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ISRAEL
Country Report

ISRAEL COUNTRY REPORT

OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION OF CULTURE

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1- CONTEXT AND INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

This report was written from the perspective of the artists. The author is a multidisciplinary artist, a former chairman of the Israeli Association of Visual Artists (from 2008 until 2012), and a researcher of cultural policy in Israel, mostly in the field of visual arts.

The report is based, in part, on research I conducted with the lawyer Nurit Asher-Fenig, entitled "Economic and Legal Aspects Related to Fine Arts and the Status of the Artist." During the research process I examined numerous sources of information, both official and unofficial, collected from public reports, interviews, and fieldwork. I am currently working on another research project in collaboration with two other researchers, in which we are examining models that encourage the flourishing of independent art and art-based community projects in the public space.

It should be noted that this report is necessarily colored by the facts that I am an active "player" in this field, of Eastern origin, and an "interested party" both personally and with respect to the community.

In many cultural spheres in Israel, artists, and both the art and the public establishment, view Western European culture and North American culture as the gold standard. The artists, the public establishment, and private supporters, are all influenced by those cultures, and consider them the criteria for quality art.

Perhaps for this reason the local establishment has replicated the artistic mechanisms and criteria of the West on numerous occasions, with no attempt to adapt them to Mediterranean culture, to local traditions, or to populations originating in the Arab world. And thus, there is a lack of congruence with the socio-economic reality of a developing country.



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Further, often the establishment adopts these mechanisms, and disregards sub-mechanisms that originally ensured a system that supported the artists, and provided a framework that enabled culture to thrive.

At this point I would like to jump ahead for a moment, even though we are in the “Context” section, and introduce culture in Israel as follows: as I see it, the State sees culture as a “luxury” that in the current economic-security reality is viewed as an elitist privilege, competing for budgets with things that are much more vital and necessary for survival, such as security, education, health and welfare.

For years, the Ministry of Culture has toddled along as an appendix to the Ministry of Science, Sport and Education and the culture budget has been about 0.15%¹ of the state budget. The State renounces culture and sucks it dry. In desperation the cultural establishment denies artists and marginalizes them, the mainstream pushes the fringe beyond the margins, while the hegemony pushes the minority to despair. And yet, despite all this, a kind of miracle occurs and somehow creativity manages to flourish.

The preceding interpretation of the cultural context in Israel should clarify why I have taken upon myself the responsibility and the challenging role of mapping and analyzing culture policy in Israel. I see this as a fascinating opportunity to be a partner in the creation of a database and to be part of a dialog with colleagues from Southern Mediterranean countries, under a European umbrella. I believe that this platform will allow both artists and the establishment in our region to benefit from the initiative. I am convinced that the support of, and the rich experience present in, EU countries will facilitate the identification of more precise mechanisms to empower artists and contribute to a flourishing culture.

INTRODUCTION

As is the case elsewhere, the mixture of culture spheres in Israel comprises areas that enjoy status and recognition, as opposed to media that receive little support or recognition. Theater, for example, receives about 22% of the total support for culture, while art museums and fine arts together receive about 10.8% of the total support².

Moreover, within each category is an additional hierarchy of recognition and support. For example, when it comes to theater, there is a large gap between the resources directed to Repertory Theater, and the close-to-zero support for

¹Calculation by the author based on the Israeli total budget and the cultural budget, Ministry of Finance website, www.mof.gov.il

²The numbers are all taken from official Ministry of Culture Pilat reports, published in 2016, www.pilat.co.il/tarbut.html.



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Fringe Theater. Further, there is the geographic tension between the center and the periphery, as well as works created by artists from different ethnic groups, which are not associated with the central works of art. Within this area is artwork described as Eastern, Mediterranean, Arab, Russian, Ethiopian, etc.

Over the years, there have been several reports on culture policy. Some were initiated by the Ministry of Culture, others by private foundations that promote social and cultural projects, and some by the National Poyis (Lottery) Council for Art and Culture. Most of these rely on data derived from reports by cultural institutions and interviews with the management of cultural organizations, and survey the habits of Israeli culture consumers. The voices of the artists themselves, those responsible for the works of art, for the scaffolding upon which the works of art are displayed, for making these accessible to the public – go virtually unheard.

So for years, it is a distorted picture that has been presented to the Ministry of Culture. And thus it is clearly of paramount importance to analyze and understand the needs of and the resources available to theaters, dance companies, museums, private and public galleries, orchestras, book publishers and film producers. However, the needs of those who provide the statistics upon which the reports are based do not always coincide with the needs of the artists. The distribution of financial resources and questions of ratings vs. quality, mainstream vs. experimental projects, work environment, and conditions, often reflect the different interests of the artists and the managing bodies. In this report, it is my goal to make sure that the needs of the artists are at the forefront, while providing a broad view of all the stakeholders in the field of culture.

In an attempt to faithfully represent the voices of the artists in the various cultural spheres I created a questionnaire that I sent to 19 artists unions and organizations from all fields of culture. I decided to include as many artists, and as many different types of artists, as possible, from as many genres as possible, and to do my best to ensure that their voices are clearly heard. I then attempted to cull from the questionnaires common trends and individual needs for each sphere.

It is important to note that in 2015, the Ministry of Culture, the "Office for the Rescue of Culture-1% For the Soul³" and the Ministry of Finance had signed an agreement which increases the culture budget for 2019 by 20 percent, in comparison with recent years. In 2019, the culture budget as a percentage of the total state's budget will actually grow from 0.14% to 0.2%⁴. In a period when budgets are being slashed across all government ministries, it is certainly an

³ The Office comprises a wide spectrum of artist's unions and cultural institutions.

⁴ Official Ministry of Finance publications

https://mof.gov.il/BudgetSite/statebudget/BUDGET2019/MINISTERIESBUDGET/socialBudget/DocLib/TarbutSport_Main.pdf



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encouraging achievement, and it is the result of rare cooperation between artists unions, cultural institutions and the top echelons of the Ministry of Culture.

2- GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND GOVERNANCE

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES

I will relate to the subject from three perspectives – cultural policy, the state of art, and the state of the artists.

Cultural Policy

Cultural policy in Israel has undergone major changes during the 70 years of the country's existence as a sovereign state. It may be said that it is only over the past two decades that the government in general and the Ministry of Culture in particular, have developed the subject of cultural policy in a context of far-reaching strategic thinking. This change occurred in light of several events:

1. In 1977, the National Youth Theater petitioned the High Court of Justice about discrimination with respect to its budget. The High Court forced the Ministry of Culture (the then-Ministry of Education) to set clear and transparent criteria for the support of cultural institutions.
2. In 1999, the Bracha Report about Cultural Policy was published, which determined the importance of clear criteria for support.
3. The adoption of a neo-liberal approach by the Ministry of Finance (in the 1990s) led to a government frenzy of full or partial privatization of social services, among them cultural institutions and community councils and centers. The Authorities expected cultural institutions to function as part of the economic marketplace, with minimal intervention from the State.

The attempt to privatize culture forced cultural institutions and institutions providing cultural services to “think economically.” On the one hand, it made them more professional and efficient, but at the same time, the content and activities began to be influenced by concerns about ratings and purely economic considerations. In the middle of the year 2000, there was some government disenchantment with the approach, and a perception began to grow that more government intervention was needed in the cultural realm, including funding and subsidies. The government began to realize that it should relate to culture as a market failure (from an economic perspective) that requires intervention.

In recent years, the Culture Council, which advises the Minister of Culture, has delved more deeply into the issue of setting criteria for support. To my thinking, the budget allocations are at a stage where there is willingness to learn more



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about the needs of the various players and, accordingly, to ensure a fair distribution of funds. There are a number of areas where adjustments should be made, such as in the sphere of fine arts, and that of independent and fringe artists, and there is also a need for affirmative action in the different areas of Arab culture. I believe that it is likely that we will see such changes in the coming decade.

The state of art

- The quantity and level of art in Israel are surprising in terms of both volume and quality. Relative to the minimal budget that art receives on both the municipal and national levels and the support of the National *Payis* (Lottery) Council for Art and Culture, and private donations, there is a wide range of high quality art in most artistic spheres.
- Most of the professional art is concentrated in Israel's three largest cities – Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa. The periphery overflows with culture that may be described as amateur or semi-professional, although in recent years, partly thanks to decision taken by the current Minister of Culture and Sports as well as dedicated funds, significant, professional art is developing at the periphery of the country as well⁵.
- The number of academic-level art schools is increasing, and new art departments are opening. Every year, there are hundreds, if not thousands of new graduates in art and design. At the same time, the policy of the Council for Higher Education has led to a reduction in the budgets directed to the Humanities and art departments. As a result, art departments are small, artist lecturers are being laid off and there is a growing risk that departments will be closed due to financial difficulties.
- While enrollment at academic or diploma art schools is mainly influenced by fluctuations in Israel's economic situation, it is not changing drastically.
- In some media, commercial ventures (that receive minimal public support) are flourishing. An example is "Fresh Paint Art fair" (visual art). However, in recent years, commercial theater has practically been wiped out, while the public supported repertory theaters are forced to mount productions perceived as commercial.
- In recent years, Israeli cinema has managed to produce quality films that are also commercially successful.

⁵ The ministry of Culture is designating a special budget to culture institutions in the periphery. Museums, Orchestras and theatres. Also, institutions from central Israel will be given more budget in the following year if they are performing in periphery. The ministry has launched a new budget (about 11 million Euro) for festivals in municipal authorities from all over the country (the SELA legislation).



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- About 6,000 new books are published in Israel each year, which is an impressive number relative to the size of the population. The law which was legislated in 2013 to protect literature and authors was canceled entirely by the current Minister of Culture, as it protected the selling price of new publications and therefore, according to the Minister, prevented many people from buying books. An alternative law has yet to be presented by the Ministry.
- Popular music abounds, there are many classical music productions as well, and Eastern music is embraced by the mainstream.
- The influences of local, Mediterranean, and North African culture are growing steadily as they trickle into the worlds of music, theater, dance, and fine arts.
- Over the past decade, the budget for dance has grown by hundreds of percentages, and as a result there is significant growth in this cultural sphere, in terms of the scope of the activity and the number of performances by Israeli dance companies at home and abroad.
- The number of local cultural festivals throughout the country has grown due to a decision taken by the Ministry of Culture and Sport to dedicate significant funds and transfer them directly to municipalities for the purpose of creating cultural festivals within their jurisdiction.
- Politicization of Culture- the current Minister of Culture and Sports, Knesset member Miri Regev, a member of the Right wing party, has declared that the government's political agenda will be a part of the Ministry of Culture's agenda. Since her nomination in 2015 she had tried to impose cultural institutions which receive national funding to sign a "Loyalty Document", stating they would not produce and perform in shows that undermine the Israeli state values as reflected in her party's agenda. She has declared that her office has the freedom to fund or not to fund any Cultural institution that would undermine or challenge these values or an institute that will not sign such a document. Over the last three years the Minister has been personally involved in stopping the funding of "El Midian" theater in Haifa and "Barbour" art Gallery in Jerusalem. Also, the Ministry has announced a change in the funding mechanism based on propensity to perform in the West bank and in Jewish settlements. Accordingly, an institute that would not perform in the settlements would lose government funding by up to 30%. Petitions about these issues have been submitted to the Israeli High Court of Justice.

Another example of the politicization of the Culture is the Minister of Culture's decision not to join the Creative Europe organization as they do not grant institutions from the West Bank, Eastern Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.



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The state of the artists

In effect, the artists in Israel subsidize local culture. The artists themselves and their families are the largest consumers of culture. The concept "Artist's fee or honorarium" is not accepted and is mostly met with raised eyebrows. The public and the establishment view the exposure of his or her artwork as a kind of payment to the artist. An absurd situation pertains. For example: A sculptor who proposes a sculpture in response to a municipal tender for a work in the public space cannot include payment for his or her work in the budget detailing expenses. Approved costs that are covered include payment for materials or to peripheral professionals, such as welders, carpenters, etc. While in recent years, a gradual change is beginning to be felt, in the absence of legislation public bodies do not consider themselves obliged to pay wages to artists. Moreover, the artists, despite their outrage, tend to swallow the bitter pill, and to add a little to the clause detailing the expenses incurred for materials, in an attempt to receive minimal indirect remuneration for their work. Without the opportunity for exposure, they will not have any recognition, or possibility of creating their art. Despite the gradual changes in the budgetary criteria for cultural institutions, the bulk of the (meager) budget is directed toward management, PR for events, and maintenance of infrastructures. Nonetheless, there are a few public galleries that pay royalties or other payments to artists in return to exhibiting their work in art shows. In May 2018, the Israeli professional artists union came out with a campaign for payment to artists who were presenting in public, funded galleries. The union has also published a price list for artist fee and exhibition fee. This campaign has been well accepted by the Ministry of Culture, and hopefully will increase the Ministry's support and funding to the Fine Art institutions. Another example occurred in 2014, where the Ministry of Culture obligated the producers of the Acre Theater Festival to pay the actors for their performances. It is understood that they are still not compensated for the long hours spent in rehearsal.

In addition, when it comes to music, there is hardly any support for artists outside the world of classical music. Musicians in orchestras usually earn no more than minimum wage, which is not enough to live on, so that they must work at additional jobs. In the realm of independent music (pop, rock, electronic music, etc.), few are the musicians who are able to support themselves from the money they earn performing. In the age of downloads and pirating, income from the sale of CDs is negligible. In the absence of subsidized public infrastructures musicians are forced to rent rehearsal space from private individuals, to record in sound studios, or alternatively to purchase their own sound systems. In the book world, few authors survive on royalties. Despite the high percentage of book purchases in Israel, the Hebrew-reading population is small in publishing terms. Poets have no choice but to share the costs of publishing their books, and in the absence of state support they must finance their own profession. In the sphere of



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dance, thanks to an increase in budgets, dancers in companies supported by the Ministry of Culture have started to receive payment for rehearsals as well.

GOVERNANCE

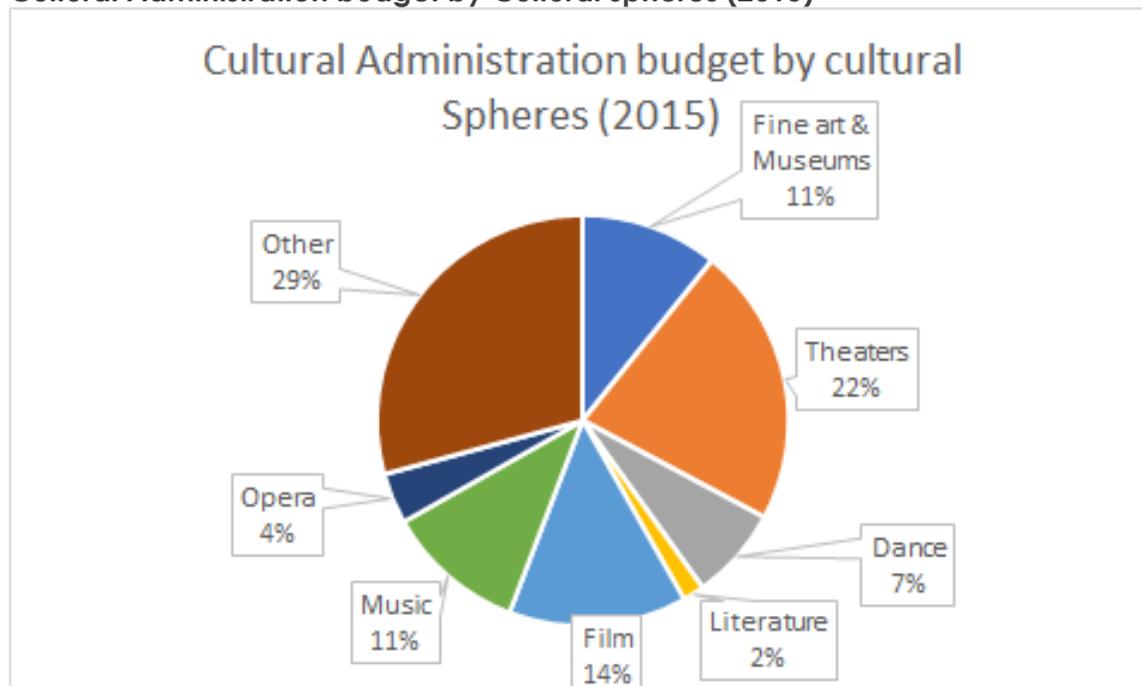
The Culture Administration is the body appointed to oversee culture in the Ministry of Culture and Sport. As previously mentioned the Administration's budget is five or six times lower than that of its European counterparts. As of today, the Culture Administration budget is not stable, and fluctuates in accordance with political pressures.

The Administration is active in the following areas:

- Providing support to artists and institutions in the cultural arena for ongoing operations, initiatives, activities, events, art festivals and artistic training at a professional level
- Providing tools for various forms of artistic expression
- Setting criteria for support and the allocation of resources and assisting with problems solving and crisis intervention in the various institutions
- Awarding prizes to promote and encourage creative and performing artists

Providing support to cultural and arts institutions and dealing with applications submitted annually for support of the institutions and their projects.

Cultural Administration budget by Cultural spheres (2015)





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Division of Culture Administration budget according to cultural spheres in 2015⁶

In parallel to the Culture Administration, in accordance with the Art and Culture Law, The Israeli Council for Culture and Art was established as a statutory, volunteer body. Its role is to advise the government and the Minister of Culture and Sport with respect to art and culture and to work to promote art and creativity in the State of Israel.

The council proposes to the Culture Minister a long-term plan for art and culture policy that includes support for art and cultural institutions, initiatives, activities and ventures to encourage and promote art and artists.

Alongside the Council, there are thirteen professional sections: music, theater, dance and interdisciplinary art, literature, fine arts, cinema, art schools, museums, libraries, Arab culture, Druze and Circassian culture, art in the community and amateur art, research and heritage, Hebrew songs, and festivals.

I believe that we should examine the composition of the Culture Council from the perspective of the percentage of women, the percentage of artists, and a fairer distribution of representation of the various cultural spheres and sectors.

The Council for Culture does not support artists but rather cultural institutions. Direct support of artists is limited to prizes (which are taxable) and specific scholarships for artists who develop projects within the community.

In 2017, the artist unions together with the Cultural Institutions Forum have raised the issue of transparency of the work and decisions of the Council of Culture and the Culture administration. The Visual Artist union has even filed a petition to the Israeli court to order the Culture administration to publicly publish protocols of the different funding and prizes committees. The petition was received by the court which ordered the Culture Ministry to publish all committee protocols for the years 2015-2016. The court order was supported by the Israeli parliament transparency committee.

Another troubling issue is the current situation of bureaucracy. Cultural institutions wishing to apply for government funding need to fill in and submit a handful of paperwork which demands a huge amount of time and resources in order to complete a submission. This results in a situation where many, mostly small, cultural institutions who do not have the resources to handle this bureaucracy do not apply for funding at all. This issue has and is addressed and raised in different occasions between the Cultural Institutions Forum and the Culture administration but no change has been done yet.

⁶ Filat Human Excellence Database, the Center for Information and Culture Research [Link](#)



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Percentages of Support for Cultural Institutions in Israel, 2015⁷

2015	Theater	Museums	Orchestras	Dance
Government Ministries	29%	12%	24%	34%
Local Authorities	10%	21%	8%	7%
Public Authorities	1%	1%	0%	1%
Total Public Income	40%	34%	32%	42%
Independent Income from Ticket Sales	55%	30%	57%	47%
Income from Donations	3%	34%	6%	9%
Other Income	2%	2%	5%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total Visitors 2015	5,346,430	4,369,280	1,386,963	488,186

Local Authorities

The major budgetary expense in the art sphere in the State of Israel comes from the Local Authorities. In 2015, the Culture budget for the State of Israel was 557 million NIS (132 million €). In contrast, the culture expenditure of the Local Authorities was about 2.5 billion NIS (half billion €). The Authorities are responsible for holding cultural events, working with the various cultural organizations and institutions that are active in their areas, and working with the Ministry for Culture and Sport on joint projects through different initiatives. Despite the huge budgets invested in culture and the enormous responsibility for culture that is the purview of the Local Authorities, there is no designated, full-time director of a culture department whose job it is to supervise the culture budgets, to manage them, or to determine the culture priorities within the Authorities. De facto, all cultural events and budgeting are subject to the decision of the elected mayor and his priorities and may be decreased or cancelled all together with a municipal election (every 5 years).

⁷ Distribution of support for major cultural institutions in Israel, Ministry of Culture, 2015





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3- LEGISLATION AND FUNDING

LEGISLATION

In the absence of a hundreds-of-years-old cultural tradition, within which art and culture are woven into the social and economic fabric of both the country and the private sector, it is necessary to create the appropriate conditions for the development of art and culture via legislation and regulation. The following are three case studies from which we may learn about the essence of the cultural implications that may be derived through legislation of a law or its being struck from the books.

- **One Percent (1%) for Art from Construction Projects in the Public Space**

In many countries, there exists a requirement to include works of art or art installations in any plan for public building. Similar approaches are common in 27 states in the US, in Britain, Holland, Canada, and Germany. Even in countries where no such formal national arrangement pertains, a similar trend is apparent on a local level (in Western Australia and Palo Alto, California). Often such arrangements are dubbed “One Percent for the Art Scheme” and accordingly it is agreed that one percent of the overall cost of the building project is to be designated for the purchase and placement of art in the public space. Some countries have even broadened the regulations so that the budget also allows for temporary, changing exhibits in the public space.

In most cases, these arrangements cite two main objectives:

1. Cultural/Environmental Development
2. Support and promotion of local artistic activity

Additional goals of these arrangements might include:

1. Increased accessibility to art
2. Art as a tourist attraction
3. Introducing contemporary art into daily life
4. Increased employment for artists
5. Increased public awareness of art
6. Creation of partnerships among artists, architects and designers



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Further, studies show that the acquisition of works of art has excellent business returns. Private and public bodies (banks and other companies) that purchased works of art report that the return on those investments is better than that for investments in stocks.

Although such arrangements exist in many countries, there is nothing similar in Israel. In the 1990s, a regulation was passed requiring developers building public projects or large residential buildings to integrate works of art at about one percent of their construction costs. The regulation stated that guidance and approval had to be obtained from the Tel Aviv Municipality Committee for Sculpture and Monuments, via an architect from the Engineering Administration, with respect to the proposed elements and their integration into the project. Several years later, the Contractors Association, along with other building companies, petitioned the Tel Aviv Administrative Court requesting a decision that the instruction from the Tel Aviv Municipality and Planning and Building Committee be declared null and void, as it was unlawful. In 1997, the District Court dismissed the regulation. The judge ruled that every administrative guideline had to be rooted in law or be a law (a legal regulation) and that neither a citizen, nor a contractor's company can be obligated by a "guideline" that is not anchored explicitly and clearly in law. At the conclusion of the verdict, the judge noted that he was aware of the good intentions of the municipality, but that as previously explained, they had to be enshrined in law, and as long as this is not the case, the debt is void. To instate the guideline, a law must be passed on a national level. Since then, some Members of the Knesset (Israel's national legislature) have attempted to pass such legislation, but to no avail.

For a short time in the mid-1990s, when contractors and developers were instructed by the Tel Aviv Municipality to integrate sculptures into their projects in public spaces, the city of Tel Aviv was graced with viable sculptures that became social icons. When one compares the number of sculptures and their material and ethical value, it is clear that in the absence of legislation developers do not choose to integrate works of art into their projects, despite the fact that the artwork can grant the projects great prestige.

On the municipal level today, there are no clear criteria with respect to the placement of sculpture in public spaces. Such a lack of guidelines leads to municipalities succumbing to the temptation to purchase "works of art" that are often nothing of the sort, but rather mass-produced molds sold by companies who have identified the niche in the market. Most of these works are nondescript copies, made of materials that require regular maintenance, painting, and repair.

- **Film**



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The Israeli Film Law was legislated after prolonged struggles to anchor and regulate government support for the country's film foundations. The Law controls budget resources for funds distribution, such that 50% of royalties owed to the State from both The Second Authority for Television and Radio and from cable and satellite broadcasting is channeled to support Israeli films. The law authorizes the Minister of Culture to ordinate regulations, and Film Law regulations determine which Israeli films are eligible for financial support.

The Film Law has regulated royalties for creators, the establishment of foundations for script development, productions, and distribution. This includes regulations that obligate cable networks and commercial channels to feature original productions and documentary films.

The year 1998 was the most difficult in the history of Israeli film in Israel. Only 36,000 viewers watched Israeli films in the theater. The central and most obvious reason was a 50% cutback in budgeting for film.

In 2001 the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) passed the Israeli Film Law. For the first time Israeli film had regulated budgeting—a fact that allowed for a calm industry, long-term prospects and planning, and the realization of a comprehensive and through rehabilitation plan.

In 2000 the number of Israeli film viewers was 140,000.

In 2003 the number of Israeli film viewers went up to 595,000!

In 2007 the number of Israeli film viewers was upwards of 1,300,000.

Over the course of 2007, Israeli films were invited to upwards of 200 festivals worldwide and collected over 100 international awards.

In the 7 years since the passing of the Film Law (2001-2007), the investment of public funds (Film Law funds) for all movies in the drama and documentary genres amounted to 307 million NIS (62 million €) total. This investment managed to actuate additional endowment from different resources (private investments, offshore investments, investments from broadcasting entities, and more) in the amount of 610 million NIS (124 million €). In the 7 years since the Film Law was passed (2001-2007), these investments prompted a million workdays across Israel for directors, producers, screenwriters, actors, extras, technical crews, set-designers, editors, musicians, and production professionals.

- **Law for the Protection of Literature and Authors**

The Law is based on the French model created under the leadership of JackLang. The Law limits the maximum revenue of marketing networks, and determines the rate of royalties for authors. The Law was created in order to prevent the kind of aggressive sales campaigns conducted by Israel's duopoly (Steimatzky-Tzomet Sfarim), in which 4 books were sold for 100 ₪ (20 €), thereby



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tampering with author royalties. The Law was enacted at the beginning of 2014 and had a great influence on the whole literature field as authors' income from royalties increased and so did publishing houses incomes and more and more independent bookstores were opened⁸. Nevertheless, only six months after her appointment, the Minister of Culture announced that she would cancel the law altogether as it was not consumer oriented and the prices of the books would rise, making books less reachable for the general public. A committee was appointed and although it suggested the extension of the law, the Minister recently decided to cancel it without suggesting an alternative. A petition to the Israeli High Court of Justice was filed on June 2018 by the Israeli Publishers Association.

Overall

Doubtlessly, the key to the prosperity of culture and of the creators themselves is in the arena of regulation and legislation—but Israel lacks legislation which deals with Culture and the status of Artists. It seems there is still a long road ahead.

4- INSTITUTIONS, CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS AND INFRASTRUCTURES

INSTITUTIONS, CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Non-Profit Organizations

Most of NGOs operate on minimal budgets, run by citizens interested in advancing certain issues related to the field.

Artist Unions

In the last decade, artist unions in Israel have had a major role in attempting to change the rules of the game. The most significant struggle was carried-out in the mid-2000s by joint forces within the creative field of the film industry. Dozens of artists took part in an adamant, uncompromising battle. Among other things, they put an end to a HOT cable network premiere in 2006, which involved police confrontation. They sat in executives' houses and protested outside the homes of television channel directors, attempting to create a new cultural ordinance regarding the allocation of royalties, and the regulation of broadcasting entities. Eventually, the protesting led to the legislation of the Israeli Film Law mentioned in this report.

⁸ According to Yaron Sadan, former head of the Israeli publishers association



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Additional artist unions, such as the professional union of visual-artists in Israel, the actors' union, and others, have begun demanding their rights to just conditions. In recent years the Ministry of Culture has recognized the importance and the contribution of the artist unions in promoting Culture and since 2017 has been funding the different unions which comply with the funding criteria.

The Israeli Social Justice Protest

In 2011, against the background of social justice protests around the world, a film student at the University of Tel-Aviv by the name of Daphni Leef led the largest social justice protest in the history of Israel. A million people took to the streets all over the country, set up tents, and conducted discourse on economic and social issues. The protest began as a demand for social justice, housing, education, and culture. The capitalist system was placed under a microscope, and the awareness that a small group of people in Israel controlled most of its money, power, and authority was revealed to all.

The ripple effect of the protest, which peaked in summer 2011, is felt today whenever marginalized coteries, among them groups of artists, aren't afraid to demand their rights in resistance to the institution.

The last six years have seen increased pressure applied by artist organizations, artists, and culture professionals, who are trying to work on various fronts toward more governmental support for culture, and for its definition as an elementary civic right.

The following are three examples of prominent initiatives for reform in the cultural arena:

- Upon Knesset member Ofer Shelah's appointment as the Chairman of the **Lobby for the Promotion of Culture and Art in Israel** (2013), a meeting was held involving all interested parties. Prior to it, meetings were held with the artist unions and government institutions and offices, with the goal of re-evaluating the subject. The lobby initiated collaborations between university departments who deal with the subject of cultural policy, law students, and artist organizations, with the goal of uncovering ways in which the lobby could influence decision makers at the Ministry of the Interior, Treasury, and Culture. I believe broadening the lobby in the Knesset to multiple-ministry cooperation ought to be considered.
- The establishment of the Cultural Institutions Forum (2009) was discovered as an efficient tool for the unification of forces from various cultural fields. The non-profit promotes the broadening of support for culture and arts institutions by: Increasing the education and culture budgets; encouraging collaboration with professional arts and culture related institutions in Israel and around the world; representing and consulting for departments of the



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cultural council, for the museum council, and for departments of culture administration; publishing material regarding the activities of culture and arts institutions; conducting conferences for developing knowledge and awareness regarding culture and arts; promoting coordination and cooperation between culture and arts institutions in Israel.

- The establishment of the Organization for the Rescue of Culture (2014), a team formed by the Cultural Institutions Forum along with the artist unions. They have joined forces with the Ministry of Culture in the struggle to expand the Israel's culture budget.

However since the appointment of the current Minister of Culture, Knesset member Miri Regev, a more aggressive approach has been taken towards artists and the general dialog has become vulgar and extreme, unfavoring artists who are not "grateful", "loyal", or do not share the right wing philosophy. Some very political decisions were taken with regards to the freedom of artists to perform and with regards to favoring performances in the areas of the Jewish Settlements which are not officially considered as part of the state of Israel. With that said, during the last three years of her service in the Ministry the Culture, the budget has increased, an initiative and funding of culture festivals in local municipalities all over the country has been promoted. Moreover, a fund for independent artists is being planned, social rights for performing artists has been legislated in the National Insurance Institute, among other promoted initiatives.

INFRASTRUCTURES

Introduction

In the infrastructure domain, as in many others, there is a troubling gap in the distribution of governmental investment in the construction of cultural institutions in Arab towns, as opposed to Jewish or mixed towns. Arab Israelis currently make-up 20% of the general population (15.4% of which reside in towns and villages defined as 'Arab'), and in the cultural infrastructure domain the percentage of investment in these areas is negligible. The Ministry of Culture is not responsible for building the actual infrastructure, but only assists with renovating existing structures. The local authorities are responsible for building structures meant for culture and art, but in light of the meager economic abilities of the majority of local authorities among Arab towns and villages, they are unable to invest resources in a field considered a luxury. Many cultural structures are built with funds from the National Payis Council for Arts and Culture, but my research uncovered that out of 18 culture and arts structures funded by the National Payis since 2001, not one has been built in an Arab region.



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During a Knesset debate conducted November 3 2014, the grim facts were uncovered: In towns and villages that are defined as Arab (in which 15.4% of Israeli population resides) almost no cultural establishments exist, not even movie theatres. At the conclusion of the debate the Chairman of the Committee, Knesset member Amram Mitzna, called for the Ministry of Culture to significantly increase the budget for Arab culture. “The classic Arab demand for culture is lower than that of Western culture, and therefore a compensative preference must be given to the classic Arabic culture in order to create and encourage its demand”. The committee also called for local Arab authorities to give preference to this issue with the help of significant aid and support with construction.

Performing Arts

Within Jewish regions, reasonable infrastructure exists for performing arts. In Arab and Bedouin regions, almost no proper structures can be found.

Museums and Visual Arts

There is a sufficient amount of museums and commercial galleries in Israel. Infrastructure for public galleries is lacking.

Libraries

After years of a severe crisis in this domain, today it can be said that there is reasonable infrastructure for libraries. The last year has seen a noticeable trend of mobile libraries, or small libraries in public domains—initiated by citizens themselves, who receive municipal backing.

Archives

The State of Israel is lacking when it comes to preservation of culture, the building of designated archives, and research institutions. Over the years an attempt was made to establish an entity for the preservation of museum acquisitions, which would function as a research institution—but it never materialized. There is also no established archive for music and theater that provides access to documentary materials. The Israeli Film Archive is the largest and most notable in Israel, and is responsible for collecting and preserving tens of thousands of films, both Israeli and foreign. This is the largest film archive in the Middle East and its assets include 30,000 screening prints of Israeli and foreign films, 20,000 video cassettes, and thousands of negatives of Israeli films. An architecture archive was established by Tzvi Elhayani as a private initiative, and was only listed as a non-profit in 2014.



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4.1 STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS MATRIX OF THE CULTURAL SECTOR

Stakeholder	Sectors' reaction to the current situation	Capacity and motivation to bring about change	Possible actions to address stakeholder interests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artists and creators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subsidizing their art with earnings from outside resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly motivated to generate change. Limited political influence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming a union that includes generators from every creative field in Israel. Establishing or adopting an administrative system that aids artists as they work with various institutions. Taking initiative to bring the subject to public attention.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural Institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Struggling to get by due to unrealistic budgets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly motivated to generate change. Limited political influence. Unable to form a joint coalition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deepening the cooperation of the cultural institutions union. Willingness to engage in uncompromising public resistance while maintaining mutual aid.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture Consumers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suffer from the unfulfilled potential of the field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A mostly passive audience, limited in its ability to generate change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Directly encouraging this public to band together and make a clear and powerful statement regarding their right to culture.



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General-public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimally exposed to creative and cultural mediums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is mostly unaware of the meaning of cultural prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness among the general-public regarding the importance of cultural development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to allot proper budgets for culture. • Tempted to engage in short-term planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partially dependent on government budgets. • A considerable amount of local authorities' experience economic deficits that do not allow them to properly address the cultural field, which is considered a luxury. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly addressing the different authorities with requests to increase the culture budgets. • Demanding aid for artists active in their field with discounted property tax, administrative support, and the establishment of artist workshops.

4.2 SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL SECTOR

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large quantity of artists and high quality of art. • The initial formation of a coalition comprised of artists, institution, and the Ministry of Culture. • Tail wind from the aftereffects of the Social Justice Protest of 2011. ▪ A state of diverse and multi-cultural population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of leadership and solidarity among creative workers at large. • Widespread public perception of creative mediums as culturally elitist. • In a country that claims an existential crisis in light of the current security situation, investment in culture is still perceived as a luxury by public majority. • The defence budget takes up close to a quarter of the national budget.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current Minister of Culture is mixing politics with culture, threatening artistic freedom.
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Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The critical social discourse regarding the tremendous investment in the Ministry of Defense over social resources is expanding and becoming legitimate. The current Minister of Culture acknowledges the importance of increasing the Cultural budget and is in fact successfully managing to increase the budget slowly, year after year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The continued Israeli-Palestinian conflict means a lesser chance of investment in culture. Culture consumption is directly and acutely impacted by periods of economic recession.

5- EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Elementary Schools

In the last decade, arts are gradually being pushed out of schools' core educational programs. Following parents' demand, schools include art programs mainly within the framework of credit completion or "extracurricular programs" funded by parents, and at times with the aid of the local education authority. The message the Ministry of Education is sending to students, parents, and teachers, exposes the dismissiveness the Ministry exercises toward the arts. I believe that removing the arts from the core curriculum will have long-term effects: lack of exposure to art will inhibit the students' creativity, will cause those who study art to avoid getting degrees in education or getting involved in arts education, and the gap between students who can and can't afford the extra programs will grow.

High Schools

From junior high through the completion of high school, students are decreasingly exposed to different mediums of art. At the Ministry of Education there is not even mention of such educational fields. Only in schools that include courses of study specifically targeted toward the arts will students be exposed to the subject. The result therefore, is that students interested in developing, getting educated, and experimenting with different mediums, must choose this type of school, which at times may be very far from their residence. I'll note once more,





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that many of the high schools that include art programs are partially privatized and the average tuition to attend is 1000 NIS (200 €) a month.

Institutions for Tertiary Certification Studies

These institutions, most of which are private (some receive partial public support), teach educational programs that range from 3 months to three years in length. The students may get a certificate or diploma, which is in most cases not recognized by the government.

Academic Educational Institutions

Over ten institutions grant a B.F.A or a B.Ed in arts within Israel. They include 2-8 different departments. There are only few institutions currently offering an M.F.A in arts.

Segmentation of Culture and Art Studies

Aside from programs that offer their graduates the professional and theoretical tools to work in the design and art mediums, there are also training programs in the fields of curating, art theory, cultural analysis, and recently, cultural policy.

Total Number of Graduates in Tertiary Studies

The total amount of graduates includes the aforementioned fields and reaches a few thousands graduates a year.

6- NON-PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND GENERAL AUDIENCE

The audience that attends the canonical museums and exhibition halls enjoys subsidized ticket prices according to the parameters of the Ministry of Culture. It is evident in the graphs below that the subsidies allotted for each visitor's ticket are significantly varied among the different cultural fields.

Ministry of Culture Statistics, 2015

Number of audience visits in Millions

Theater- 5.3 million

Museums- 4.3 million



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Music- 1.4 million
Dance- 0.5 million

Number of audience visits in Millions

Theater- 30.5 million Euro
Museums- 12.7 million Euro
Music- 15.5 million Euro
Dance- 10 million Euro

Government subsidy per visit in Euros

Theater- 5.7
Museums- 2.9
Music- 11
Dance- 20

Along with the demand for culture in the traditional exhibitions halls, theaters, dance and music halls, and museums, a parallel cultural demand has developed over the second half of the last decade in front of the screen. Reality television shows often externalize marginalized culture, legitimize it, and even push aside culture that is perceived as elitist. Aside from television, the internet has become a boundless space for the presentation and 'consumption' of art. The internet allows for an incredible degree of exposure for cultures from all over the world in every possible genre, and the responsibility for quality control and reviews in this medium is transferred from the experts (art critics and journalistic culture sections) to the distribution and recommendation of social networks, youtube, ratings, 'likes', and viewing statistics. The shifting trends in the demand for art due to use of the internet change the rules of the game, and it seems this chapter in history is being currently written and rapidly evolving. With the use of the internet, artists now upload presentations and documentation of their exhibitions. The segmentation of the demand for culture makes tracking it almost impossible, due to the decentralized nature of sites and blogs that feature and exhibit art.

The change in the mode of cultural demand causes a gradual shift in the control mechanisms, the funding, and the production of art, and even infiltrates the content of the art itself. A clear example is the whirlwind experienced by record companies in Israel and all over the world. The general-public began accessing music via file-share networks and at first, record companies focused on legally combating the phenomenon. Later on, this development led to the creation of different technological vehicles that allowed consumers to buy single songs, as opposed to the exclusive sales of full albums. The musicians themselves realized that posting their songs on youtube or the internet contributes to the exposure of



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their work, and accepted that their main income would be earned from live shows. A similar change is occurring in the literary field with the introduction of electronic books. It will be interesting to track changes in book sales among Israelis following the price decrease of electronic books, and in light of the restrictions on discounting books within their first year of publishing. It is possible that in the future access to content defined as 'fine art' and video art will be valued according viewing time or downloads due to changes in cultural consumption mechanisms. These developments create a more direct channel between artists themselves and culture consumers, and introduce the possibility of making revenue through online content demand.

7- CHALLENGES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHALLENGES

According to my evaluation, the primary challenges facing the different players who generate culture or influence cultural policy in Israel are as follows:

1. Creating a change of perception regarding the significance of experiencing arts and culture, and positioning these as a vital pillar in the formation of a multi-national Israeli identity, and a supportive foundation of a healthy society.
2. Bringing the lobby pertinent to all creators, cultural institutions, and the Ministry of Culture, to the attention of the Treasury and Knesset members at large.
3. Significantly increasing the culture budget, on both a national and municipal level.
4. Searching for existing models in the Mediterranean, Europe, the United States, and the rest of the world, that can shed light on how the state of culture in Israel can be improved upon.
5. Narrowing the gap between the general Jewish population and Israel's minorities including the Orthodox, Arab, Druze, Circassian, and Bedouin populations, by developing infrastructure and ongoing activity.
6. Making both canonical and fringe works of art accessible to the general-public.
7. Establishing an experiential method of art studies, and including it in the educational process from kindergarten through the completion of high school.



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8. Keeping the artistic freedom of creation as the highest principal in the Israeli cultural environment and preventing politization of the culture funding principles.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

If I look back on the past few decades of Israeli culture, it seems to me that we are now at an interesting stage, in which a 'ripening' can be felt among state leadership with regards to the subject. The beginnings of broader thought processes in relationship to the concept of culture can be detected, and the importance of creating the conditions necessary to its prosperity is starting to be acknowledged. The information included in this report may not inspire much optimism, but if we keep in mind that the State of Israel was established seventy years ago, it can be said that the State's approach toward investing in cultural resources is gradually improving.

The operative recommendations I would like to include are as follows:

Establishing an expansive statutory committee, which will examine a variety of economic and legal aspects that could potentially support the prosperity of arts and culture, while protecting the welfare of Israeli creators. The following subjects would be considered within this framework:

1. Evaluating the needs of different players in the cultural field.
2. Evaluating economic matters such as financial incentives for the purchase of art, tax and property tax abatements for art professionals and/or presenters, tax brackets and national insurance suited to artists, and re-evaluation of the Value Added Tax rate applied to works of art.
3. Evaluation of regulations over public and governmental institutions regarding the purchase of art and artistic performances, with consideration of fair pay for artists.
4. Evaluation of the purchasing, preservation, and research systems in the field of Israeli art.
5. Thorough examination of the ongoing budgets for different sub-populations that have been neglected over the years, and evaluation of existing infrastructure and prospective development in neglected areas.
6. Thorough investigation and assessment of the desired allocation for the cultural field.
7. Investigation of various models tested elsewhere around the world.
8. Research regarding the implications of the removal of art studies from the core curriculum in schools.