that would be nice to do whatever (Evelyne).

Because of her efforts, the economic development opportunities that serendipitously unfolded in Tunis village were significant. Potters sold their products in Egypt and abroad; people came to Tunis village to see this Swiss woman who trains children, creating a vehicle for socioeconomic development in a remote rural setting; her friends and many other intellectuals decided to stay in Tunis village or build weekend homes; hotels and ecolodges were established; other ecotourism activities arose, such as birdwatching and horse riding. Relevant quotes were:

'economically, it's enough to say that all people work in glazed pottery making and their big families have this sole source of income' (P2);

'one like, the owner of company in Cairo who is considered one of the richest in Egypt. He came here, constructed a wonderful hotel. The room is of 1200LE per night. That is a very expensive accommodation in a marginalized village, isn't it?' (P10);

'Also ... a foreigner, the owner of Four Seasons famous hotel chain established an extraordinary ecolodge here and it is always full although the room rate is 300 Euros per night.....and the chef's salary is 29000 LE per month' (P5);

'Other villagers such as ... who owns 20 horses and hires them to visitors and ... who owns boats at Tunis village shoreline of Qarun Lake and he earns a lot of money' (P4);

'The whole village benefitted from the existence of Evelyne. Many young people work to build and decorate the dome-topped villas and tend gardens. Not only Tunis village but also young people from the surrounding villages' (P9);

'... one important thing is that although Egypt suffers economically due to the revolution (Arab Spring) and

investment is very slow, people build hotels and villas costing millions of pounds because we flourish all the time ... all this because the fame of Evelyne, which has pushed people to come - Egyptians and foreigners' (P7).

The consensus of the children was that this economic development happened because of Evelyne's fame: *'people always say: let's go and see her, her children, and the beauty of the place'* (P 4). She was the one who received everyone at the beginning and then visitors used to appreciate the beauty of the village and its natural heritage and pottery. Evelyne's story is rich and reading the transcript sheds light on how she and her apprentices were spurred on to change or transformation. The story also gives an indication of the accelerators and brakes along the way. Evelyne was herself scathing about planning and the use of plans. This may well have been a part of her success. Of course, there were obstacles, but she met them head on, avoided them, went around them, threw back some of the obstacles put in her way, etc. She was very astute about this. She conjugated her Swiss-French origins and her adoption of Egypt and all things Egyptian. Part of her message is: Yes, there are / will be obstacles – some of which may seem showstoppers – but usually there is a way forward.

Because of her success, her students attained excellence in glazed pottery making and world-wide fame. That's why *'European trainees come from France, Switzerland, Belgium, and Germany; and from other countries, such as Algeria and Morocco'* (P7).

Transformational Leadership

The enthusiasm of the children was vital. By channeling this enthusiasm, and at the same time giving free rein to their talent, the children achieved a quality of pottery manufacture which made their products marketable, sellable, to the extent that they have now gained world-wide recognition through international fairs. In the interview Evelyne Porret gives some insights into this mix of discipline and freedom.

This freedom facilitated knowledge transfer from Evelyne to the students and helped to build their own artistic personalities. This could be seen by visiting the different workshops of students and seeing their individual patterns and artistic tastes *'Evelyne gave us freedom in art. When we ask*

her what to draw on the glazed pottery plates - for example, she always replies: whatever is in your mind.... but she kept directing us and correcting any mistakes, such as misbalance or crowdedness' (P1).

International students and pottery artists assisted in knowledge transfer as they were hosted by Evelyne at the Pottery School. They interacted with the Egyptian students and helped to polish their skills:

Girls and some boys (from Europe) also have come and asked if they can do a period of time with us. So, I say 'Yes you can come and give a hand with the School. You can help a bit in the workshop. You can stay as long as you like'. So, they come, they make friends with the students, they work together, they participate in competitions, they talk about pottery, the ones that know something they teach the others (Evelyne).

The children feel they became different compared to other villagers. They were transformed and developed as individuals: *'we [Evelyne's children] learnt from Evelyne ... we became different ... although we are competitors and our workshops work in the same field, we work as a team, respect each other, cooperate and learn from each other, love each other' (P8).* Another significant quote was: *'Evelyne did human resource development to the whole village' (P3).*

What is stunning in Evelyne's story is that she managed to develop a multi-national 'pottery community' in Tunis village - from the village students and foreigners - who collaborate to develop their profession:

What I like also is that the potters together are a group in the village. There are problems. But they have something in common. A friendship which is a bit special, as one of the students said to me is 'what is great about pottery is that we can talk about it for hours. But no, this technique would be better. If we were to put the blue like this, it would be better' (Evelyne).

There is a resonance between Evelyne as a leader and the underpinning theory concerning transformational leadership. She demonstrates all the

four 'Is'¹ through charisma, the ability to motivate, caring for the children and wanting them to do their best, and stimulation to set high quality standards while remaining authentic. Certain of the traits apply more strongly than others. She could be termed as extrovert (although true to her Swiss-ness) and certainly could stand up to the '*men in suits*' if they were at times contrary. Neurotic does not apply? But openness to experiences, especially those that can inspire her potter's art is a key characteristic, even now when she is older. She does not suffer fools gladly ('*what do you call this?*' she can say with exasperation) but agreeableness is a trait and she is not just a mother to her son Angelo (*Om Angelo*) but she is a mother in a sense to all the child-potters. Conscientiousness is a strong trait – she is the guardian of quality and would not wish to lower standards in striving for short-term volume and profit. She is therefore in Bass's terms an authentic transformational leader. Also, her students now act as transformational leaders to other children who seek a bright future in the field of tourism as the second generation started to establish their own workshops.

¹1) Idealized influence (akin to charisma); 2) inspirational motivation; 3) individual consideration; 4) intellectual stimulation - see page 4&5 under Transformational Leadership.

Accelerators

Novel idea and authentic product

Evelyne had trained as a potter in Switzerland. She moved to Egypt and Tunis village became her adopted home. She saw the village children make their own toys out of mud and saw that they had a natural talent. She got a novel idea; she decided to use their natural talent to help them create glazed pottery.

In the interview Evelyne Porret intimated that their talent and ability is to some extent innate:

There are some that learn quickly that are capable. The students here do have a gift, working with clay. Pottery is close to country people it is of the earth, it is close to the people here. That's another reason why perhaps it works. It is something that touches them, that they have the habit of knowing. An analogy would be bread (Evelyne).

However, she was sorry the children's talent was not recognized: 'I had the impression that these children had something in them that we had lost' (Evelyne). Over time, Evelyne helped them to market and sell their pottery and establish their own independent workshops. Today her former students are middle aged and their children in turn have become potters. Today the loyal ones visit Evelyne and bathe in the infinity pool in the grounds of her house.

We get an insight into Evelyne Porret's character in this extract from the interview. Even in her late 70's she is still, wherever she is, thinking of new ideas to communicate to the Pottery School and her students:

When I do pottery for me it helps me to ... if I stopped completely my work - I do trials - I do different commissions - that gives me an idea for the School. When I am wherever - a museum - I think to myself they could do this in the School. There I could put an animal like that - I have all the time - it works still (Evelyne).

But, she realized that her authentic product is remarkable and not easy to be competed with by other products.

... the Egyptians from Cairo that do ceramics they are all artists they don't do things that are for common use, they don't like primitive (Evelyne).

Appropriate technology

Through her own training (Faculty of Applied Arts in Switzerland) and through her practice of pottery to this day, Evelyne Porret helped the children to develop their professionalism because she had attained appropriate technology at early age: '*...at the start I did the School of Decorative Arts in Switzerland for pottery. I started early ...I was just 16 years old*' (Evelyne). This was no small task as just mastering a potter's wheel takes four years of intensive training. The youth of the students is also remarkable – students as young as six years old (although normally ten years old) study the art, and there is a precedent for a student starting a commercial workshop at nineteen years of age.

A success factor to her technology of producing remarkable competitive glazed pottery type is 'spontaneity'. Evelyne acquired this feature from her work - during her first years in Egypt - with Ramesses Wisa Wasef, a known handmade carpet manufacturer in the Harraniyah area of Cairo:

Ramesses Wisa Wasef taught me everything and I read the books he wrote. I worked with him in Harraniyah in carpets and then in pottery too. I took spontaneity in art from him and I owe him all my successes (Evelyne).²

This spontaneity was transferred later to the children by Evelyne; therefore, their work is inspired by the local environment and their own imagination and this may be a success factor (they do not use molds or models). Students consider this factor an important one behind the success they have achieved: '*when we produced pottery objects, everyone - even artists - were impressed and even in the France exhibition, every piece we open, people sniff because the work is unique and can't be echoed*' (P2).

Tenacious character

Evelyne and her character were key to what happened. She is extremely forthright and does not suffer fools gladly. This has alienated some of her former students at least for the time being - she can be sharp with them if they disappoint, and this can include their parents, and the authorities – '*the men in suits*' as she calls them. At the same time many of her former

² 50 years later, the Ramesses Wisa Wasef family is still very active and that students today create and sell their carpets and pottery. This example along with Evelyne's is sustainable.

students are devoted to her - she is not just the mother of Angelo (*Om* is mother in Arabic, hence *Om Angelo*) but really a mother to the whole community. She lives the simple life of an ordinary Egyptian woman.

In a word, her character is a mixture of love and sharpness *'I like my students very much; sometimes they annoy me (laughs). I shout at them a lot'* (Evelyne). She describes one incident when the school was being filmed: *'a student said to the filmmaker 'You should see Om Angelo when she gets cross with us!'* (Laughs). *And it's true once I screamed 'But what do you call that...!'* (Evelyne).

There was a consensus amongst Evelyne's students that she was: *'full of good intentions and forthright'*. But as an artist: I. P5 explained how much she suffered in her life: *'Evelyne suffered a lot. We were children and caused many many problems to her, such as: we sabotaged the plants in her garden although she planted it to avoid buying from the market and save money. Also, people accused her she was exploiting us and sell our products although we were still learning the technique. And many other problems'* (P5).

In her interview Evelyne described how things evolved once initial teething problems with the creation of an Association were resolved. She had started with 16 students in the Pottery School but had to halt for a time: *'After that we started with my Association. Everything then started to go well. I went, I arranged, I filled the school with students, some had left. Not all the children were there but some were'* (Evelyne).

Then she started to market the products through exhibitions - in Cairo and abroad - and in her and her husband's shop *Nagada* (in the Dokki suburb of Cairo).

Then what did we do? - we did an exhibition. That started to work. Then we had an exhibition in Switzerland, afterwards several. We sold in the Galleries in Cairo, in the shops. And we also sold in our own shop, Nagada. In the beginning we sold here but then we started to sell the pottery there (Evelyne).

Despite obstacles through the years, Evelyne never gave up. She was a ubiquitous presence: *'If it works, it is because I was always there'* (Evelyne). Some of the obstacles for anyone else might have been a showstopper. The obstacles included: her own exile; parents in

opposition to their children's participation in the Pottery School; authorities who caused bureaucratic complications by earmarking funding for the school and then not making it available; tensions with former students; not being included in (or even consulted on) new project initiatives. Today she is even encouraging a former student who to some extent rebelled against her.

Mediation and people who helped

Just as there were those who did not help, there were those that helped. First and foremost, Evelyne's husband Michel also Swiss, a noted fashion designer in Cairo with an international reputation. As mentioned their shop Nagada, a villa in the Dokki district of Cairo showcases pottery from the Pottery School to best effect for buyers from Cairo and internationally. *'And my husband also he helps me for the technical side – he helps a lot – he comes to see, he chooses things that can go in the shop. He cooperates a lot. But he doesn't want to be involved in saying to the students 'Do this' or 'Do that''* (Evelyne). The children added that *'he was a pottery expert too. He added to our talent, especially in tiny matters in the technique ... He always interferes in small but important things'* (P1).

Other artists helped Evelyne acquiring the right technology that caused her extraordinary success, especially Ramesses Wisa Wasef, her former tutor. He helped her refine her talent when she worked with him when she first came to Egypt and taught her the importance of 'spontaneity in art'.

Moreover, some of her friends also helped, especially in establishing an NGO, which now runs the Pottery School:

My friends helped a lot; Hagar ElHadidy and Mona Zakaria helped me through the routine paper, HodaLotfy is the head of the association till now, HasanSoror is the general secretary, and Ibrahim Samir is helping me at the moment as my primary assistant and the second person in the school (Evelyne).

Some of the 'men in suits' were supportive and helped Evelyne to conceptualize the idea of establishing the pottery school: *'Then one day someone from Social Affairs, came, a gentleman, who said to me: why don't you teach the children? You could create a school, or you could do*

something' (Evelyne). Also, one of them was a source of enthusiasm: *'but there was one who was enthusiastic, who wanted to do something'* (Evelyne).

Some of the 'men in suits' also helped Evelyne to navigate through the paperwork, accounting, and local bureaucracy. The interview with Evelyne demonstrated ups and downs in relationships with the authorities. At times this presented a showstopper, at least temporarily:

They said we'll come and see you. Nothing. No-one came. And those from Social Funds – they came to see a bit. Nothing. In the end nothing at all. ...So, what did the people from Social affairs tell me? They said: no, it's not permitted to sell a piece of land to another Association; it's not permitted to rent out; we simply could do nothing in terms of our own Association. So, I said well if everything is forbidden, sort yourselves out. Finally, I received a letter from Social Affairs, if you want to create an Association –you can do as you like. Suddenly everything was possible. Even now I don't understand, but it doesn't matter (laughter) (Evelyne).

Sometimes the authorities helped, sometimes they hindered. If they had helped, consistently helped, this could have been a more important success factor.

The working team in the association from the village helped Evelyne to develop a winning formula which led to her success:

I started to work because people who were with me in the association they understood me. I didn't need much, but they understood. We did the accounts with one of the villagers. And another who helped me here in the school. We calculate everything, and we do invoices so that it is correct for the Association (Evelyne).

One of the Evelyne's major helpers was: *'Haj Mohamed Ibrahim who donated the piece of land upon which Evelyne built her villa for free'* (P3).

Brakes

Gender issue

There were cultural issues – the role of the woman in Egyptian rural communities and the lack of fit between the culture and its expectations and women forging professions of their own. One frustration for Evelyne was that girls once they had developed their expertise were rushed into marriage (in her view) at a young age and had one, two or even three children while still very young, and then gave up all thought of an independent economic existence. Evelyne explained that one female student had:

...succeeded in creating her workshop, it worked, she sold in the shops, she went to Cairo on her own. For a woman from the village that is great. It's good. I am happy. I don't understand why the other women, the other girls from the village, haven't said 'Look it's great my daughter could also work like that'. But no, they send girls just up until marriage and then (claps hands) suddenly nothing we never see them again (Evelyne).

This factor is the only one Evelyne's children disagreed with her. One comment that helps to explain their view point is the following:

.... look! this is our eastern tradition and custom. We are not like Europe. This is normal normal normal. This girl was given birth and brought up at Evelyne's home and learnt a lot from her and became professional, but we don't know why Evelyne thinks of her in such dictatorship! Evelyne is a European and should be democratic and respect the girl's opinion. The girl said to her: this is personal freedom ... this is my life and I decide ... I am free and would rather get married. It was the decision of the girl and nobody interfered. Sometimes, Europeans claim democracy, but they act as dictators. (P8).

Poverty and Illiteracy

At the beginning there was only natural beauty to Tunis village and its surroundings; little in the way of infrastructure or other resources. The

local community lived from working the land and fishing. Poverty and illiteracy were obstacles to the progress of the village children.

When I found this place, it was beautiful –there was nothing. Only the lake, the palm trees. That was it. And I loved that (Evelyne).

Today the village has diversified its entrepreneurial activities: with restaurants, ecolodges and hotels, pottery workshops (all Evelyne's former students). The village remains unspoiled, the roads remain unpaved. There are those who still eke out a living as before, but there are others, like Evelyne herself or the ex-Cairo intelligentsia, who have also made their homes there.

Jealousy and Resentment

At times support was marred by conflict from different quarters - especially the wrong men in suits (Governmental officials from Social Fund):

Because I had no oven because they hadn't given me the money for the oven I said: give me the things to cook the pottery in my own oven. So, what did they say then? They said Ah! She doesn't want to say her secrets and she doesn't want to teach them the enameling because it's for that reason she does it in her oven (laughs). I didn't have an oven! I gave a lot, sometimes I became mad! (Evelyne).

Community Resistance

If Evelyne and the children had been left to their own devices, the path to success might have been smoother. It is testimony to the perseverance of these key stakeholders that what could have been major obstacles and derailed the project were in the end overcome.

Where did the resistance to their success come from? Ironically, from the very people that should have been helping. Parents who wanted money from the children's activities:

The parents were angry because I took the children, but I didn't pay them. Even though I explained that I had trained (myself in Switzerland) for four years, that I had paid myself for the training (which now the children could benefit from in turn). But no, they wanted to hear nothing.

They even wrote to me a letter saying I ought to be in prison because you don't pay the children. So, I said OK I'm going to do an exhibition (Evelyne).

Also, from the wrong men in suits and the bureaucracy and rules that did not advantage progress. Later there was resistance from former students who wanted to produce pottery in quantity to the detriment of its quality. The 1967 war and rules regarding foreigners denied residency in rural areas provoked an exile for Evelyne that lasted eight years.

Lack of Political Will

The authorities did not know how to deal with Evelyne and her growing success. They recognized and wanted the benefits but did not know how to harness them. They oscillated in the early years between wanting to take control and recognizing that the project would flounder or come to nothing if they did not allow Evelyne to be its main driver. Even today they could do more to recognize her contribution, work with her to ensure her legacy. She is not always consulted and for example a later Italian project, with similar objectives has not involved her although she would be the obvious source of advice.

Perhaps Evelyne being a woman, and a foreigner, led to the passive resistance on the part of the authorities. Paradoxically there is a realization now that whatever the reason or resulting from whatever alchemy she has leveraged the village out of poverty and even her adversaries are afraid to damage this result.

Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy was a major dilemma that decelerated Evelyne in her story. Her story is full of examples: '*... and the government said to build an oven that wasn't possible. And we had to fill out lots of paperwork and so forth*' (Evelyne).

Evelyne also explained how the wrong 'men in suits' could want to control to the whole production process although they don't know anything about it:

... it was very complicated, because to buy anything you needed to see five things to have the least expensive. There would be four people who would come with me to buy one thing, who knew nothing about nothing of course. They didn't know what we needed to buy (Evelyne).

Evelyne at times got fed up of the bureaucracy and, in the interview, she complained that often the men in suits worked randomly without clear steps for what they were doing. She described them in this quote: *'they didn't know what to do. So, they didn't know how to sort things out'* (Evelyne). One of the children said that the wrong men in suits kept telling him and the other children: *'Evelyne sells your products and takes the revenues to herself'* (P7).

Lack of Finance

Several inflection points, particularly to do with funding but more importantly the straight-jacketing effect of the first Association could, and indeed initially did, create complications. The Social Fund for Development - the Ministry of International Cooperation - had earmarked 90,000 Egyptian pounds for the first Association but then took back half. The first Association did not always make good use of funds. An amount of 18,000 Egyptian pounds was in part wasted on an oven constructed on their own initiative which never worked and part of the money simply never materialized.

At one point when all doors were closing, and she was not allowed to create an Association of her own, Evelyne said *'Bye Bye'*. Later the authorities relented and freed constraints so that Evelyne could set up her own Association. Using her own money from a small Migros account in Switzerland, this had a balance of 10,000 Swiss francs, Evelyne auto-financed the creation of the new Association.

Although money can act as an accelerator we can see that for this case study success was not linked closely with funding. Sometimes money was promised and then was not forthcoming. Evelyne simply made do and occasionally advanced her own money.

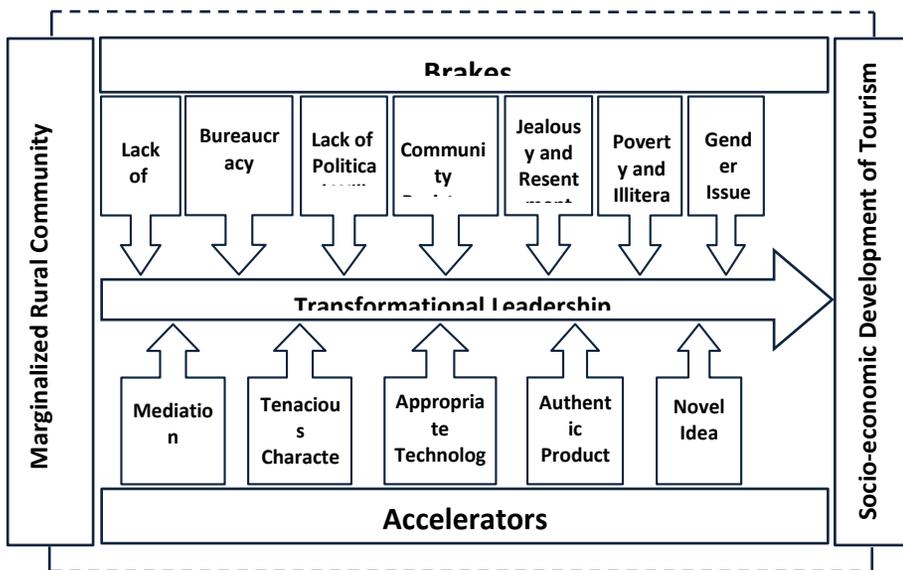
I had received a little money. I had received 10.000 SFr. or something like that from the MIGROS in Switzerland. (laughs!), which I had kept to one side before the project has been spoilt. I had left it in a savings account at the bank, so I had still this money. So, I said with this money we will create an Association and restart something (Evelyne).

Evelyne tourism destination success model

The distinction between accelerators and brakes can become blurred – an accelerator in the wrong hands or with a wrong attitude or a vested interest can become a brake.

Figure 1 shows a model resulting from the accelerators and brakes identified by Evelyne and the children’s story over a forty-year period. Being mindful of these experiences may help other transformational leaders and followers in rural and marginalized settings to leverage out of poverty.

Figure 1: The Model: Accelerators and Brakes Affected Transformational Leadership to Achieve Successful Socio-Economic Development of a Tourism Destination



Conclusions

This story is remarkable and informative when narrated by ecotour guides who accompany tourists in Tunis village. Our research objective was to identify success factors and lessons learnt from Evelyne’s story which allowed Evelyne to become a transformational leader for her students and to achieve socio-economic development in a marginalized rural destination, so it has become a tourism destination *par excellence*. Her story tells in detail what she did and how it worked. She transformed young lives, so they loved her before loving what she was doing –

producing glazed pottery. Then, a 'novel idea' came to her mind prompted also by a visitor: to train the students how to make glazed pottery professionally and add environmental decoration on the products spontaneously. The product was 'authentic' as the children used to play with mud and form toys and they liked this too. Moreover, she had already the 'appropriate technology' from her study in Switzerland and her training at Harraniyah in Cairo. Although, she suffered from local people 'poverty and illiteracy' and 'jealousy and resentment', she was helped by 'good people' - such as her husband - and although she struggled to fund her project she managed to finance it at the end of the day. Also, 'community resistance' was a major hurdle; even the children's parents hindered her success. Finally, 'bureaucracy' and the 'lack of political will' were major issues but she was supported by her 'tenacious character' to resist against the 'wrong men in suits'.

Evelyne Porret has enabled Tunis village to develop a unique identity as a tourism destination through the Pottery School she established to help local children sharpen their skills. Subsequently, nine pottery workshops have gradually been established in the village and many pottery exhibitions have taken place by Evelyne and her children in Cairo and over the world. This has caused Tunis village to become famous and to attract other artists - both Egyptians and foreign expatriates - and many professionals and academics from Cairo in search of a rural and picturesque destination full of simplicity and tranquility. Ecolodges, hotels and restaurants have established in the village to enhance the tourism superstructure and many tourism activities have been initiated, such as bird watching, camel trekking, rural life, and other handicrafts. Obviously, it would be hard to isolate the variables but certainly Evelyne helped to put Tunis village on the tourism map. Thus, Evelyne and the children have been catalysts for change and transformational leaders for the local population and have positively influenced socio-economic development in Tunis village.

The transformation achieved by Evelyne is sustainable; eight workshops established by 9 of her children - beside her own pottery school, which currently comprises 20 artists - represent the first generation. Now, her children - initially Evelyne's followers (Goffee & Jones 2006) are acting as transformational leaders to other students and their graduates are

starting to blossom as the second generation. One workshop of two artists belonging to the second generation has been established. Moreover, the total nine workshops train 35 students beside Evelyne's school which trains 20 students. So, a significant number of artists will establish other workshops and guarantee the survival of Evelyne's serendipitous legacy. Analysis of the data reveals several accelerators and brakes impacting Evelyne's serendipitous success. The accelerators include: novel idea and authentic product; appropriate technology; tenacious character; mediation; people who helped. The brakes include: gender issues; poverty and illiteracy; jealousy and resentment; community resistance; lack of political will; bureaucracy; and lack of finance. Evelyne was always there as a transformational leader to make use of the accelerators and to where possible reduces the effect of the brakes. She did it and, because of her drive, Tunis village now is full of visitors who enjoy not only the glazed pottery but also a wide range of ecotourism activities.

The key to success has been to privilege the accelerators and remove the brakes. This allows transformation to happen and projects to progress without hindrance achieving 'win-win' for the stakeholders. If accelerators and brakes are in equilibrium, then there is stasis and no movement forward. If brakes outweigh accelerators projects might be abandoned or derailed.

These accelerators and brakes have been identified and incorporated into a model of socio-economic development of marginalized rural areas that leads to tourism destination success based upon the emergent themes. The developed model could inform development of rural tourism destinations in other contexts in Egypt or internationally. Current Egyptian government initiatives tend to favor large tourism projects or specific tourism destinations. However, self-help project driven by local communities building on their comparative advantages should be encouraged and could provide part of the answer to poverty alleviation and socio-economic development in rural communities?

References

Andereck, K. and Vogt, C. (2000). "The relationship between residents' attitudes toward tourism and tourism development options". *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(1), 27-36.

- Avolio, B. *et al.* (1991). "The Four I's of Transformational Leadership". *Journal of European Industrial Training* ,15(4), 9-16.
- Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York: The Free Press.
- Bass, B. M. and Avolio, B. J. (1994). Improving organizational effectiveness through *transformational leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Boley, B. *et al.* (2014). Empowerment's and resident attitudes towards Tourism: Strengthening the theoretical foundation through a Weberian lens. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 49, 33-50.
- Briedenham, J. and Wickens, E. (2004). Tourism routes as a tool for the economic development of rural areas- vibrant hope or impossible dream? *.Tourism Management*, 25(1),71-79.
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Carson, D. *et al.* (2001). *Qualitative Marketing Research*. Sage Publications Ltd, London.
- Cawley, M. and Gillmor, D. (2008). Integrated Rural Tourism: concepts and practice. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35 (2), 316–337.
- Dawson, C. (2002). *Practical Research Methods, A User – Friendly Guide to Mastering Research Techniques and Projects*. How to Books Ltd, Oxford, UK.
- Dolson *et al.* (2002). *Field Trip No. 7, The Eocene and Oligocene Paleo-Ecology and Paleo-Geography of Whale Valley and the Fayoum Basins: Implications for Hydrocarbon Exploration in the Nile Delta and Eco-Tourism in the Greater Fayoum Basin*. Cairo, Egypt.
- Dwyer, L. *et al.* (2008). Destination and enterprise management for a Tourism Future. *Tourism Management* , 30 (2009), 63-64.
- Environmental Design Group, EDG (2006). "The Fayoum Tourism Development Plan 2005-2015". <http://www.cis song.org/it/press/news/il-piano-ecoturistico-del-fayoum> [accessed at: 12 December 2014].
- Fleischer, A. and Felsenstein, D. (2000). Support for rural tourism. Does it make a difference? *.Annals of Tourism Research*, 27, 1007–1024.
- GAFI. 2009. *FDI Database: Investments to Egypt: 1970-2010*. Ministry of Investment [in Arabic].
- Gallarza, M. *et al.* (2002). Destination image: Towards a conceptual framework". *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29 (1), 56–78.
- Goffee, R. and Jones, G. (2006). *Why Should Anyone Want To Be Led By You? : What it takes to be an authentic leader*, Boston, Mass., Harvard Business School Press.

- Hassan, S. (2000). Determinants of Market competitiveness in an environmentally sustainable tourism Industry, *Journal of Travel Research*, 38 (February), 239-45.
- Haven-Tang, C. and Jones, E. (2012). Local leadership for rural tourism development: A case study of Adventa, Monmouthshire, UK. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 4 (2012), 28-35.
- Hjalager, A. (1996). Tourism and the Environment: The Innovation Connection, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 4 (4), 201-218.
- Ibrahim, O. and Jones, E. (2011). *Enhancing the Competitiveness of Tourism Destinations: The Fayoum Region in Egypt*. LAP Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Johnson, G. et al. (2008). *Exploring Corporate Strategy*. (8th Edition). FT/Prentice Hall. UK Harlow, Pearson Education Ltd.
- Komppula, R. (2014). The Role of Individual Entrepreneurs in the Development of Competitiveness for a Rural Tourism Destination—A Case Study. *Tourism Management*, 40, 361-371.
- Menning, N. (1995). Traffic and tourism in the bitterroot: tourism promotion, development, and management, *Montana Business Quarterly*, 33 (2), 2-7.
- Mihalic, T. (2000). Environmental management of a tourist destination: A factor of tourism competitiveness. *Tourism Management*, 21 (2000), 65-78.
- Ritchie, J. and Crouch, G. (2003). *The Competitive Destination: A Sustainable Tourism Perspective*. Cambridge, MA: CABI.
- Sainaghi, R. (2006). From contents to processes: versus a dynamic destination management model (DDMM). *Tourism Management*, 27 (5), 1053-1063.
- Scheyvens, R. (2002). Backpacker Tourism and Third World Development. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29 (1), 144-164.
- Seddighi, H. and Theocarous, A. (2002). A model of tourism destination choice: a theoretical and empirical analysis". *Tourism Management*, 23 (5), 475-487.
- Siliotti, A. (2003). *The Fayoum and Wadi El-Rayan*. The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo.
- Sofield, T. (2003). *Empowerment and Sustainable Tourism Development*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Stylidis, D. et al. (2014). Residents' support for tourism development: The role of residents' place image and perceived tourism impacts. *Tourism Management*, 45, 260-274.
- Wafik, G. M. et al. (2011). Official Awareness of Tourism Carrying Capacity Dimensions in TheFayoum Destination's Natural Heritage Sites (Case of The Valley of Whales). *International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Systems*, 4 (1), 91-115.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications.