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## JORDAN COUNTRY REPORT

### OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION OF CULTURE

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report gives an overview of the situation of culture in Jordan. The report presents the history and context of political and cultural life in Jordan as a start point, and provides information about the workings of the public, private and independent (non-profit) sectors, concentrating mainly on the capital Amman. The report is subjective in that it takes the authors' background in the independent sector as its primary perspective.

The unusual state of arts and culture in Jordan is that there is quite a disparity between public practices and private/independent ones. The public sector has been enriched since the 80s with large institutions and nation-wide festivals, attracting big productions and large audience. However, culture became more synonymous with state policies serving patriotism and tradition in the last 2 decades.

The private and independent sectors however, only starting to a force in the cultural scene in the last decade or so, have provided a needed avenue for expression for a wider range of artists in all fields, as well as regional and international collaboration. Both fields have however suffered in the realm of funding. Since 2010, austerity measures caused cuts to public budgets as well as a decrease in foreign funding available for the arts in the country. Local funding is scarce and creates a huge obstacle for local artists, albeit also an opportunity for this sector to grow as local businessmen and activists are slowly realising its importance. The report concludes with a set of recommendations ranging from policy wide issues in public-private partnerships and education reform, to practical issues in production, artists and management development and sensitivities in the political realm.

## 1- CONTEXT AND INTRODUCTION



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The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a country that is relatively young. The spark of the Arab Revolt, coming from the South, overthrew the Ottoman rule in 1916, and led to the establishment of the Emirate of Trans-Jordan in 1921. It installed one of the sons of the revolt as the emir of the nascent state, and fell under a British mandate. Acquiring complete independence from the British only in 1946, and announced as a Kingdom, the monarchy has struggled in the face of the economic and political hardships of the last and current centuries. The early years of Amman the capital are often described as a festival of ethnicities, reflecting the diverse backgrounds of its early inhabitants; merchants and migrants from Damascus, Nablus, circassians, and others. A continuous influx of refugees has also drastically changed the topography and population structures of the country starting from 1948. Large numbers of Palestinians came in in 1948, 1967, and in 1990 accompanied by waves of Iraqis who continued to transit or settle in the country due to the Gulf wars. In addition, the Syrian crisis of the last few years has forced hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees to flee to Jordan; many settling in refugee camps but more settling in urban centres. In November 2017, 79% of 650,000 UNHCR Jordan registered Syrian refugees in Jordan were living outside the camp settings. The number of these registered refugees is equivalent to 7% of Jordan's population.<sup>1</sup> Several consensus of population in Jordan registered the following numbers: 586 thousands in 1952, 900 thousands in 1961, 2133 thousands in 1979, 4139 thousands in 1994, 5597 thousands in 2004, 9559 thousands in 2015, and 10053 thousands in 2017.<sup>2</sup> Questions of identity and geography are continuously battled in the desert and resource-short kingdom. Looking at "culture" from this perspective, an underlying yet unspoken questions persists: "Who is ultimately Jordanian?" When we speak about public cultural policy, which "culture" is it trying to define or propel? How does this identity crisis permeate in cultural activities? What support is available and to which scope or culture?

The political context in Jordan and its surroundings is extremely unstable; to the East it is neighboured by Palestine, occupied by Israel, and it is where a large segment of Jordan's population hails from, putting the majority of Jordanians at odds with the Peace Treaty Jordan signed with Israel in 1994. In the north, there is a civil war in Syria, where borders are permeated by refugees pouring into the country and weapons and fighters pouring out. To the West lies Iraq that has been suffering under occupation and constant bombing for the last decade and more. From 2014, Jordan's air force has taken part in the international coalition to defeat The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

<sup>1</sup> Nicola Giordano, Katherine Dunlop, Tamar Gabay and Deepak Sardival, Evaluation Synthesis of UNHCR's Cash Based Interventions In Jordan, UNHCR, December 2017, p8.

<sup>2</sup> Table 2.1 Population of the Kingdom by Sex According to the 1952, 1961, 1979, 1994, 2015 and 2017 Censuses, and Estimated Population for Some Selected Years (In 000), Department of Statistics, Jordan.  
[http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/DataBank/Population\\_Estimares/2017/PopulationEstimates.pdf](http://dosweb.dos.gov.jo/DataBank/Population_Estimares/2017/PopulationEstimates.pdf)



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To protect itself from these regional woes, Jordan has continuously pushed the 'safety and security' agenda as its top priority. This has led to an increasing dependence on foreign aid to keep the country afloat. Together with other factors such as economic challenges brought on by neo-liberal agendas coupled with the country's lack of natural resources to sustain itself and make-shift democratic, inefficient political system, these issues have led to numerous problems that have caused a decline in public agency: lack of information and transparency from government authorities, several loans from IMF leading to increase in the national debt, privatization, and corruption, as well as declining levels of public education, increasing conservatism and class divisions, etc. Looking at this unfortunate picture, it is not difficult to discern that arts and culture are not a priority for the state, and it is important to keep this in mind when reading this report or using it as a reference. Nuances pertaining to these facts will be presented in the sections below, particularly when it comes to state cultural policy and funding.

In addition, the economic factor in the country unfolds in several ways. Jordan, due to its poor natural resources, invested heavily in higher education and produced a large number of highly skilled workers such as doctors and engineers. Other fields across the board from craftsmanship to social sciences and arts are generally not as well desired and are relatively small. In terms of cultural production, artistic careers are either a choice for the privileged or a dissent from while continuing to live in impoverished conditions. However, and although there is not yet a viable economy of the arts, the creative industries and services are on the rise, perhaps partly due to the encouragement of entrepreneurship and small-businesses in the country.

This report will attempt to outline cultural policy and infrastructure for the public, private and not-for-profit (independent) cultural sectors, and highlight the factors that make the cultural sector a very challenging one in Jordan.

In the early stages of formation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, cultural production naturally concentrated on two crucial elements: deepening the people's connection to the land, and increasing awareness of the dangers of the neighbouring Israeli occupation.<sup>3</sup> Through the former, it was important for the state to create a strong connection between the inhabitants of the land and their new borders (previously non-existent during the Ottoman rule), thus ensuring loyalty to the country and to the ruling Hashemites. As for the latter, the Palestinian question is a tragedy that continuously affected Jordan. Refugees and their hardships was an ever-relevant theme in cultural production since many of them became the early urban inhabitants of the country. During the period of Al-Naksa in 1967, most cultural production of the time had an over-

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<sup>3</sup> Cultural Policy in Jordan, Hani Al-Amad, published by UNESCO in 1981.



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arching nationalistic tone. Solidarity to the Palestinian cause and resistance to the Israeli occupation became central themes. Meanwhile, the Kingdom was going through extensive processes of modernization, institutional building, and 'national' solidarity projects.

During the reign of King Hussein (1953–1999), great weight was also placed on the ideals of Arabism, Arab culture and Islamic heritage and civilization. These ideologies translated into compulsory education policies and a push for the expansion and concentration on higher education in the country.<sup>4</sup> The period of the 70s and 80s saw many cultural infrastructures set up in as well as the rise of the populist nationalist music and folkloric practices (e.g. extending electricity to the rural areas through a tax of 1 fils (JD 0.001) / Kilowatt consumption on all electricity bills, since 1977). These ideals were condensed in the drafting of 1990 National Charter in which culture was defined within an Islamic and Arab culture and ideology, and where cultural and developmental plans set out guidelines to be followed; adhering to the Arabic language, protecting and popularising national cultural heritage through libraries, information centres, theatres, exhibitions and museums etc.

The country witnessed a significant shift since the reign of King Abdullah II (1999–). An end to political troubles around Jordan was nowhere to be seen, and refugees continued to pour into the country due to the second Gulf War. Economic hardships defined the new millennium, and the country moved towards privatisation of public infrastructures and implementing neo-liberal economic policies. The gap created by the brain drain to the Gulf of the 70s was substituted by importing migrant labourers from Egypt (since the 70s) and Asia. Public debt was increasing (The net public debt outstanding in 2017 reached 88.2% of 2017 estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP))<sup>5</sup>, and the country relied more and more on foreign aid.

As the country battles for its existence, much attention of the state and grant-making NGOs is poured into large-scale programs for relief, poverty reduction, educational and developmental purposes. Naturally, cultural and artistic production moved to the sidelines for state policy-makers and cultural practices have become more centralised in the capital with many areas around the country being unserved by Amman's art scene. To some extent, foreign donors filled some of these gaps through their own arts and culture programs. However, it was the independent sector<sup>6</sup> in the capital that started to rise and consciously create alternatives for state policy. After the so-called Arab Spring, coupled with the arrival of a new wave of creatives from neighbouring Syria, a new

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Public Debt Quarterly Report, First Quarter 2017, Ministry of Finance – Public Debt Department, Jordan, p2. <http://www.mof.gov.jo>

<sup>6</sup> The Independent sector here includes: non-government affiliated cultural spaces, private galleries and endowments, small art spaces and artist-run initiatives.



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generation of artists have been pushing the boundaries of freedom of expression in the country. The independent cultural scene is also more aware of the political nature of its operation, whether through more concentrated efforts of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign against Israel, or through greater awareness of the need for local support for it to achieve change in society. Amman became one of the only Arab capitals where Arab and international artists can meet with fairly few restrictions, and the capital is looking to the region for increased collaboration and inspiration.

## 2- GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND GOVERNANCE

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

There are two somewhat contrasting definitions of culture in Jordan. The first stems from the public sector that designates the definition of culture within the parameters of Arabic language and Islamic traditions. It outlines these in reference to local beliefs, customs and traditions, and language, using creative forms of literature and the arts as a medium for expression that serve to strengthen public awareness in democracy, equality, transparency and good work ethics as well as human rights, freedom of speech -particularly in media- and the support of youth.<sup>7</sup> From this definition, one can deduce that the public sector considers cultural production as a tool to serve, maintain and disseminate social and geographical heritages, and does not consider autonomous creative production as the primary intention. On the other hand, the private, independent, non-profit sectors paint a different picture of culture, them being interested in creative production in different mediums, serving the artist as a professional worker who contributes to the production of knowledge in society, and thus 'de-facto' defining culture and its production as a natural, elemental product of communities that is an entity in its own right and does not necessarily serve a pre-prescribed goal or aim.

Fundamentally, the definition of culture can be traced back to its meanings in language as well as in cultural forms. In the Arabic language, the term *thaqafa*, which can be translated as *culture*, refers to a social framework, and so is related to the tradition, language, ethics and heritage of Arab and Islamic contexts. The word *fann*, which translates to *art*, encompasses creative forms of production in various mediums. Therefore, when looking into the field of culture in the Arab world, the scope of the investigation will inevitably include the social traditions and language framed within Islamic and Arab culture. Considering the public sector has a wider audience base throughout the country, the dissemination of culture is generally understood to be within the definitions of the state, perhaps in slight contrast to cultural organisations working in the non-profit, independent or

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<sup>7</sup> Culture Policy 2006, Published by the Ministry of Culture, 2006. - 5 -



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sectors that adopt a more universal or international English and modern definition, where culture is interpreted to be the creative forms of production of any people.

On a broad policy level, Jordan adopts the *mécénat* or guardianship cultural policy model, where royal patronage heavily endorses arts and culture in both its founding and infrastructural setup as well as public dissemination. This model is often present in monarchies, and involves members of Royal or government figures who play a large role in fostering and establishing cultural institutions in the public sector, as well as supporting and promoting their events. Up until the mid 1980's the guardianship model played a key role in establishing large state institutions and in the development of different creative spheres around the country. However, by the beginning of the nineties, the guardianship model gradually grew to where culture was instrumentalised to enforce national agendas, supporting the objectives of the State Security Agency. This move was strengthened with changes in the leadership of the country when King Hussein passed on the throne to his son, King Abdullah II, who moved the country towards open market and neo-liberal economic policies, and whose reign was clouded with regional political turmoil that we are witnessing until the current day. Today, (mainstream) culture is (or continues to be) used as a tool to emphasise traditions and promote nationalist subjects under the monarchy's rein. This can be seen in the type of productions that are supported and circulated by the government or in the programs and programmers of Jordan TV. A prime example in recent times is the theatre/dance production 'Petra Rocks' which is based on the historical Nabatean site of Petra, arguably the first large stage production supported by the public sector of that scale<sup>8</sup> to go on international tours. Had the piece not been centred on a historical national treasure it is questionable whether such a production would have had access to public money. Similarly, patriotic music productions get more than its fair share of support and play time on the airwaves.

Counter to government strategy of using culture to support the monarchy and state security agendas, is the independent sector; organisations, individuals, informal collectives that offer alternative structures for the production and dissemination of cultural goods, supporting creative and artistic freedom in their subject matter and forms of work. A critical difference between the two sectors however lies in their audience base. Where public sector organisations have access to a relatively wider audience through its large network of infrastructures and centres throughout Jordan that run popular mainstream programs, the independent and private sectors have a smaller niche audience group, and more often than not, present their programs in more-or-less geographically controlled parts of the capital city - Amman. It is also important to note that the

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<sup>8</sup> Yasmin Khan, Amman's West Side Story, Ibraaz, 30 May 2013. <http://www.ibraaz.org/essays/65>



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size of the space offered for independent initiatives is far smaller compared to the size of the spaces that could serve and host the state-related cultural events (e.g. Jerash Festival takes over the full site of the Roman city, its open amphitheatre can take in 5000 spectators).<sup>9</sup>

## GOVERNANCE

The early years of cultural institutionalization in Jordan started in 1966 with the establishment of the Directorate of Culture and Arts that was administered by the Ministry of Culture, Media and Archaeology until 1976. Then it became part of the Ministry of Culture and Youth between 1976 and 1984, and since then a Ministry of Culture. It continues to publicise Jordanian culture and heritage, organising activities such as seminars and festivals, and generally managing organisations or centres that come under its jurisdiction. These centres are either extensions of the Ministry of Culture, such as the several 'houses of culture' run by the Ministry itself, or non-profit organisations operating in the field of culture that are registered with the Ministry. In the years before 1976, creative production was also disseminated through the University of Jordan (est. 1962), a public institution that was and remains heavily invested in publishing, and that presented activities in theatre, visual arts and performance. The interest in publishing continues to be a prominent and important focus of the Ministry of Culture. The interest is present also in the Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) that presents and supports culture through its own internal programs and its network of libraries that carry out cultural and education-related activities. This invested interest in literature and printing can further be seen as an indication of the strong link between 'culture' and the Arabic language; a key element of localised culture. From these we may be able to understand the strong support of publishing, in a context where reading non-news related print media is on the decline, and an increase in digital reading sources among youth in particular is on the rise. Nevertheless, the importance of the Arabic language and the creative forms related to it such as poetry and literature can be connected to a strong emphasis on publishing.

The scope of the work of the Ministry is outlined as follows: "The Ministry of culture is the official body directly responsible for culture and for the drawing up of policies, and implementing them in cooperation and coordination with other related organisations, in accordance with the country's laws and regulations".<sup>10</sup> The objectives of the Ministry of Culture according to the law no 36 of 2006 are stated as the following:

- Create and facilitate a good environment for cultural production.
- Support culture and fine arts, and their appreciation.

<sup>9</sup> Website of Ministry of Culture. <http://www.culture.gov.jo/node/31673>

<sup>10</sup> Lina Khamis, "Aspects of Cultural Policy in Jordan", University of Exeter, PhD, 1998.



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- Solidify the relationship between local, regional and international cultural bodies.
- Develop and disseminate the Jordanian citizen's creativity in different fields.
- Develop an all-encompassing national culture throughout the kingdom that emphasises its Jordanian, Arab, Islamic, and humanitarian identities and culture.<sup>11</sup>

Aside from the last item in the above list of objectives, the description of the goals and objectives of the Ministry of Culture are vague and lack clarity in defining what terms like 'fines arts' actually mean, or how they would achieve objectives such as "support", "appreciation" and "facilitate a good environment". More importantly, there is no mention of the relation of these objectives to a coherent strategy for the application of these goals. According to voices on the web site of the MOC, a cultural strategy, if there was one, must be drafted in partnerships between the following Ministries: Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Higher Council for Youth, Ministry of Islamic Affairs, and The National Army Forces<sup>12</sup>. The Ministry's Development Plan 2017–2019 prioritizes the employment of culture to counter radicalism by means of breeding a multi-cultural environment that respects others' creativity and by expanding the work of cultural institutions from the elite to the broader social networks. Among its programs are prizes for "Best Reader" and "The Culture of Tolerance and Moderation", and a series of films and publications as well as a website targeting the youth.<sup>13</sup> In the same light, more investment is directed towards the conservation of intangible (national) cultural heritage.

This long list of collaborators could indicate that the scope of the Ministry is not specific, but is an element that supports and fits into existent programs related to other Ministries. This so-called collaboration also indicates that state and security control would have an influence through the agenda and involvement of the Army Forces. Simultaneously, all non-profit organisations under the Ministry's jurisdiction are also assigned representatives from these Ministries to monitor their activities<sup>14</sup>. Aside from not having a clear, well-articulated policy, where vague clauses leave room for interpretation of the appointed Minister of Culture, the fact that the Ministry must coordinate with several other ministries and bodies points to the winded routes that cultural policy ideas have to go through, and perhaps adding more limits to the scope of who it serves of artists or audiences. Although this cross-cutting approach could have been used as a model for

<sup>11</sup> Samah Hijawi, Cultural Policy Research – update 2014, Al Mawred Al Thaqafy, Translation from Arabic by the author from [http://www.lob.gov.jo/ui/laws/search\\_no.jsp?no=3&year=2003](http://www.lob.gov.jo/ui/laws/search_no.jsp?no=3&year=2003)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.culture.gov.jo/node/24831>

<sup>13</sup> Annual Book 2016, Ministry of Culture, Jordan.

[http://www.culture.gov.jo/sites/default/files/annual\\_book\\_2016.pdf](http://www.culture.gov.jo/sites/default/files/annual_book_2016.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.culture.gov.jo/node/25597>



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collaboration across public sector organisations, the reality is that without any clear strategies this kind of 'collaboration' only translates to more bureaucratic practices. Between the absence of a policy and strategy, and its instrumentalisation for government agendas, culture and arts 'for their own sake' in Jordan are arguably not a priority and are in a dire state of decline. This has been particularly obvious since 2011 with the constant change of laws and governments, and the decline of freedom of expression under the pretence of the protection of national security in light of the on-going distress in the region and rise of political Islam.

Otherwise, the Ministry of Culture maintains a hierarchal system and administrates its budget for a set of programs and activities. In 2016, there were 629 cultural centres throughout the country registered through the Ministry.<sup>15</sup> These centres may be an extension of the Ministry in cities across the country, or registered independent, non-profit cultural organisations or groups working in the field of cultural production and dissemination. Management of the independently registered cooperative and non-profits is strictly maintained through assigned personnel from the Ministry of Culture to monitor activities and budgets of these organisations, and any changes in these two elements need to be approved by the Ministry. The Ministry annual report from 2016 shows that it processed 7700 financial transactions totalling to 7.647 million Dinars, 278 thousand dinars of which were annual support for cultural institutions, and 1.4 million dinars were for support and empowerment of cultural and creative projects and activities.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, the law stipulates that any international funding received by these registered organisations must be declared to and approved by the Prime Minister's office.<sup>17</sup>

Simultaneously, since the mid-nineties, the private/independent non-profit sector slowly started to appear, and until the recent modification in the non-profit companies' law in 2010, these organisations were free to work and source their funds without the government's interference. But due to the large amount of foreign funds available in Jordan since the early nineties, managed through the non-profit and NGO sectors, as well as the ease in laws pertaining to the registration and administration of such bodies, the government changed the law so that only organisations working in health, micro-finance and education were allowed to register as non-profit organisations. In 2008 the status of non-profits in all sectors of development and culture were automatically converted to cooperatives, and assigned to their respective ministries. Reporting to ministries threatens the autonomy of the independent cultural sector, and means that their activities and funds would be monitored and controlled by the ministries

<sup>15</sup> Annual Book 2016, Ministry of Culture, Jordan, p41.

[http://www.culture.gov.jo/sites/default/files/annual\\_book\\_2016.pdf](http://www.culture.gov.jo/sites/default/files/annual_book_2016.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p35.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.culture.gov.jo/node/25597>



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they are registered within. To avoid such interventions, some organisations opted to change their status to for-profit companies, or changed their scope of work to include education for example, a specialization that was also not easily granted. Other than the locally registered governmental and NGO organisations, foreign cultural centres and embassy cultural attachés including the French Institute, Goethe, the British Council, the European Union office and EUNIC also program cultural events. These all manage their own programs including capacity building projects and presentation of artists from their respective countries, festivals in partnership with local initiatives, organisations and government bodies, and small funds allocated for the support of independent projects. Mostly, these organisations like to frame their local activities as partnership and not support. These do contribute to bringing a diversity of events and cultural workers to Jordan.

Accessing information about the detailed expenses of the Ministry of Culture is usually done through the documents published by the General Budget Department. The available information indicates that the budget of the Ministry of Culture in 2018 was 8.187 million Jordanian Dinars, which is divided into three spending sections; 21.9 % on salaries and running costs, 11.7% on the Royal Cultural Centre (one of the Ministry's 'houses of culture'), and the remaining 66.4% on cultural development, programming and collaborations with other events or organisations.<sup>18</sup> In 2018, the budget allocated to cultural development included the Jerash Festival, a longstanding (non profit) annual festival that started in 1981, mainly supported by the Ministry with 900 thousand Jordanian Dinars. In 2015, the Minister of Culture allowed that the festival receives funds and support from local institutions. It is the largest program supported by the Ministry of Culture. The other major entity that gets a bulk fund of 960 thousand Jordanian Dinars from the Ministry is the Royal Cultural Centre; established in 1983, the institution hosts a variety of cultural events, including some of the Arab League Summits organized in Amman. Historically, the Ministry of Culture's budget was almost double than what it is now— a striking reduction came in 2008 when funds were dropped when Jordan recorded a Government Budget deficit record low of -8.90 percent of GDP in 2009.<sup>19</sup> The cuts also touched institutions like the Jordan Centre for Information, which was established in 2004 to replace the cancelled Ministry of Information, and to serve as the official source on the government activities, conduct surveys and facilitate the work of the press agencies. The centre was cancelled in 2008. Within the national budgets is also a separate budget for the Department of the National Library (est. 1977) estimated at 982 thousand Jordanian Dinars in 2018. This institution

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Culture Budget for 2018, General Budget Department.  
<http://www.gbd.gov.jo/GBD/ar/Budget/Ministries/%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%A9-2018>

<sup>19</sup> Jordan Government Budget, Trading Economics website 1990-2018.  
<https://tradingeconomics.com/jordan/government-budget>



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acquires national cultural production, preserves related documents, issues Jordan's national bibliography, and allow access to researchers.

### 3- LEGISLATION AND FUNDING

#### LEGISLATION

The National Charter of 1991 defines culture as local folklore and cultural identity within the framework of Arabic language.<sup>20</sup> It mentions that cultural heritage as well as the attainments of all artists and thinkers should be preserved through documentation and disseminated in databases, libraries, theatres and exhibitions, but emphasises that any such productions should be “without detriment to Arab and Islamic values”.<sup>21</sup> As for the Constitution, there is no mention of culture, heritage, cultural rights, creativity or copyrights. Only freedom of expression, education and language are mentioned.

#### LABOUR LAWS

Independently working cultural producers in theatre, dance, and cinema are legally represented by the Union of Artists. The Union of Architects represent professionals in the field of Architecture and Urban design and both offer registered members social security and health insurance within a legal framework. Writers and visual artists are represented by their respective associations: The Artists Association and the Writers Association. Neither of these offers legal protection, social security or health insurance to their members. Members are accepted through an application process and must prove experience in their field and submit samples of work in order to get accepted by a selection committee. The annual membership fee for the Plastic Artists Association in 2018 was JD 24 per year, with an average annual membership basis of 350 artists.<sup>22</sup> The Artist Association offers artists opportunities for the presentation of their works in local events or international participation through government networks.

#### INCOME TAX

For all Jordanian citizens, income taxes start at 7% for those earning over 14,000 JD per year, while those earning under 12,000JD per year are exempt from it.<sup>23</sup> Tax laws for arts and culture are vague and are grouped within the section on goods and services that are exempted from taxation. Article (22) of the Income Tax Law of 1995 states that:

“The following goods and services imported, or locally purchased, have a zero-tax rating: Mosques, churches, orphanages, elderly people and handicapped

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/charter-national.html>

<sup>21</sup> Samah Hijawi, Cultural Policy Research – update 2014, Al Mawred Al Thaqafy

<sup>22</sup> Info provided Mr. Ghazi Inaim, the previous director of the Association, in a phone call on 12 June 2018.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.istd.gov.jo/ISTD/Arabic/Legislations/LatestLaws/>



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centres, sport and cultural clubs (which may translate from Arabic to English to mean cultural centres), and individuals of special needs<sup>24</sup>"

Article (7) of the same law states:

"(a) The following shall be fully exempted from Income Tax:

- The income of Trade Unions accrued from business not for the purpose of profits.
- The income of cooperative societies derived from a business not for profit purposes.
- The income of any religious, charitable, educational, cultural, sport and health institutions of a public nature accrued from income not for profit purposes as well as income of charitable (trusts) Waqfs, and the incomes of the Orphanage investments.

(b) Any person is permitted to deduct from his taxable income amounts paid in The Kingdom as a donation or contribution to a charitable or humanitarian, scientific, cultural or sport cause, if such cause has been recognised by the Council of Ministers provided that deductible amounts under the provisions of this law do not exceed one quarter of the taxable income before making this deduction and after making the deduction provided for in Para (A) of this article."

### **COPYRIGHT PROVISIONS**

Although rarely implemented, there are laws in Jordan to protect copyrights in arts and culture. In addition, clauses such as "The use of a work of art shall not be considered as infringement of rights when such use occurs within a private family gathering or at an educational, cultural or social institution, provided that the source is mentioned" that are within the laws listed below, are vague and leave much for the personal interpretation of a judge in case of a court ruling for example.

Copyright laws apply on the following:

- Protection of literary collections and/or artistic works, such as encyclopaedias, anthologies, and data compilations - whether in machine-readable (digital) or other form.
- A performer is granted the right of prohibiting third parties from the documentation of live performances, or their reproduction by any means without his prior consent.
- The protection period of the rights of performers and producers of phonograms is 50 years as of the date of the production of the performance. The protection period of radio and television broadcasts stands at a lesser time period of 20 years.
- The financial rights of an author over his/her written works are for a period of 50 years after his/her death, or death of the last surviving co-author. The rights

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.ssc.gov.jo/english>



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for the performative or sound works, as well as the cinematic and tv productions, are for 50 years from the first year of their production. Software rights are protected under the same laws through the protection of computer programs, whether in source or object code. The copyright protection office staff shall be able, under the pertinent law, to exercise the powers of judicial police officers in the implementation of the provisions of the law, and shall have the power to inspect, seize, and destroy pirated copies, and to close down the business concern carrying out the infringement. The maximum penalty for copyright infringement has been raised to imprisonment for a period between 3 months and one year, and a fine ranging from JD 1,000.00 to JD 6,000.00<sup>25</sup> (US\$ 1,400.00 to US\$ 8,400.00), or both penalties. Unfortunately, the government has not been able to exercise control over copyrights and infringement happens on many levels. Accessibility to pirated copies of movies, music and computer software is very widespread and they are openly sold and distributed throughout the country. The problem with applying the law here is that the penalty is substantially low, while the profit margins of these businesses are so lucrative that they can afford to pay the due fines even if issued several times a year. The law only acknowledges legal protection to any kind of original work in literature, art and science regardless of the value or purpose of the work.

### **DATA PROTECTION LAWS**

Privacy in Jordan, as in many other Arab states, is seen as a cultural value and is not yet enshrined in any laws or in the Constitution.<sup>26</sup> Jordan has no data protection or privacy laws, however, concern for both of these areas are growing as Internet penetration and e-Commerce possibilities grow and with recent efforts from the government to start enforcement. Nevertheless, one can patent materials and creations at the National Library, and these are protected by law no (22) issued in 1992. The law acknowledges creations by artists and writers and includes programming, theatre, speeches and seminars, music compositions / production, architecture, maps and illustrations.<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, within educational institutions, professors are not aware of the implications of piracy, and may even engage plagiarism themselves, indicating a very low awareness and understanding of the importance of data protection. It is commonly known for example that professors in public universities rarely issue reading lists for books anymore, but rather encourage the students to make their own photocopies as study materials.

### **LANGUAGE LAWS**

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<sup>25</sup> Law No. 22 of 1992 on the Protection of Copyright and its Amendments, article 52.

<http://www.nl.gov.jo/Documents/Copyright-Law-Ar.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Privacy and Human Rights Report 2006, EPIC. <http://www.worldlii.org/int/journals/EPICPrivHR/2006/PHR2006-The-4.html>

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.lob.gov.jo/ui/laws/search\\_no.jsp?year=1993&no=10](http://www.lob.gov.jo/ui/laws/search_no.jsp?year=1993&no=10)



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The Arabic Language Protection Law was issued in 2015, and stipulates that all governmental, educational, public and private, associations, clubs, civil society institutions, as well as private and public companies use Arabic language in their names, publications, paper works and indices. It also includes that all local and imported products should bare info on their products in Arabic, and that the commercial advertisements, subtitling of films, names of streets, issued certificates, conducted research, and language of conferences should be in Arabic. So is teaching in schools and in contracts. The Jordan Academy of Arabic (est. 1923) regulates the use of the Arabic language, keeping it up to date with its definitions in arts, sciences and literature. It also attempts to maintain the language's integrity and updates through the publication of dictionaries in the Arabic Language for use as a source of reference. These are achieved through research, writing and publication, translation of the 'wonders of the world'<sup>28</sup> and distribution of these publications, through publishing new terminologies in all possible means of communication. Finally, since 1978, the academy publishes a periodical as another way to monitor and update Arabic language.

#### 4- INSTITUTIONS, CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS AND INFRASTRUCTURES

##### INSTITUTIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Amman has developed its independent and private cultural sector over the last three decades.

In the visual arts, one of the independent institutions established and expanding in Amman is Darat al Funun, a private institution that has hosts countless contemporary Arab art exhibitions and supports the exposure of new forms of arts such as video and installation to the Jordanian public. The Darat also offers a fellowship for scholars, a residency and a publishing program. In the performing arts sector, Al-Balad Theatre (est. 2002), which used to be one of the oldest cinema houses in Amman, was one of only a handful of independently run theatres in the city and regularly puts on performances and festivals for alternative music, contemporary theatre, and the burgeoning genre of storytelling. In 2018, the theatre lost its case against the new owners of the building and thus had to evacuate their premises. They are now moving to another old cinema space and working on renovating it as their new headquarters.

Private galleries such as Dar Al-Anda, Nabad Gallery, Wadi Finan For Arts (so far the only Jordanian gallery that presents in a booth in Art Dubai), and Jacaranda among several others have been dotting the city's artistic map with photo, print and illustration exhibitions.

<sup>28</sup> A term used within descriptive text of the Language law referring to the need for translating the important texts about the wonders of the world.



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A new art foundation was launched in 2017 under the name Mahera and Mohammad Abu Ghazaleh Foundation. Parallel to art exhibitions, the foundation aims to provide a school program for the arts in Amman.

Due to their institutional structure, one that consists of standard hierarchies, team structures and management/curatorial approaches, most of the independent organisations mentioned above are characterised by having dedicated audience base and a strong programmatic nature that runs throughout the year. Some of these organisations produce yearly festivals in performance, music and film.

Civil Society organisations that operate cultural programs are relatively few, whereas many organisations and NGOs exist in the field of development and capacity building. One notable example however is Ruwwad, started by a philanthropist. It runs educational and cultural programs for the underprivileged youth of Jabal Al-Natheef in east Amman and has recently branched off to Egypt and Lebanon. Among their extended projects is Beit Silsal, a project for empowering intellectually challenged youth who live under disadvantaged circumstances in Jabal Al-Natheef.

On the other end of the spectrum, Amman has also seen a rise in smaller, artist-run collectives and spaces. These informal art structures offer alternative avenues for arts production and dissemination that are capable of fulfilling unmet communal needs and addressing issues of social and political importance. Makan Art Space, established in 2003, was at the forefront of this movement and created a space for artistic experimentation in the capital until it closed its premises in 2015. Other initiatives include The Studio, Jadal, I Learn initiative, Sijal Institute (for teaching Arabic language and culture), and very recently, Platform dedicated to design culture and trainings. Many of these independent, temporal projects have succeeded in breaking the traditional rhythm characteristic of institutional arts-structures and programming in Jordan. Some initiatives do not base their work in a space, and move between events; examples of this include Taghmees (critically reflects on the fabric of culture and social justice while eating together), Zikra Initiative (works on finding local skills in underprivileged villages and exchange services for other services or money), and For9a.com (a website for scholarships and internships).

There is also Studio-X Amman which is a regional platform for experimental design and research run by Columbia GSAPP and the Columbia Global Centers in Amman.

Many of the larger institutions, if not privately funded, find their support through regional or international grant programs or institutions. Due to their independence from the state, they can raise critical issues through art that are away from the typical nationalist or folkloric approach. They are however still bound by the funding politics of their donors.



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European cultural organisations such as Goethe Institut, British Council and Institut Français have been contributing to the arts and culture field in Jordan considerably over the years, by funding production of projects or festivals and by supporting Europeans exchange and capacity building workshops.

As an example, the French Cultural Centre, or Institut Français, has been running the Franco Arab film festival for the past 22 editions in Amman. In 2010, they also launched the “Images Festival” that showcases local and international photography, and invites leading French photographers to give workshops in Jordan. The festival also links with the “Rencontres d'Arles” festival that chooses Jordanian photographers to exhibit at the Night of the Year event in Arles through a Jordanian screen. Institut Français also contributes to the EU Film Festival that takes place every year in Jordan.

Several of the European cultural organisations recently formed European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) cluster. The cluster initiated its work in Jordan by launching the ‘Creative Jordan’ platform that mapped out the creative industries and attempts to forge links between the private sector and the creative field. The cluster also aims to work on policy issues and support for culture in Jordan. One of their activities was to compile the many art and culture spaces of Jabal Al-Weibdeh onto a single map that is now installed on many of the neighbourhood’s street corners. To launch the map, they initiated a series of guided walks for the general public and brought in targeted groups such as school children in large numbers to explore the area.

Mapping cultural initiatives in Jordan is among the important efforts invested in the art scene. In 2016, an exhibition of the cultural initiatives was organized at the Hangar under the title “About Culture in Jordan”, organized by an independent group of artists. It brought together over 50 cultural initiatives of different sizes, and over the course of three days, it allowed the public to come and meet in person the founders and some of the products of these initiatives.

In 2017, StudioX and CLUSTER — Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research hosted several workshops on creating an online catalogue of personal and private collections. The Public Interlibrary Online Technology project (PILOT) is a shared Arabic-English cataloguing platform for small, specialized collections housed at civil society organizations, professional practices or private collections, and aims at developing a framework to open private collections on art, architecture, urbanism, humanities and social sciences.

The two institutions also organized at Sijal Institute two workshops on translating architectural and art terms between English and Arabic. This Critical Arabic Urban Lexicon Project aim is to produce, compile and offer new terms and terminologies by means of looking at the language and elements that constitute them.



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There are also other institutions like the EU funded programme MedCulture (e.g. SouthMed CV supported four projects in 2017), Foundation for the Future, Anna Lindh Foundation, USAID (e.g. offers BADIR fellowship which equip young Jordanian leaders with knowledge and skills), the European Commission, and Al Mawred Al Thaqafy that run grant programs in Jordan. Since 2013, Drosos Foundation supports projects that promotes creative activities for young people such as film or theatre, and income generation and economic empowerment projects. Besides Amman, the foundation extends its support to projects in Mafraq (close to Syrian borders and house of Al Zaatari camp for Syrian refugees), Irbid, (also hosts large numbers of refugees), the southern part of the Jordan Valley and the local communities in Petra and Wadi Rum.

With funds from Drosos, Tajalla for Music and Arts, a non-profit NGO registered under the supervision of Ministry of Culture in Jordan, set up music corners in Irbid to introduce over 120 children to singing and music lessons. The institutions based in Amman in some instances collaborate with initiatives in the other cities, such as MedeArts in Irbid, on conducting such local workshops. MedeArts was launched in 2015 by the Art Theater Association of Irbid, and is an independent initiative that works to develop culture and arts in remote cities and provinces. This network is run by a group of young artists who carry ideas for enhancing the role of arts in cities and provinces, understanding the social fabric of the cities in the north (close to Syria), and in reclaiming the historical place of these cities in the shaping the art scenes in Jordan.

In 2018, the EU launched a prize for young talents, titled RISE. The competition leading to the prize award ceremony required that young talents post on social media a submission of their artwork, authored music piece, or performed song. A prize for each category was awarded in a final ceremony led by EU ambassador in Amman.

Between 2016 and 2018, MedCulture organized meetings in Amman with active members of the cultural scene as well as a participation from the Ministry of Culture to discuss and outline a Strategic Cultural Plan for Jordan. A draft of this plan was put together and discussed in several meetings, as well as parallel meetings between cultural leaders on what and where to work on culturally in the local scene. These meetings took the name of national focus group, and happened once every month in 2018.

These meetings helped the Economic and Social Council to reach out to the active voices in the scene to discuss another paper produced by the council on the challenges, potential development, and priorities of change in cultural work in Jordan.

## **INFRASTRUCTURES**



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Both the Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Greater Amman (GAM), the two largest and most important public institutions with a remit in culture, operate their programs through a network of centres and art houses in both the capital city as well as municipalities throughout the country. The Ministry of Culture manages the following centres: The Royal Cultural Centre, King Abdulla II Cultural Centre, Princess Salma centre for Children, Irbid Cultural Centre, Ma'an Cultural Centre, Arar House and the Adeeb Abassi House in the city of Al Husun. The Municipality of Greater Amman operates several centres; Al Hussein Cultural Centre, Sahab Cultural centre, Zaha Cultural Centre, Al Ashrafiyeh Cultural Complex, Jordan Art House, and the Hangar space in Downtown Amman. Most of these facilities are receiving houses and do not program or curate their own events, and mostly host external events. Entrance to these institutions and their events is mostly free. The Hangar is usually utilized for crafts fairs, used books fairs, art exhibitions, and most recently the annual (now bi-annual) exhibition of Amman Design Week. The Week inaugurated in 2016, with exhibitions and programs in the Hangar, Jordan Museum and a third venue closer to the commercial heart of Downtown Amman. With Royal patronage, the week activates the city through exhibitions and activities centred around design and artistic interventions. It has grossed 90,000 visitors and over 150 exhibitors and 50 participating spaces in Amman.<sup>29</sup>

The Ministry of Culture's activities are many, and include producing a number of festivals in theatre, music and poetry. The Ministry awards a prize for innovative Jordanian artists and initiated a myriad of activities under its plan for the development of culture in Jordan (2007 – 2012) including assigning a Jordanian city each year as a city of culture for the country.<sup>30</sup> The selection of a city as a cultural capital for one year activates the investment in the cultural infrastructures and spaces in the cities, redirect the gaze towards its own historical and traditional elements within the Jordanian fabric, and encourages more voices and publishing to happen. Two areas were chosen in 2018 to be the cultural capital of Jordan, Ramtha (northern city, also close to Syrian borders) and the Southern Ghor area (an underdeveloped rural area in the Jordan Valley).

The Municipality outlines a list of cultural services on its website, which include hosting cultural events, art exhibitions, musical performances, advertising in the magazines published by the Municipality (Tyche, Bara'em Amman, Amman), and the booking of theatres, galleries and halls. The website indicates that the Municipality manages these spaces as facilities, and not a platform for their own programs. The Municipality also manages a network of 21 citywide parks<sup>31</sup> and

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.ammandesignweek.com/about/overview>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.culture.gov.jo/culture-cities>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.amman.jo/ar/services/parks.aspx>



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72 public libraries (in 2011).<sup>32</sup> The activities and events that take place in these locations are not clearly defined. The Municipality budget for 2018 is 481 million Jordanian Dinars, 1 million dedicated to cultural projects and the development of the libraries, and 1.6 million dinars for public parks and green areas.<sup>33</sup>

Below is an outline of some of the major public-sector cultural centres:

- Royal Cultural Centre (1983) perhaps the most prominent cultural institution in the capital, houses two theatre spaces, a large conference room and several exhibition spaces.
- Al-Hussein Cultural Centre (2000), falling under the Greater Amman Municipality, Al Hussein Cultural Centre includes several exhibition halls, which can be used by citizens free of charge, as well as theatres and public libraries.
- The Queen Rania Park project aims at providing educational, health and physical care for children, and developing their mental capabilities, as well as providing opportunities for training and educating women.
- Zaha Cultural Centre, also operating under the auspices of the Greater Amman Municipality, is dedicated to providing Amman's children with free social, cultural and athletic services. The Centre has a computer lab, a library and several courts and playgrounds.

The House of Art (2000) was established by Greater Amman Municipality in an effort to dedicate one of Amman's historical houses as a centre for Jordanian arts. In addition to staging musical and theatrical activities, the House showcases traditional costumes and handicrafts.

- The Amman Municipality Public Libraries (1960) are among the oldest and most visible cultural attractions in the city. The first public library was opened to the public in 1960 and today the Municipality oversees 31 public libraries that cater exclusively to children. The Municipality's libraries welcome some 1000 visitors daily, house more than half a million books, 256 periodicals; have about 50,000 members, and serve the needs of around 130,000 borrowers a year.
- The House of Poetry (2000) is located in one of Amman's oldest houses: the former residence of Prince Ali bin Nayif. It was purchased by the Greater Amman Municipality in 1994, and was opened for public activities that focus on music.
- The National Centre for Culture and Arts (1987) of King Hussein Foundation is a non-profit, nongovernmental organisation established by Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein. Its aim is the incorporation of performing arts in all levels of education in order to promote creativity, humanitarian values, and cross-cultural understanding; to enhance cultural enrichment; and to bring about

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.alghad.com/articles/645829>

<sup>33</sup> [https://www.ammancity.gov.jo/site\\_doc/menu-35764145356.pdf](https://www.ammancity.gov.jo/site_doc/menu-35764145356.pdf)



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social change.<sup>34</sup> It operates in Amman and organises events all throughout the country. NCCA offers regular training programs for young people and adults in theatre arts, drama in education and dance with international accreditation and houses the National Interactive Theater Troupe (NITT) which was established in 1989, and MISK Dance Company. It is also active internationally: for instance, the inclusion of the NCCA in the consortium running the South Med CV project in the framework of the EU funded Med Culture programme is an example of its involvement on the international cultural scene.

- Haya Cultural Centre (1976) is a non-profit organisation, and one of the oldest cultural centres in Amman that targets children and youth. The centre offers a wide range of programs in the creative fields, features playgrounds, a library, museums, arts and crafts rooms, a performance hall and a state-of-the-art computer lab.<sup>35</sup>
- National Music conservatory, established by the Noor Al Hussein Foundation, houses the Amman Symphony Orchestra aside to its training programs.
- The Royal Film Commission (2003) is a government entity that was founded as a financially and administratively autonomous government organisation and is the official professional and educational organisation for film commissions. They assist feature, television, commercial, industrial and stills production throughout the world.<sup>36</sup> The RFC has played a substantial role in establishing a framework for the production and dissemination of independent film in Jordan, simultaneously putting Jordan on the international map for large-scale film productions.

In addition to the above, below is a brief overview of public museums and cultural centres in Jordan:<sup>37</sup>

- The Jordanian Museum of Popular Traditions (1971): Aims to collect Jordanian and Palestinian folk heritage from all over Jordan, to protect and conserve this heritage and to present it for future generations
- The Archaeological Museum / University of Jordan (1962): A small archaeological museum was initially established at the University of Jordan that was later expanded and transferred to its present location; the new building was officially opened in 1986.
- The Anthropological Museum / University of Jordan (1977): The museum houses collections of modern Jordanian heritage, tools made by Jordanian people from their natural environment to meet their needs and demand. The

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.ncca.org.jo>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.hcc.jo>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.film.jo/Contents/Who-We-Are.aspx>

<sup>37</sup> All information and descriptions under this section is sourced from the Jordan tourism Board website and <http://www.layyous.com/en/about-jordan/cultural-centers-in-jordan/2-108>



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collections of the museum are displayed according to their material and functions.

- The Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (1980): The Royal Society for Fine Arts established the Jordan National Gallery for Fine Arts at Jabal Luweibdeh in Amman supports and exhibits contemporary art in Jordan, the Arab countries, and the developing world.
- The Numismatics Museum Central Bank of Jordan (1988): Houses a collection of over 2200 coins that circulated in the country since the introduction of coinage to the Near East in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.
- The Exhibition of Arab Heritage and Recent Discoveries (1992): Housed and managed by the Department of Antiquities in Amman, the museum aims at introducing Jordan to the Arab cultural heritages throughout the ages, as well as exhibiting recent archaeological discoveries.
- The Royal Automobile Museum (2003): Depicts the history of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, from the early 1920s until the present day, and the featured cars highlight the life of His Majesty the late King Hussein and his reign.
- The Children's Museum (1995): A non-profit non-governmental organisation for children aged 14 and under, has facilities in an exhibit hall, a multi-purpose hall, a children's library and IT centre, an activity room, an outdoor exhibit area, an outdoor theatre, a museum shop, a birthday room, a cafe and a planetarium. The Museum curates its own programs for visitors, members and offers free services to public school children.
- The Jordan Museum (2013): In the downtown area of Ras al-Ein, the museum presents the history and cultural heritage of Jordan in a series of newly designed galleries. The Jordan Museum serves as a comprehensive national centre for learning and knowledge that reflects Jordan's history and culture.
- The Museum of Parliamentary Life (est. 2016): consists of three parts: the middle part containing the parliament hall, the right wing, which is the exhibition halls that tell the story of parliamentary life; the left wing which contains the offices of the head of the senate, the speaker of the parliament and VIP halls.
- The Royal Tank Museum (opened in 2018): a display of hundreds of light and heavy military items placed in their historic chronological order.
- The School Book Museum (est. 1983): located in Salt, this museum carries around 5500 school books ranging from the earliest curricula taught in Jordanian schools from the late ottoman time till today.

Other private and independent centres include: Darat al Funun: The Khalid Shoman Foundation (est. 1993), The Abdul Hamid Shoman Public Library (est. 1986) and Cinema Club, Darat Al Tasweer (2009), MMAG Foundation (est. 2017), and Tiraz (est. 2015) a non-governmental organization that is home to a large collection of Palestinian and Jordanian traditional costumes. With pieces form



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the 19th and 20th centuries, the collection has grown to include over 2000 items of costumes, weavings, home utensils and jewellery.

Commercial art galleries include Nabad for contemporary Arab art, Jacaranda Art Shop, Orfali Gallery, Dar Al Anda, Zara Gallery located in Grand Hayat Hotel, and the Intercontinental Art Shop, which is one of the oldest operating commercial galleries in Amman.

In addition to all of the above, festivals have played a substantial role in the cultural life of Jordan. They serve as platforms for the presentation of local and international productions, a space for creative workers to network and learn, as well an opportunity for the production of new works. One of the longest standing festivals was the Fawanees Festival, initiated in 1984 by a group of theatre makers and focused on Arab and international groups. Unfortunately, the group was unable to secure funds to continue operations since 2012. Nevertheless, other theatre and dance festivals including the Aat Women's Festival, Hakaya Storytelling Festival and the Zakharef in Motion dance festival, are platforms through which performance, theatre and dance have been offered to the public. In music, Al-Balad music festival and the Fete de la Musique of the French Institute presented local and international musicians. In film, Al-Ma3mal productions has been organizing the Karama Human Rights Film Festival since 2010 and bring an array of worldwide films to Jordanian audiences. They are also expanding regionally through their project ANHAR (The Arab Network for Human Rights Film Festivals), a regional project (est. 2015) with nine members who exchange film database for human right film festivals and screenings in the Arab region. The Royal Film Commission regularly hosts country-based festivals at its location, and has organized so far seven editions of An Arab Film Festival. RFC also supports the production of local and international films in Jordan, offers a film library, and produces catalogues on local service providers to the industry. On the note of diversity in different cultural and creative fields, the visual arts, music and theatre fields are the two areas in where the private and public organisations are both present in somewhat equal capacities and contribute to a multiplicity of productions; whereas fields such as film<sup>38</sup> and literature are mostly lead by the public and government sectors. Conversely, for the applied arts and other creative industries such as architecture, animation and others, there are hardly any independent or public sector initiatives, and their activities remain within the commercial companies and for-profit endeavours.

The Intangible Cultural Heritage department and the Research and Documentation department are the two projects lead by Heritage Directorate at the Ministry of Culture. The two department seek to locate, acquire,

<sup>38</sup> With the exception of the Abdul Hamid Shoman Library and Cinema Club, and screenings in visual arts organizations or independent festivals, there are no established, continuously functioning, independent initiatives in film in Jordan (such as the now defunct Amman Filmmakers Cooperative.)



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catalogue, and index previous research work on cultural heritage from the past years. The first, ICH, launched a website<sup>39</sup> for the materials they are indexing, digitizing and uploading online, of songs, folklore music works, while the research department studies the locations that needs to be researched, commissions researchers who collect materials and conduct interviews, catalogues the results, and produces map the home cities and villages to the heritage and traditional content.

Together with UNESCO, and following a series of workshops on safeguarding ICH, the Ministry works to establish and maintain a National Memory of the World Register for Jordan.

Other national archives are the Centre for Documents and Manuscripts at the University of Jordan, the Mutah University Library in Karak that has 15 data bases, 40 websites, about 1 million books, maps, microfiche, microfilms, Jordan Radio and Television Corporation which is a merge of the archives and productions of both Jordan Radio and Jordan Television, The Royal Hashemite Documentation Centre with historic paper documents related to the Hashemites (founders and ruling family of Jordan).

#### 4.1 STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS MATRIX OF THE CULTURAL SECTOR

Stakeholder and basic characteristics	Interests and how affected by the problem(s)	Capacity and motivation to bring about change	Possible actions to address stakeholder interests
<p><b>Public sector:</b> Ministry of Culture and associated culture houses and organisations, Greater Amman Municipality, fine artists union, public universities, activities mainly focused on traditional arts events, largely male dominated, mostly inefficient with majority of staff inexperienced and untrained in arts and cultural management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing fine arts</li> <li>• Promoting the image, values and culture of Jordan</li> <li>• Budgets being cut</li> <li>• Bureaucracy on the rise</li> <li>• Challenged by rising/competing private and independent sectors</li> <li>• Slow turn towards strategy or vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to larger audiences</li> <li>• Strong interest in large scale events and competitions</li> <li>• Strong political influence</li> <li>• Official legacy and strong access to PR channels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building to improve arts/cultural management and curating skills</li> <li>• Capacity building to improve organisational structures</li> <li>• Capacity building to improve technical skills</li> </ul>

<sup>39</sup> See <http://www.ich.gov.jo/>



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<p><b>Private sector:</b> For-profit organisations and companies working in art, visual arts galleries, arts and design companies, film production companies, concentrated in Amman, small but wealthy audience base.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting visual and contemporary arts and highly aesthetic designs.</li> <li>• Creating an economy of arts and culture.</li> <li>• Good access to audiences in the audio-visual fields (film/TV/music)</li> <li>• No access to wide or popular audience base in the visual arts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience in arts/cultural management</li> <li>• Knowledge of the global art and culture sectors</li> <li>• Growing economic power</li> <li>• Good connections to other industries</li> <li>• Strong global and regional connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking with other Mediterranean and International institutions</li> <li>• Advocacy to popularise fine arts within Jordanian society</li> <li>• Advocacy for international recognition for Jordanian art production</li> </ul>
<p><b>Independent sector:</b> Not-for-profit independent institutions and collectives working in various art forms, theatre and art spaces, informal collectives, concentrated in Amman, work outside of the box, largely female dominated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing contemporary arts</li> <li>• Experimenting with new forms of production</li> <li>• Experimenting with new topics and putting arts in different social contexts</li> <li>• Interest in accessing new audiences</li> <li>• Limited funding and support</li> <li>• Lack of strong local networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience in arts/cultural management</li> <li>• Knowledge of the global art and culture sectors</li> <li>• Strong global and regional connections</li> <li>• Invested in changing society and creating strong outreach programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking with other Mediterranean and International institutions</li> <li>• Advocacy for international recognition for Jordanian art production</li> <li>• Capacity building for institutionalisation (if wanted) and sustainability of small organisations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Artists and cultural makers:</b> Individual practicing artists and cultural makers un-affiliated with institutions, higher and lower economic classes, often working other jobs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicing art with economic rewards</li> <li>• Access to venues for exhibiting their works</li> <li>• Limited managerial skills</li> <li>• Limited access to local and global networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong technical / fine art skills</li> <li>• Knowledge of world art history and trends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking with artists from the Mediterranean region and internationally</li> <li>• Advocacy for international recognition of their works</li> <li>• Access to contemporary art education</li> <li>• Access to production funds</li> </ul>



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<p><b>Media:</b> Traditional press, online media, TV, radio, varied from big institutions to smaller ventures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic rewards</li> <li>• Large readership</li> <li>• Lack of investment in promoting arts and culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of experience in cultural reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building in cultural reporting and journalism</li> <li>• Capacity building in documentation and archiving</li> <li>• Incentives to nurture core belief in importance of arts and culture</li> </ul>
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#### 4.2 SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL SECTOR

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent cultural sector fairly vibrant</li> <li>• Supportive infrastructure with many spaces available for artists</li> <li>• Opportunities for training, development and capacity building</li> <li>• Cooperative independent sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively few acclaimed and high standard artists</li> <li>• Level of artistic and cultural production not on-par with regional and international excellence</li> <li>• Little local funding for cultural projects</li> <li>• Little local relevance of cultural production for communities</li> <li>• Informal sector unsustainable and projects are short-lived</li> <li>• No critique or health cultural journalism life</li> <li>• Centralised in Amman</li> </ul>

<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collectivity and possibly union for independent sector</li> <li>• Growing private sector involvement in supporting the arts</li> <li>• Cultural organisations working for a long time working towards sustainable community impact</li> <li>• Regional cooperation (Jordan only country that can host all nationalities)</li> <li>• Celebrating diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Censorship from public authorities</li> <li>• Economic hardships make it difficult to keep art affordable</li> <li>• Political situation makes it difficult to keep art relevant to general public</li> <li>• Press and Publications law</li> <li>• Lack of transparency (with official bodies) / corruption</li> <li>• Religion and conservatism</li> </ul>



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## 5- EDUCATION AND TRAINING

When looking at arts education in a larger scope in Jordan, it is important to keep in mind social factors; mainly that arts is not seen as a serious profession in Jordanian society, as opposed to more respected professions such as medicine and engineering. In addition, economically, and due to the facts that the arts sector is understudied, underdeveloped and presents low job prospects for graduating students; public arts education as a whole is not invested in. In addition, rising conservatism in Jordanian society prevent the development of infrastructures for arts and culture at early stages of development. In public schools, arts and music classes are slowly being cut and they are part of extracurricular activities and not graded, therefore little incentive to develop them exists. As for private schools, ones that cater for a small segment of society in the capital Amman, they do have arts programs that are graded as part of international education systems.

As for higher education, Jordan's two biggest public universities offer degrees in Fine Arts. The Faculty of Arts and Design at University of Jordan in Amman, inaugurated in 2002, offers undergraduate degrees in Fine Arts, Music and Theatre Arts. The Faculty also offers an MA degree in Music. In the 2012/2013 academic year the Faculty supervised 48 graduation projects and had 24 students enrolled in its Masters' program.

In Irbid, Jordan's second largest city, the Faculty of Fine Arts was the first to be established in Jordan, in 1981 at Al Yarmouk University, and has departments for Fine Arts, Design, Drama and Music. The Faculty offers undergraduate and post-graduate degrees and also holds an annual contemporary Arab art conference. It includes 13 faculty members and over 337 students.<sup>40</sup> Many other private universities offer Arts degrees but mainly in Graphic Design.

Teaching in higher education institutes concentrates on classical modes of arts production and there is little if no curriculum that includes contemporary arts practice or discourse. Away from the formal arts education system, some of the independent institutions in Amman do run practical and conceptual workshops for artists. Darat al Funun used to hold a regular summer academy that mentored a generation of fine artists in the 1990s and 2000s that are now practicing successfully in their fields. The summer academy has unfortunately been discontinued and what remains now, through large institutions like Darat al Funun, the National Museum and others, is a sporadic offering of workshops in various fields of Fine Arts and contemporary arts. Similarly, institutions like Al-Balad theatre and the Performing Arts Centre, or dance festivals like Zakharif in Motion,

<sup>40</sup> <http://finearts.yu.edu.jo/en/visual-arts>



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hold workshops in dance, theatre and storytelling. These workshops are often timed with big festivals in these genres that invite international artists to instruct and collaborate with younger local performers. The Ministry of Culture holds a large sculpture symposium every summer where international and local sculptures are given the space and materials to work and learn from each other. There is however no regular or long-term learning programs in contemporary arts practice. StudioX offers through architectural angles entries into the arts but is more concerned with the built and urban environment.

As for informal and experimental education, there is a big gap to be filled in Amman and Jordan as a whole. One of the few attempts at creating an informal learning program is the Spring Sessions; an education program for young artists and cultural practitioners that was initiated in 2014 and takes place over a period of 3 months every year. The program relies on non-academic methods for learning and invites local, regional and international artists to conduct multi-disciplinary workshops with young participants from Jordan.

Many training and capacity building opportunities exist in cultural management, whether locally through clusters like EUNIC, or regionally through Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafy's dedicated cultural management program, or internationally through the Goethe Institut's cultural management exchange program, or Med Culture trainings for local and regional participants. Tamasi, a collective of 11 Arab performing arts organisations, launched once a training program on fundraising for the Arts and Culture sectors. Other local and regional initiatives conduct more specialised trainings in fields such as human rights and artistic production, managing independent cinemas etc. This rise in the number of opportunities is definitely a good sign for the sector, although many if not most of these programs lack an artistic perspective to them, treating cultural management as a business opportunity, and face many challenges in follow-through for tangible results. In addition, quite often these trainings lack the contextual perspective of creative problem solving for working in the Arab region.

## 6- NON-PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND GENERAL AUDIENCE

Studies on audiences for arts and culture in Jordan are rare and, to the author's knowledge, there have been no systemic studies of audience attendance of and interaction with arts and culture activities in Jordan to date. However, some general observations can be made:

- Audience numbers are higher when it comes to state-run activities in state-run venues. These venues have a wide popular base and reach and people have a general level of "trust" for the events that are put on by state



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institutions. Audiences for these institutions are of a more “popular”<sup>41</sup> background and span across different economic classes.

- Audience numbers are relatively lower when it comes to regular activities in independent spaces, except during performing arts, music and visual arts festivals that usually take place on a yearly basis. These festivals are very often held in different locations across the city, some of them being state-run spaces or municipality-run spaces (such as the Roman Amphitheatre), and are hence used strategically to attract more and a wider variety of audiences. However, independent spaces have been slowly attracting a larger number of youth to their programs, either as volunteers or as general audiences. A good example of this is Al-Balad Theatre that had a strong volunteering program that involved youth from diverse communities in running its activities, therefore encouraging them to become more involved in arts and culture in the long term.
- Audiences of private galleries and private initiatives are relatively low and usually restricted to the same class of regular art goers, or the “art crowd”. This class is however economically strong. It is difficult to assess the level of interactivity with or “affect” of arts and culture programming in Jordan because initiatives and institutions do not conduct impact assessment measures within their programming. Measures for audience numbers are taken, but not publicised, and rarely if never for emotional impact assessment. This is especially critical for the country when considering the need for reaching wider and greater audiences, one many practitioners in the various fields of arts mention. Another aspect is the feeling that contemporary art is not yet understood by the majority of Jordanians, similarly to many other countries.<sup>42</sup>

Audience development efforts currently ongoing in Amman can be classified into several kinds:

- Projects that focus on numbers growing, for example EUNIC's creative trail project that aims to increase the number of visitors to art spaces in Jabal Luweibdeh.
- Projects that focus on youth involvement in culture and the arts so they can remain committed and interactive members in adulthood.
- Projects that focus on accessing new audiences by putting the arts in an economic, political, scientific or other social contexts.

The second case is employed by independent performing arts spaces such as the 3D printing lab at Amman Design Week, Al-Balad Theatre, The Royal Film Commission as well as European centres such as the British Council, while the

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<sup>41</sup> In Arabic 'Sha'bi'; not elitist in this context.

<sup>42</sup> BOP Consulting and Dr. Faris Nimry, *Developing Creative Industries in Jordan A Call to Action*, published by EUNIC, 2013.



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latter by more experimental spaces such as the Lab at Darat al Funun, the exhibitions of Amman Design Week, and Makan Art Space. It is important to note here that mainstream culture such as popular songs and soap operas of the entertainment industry enjoy huge popularity and audience bases that span cultural and class divides, whereas here the report is trying to analyse trends in non-mainstream fields.

## 7- CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As can be concluded from the majority of this report, there are many and major challenges that face the cultural sector in Jordan today. The public sector is still very traditional and in general seems to lack the funds and skills necessary to fully support healthy and innovative arts and culture practices in Jordan. Attempts to create a cultural strategy for the arts in Jordan is discussed today between the state, private and independent actors. The independent and private sectors have experienced minds, but lack the funding and networks to take their practices level, they are mostly dependent on foreign aid programs and thus their scope of work keeps shifting based on the areas of available funding. Looking at the big picture, the biggest challenge is perhaps economic conditions. In a country that is said to have little resources, few in the top circles of governance seem to believe in the power and potential of arts and culture. Thus, the country also relies on foreign aid, and has played the role of controller rather than enabler. Censorship has always existed in Jordan over any form of production, more clearly when it is tackling issues of religion, sex, or the ruling family.

Another major challenge, often overlooked by policy makers, is the quality of arts education, and education in general, in schools and universities. There are few discernible efforts by policy makers or the private sector to rectify this situation, and the picture is still bleak for the future of artists' development in Jordan. Coming down to institutional levels, funding for running costs and projects costs of institutions are harder to come by and many organisations have to look at novel ways in order to survive, including partnerships and community based funding. One of the biggest sticking points in this regard is local funding; state funds are either disseminated through a public body like the Ministry of Culture or the Greater Amman Municipality where there is little public support for work that is not contained within the public or state networks. Also, there is not one independent funding body in Jordan. The private sector has been increasingly supportive of the arts sector, but is more interested in big cultural events that promote their brand and fall under their Corporate Social Responsibility policies. Accessing these funds is especially difficult for independent artists and institutions who are producing beyond the norm of traditional or classical arts, who do not



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possess the management and fundraising skills, or who are not doing art for development.

There has been an outpouring of funds for art for development or artistic/cultural projects in times of crisis in the past few years and this trend has pushed organisation to follow suit and therefore “create” projects to suit these funding policies.

Coming down further to the artist level, artists suffer to make a living from their arts, let alone be seen as respectable professionals by society. Often artists have to work other jobs, and so their practice takes a side role and their production and quality decreases. Due to many social, political and educational factors, artistic production in Jordan is relatively small, uncritical and safe. There is also a noticeable schism emerging between traditional, older, artists who are practicing the fine arts, and younger, more daring artists who are experimenting with newer forms. Furthermore, language barriers prevent a lot of artists who do not speak or read English to access international calls and networks. In addition, there are few independent cultural managers and curators that can leverage artistic talent and support artists in producing their work. This problem of mid-level management exists in other fields; there are few music producers to professionalise local music, and few editors to work with new writers. Although it enjoyed a heyday in the 1990s and early 2000s before the Gulf opens up its art scenes, the art market in Jordan is not encouraging. Many individual artists look to the Gulf as source of economic appreciation, or to Europe and the rest of the Arab world as a source of artistic appreciation, exhibitions and acquisition.

Many of the challenges above build an interrelated picture that not one strategy or solution can fix, rather a complimentary set of actions that traverse public and independent/private fields. Without a clear government cultural policy or vision and without a declared national agenda for culture, an overall problem persists in Jordan where a large rift between the public and private sectors exists. Public entities, who albeit provide support for arts and culture in the form of infrastructures and creative production to include theatre, arts, literature etc., are essentially using these forms as tools for expressing government agendas in line with their definition of culture, one that includes that such productions should be “without detriment to Arab and Islamic values”<sup>43</sup>. The private and independent sectors are however pushing for a more broad and open use of culture, a path that perhaps side-lines them from public policy and the (loyal) public at large.

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<sup>43</sup> Samah Hijawi, Cultural Policy Research – update 2014, Al Mawred Al Thaqafy.  
<http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/charter-national.html>



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When thinking about solutions to the challenges to the cultural sector, this rift proves that the biggest efforts should concentrate on public institutional reform and education reform. Culture should not be seen as a tool for security or political agendas, but rather cultural and artistic production encouraged as a means for free expression, as well as a means for nourishment and civilization. This is no easy task, for it involves a real change in state vision and policy. It is important nevertheless to note two further important styles of escalation which lead to changes implemented by the government recently. In the rise of violence of the ISIS state in Syria and Iraq, there was a re-reading of the Jordanian curricula, particularly the scientific content that is combined with religious texts or illustrations, claiming that the infiltration of radicalism could be eliminated by the secularization of the curricula. Other voices were equally heard rejecting the secular calls and clinging to the localization of the illustration and content of the books taught at schools (e.g. women could be wearing a head scarf in the illustration of the book). The tensions lead to the change in the Minister of Education, who also worked on reforms within not just the curricula but also the assessment system for the final year of high school studies, and eliminated the 'failed / passed' results to less overwhelming criterion. Another important aspect is the people taking out to the streets several times in the recent years. Starting with objections to a 15-year, \$10b gas deal with Israel, followed by large protests on the American decision to move its embassy to Jerusalem. The government showed more tolerance towards the later protests as Jordan is the custodian of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. In June 2018, massive protests took over Amman and several Jordanian cities objecting to the new income tax law which attempted to tax incomes that are above 8000 Dinars, raised the taxation percentage brackets, and offered no exemptions or deductions of expenses related to housing, health or education expenses. The protests lead to the resignation of the government and the newly appointed government promised not to implement income tax laws without conducting a dialogue with the public. The protests also lead to an intervention from the Gulf neighbours with new aid offers.

It is also noteworthy that the communities or subcultures within Jordan lack a space for meeting. For instance, Iraqi intellectuals form a large segment within the community, and meet often at Orfali Gallery in Amman. There is need to invest in non-commercial public spaces and meeting areas, for instance that has a roof and thus is usable in summer and winter, to further encourage mixing, meeting and exchange between individuals.

On the more practical level, below is a set of summarised recommendations for action in the cultural sector in Jordan:

- Create long-term capacity building programs for public sector employees of the Greater Amman Municipality, the Ministry of Culture, the houses of culture in Amman and other major cities, including: appreciation of the arts, cultural



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management, artists management, programming artistic spaces, financial management and community outreach. Lobbying and advocacy with politicians must be done to ensure these programs can be implemented on the long run. These programs can be implemented locally or through international collaboration.

- Create long-term programs for arts education in public schools in Amman and other major cities. This should include visual arts, drama, music and other arts. Lobbying and advocacy with politicians must be done to ensure these topics are included in school curricula in coordination with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture. These programs can be implemented locally or through international collaboration.
- Create long-term capacity building programs for public-school teachers in topics of visual arts, drama, music and other arts in coordination with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture. These programs can be implemented locally or through international collaboration.
- Network between different groups (independent or otherwise) working on cultural policy in Jordan to consolidate efforts and create a strong network that can then lobby the government for a strong, clear cultural vision and strategy for the country. There are currently separate efforts by EUNIC, Med-Culture, About Culture in Jordan group, and the Economic and Social Council, for cultural policy work and research in the country.
- Invest in research on several lacking topics in Jordan including but not limited to: the economy of the creative industries and creative services in Jordan, the economy of the independent sector, audience participation and engagement, to be updated on a yearly basis. Other examples could be on the effect of the infusion of Iraqi and Syrian artists in the Jordanian art scene.
- Encourage local cultural and artistic production by establishing an independent local funding body. International funds could be funnelled through this local body as in the case of the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture and Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafy.
- Encourage the development of mid-level management and managers in the arts; music producers and not just musicians; editors and not just writers; curators and not just artists etc.
- Create opportunities of exchange for local artists to travel internationally and network with other artists and institutions.
- Be mindful of the situation of cultural production in Jordan in grant- programs. Themed funding opportunities should be more inclusive of various art forms and should not restrict artists, cultural makers or institutions.
- Be mindful of the political situation in Jordan in grant-programs. Most importantly, do not include Israel in any programs that include Jordan, whether as a regional program element or through collaboration with any Israeli institution or artist. Any form of support, collaboration or inclusion of Israel is detrimental to an ethical and sustainable collaboration with a Jordan institution or artist.



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## 8- ANNEXES

- *An Introduction to Cultural Policies in the Arab Region*, Samah Hijawi and Nawal Ali, published by Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafy, 2010. The survey was updated by Samah Hijawi and Ala Younis in 2013, unpublished.
- *Developing Creative Industries in Jordan, A Call to Action*, BOP Consulting and Dr. Faris Nimry, published by EUNIC, Amman, September 2013.
- *Mapping the Creative Industries in Jordan*, EnConsult (Yusuf Mansur), 2012, unpublished.
- *Cultural Policy in Jordan*, Hani Al-Amad, published by UNESCO, 1981.
- Med Culture Focus Groups working paper.
- *About Culture in Jordan - An Exhibition of Cultural Initiatives*, published by About Culture in Jordan group, Amman, 2016.
- *Assessment Report: Audiovisual Archiving In Jordan*, Ray Edmondson (UNESCO Consultant), 2017, unpublished draft.
- Public Debt Quarterly Report, First