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CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF A DIVIDED SOCIETY:

The Case of Israel in the Czech Republic

Dissertation thesis

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Declaration:

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. All the sources and literature used have been duly referenced.

In Brussels 8 June 2019

Jitka Pánek Jurková

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Abstract:

The thesis explores the cultural representation of the State of Israel in the Czech Republic from an anthropological perspective, depicting how the topic of the state is appropriated and represented by different actors.

Among its key theoretical statements, the thesis differentiates between cultural diplomacy—governmentally facilitated communication with a foreign audience through whatever is considered as culture—and the cultural representation of a state—the resulting picture of a state that depends on a multiplicity of narratives that emerge when various actors use the topic of the state to publicly assert their self-understanding.

In an actor-oriented analysis, based on events observation, the thesis deals with the Israeli foreign policy institutions, artists engaged in cultural diplomatic activities, the Diaspora, audiences, various Czech non-governmental actors including pro-Israeli support groups, BDS movements, and others. The thesis analyzes Czech-Israeli bilateral relations and their impact on current Israeli cultural representation, concluding that while formerly close, the contexts of the two countries are drifting apart, creating “false familiarity” in cultural representation that results in low efficiency and misunderstandings.

The research focuses specifically on the deep divisions of the represented society, that, in contrast to cultural representations of more homogenous entities, produce mutually exclusive notions of the state. It describes how, especially in times of heightened attention, certain actors put increased pressure on the dissemination of their own notion of Israel, involving other high-standing actors, increasing communication with the public, and adjusting their strategies to the reactions of their counterparts.

While examining the cultural representation of a divided society, the thesis shows how the state administration can cope with domestic divisions by either centralizing the message, or leaving it incoherent, as in the case of Israel. The reasons for this, including the low status ascribed to cultural diplomacy in Israel, are examined. The thesis also describes how the representation of divided societies, even if decentralized, favors cultural elites with better access to channels of communication. The thesis concludes by characterizing the cultural diplomacy of deeply divided societies as caught in a

permanent dilemma between efficiency and normative democratic standards, that can be resolved only by a focus on personal relationships.

Keywords:

cultural representation, cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, divided society, Israel, the Czech Republic, hasbara

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1. INTRODUCTION

Living in any major European capital today means being exposed to a plethora of public cultural events. On closer inspection, many of them do not aim merely to elevate the audience's minds, to mediate a new understanding of reality, to question current stances, or to invoke a particular emotion. Some of the exhibitions, festivals, concerts, and film screenings are also there to mediate the symbolic presence of an official entity such as a governmental or non-governmental institution, a region, or a state.

In a world where culture has almost unequivocally positive connotations, critical thinking about such events is not commonplace. We tend to see art and culture as a "force for good." But behind the spectacle—in a literal as well as in a figurative sense—other motivations might have played a role. What exactly is the performance saying? Is it always a call for "mutual understanding," or does it affirm a certain position? And who wants this voice to be heard? Even if we see a narrative, this is not the whole story. Dramatic negotiations might have taken place when shaping it (cultural representation is not always the outcome of a frictionless process). Behind the result, there is a vivid landscape in which various actors pursue their agendas, form alliances, formulate their message in line with their self-perception, and even adjust it according to the expected reception.

The struggle to gain control of a part of the symbolic universe in international relations is probably more important nowadays than ever before, and states are by no means the only, or even the most influential actors. However, states do encompass and make alliances with a variety of actors who want to participate in their cultural representation abroad.

This thesis analyzes one such example, the cultural representation of the State of Israel in the Czech Republic. Not only does it seek to point to the diversity of forces participating in the formulation of the message; it also seeks to show how specific the dynamic is when a deeply divided society is involved, mobilizing an array of actors with often antagonistic interests.

The thesis is based on one year of field research and two years spent researching scholarly and practitioners' materials on the topic. It is a snapshot in time (the author is well aware of the dynamic changes in the field).

Knowing how subjectivities tend to be reflected in issues as polarizing as questions related to the topic of Israel, the thesis begins with a self-positioning autobiographical chapter, and then progresses to a discussion of key theoretical notions and methodology before starting the analysis.

The central part of the thesis derives from observation of the involvement of various actors with Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech Republic in the years 2015–2016: the actors responsible for foreign policy, Czech non-governmental actors of various types (from churches to cultural entrepreneurs to institutions with educational agendas), the Czech Jewish Diaspora, and, finally, the anti-Israeli boycott movement that wants to present a counter-narrative.

In separate chapters, the thesis also deals with the various approaches of Israeli artists towards representing their country, and with the Czech audience of Israel-related cultural events. Each of the actors is analyzed in a historical and global context, acknowledging that the research is restricted not only by its time frame, but also by spatial limits that determine the relative importance of the actors, and of the issue *per se*.

The thesis hopes to build a layered picture of the foreign cultural representation of a state, and the variety of expectations and agencies tied to it. As such, it hopes to inspire a nuanced understanding of the issue of a state's cultural representation abroad, as well as Israeli representation specifically.

2. AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

The autoethnographic part of the thesis will not be long but is immensely important both for reasons of academic honesty and for my own self-positioning before I start the writing process. Thus, in this chapter, I will conduct an autoethnography in one of the senses of the word proposed by Chang, namely the most basic one: in this thesis, autoethnography is neither the aim nor the method, but it is necessary to establish my position and make myself aware of it (Chang 2008, 124), and to allow the reader to judge the possible implications of my values and experience on the research.

I was born into a Christian family. In the Czech Republic, Christian churches are predominantly supportive of Israel, probably partly due to the shared political history of Christians and Jews as enemies of the regime. During communist times, Christians were viewed just as unfavorably as Jews,¹ and diplomatic relations with Israel were interrupted from the Czechoslovak side after the Six Day War in 1967 and renewed only after the Velvet revolution (just like the churches' and the Jewish community's freedom). Therefore, a certain inclination towards Jewish culture and Israel was among the private as well as the public signs of anti-communism, as will be further explained in the chapter dealing with diplomatic relations between Israel and the Czech Republic.

I grew up in the Czechoslovak Hussite Church, namely in the denominations of Kladno and Slaný. They were both rather pro-Israel, participating in regular prayers for Israel, annual commemorations of the Holocaust, etc. Furthermore, the church house I was brought up in was a former synagogue. After the Kladno Jewish community was decimated, the building was bought by the by-then-strong Hussite Church (1939) that lacked church buildings at that time. After the fall of the communist regime, the Kladno denomination searched for descendants of the former Jewish community and found them on the US West coast. It has maintained friendly relations with them ever since. It would not be true to say of any believer that occasional Israel- or Jewish-community-related activities determine their political stance. But the topic of Israel is omnipresent in church narratives. For example, the Bible revolves around the territory of today's Israel, and the name of Jerusalem can often be heard in the life of a Christian.

¹ Both groups suffered serious political persecution. Examples include the obviously anti-Semitic trial involving "internal enemies of the party" in the 1950s, the crackdown on monasteries in the same period, and the torturing to death of the catholic priest Josef Toufar in 1950. involving "internal enemies of the party" in the 1950s, the crackdown on monasteries in the same period, and the torturing to death of the catholic priest Josef Toufar in 1950.

Furthermore, part of my family lives in Israel as a relative of mine got married to a middle-Eastern correspondent for a Christian German radio station. As a result, I visited Israel a few times and have followed news from the region since I was a young girl.

I was always deeply interested in politics and when the time came for me to choose a field of study at university I opted for International Relations, bringing my high-school paper on Israel to the admission exams, and was accepted. At a later stage, despite considering it, I decided to focus my studies not on Israel but on a topic that was much more accessible from home: cultural diplomacy. Discovering that there was a concept in International Relations that allowed me to combine politics and my second big passion, the arts, was probably the most defining moment of my university years.

During my undergraduate studies, I engaged with cultural diplomacy as much as I could. I worked as an intern in the Czech Center Brussels in Belgium when I went for an Erasmus study stay, and I wrote my bachelor's thesis on the topic of the cultural diplomacy of small states. After completing my Bc., I started working part time at the Czech Centers headquarters. Later, I pursued a master's degree at the University of Amsterdam, graduating cum laude with a diploma thesis on the topic of concepts of culture in cultural diplomacy. Subsequently I returned to Czech Centers headquarters in Prague.

However, I never ceased to be interested in Israel and the Middle East. During my studies, I broadened my knowledge of the region by studying another narrative, taking a major course on Palestinian history at the University of Louvain-la-Neuve, participating in a conference about Islam at the same university, reading many books on the topic, and talking for hours with a very close friend of mine, a professional working with Palestinian refugees. This is important to mention in order to make clear that my involvement with Israel was not predetermined by a certain political background (as it often is, for instance, in the USA, where engagement with Israel is often a sign of conservative leanings). Indeed, my family and my friends belong predominantly to liberal circles. It was rather an outcome of always having the topic of Israel on the edge of my awareness and finding it increasingly fascinating due to its complexity.

A window of opportunity to combine my specialization in cultural diplomacy with my interest in Israel opened for me when the Embassy of Israel in Prague asked me to apply for the position of Cultural Officer there. It was the right moment to use my knowledge

of cultural diplomacy, at that time related mostly to the Czech milieu, and transfer it to a different environment, whilst having the opportunity to follow my long-time country of interest. I worked at the Embassy for three years and grew to better understand many of the realities of the life of Israelis, while forming my own views on a range of topics. Within this capacity, I made two visits to Israel, each of which lasted several weeks. After leaving the Embassy, I spent approximately three months advising the team of Days of Jerusalem 2016 on the program accompanying the festival. During these years, I got to know the Israeli artistic scene well and some of the artists became my friends.

It follows naturally, then, that my experience has given me a better understanding of the Israeli position, which I had many opportunities to explore. I am aware that the topic I chose for my thesis could be examined from other perspectives, too, including a critical perspective focusing predominantly on power dynamics. But I opted for descriptive research, trying to maintain as balanced a view as possible on this explosive theme.

Max Weber (2009) insisted on value-free methodology but he acknowledged the role that values play in other parts of the research process, namely when selecting the research topic. This is very pertinent for my work. Coming from the background of a rather non-conflictual Czech cultural diplomacy that does not arouse passions at home or abroad, the encounter with Israeli cultural diplomacy was a stark contrast: there, culture did not seem to provide neutral ground and a means of understanding and bridge-building, but was an unstable terrain that evoked strong and conflicting sentiments, was ascribed great power, and could even be blamed for crimes against humanity and multiple other sins. This contradicted most of the conceptualization (scholarly and governmental) of cultural diplomacy that I had encountered before, but sadly confirmed the claim made in my master's thesis that the often sloppy conceptualization and shallow understanding of cultural diplomacy precludes understanding of its real potential and limits, and thus is a basis for overblown claims about cultural diplomacy's power or powerlessness. I hoped that researching Israeli cultural diplomacy would help me to examine its discontents in a rather paradigmatic and sharply defined case.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Political Anthropology

My home field is international relations (IR). This was also the field of most of my pre-doctoral studies, research, and writing. My previous focus was on institutions conducting cultural diplomacy, but when I stepped into the practice of cultural diplomacy, it struck me how many factors *on the ground* eventually influence its outcome in a major way but can be examined by IR methods only with difficulty, or not at all. Therefore, I decided to turn to the domain of anthropology to provide me with the tools for more practice-oriented research.

In “Anthropological Approaches to Political Behavior,” McGlynn and Tuden explain why anthropological notions are useful for the study of political phenomena:

“Anthropology demands that the intrinsic consensual and conflicted merging of the private and public spheres of power are where the institutional and behavioral aspects of power achieve their transformations, and this is foremost an issue of group social relations rather than merely formal political institutions.” (McGlynn and Tuden 1991, 4)

Therefore, they point our attention to several questions very much pertinent to research in cultural diplomacy: a necessary conflict between different agencies (namely between institutional and non-institutional actors), relationships (including the aspect of power), and the transformative effect of both.

For example, in my bachelor’s research on the Czech Centers² I focused on their strategic documents and explicit aims. This allowed for only a limited understanding of the rationale of one institution that has the ambition to conduct cultural diplomacy, but its proclaimed intentions make up only part of the picture. Experience with on-the-ground cultural diplomacy demonstrated to me the crucial role of such factors as the individual decisions of an institution’s employees, the particular sensitivities in each situation, and the expectations and comparative experience of the audience.

To allow the research to focus on interactions between various actors in the field of cultural diplomacy, I decided to root my thesis in political anthropology, which deals with the “processes of how group goals are determined and implemented” (Swartz et al.

² The agency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic responsible for public and cultural diplomacy.

1988, 8) by analyzing “social relations themselves, under the conflicting pressures of discrepant principles and values” (Gluckman 1965, 235).

The political field, on which we will be operating, is, within political anthropology, characterized by Swartz, Turner, and Tuden as

“a field of tension, full of intelligent and determined antagonists, sole and corporate, who are motivated by ambition, altruism, self-interest, and by desire for the public good, and who in successive situations are bound to one another through self-interest, or idealism – and separated or opposed through the same motives. At every point of this process, we have to consider each unit in terms of its independent objectives, and we also have to consider the entire situation in which their *interdependent* actions occur.” (Swartz et al. 1988, 8; emphasis in original)

For our purposes, two aspects of this characterization are crucial: First, **that the actors have various self-understandings and thus various strategies for approaching the topic; and second, that the field is dynamic, i.e., actors’ strategies change according to the changing context, including their interactions with others.** These two aspects are the point of departure for the whole thesis.

Also, as we will see, the thesis’ methodology is predominantly that of anthropological fieldwork, namely observation and semi-structured interviews.

But let us first consider the key theoretical perspectives from which the thesis is derived.

3.2 Social constructivism

The thesis is rooted in the perspective of social constructivism. This ontological approach sees reality as constructed by interactions between actors, who in the process create social constructs, e.g., operational unities that are the building blocs of reality for those who adopt them. These social constructs are operational definitions and the basis of the actors’ actions (Sandu and Unguru 2017, 52). Or, as the father of social constructivism, Luckman, suggested, the reality of society is based on the subjective processes of conceptualization and definition (Harrington 2006, 113).

In the field of international relations, this perspective follows how ideas define international structure, how this structure shapes identities, interests, and foreign policies, and how state and non-state actors reproduce it (Baylis and Smith 2008). Social constructivism has two major dimensions: it is idealistic, i.e. it takes seriously the role of ideas in international relations; and it is holistic, i.e. it does not aim to

deconstruct the world into single actors but rather wants to show how the structure emerges and changes. In this sense, my analysis of the functioning of different actors engaged in the process of Israeli cultural diplomacy does not primarily aim to illuminate their functioning, but rather seeks to examine how cultural representation emerges, which forces shape it, and how they behave in mutual interaction.

Another reason that social constructivism is an appropriate perspective for our purposes is that it is not a substantive theory of international politics, but a social theory. As such, it does not ascribe specific preferences to the actors, but rather deals with the conceptualization of the relationship between agents and structures (Baylis and Smith 2008). A key issue to be considered through this lens is the interaction of the actors. Following on from that, the focus of social constructivism is on the process, not the product (Clarke 2016).

Now, having defined the perspective that the thesis will adopt, we can delineate the field that we are examining: that of cultural diplomacy and its context, which together compose the cultural representation of a country.

3.3 Definitions of key notions

Cultural diplomacy

The key point from which we start out is the notion of cultural diplomacy. But, already here, we face conceptual difficulties. Cultural diplomacy has been defined in multiple ways, as we will see here, as well as in the following pages. The dictionary of cultural diplomacy says:

“Although there is no set or commonly agreed upon definition of cultural diplomacy, it may be best described as the means through which countries promote their cultural and political values to the rest of the world. The essential idea is to allow people access to different cultures and perspectives, and in this way, foster mutual understanding and dialogue. Cultural diplomacy is practiced by a range of actors including national governments, public and private sector institutions, and civil society.” (Chakraborty 2013, 30)

Other authoritative³ definitions are briefer, such as Gienow-Hecht’s and Donfried’s characterization of cultural diplomacy as “a national policy designed to support the

³ Taken from Gienow-Hecht’s and Donfried’s major study on different practices of cultural diplomacy, *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy* (Gienow-Hecht, Donfried 2010).

export of representative samples of that nation's culture in order to further the objectives of foreign policy" (Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010, 13).

I believe that these and other definitions of cultural diplomacy face a structural problem, as they imply a normative aspect that is far from self-evident (the emphasis on "mutual understanding" in Chakraborty), or a conception of culture that could easily be challenged from the anthropological point of view ("samples of a nation's culture" in Gienow-Hecht and Donfried).

Cultural diplomacy as a force for good?

The first type of shortcoming stems from the ambition of current cultural diplomacies to distinguish themselves as a "force for good." They frame culture as related to exchange and thus also to understanding—an example being the definition of cultural diplomacy as "the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding" (Cummings 2003, 1).

This idea has its roots in the enlightenment conceptualization of art as related to individual creativity. The notion of individual creativity stems from the eighteenth-century Kantian conception of the experience of beauty as a harmonious combination of particular sensory pleasures and rational judgement that is derived from universal laws. Thus, according to Kant, aesthetic experience is autonomous and has a moral, normative character. This concept has been rather influential and was developed by nineteenth-century romanticism, within which Hegel saw art, religion, and philosophy as three forms of access to "absolute spirit," while others saw it as a way to "communicate a special understanding of the world" (Harrington 2004, 12). Kant and Hegel's understanding of aesthetic experience as a process that allows us to approach general instances through particular ones determined the European understanding of art and laid the foundations of the importance ascribed to art as a positive force. This importance is reflected in the support for "creative hubs" in European cities, the high status ascribed to cultural specialists, claims that the state should unconditionally support culture, etc. The growing infrastructure of channels of communication and self-expression accessible to a growing number of people has supported these developments.

The notion of art as inherently positive can also be seen in major documents from the field of international relations. It is echoed not only in some scholarly papers, but

probably even more so in practitioners' discourse and art advocacy.⁴ Culture is ascribed universal value and the status of the best fruit of the human (and national) spirit—for instance in UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.⁵ Similarly, Karl-Erik Normann, founder and Secretary of the European Cultural Parliament, subscribes to the Institute of Cultural Diplomacy's vision that "the ultimate goal of cultural diplomacy is promoting peace and stability through intercultural relations" (Normann 2013). The European Parliament's resolution on the cultural dimension of the EU's External Action Service claims that "culture can and should be a facilitator for development, inclusion, innovation, democracy, human rights, education, conflict prevention and reconciliation, mutual understanding, tolerance and creativity" (European Parliament 2011). This tendency to frame culture in international relations as a solely positive force might be interpreted as accompanying the "culturalization" of IR in the context of the reduced acceptability of military and economic coercion, and the heightened importance of symbolic standing (Mattern 2005).

As we have seen in the subchapter on concepts of culture in cultural diplomacy, art as an expressive form of culture is considered to have the potential to open channels of communication, represent national specificities efficiently, or spread universally positive values.

But is this justifiable? In the twentieth century, the concept of the autonomy of art has been criticized by multiple scholars, notably the Marxist school, Bourdieu, and others, who accuse it of blindness towards its own social conditioning which leads to the application of circumstantial ideas to the whole of humanity. That, the critics claim, leads to the perception that those who do not comply with prevailing aesthetic norms participate in universal morality to a lesser degree.

This thesis adopts a third approach, neither seeing art as a universally positive phenomenon in international relations, nor reducing it to a tool in a wider power struggle. I advocate for the understanding of art as a phenomenon that is contextual, but

⁴ One of the most recent examples is the conversation of former U.S. Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power and actor Amy Adams, which brings forward the issue of identification with other humans through art, and thus supposedly also better understanding of their perspectives—see Amy Adams & Samantha Power On Art And Diplomacy (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_QkNv5hGMg&feature=youtu.be). However, there are many others. The May 2017 forum on cultural diplomacy, organized by the University of Luxembourg, bears the subtitle "Creating Human Bonds through Cultural Diplomacy" (see the conference website, Transatlantic Dialogue, <https://transatlanticdialogue2017.uni.lu/>).

⁵ For full text, see UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001271/127160m.pdf#page=10>.

retains its autonomy (Harrington 2013, 84). Works of art are indeed the fruits of specific circumstances, but they are not to be reduced to a mere reflection of these: they create their own aesthetic rules (by composing impetuses from the social reality into their own universe), because they are self-reflective (artists are able to reflect on the influence of context on their work), and because they co-create social reality (through “the mediation of symbolic systems that convert creativity in cultural life into creativity in social action”; Harrington 2013, 61).

Despite supporting the claim of the autonomy of art, I believe it is necessary to acknowledge that cultural diplomacy is a paradoxical enterprise: while promoting the autonomous value of the arts, it uses them for a specific political purpose.⁶ Therefore, in my opinion, understanding this paradox is necessary in order for us to be able to evaluate the various roles art can play in cultural diplomacy. Thus, analyzing the functioning of cultural diplomacy carefully and not taking its positive effect for granted is essential. As we will see, it is formed by various actors with various aims, some of them far from that of promoting universal understanding; and even those who proclaim this goal may underestimate other factors, thus pushing, in the end, in the opposite direction.

Notions of culture in cultural diplomacy

The second type of shortcoming of the definitions of cultural diplomacy characterized above is the ambiguous use of the term culture. In an anthropological paper, this demands analysis.

Never mind the lack of conceptualization of the term culture within this context; it often forms an essential part of the definition of cultural diplomacy (thus making it a bit tautological). Among the scholars making culture a part of their definition are, for example: Schneider, who sees cultural diplomacy as “the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding” (Schneider 2009, 261); Osgood and Etheridge, who see it as a “wide range of cultural interactions between nations and peoples” (Osgood and Etheridge 2003, 13); and Gienow-Hecht, who sees it as “the effort to create a cultural

⁶ Fosler-Lussier suggests an alternative view to that advocating the primacy of socio-political reality, and that advocating the complete autonomy of the arts, claiming that “[Cultural] diplomacy [may build] relationships that encompass both political and artistic experiences. Distinguishing which is the primary objective and which is the by-product is entirely a matter of perspective.” (Fosler-Lussier 2015, 13).

liaison between or among people living in two or more different regions” (Gienow-Hecht 2010, 32).

But the notion of culture across the studies is rarely defined, and, where it is, consensus about its meaning is lacking. Various scholars define culture as more intuitive or more elaborate on a case-by-case basis spanning from culture as high art (Grincheva 2010, 171) to culture as the “totality of human forms of life as they are developed and adapted to the environment over time by each people” (Aguilar 1996, 11). The multitude of concepts of culture can be sorted into several groups.

The first type of conceptualization sees culture in cultural diplomacy as a fixed structure of collective values and norms largely determining the behavior of an individual. In anthropology, its best-known proponent was Clifford Geertz, whose definition of culture as a “web of significance” (Geertz 1973, 5), formulated in 1970s, became the most influential concept of culture in anthropology in the following decades. The concept has been adopted by political science, bringing with it the assumption of a set of collective traits determining, to some extent, the behavior of each nation, and it remained influential in studies of international relations even after it had lost its prominence in anthropology in the 1980s (Bonnell and Hunt 1999, 37). For instance, in the 1990s the concept was used by Huntington in his immensely popular theory of the “clash of civilizations” (Huntington 1998). In the domain of cultural diplomacy, Geertz’s concept (labelled by some as “essentialist”; Wedeen 2002, 713) means that each nation can be represented by specific symbols related to national characteristics. There is a “Frenchness” associated, for example, with a passion for good food and great fashion sense. These characteristics are represented by products such as “les escargots” and Luis Vuitton, internationally recognized as “typically French” (and perceived as rather positive). In the literature on cultural diplomacy, the use of this concept can be identified through an explicit reference to “cultural essence,” or through the notions of traditional national values or inherent national traits differentiating one group from all the others. Dalot-Bul talks explicitly about “cultural essence found in Japanese tradition and culture” (Dalot-Bul 2009, 254). Girginov describes Chinese cultural diplomacy during the Olympic games as an effort to learn “Western functions while preserving Chinese essence” (Girginov 2008, 908).

The second notion of culture in the studies of cultural diplomacy sees it as the outcome of the potentially universal process of cultivation, a matter of achievement “in the

context of [a] teleological view of human progress” (Hegeman 1999, 6). This concept of culture, that can be called, for our purposes, “universalistic,” derives from the humanist tradition which, crystallizing during the Enlightenment, emphasized reason as a common trait of every human being and as the basis of progress. Through reason, people are able to determine the objectives of such progress, which include universal values such as democracy, and the means to reach them.

In her 2004 book *Culture and International Relations*, Reeves further contrasts the universalistic and the essentialist concepts by showing how the former developed in opposition to the latter, “Kultur” (romantic, “natural” phenomenon, distinctive in a nation, and therefore essentialist) resisting “Zivilization” (cold, technical, connected to reason, industrialization and Enlightenment, and therefore universalistic). That is why, although both the concepts share a root in the concept of culture related to community and derived from modernization, they are antithetical.

Originally, humanism concerned the individual level and therefore considered the education of individuals to be the primary means of improving interpersonal relationships. Only later, with the French revolution, did culture start to be perceived as a “collective achievement,” connected to national education (Reeves 2004, 13). The prospect of improving interpersonal relations through education was the basis of an analogy on the national level: general cultivation will lead to world peace.

The assumption of the universality of reason has two major implications for cultural diplomacy. Firstly, national specifics are surface differences artificially created with the emergence of a nation-state. True mutual understanding between counterparts (or nations) is possible and can be built through rational exchange. Secondly, a higher level of culture in general will bring common benefits such as peace. Therefore, it is in the interest of the most advanced nations to share their knowledge, and in the interest of the less advanced to accept it. That is why cultural diplomacy entails, in some cases, primarily exporting the values of “the advanced” nations.

Within this conception, the function of cultural exchange is different. It is not the representation of specific national traits, but the representation of achievements. For example, jazz was used in cultural diplomacy for its ability to represent the universal values of freedom, inclusivity, and democracy inherent to American society (Graham 2008, 345), and thus to prove the superiority of American political institutions (Rietzler

2011, 156). Paschalidis characterizes the promotion of cultural ties between metropolis and ex-colonies as the “mission civilisatrice” (Paschalidis 2009, 282), thereby pointing out the civilizing narrative underlying cultural relations based on the universalistic concept.

Finally, the third concept of culture represented in papers on cultural diplomacy differs from the previous two in its focus on the individual and his self-expression that can be used as a basis for interaction. Von Geusau defines culture in the context of cultural diplomacy as “a domain in which man unfolds his spiritual and creative activities,” giving men the opportunity of “freely exchanging and circulating thoughts, ideas and convictions” (Von Geusau 2009, 37). Similarly, Grincheva states that, in the US, arts as an important cultural resource are understood as “a means of individual self-expression rather than as a national cultural identity” (Grincheva 2010, 170).

This concept, that—due to its emphasis on interaction—I call “interactive,” is present in the newer literature on cultural diplomacy. There, the aim is, to a greater extent than before, not to represent collective traits, but to open the channels of personal communication. Art is believed to be an appropriate platform for interactive communication. Art as explicit culture carries the characteristics of implicit culture as a complex realm of interpersonal interactions: it is based on two-way communication and is highly personalized. Moreover, art can appeal to basic values and emotional characteristics common to all people regardless of nationality—a common humanity. That is why art can be neutral and generally comprehensible. “Artists effectively build bridges by demonstrating and sharing what the peoples of the world hold in common” (Ash, Fullmann 2004, 3). Additionally, art is “inherently honest” (Mark 2010, 66). In sum, art can create an atmosphere of true commonality (Von Geusau 2009, 37; Grincheva 2010, 171) and be a platform for a genuine interpersonal exchange (Reimann 2004, 85). The relationship between an artist and his audience and among the spectators is believed to have the potential to reach great depths (Arndt 2005, 547).

In sum, there is a notable diversity in the conceptualization of culture in studies of cultural diplomacy. It is important to note that these concepts often exist in a hybrid form within one scholarly paper, or are not explicitly defined at all.

The concepts have different implications not only for their understanding of the central element of cultural diplomacy, but also for the character of the process. While the first

two see cultural diplomacy as a unidirectional process of transmission and projection of one's values and ideas (Bargoorn 1960; Paschalidis 2009; Arndt 2005), the latter notion of culture takes an idealistic view of cultural diplomacy as a striving for "mutual understanding" (Gienow-Hecht, Donfried 2010; Grincheva 2010). Both these concepts have fundamental shortcomings. The idealistic one implies that there is the same aim and potential to every kind of cultural diplomacy. But we can easily doubt the automatic preconception that exposure to culture brings better understanding. In fact, various anthropological studies attest to the contrary, demonstrating how the arts often exacerbate or cement conflict (O'Connell, Castelo-Branco 2010). And even if this was the power of art or culture, there is no reason to suppose that every instance of cultural diplomacy aims to increase understanding. Multiple studies have described various techniques of cultural diplomacy with aims as diverse as unilaterally pushing a country's narrative regardless of its potential to speak to a foreign audience (Lomová 2019), increasing tourism (Ireland 2014) and commercial exchange (Uldemolins, Zamorano 2014), and solidifying domestic support for the government (Brienza 2014).

The notion of cultural diplomacy as a projection of one's values and ideas that is at the root of both the essentialist and the universalist concepts of culture does not take into account for studies that efficiently call into question the unidirectional model of communication, suggesting that the listener's frameworks may cause significant alteration of the meaning. It also works with an outdated concept of culture, deeming it to be an "essence" of a nation that can be captured in cultural diplomacy, or a resource employed in a case of need. This concept has been challenged by scholars due to its inability to employ the notion of change (Bonnell and Hunt 1999).

Notably, the disagreement about the concept of cultural diplomacy has a significant bearing on inconsistencies in methodology. A large number of studies deal with the content of cultural diplomacy and tools selected to promote it. Below, I suggest an alternative definition of cultural diplomacy that emphasizes other aspects. Such a definition will allow us to propose an efficient methodology without the need to reconcile possibly irreconcilable differences in various notions of culture.

Definition of cultural diplomacy

As we have seen, scholars are far from reaching a consensus about what constitutes culture in cultural diplomacy. Current definitions depend on the studied country, the

home discipline of the scholar, and other factors (Jurková 2011). So, on what grounds can we define cultural diplomacy? I suggest we do so not through its resources or aims, but through its practice, thus internalizing Veyne's (2010) call to analyze every societal phenomenon through such a lens. As Veyne suggests, the same term often relates to very different phenomena—phenomena that are defined by a complexity of contemporary practices, social norms, needs, etc., that differ across time and space (similar to Bourdieu's term *habitus* that we will examine later), and that we are not able to truly understand and relate. Therefore, he suggests that we derive conclusions about causalities only by observing practice. Only in this way we will be able to reveal hidden driving forces without succumbing to false similarities determined by our preconceptions.⁷

Therefore, I base my definition of cultural diplomacy on practice. The aspect of “diplomacy” simply reflects the fact that it is conducted with the support or approval of governmental agents responsible for foreign policy. The aspect of “culture,” as we have seen, has to be left open to each of the cases studied, because conceptions vary widely across different practices and thus across the scholarly studies of these practices. Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, cultural diplomacy will be understood as *governmentally facilitated communication with a foreign audience through whatever is considered as culture*.

This leads us to an efficient methodology. While most of the studies dealing with the concept of cultural diplomacy focus on the macro-level (i.e., the institutional framework, strategic outline, and aims), I suggest that we *focus on the practice of cultural diplomacy as formed by its context*, which has a crucial bearing on the actual practice of specific examples of cultural diplomacy. In the age of the rising importance of transnational actors, a complex process arises around cultural diplomacy that brings together a multitude of actors of different kinds—governments, artists, audiences, media, and other stakeholders—encountering each other in a real or a symbolic space (such as through media, through virtual mobilization for common purpose, etc.), whose encounters may be friendly, dialogical, competitive, hostile, and of other kinds. Thus, the interaction of a multitude of actors with various natures, motivations, and modes of conduct influences the outcome of cultural diplomacy.

⁷ For a complete discussion of the value of observation, the role of one's own values, and the perils of classification, as well as other tools of objectivization, see Veyne 2010.

Cultural diplomacy today is thus, in my view, a highly contextual phenomenon—a process more than a product—co-created by an array of entities, and should be studied as such. Each state’s cultural diplomacy enters into a dynamic and complex environment of overlapping communication streams, expectations, reactions, and counterreactions. Only in the interaction of cultural diplomacy with its environment, which influences the resulting message as much as the original intent, does a fluid projection of a state’s image abroad emerge. For this phenomenon as a whole, I introduce the term *cultural representation*.

Or, in other words: when we talk about cultural diplomacy, we have in mind the state-facilitated effort to communicate with foreign audiences through culture. When we talk about cultural representation,⁸ we consider the resulting picture in each moment, including negative reactions, competing and contradictory representations, etc.

This thesis examines the cultural representation of one state—Israel—which has a divided society—a factor that further complicates the process.

Soft power, public diplomacy, nation branding

Within its home field of International Relations, cultural diplomacy is related to the framework of soft power (e.g., Finlay and Xin 2010). The term *soft power* was first coined in 1990 and then further developed by the Harvard scholar Joseph Nye who, whilst arguing that the United States would remain the only world superpower, besides military and economic sources of power (which he calls “hard power”) pointed also to ideational ones. Soft power is defined as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments” (Nye 2004, X). Its sources, according to Nye, are culture,⁹ values, and foreign policies, which, if attractive, can lead others to follow leadership without coercion. Nye used this concept to explain that the US remains the only country that has all three of them at its disposal, unlike, for instance, China, that lacks soft power and thus cannot be a leading state in the new world order (Nye 2012).

Cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy are among the tools that can be used to enhance soft power. Even though the terms “cultural” and “public diplomacy” are

⁸ For more on the conceptual basis of representation, see the respective subchapter.

⁹ The definition of “culture” in cultural diplomacy is omitted in Joseph Nye’s study as well as in the majority of other scholarly papers on cultural diplomacy. We will deal with this issue in the following pages.

sometimes considered to be equal (e.g., Pwono 2009), most scholars, as well as the author of this text, perceive them as distinct. *Public diplomacy* is a government's communication with foreign publics through various means, such as musical broadcasting and press conferences. Whilst musical broadcasting would be described by most as a tool of cultural diplomacy, information about foreign policy is almost never classified as such. It rather comes under the category of information policy, which is the provision of foreign publics with information about the actor's policy-making (Aguilar 1996). Therefore, "cultural diplomacy" is a subset of the broader term "public diplomacy." This conception is common among scholars and practitioners (Arndt 2005; Bayles 2005; Mark 2010; Hendrikson 2006).

Importantly, public diplomacy, especially in large-scale campaigns, often employs information techniques (analysis of the press coverage of a state, use of social media campaigns, tourism campaigns, creation of mass media channels¹⁰) that are rather unidirectional, while cultural diplomacy is mostly involved with art, that has a much less measurable effect on foreign audiences.

On the other hand, the two also share some important traits: the main rationale of both is communication with foreign publics, they both grow from domestic reality, and actors involved with both often overlap (indeed, the same or related governmental bodies are often responsible for both public and cultural diplomacy). Therefore, certain arguments—especially those about the domestic context of a state's effort to increase its soft power—that were put forward in regard to public diplomacy can also be used in the domain of cultural diplomacy. This inference will be used throughout the thesis. When outlining the domestic context for Israeli public diplomacy, for instance, we will see that the findings are also relevant for its cultural diplomacy. In short, public diplomacy will be treated as a broader notion than cultural diplomacy in this thesis.

A certain change in the concept of public diplomacy came with the concept of "*new public diplomacy*," advocated by Melissen (2005) and others. Its basis is the network model, drawing the notion further from a state-centric model, and emphasizing that in the contemporary world a dialogue between a multiplicity of state and non-state actors is necessary as the division between intra-state and international affairs is less and less pronounced (ibid.). Among the subjects taking part in new public diplomacy are

¹⁰ Among countries that have their own mass media at their disposal to direct at foreign audiences are Great Britain (BBC World), France (TV5 Monde), and China (press agency Xinhua).

political parties, NGOs, individuals, private companies, and sub-state actors such as cities and regions (Tomalová 2008, 16). This thesis shares the notion of the multiplicity of networked actors in the field of soft power; however, the notion of new public diplomacy often works with the question of efficiency through rapprochement between actors with different perspectives (e.g., Leonard 2002), which this thesis calls into question when it is applied to cultural representation.

A related concept is that of *nation branding*, which is close to the discipline of public relations. Nation branding states that branding techniques, as adopted from marketing, can be applied to the strategic communication of a state (Szondi 2008, 4). There are multiple schools of thought on its relationship to public diplomacy—from those advocating nation branding as an equivalent to public diplomacy through those considering them as partly overlapping to those that see the concepts as entirely different.¹¹ This thesis will fall within the school of thought postulating that nation branding is from the family of public diplomacy techniques; but if used in relation to cultural diplomacy it undermines the latter's potential as a decentralized, to some extent spontaneous practice involving the significant and non-coordinated engagement of various local partners. Therefore, here, nation branding is considered to be one of the possible techniques of public diplomacy, but seen as rather distinct from another of its tools, cultural diplomacy.

Development of the soft power concept

Let me at the end of this subchapter point to a specific critique of the soft power concept in order to establish an angle on power relations that will be evident throughout the thesis.

The notion of soft power stems from the aforementioned perspective of social constructivism, as it considers power to be not only factual but also ideational; i.e., power is not only about changing someone's behavior, but also about fixing meanings and constructing self-understanding.

Nye's notion has rightfully been critically reflected by many who have suggested that it needs to be underpinned by hard power if it is to be efficient, that too much soft power can provoke resentments, and that it operates with assumptions valid for individual relations but hard to prove in the context of interstate relations (Fan 2008). This critique

¹¹ For a detailed discussion, see Szondi 2008.

has raised questions about the unoppressive character of soft power in international politics and pointed to the necessity of initial shared values and understanding about the rules of communication for the parties involved, which do not always exist (Mattern 2005). However, we will not discard the notion as it has been influential in the international practice of cultural diplomacy, and most practitioners' as well as scholars' takes on cultural diplomacy refer to the concept of soft power.

Among the many critics of Nye's theory, Lock does not reject it but develops it usefully for our purposes. Lock points to Nye's confusion between the relational and structural aspects of power (i.e., is it supposed to change the values of the counterpart through a relationship, or does it speak to the audience that already shares the values through a shared structure?); his failure to clearly determine whether power is agent-centered or subject-centered (is the focus of attention the instance spreading the values, or those being influenced by them?); and his treatment of soft power as a resource (which leads to the notion of the sources of soft power—values, culture, etc.—as fixed).

Among others, Lock suggests that the agencies of the agent and the subject of soft power are interdependent, emphasizing the role of the subject's expectations: "One is seeking to exercise power over another through the conditioning of one's own behaviour based on one's expectations about how that other interprets 'attractiveness'" (Lock 2009, 11). We will see in the following chapters how certain actors adjust their behavior according to their expectations as to "what will work" for the audience.

Lock's criticism is especially useful because it points to the limited role Nye ascribes to the subject of soft power—in the case of cultural diplomacy, its audience. Lock suggests that the subject is an active participant in every power relationship, regardless of the disparity of the relationship. In his words, "social structures are constituted through the practices of both those who are advantaged and those who are disadvantaged by their structuring effects" (Lock 2009, 12). This thesis adopts Lock's stance, ascribing a certain amount of power over the process of formation of cultural representation to all involved subjects, and thus rejecting the claim that cultural representation is a mere product of one, homogenous dominant subject with dominance over the field. Here the thesis also departs from Bourdieu's conception of social relations, which he largely sees as dictated by dominant actors who reproduce the existing social structures and thus maintain their privileged status, and prevailing inequalities. This thesis, in accord with

Lock, suggests that even minority actors have their ways of influencing and reacting to a state's representation.

By adopting a simplistic view of the more and the less powerful subjects and automatically ascribing one side morally superior status due to its inferiority in terms of power, we deprive ourselves of the opportunity to acknowledge—and examine—any confusion, inconsistencies, or vulnerabilities of the “superior” side (Kahanoff 2016). In this way, refusing the one-dimensional view of conflict—and of cultural production—as a one-sided dynamic of the dominant vs. the dominated is for me both an ethical and a pragmatic stance.¹²

Propaganda

Propaganda is another notion that we have to consider within the field of soft power and its tools. Definitions of propaganda vary, but most of them have in common the emphasis on instrumental handling of information, secrecy, efforts to manipulate the decision-making process, (e.g., Etang 2009, 608; Dutta-Bergman 2006, 111; Taylor, Snow 2001, 51), and the most prominent characteristic: centralized management of information aiming at maximal efficiency (Zaharna 2001, 86).

Even though some researchers see an affinity between public/cultural diplomacy and propaganda without necessarily negative connotations (Peterková 2008; Berridge 2001; specifically in an Israeli context, Schliefer 2003), most scholarly materials sharply separate public diplomacy and propaganda (Melissen 2005; Tomalová 2008; Hocking 2005). Scholars differentiate between public diplomacy and propaganda: (a) on the basis of means (nowadays, due to new technologies it is impossible for a government to wholly control the image of a nation, therefore it is more beneficial to involve civil society in its creation, as most states do; Hocking, 2005); (b) on the basis of the aim (propaganda as aiming to narrow the view of the public, and public diplomacy as broadening it; Melissen 2005); and (c) on the basis of the historical connotations of the terms (propaganda is mostly associated with totalitarian regimes such as Nazi Germany or the USSR; Melissen 2005).

¹² Similarly, I also refuse the Marxist theories of art that see it as a mere reflection of sociopolitical reality. These theories deprive art of its autonomous existence and assume a superior position as an interpreter of art.

Especially in an Israeli context, where public diplomacy is often labelled as propaganda,¹³ we must carefully evaluate the significance of the term for our research. We will return to this discussion later, in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

It is important to note already, though, that dealing with Israeli cultural diplomacy is an oxymoron *per se* for certain researchers and activists. For one thing, some scholars deem any war-related public communication to be propaganda (e.g., Taylor 2008, 15). Also, there are scholars who consider public and cultural diplomacy to be notions that can be used solely in the context of liberal democracy, and who at the same time do not consider Israel to be one; for them, our discussion is without merit. To follow this line of argumentation, the reader can turn, for example, to Aouragh (2016), Allan and Brown (2010) or Said (2001). This thesis, however (building on the example set by Fosler-Lussier's research on US cultural diplomacy during the cold war; Fosler-Lussier 2015) does not recognize a juxtaposition between war and cultural diplomacy; neither does it seek to demonstrate a direct correlation between the quality of a democracy and the possibility of conducting cultural diplomacy, as this would presuppose an analysis of different theories of democracy and their bearing on the external representation of a state.

Therefore, we will continue in our aim of examining Israel's cultural representation for now, and will evaluate its possible relationship to propaganda at a later stage.

Symbolic capital

When looking at the roots of soft power, cultural diplomacy, and related concepts from an anthropological perspective, the notion of *symbolic capital*, developed by one of the central figures of political anthropology, Pierre Bourdieu, is helpful.

Bourdieu defines *symbolic capital* as “the acquisition of a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability” (Bourdieu 1984, 291). Consisting of *cultural capital* (cultural competences to appreciate cultural relations and artefacts) and *social capital* (networks that can be mobilized) it is also a source of symbolic power—the power to lead by example, to be respected, and to be accepted (just as economic capital is the source of economic power). Actors invest and struggle to maximize this

¹³ It is, for instance, a common narrative of the BDS campaign against Israel (see Israeli Propaganda Trips, <http://www.bdssouthafrica.com/campaigns/academic-boycott-israeli-propaganda-trips/>, or Rapoport 2018).

form of capital within the context of possibilities and their development. We already see the proximity of Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital and Nye's idea of *soft power*.

Bourdieu employs the notion of symbolic capital specifically in the study of the artistic field¹⁴. According to him, the field of cultural production is structured by “the relationship between systems of thought, social institutions and different forms of material and symbolic power” (Bourdieu 1993, 1). We will not get into the detail of Bourdieu's elaborate theory of the field of cultural production, but we will keep in mind that he was among the major figures to examine the role of art in the formation of social (political) relationships. For us, it is crucial that he talks about the actors' *strategies* in the field of cultural production—a notion that we will often use. Bourdieu sees strategies as “a function of the convergence of position and position-taking mediated by habitus” (Bourdieu 1993, 17). For him, strategies are not necessarily conscious or rational ways to reach a defined aim. They are, rather, a behavior composed of the actor's aims, the position the actor is in, and the conscious and unconscious forms of accepted behavior within the actor's environment or domain. The actor's behavior will also be influenced by the specific issues that provoke struggles over symbolic capital (in our case, international reputation). These determine the stakes. Therefore, the strategies are largely context-dependent.

While operating within a given field, cultural production is “one of the ways in which the relationship between the agent and the field is objectified” (Bourdieu 1993, 17). Thus, the relationship is conceived as objectification. In this thesis, we will examine cultural representation not as a symbolic practice referring to a fixed reality (i.e., we do not consider cultural representation an expression of a state's “soul” or specific “culture”). We will rather consider cultural representation to be a set of strategies, developed by a multitude of actors and objectified in cultural practices involved with a certain topic (in our case, the topic of Israel). The actors actualize their conscious and unconscious aims within the possibilities determined by the field, changing their strategies as they interact. The emerging cultural representation is only partially controlled by each of the actors engaged, including the state.

Furthermore, Bourdieu's perspective allows us to understand the reality of a divided society as highly relevant for the formation of cultural diplomacy: as he suggests, the

¹⁴ According to Bourdieu, the artistic field is formed of three levels of social reality: its position within the field of power, the structure of its agents' competition for legitimacy, and the way in which its practices (of interaction, reproduction, etc.) are generated (Bourdieu 1993).

issues over which the various actors struggle determine their strategies. This thesis argues that, in the case of a divided society, the motivations of the actors involved are stronger than in more consensual societies; therefore, the struggle intensifies and the issues further determine the actors' strategies, as Bourdieu suggests. In the case of Israel, this is illustrated by the unprecedented impact of cultural boycott on its cultural representation—not only physically preventing Israeli artists from performing in certain countries (and foreign artists from performing in Israel), but also isolating Israeli artists, with various consequences, (including hardening of their identities, disguising of their nationality, etc.).

3.4 Actors, representation and negotiation

In its analysis, this thesis is heavily actor-oriented. It examines how, within the outlined struggle for symbolic capital, the topic of Israel is picked up by various actors (with the assistance of Israeli governmental institutions) and represented in different ways. The following paragraphs specify who the actors are and how we conceive of representation.

The actors in cultural representation

In this thesis, I consider an actor to be any subject that aims to engage with a given government in the process of representing a state—Israel in this case. We will consider both actors that directly create cultural products, i.e., artists themselves, and those that employ these cultural products (by hiring the artists for a performance, or mediating the cultural product—for example, by publishing a book by an Israeli writer), i.e., festival organizers, publishers, and interest groups.

Actors here are perceived as basic elements in the process (of cultural representation)—“an unending process of struggle, not the fortuitous grouping of demographics, psychographics, or even issues. It is a view grounded in evolving networks that share vocabularies that create the perception of issues” (Self 2010, 89).¹⁵ The thesis follows the actors that allowed for the most complex description of their representation strategies in relation to the State of Israel, and were the most potent in creating the perception.

Who are the actors, typically? On the following pages, we will encounter a multitude of them, a large portion of whom are non-governmental (albeit interacting with the

¹⁵ In his paper, Self frames actors as “publics” to emphasize the interactive character of the process.

government). Non-governmental actors play an increasing role in international relations, as many have argued. As Fitzpatrick puts it,

“In a new age that is characterized by globalization, democratization, and new technology, non-state actors have gained increasing influence in global affairs, creating a ‘new world order’ in which nations and peoples have become more interdependent and cross-border networks of power have replaced traditional government structures” (Fitzpatrick 2012, 435)

Public and cultural diplomacy are not an exception—the “public” component is becoming more prominent in comparison to the “diplomatic,” government-conducted component. In the twenty-first century, non-state actors have an increasing influence on policy making, and the international policy environment is becoming more complex (Fitzpatrick 2012; Lord 2010). Therefore, many emphasize that it is becoming necessary to consider non-governmental actors when designing and analyzing public and cultural diplomacy (e.g., Hocking 2008; Slaughter, 2004; Zaharna, 2011). Some suggest that the government is only one among multiple actors that determine the outcome of public diplomacy and should be analyzed as such, focusing on the whole picture (Fitzpatrick 2012), instead of analyzing a relationship of the government with each of the actors and thereby ascribing it a central role. According to Fitzpatrick,

“Under a network perspective, publics are no longer viewed as targets of public diplomacy efforts; rather, they are viewed as participants – and possible partners – in networks of relationships between and among groups and individuals that have the potential to influence directions and outcomes in global affairs.” (Fitzpatrick 2012, 437)

This stance is also backed by historians engaged with the empirical study of cultural diplomacy. Fosler-Lussier, talking about US music diplomacy, claims that from the top down cultural diplomacy seems like an effort to unilaterally transfer ideas, but from the bottom up we see it as an “intensive process of negotiation and engagement” (Fosler-Lussier 2015, 5).

This thesis adopts a similar stance. However, as we will see in the course of the thesis, this is possible only in rather decentralized cultural diplomacies, and not in more authoritatively managed, centralized cultural diplomacies (such as that of the Chinese).

Fitzpatrick represents the voices calling for the employment of notions from public relations in public diplomacy (Fitzpatrick 2012; Gilboa 2008), claiming that it allows for more efficiency, and quoting normative reasons as well, such as the democratic

aspect of including multiple stakeholders in the process of public diplomacy (Kim and Grunig 2011), and the enhancement of human interstate relations and mutual understanding (Fitzpatrick 2012). I do not necessarily share these normative conclusions since increased relations do not always lead to mutual understanding; and the issue of democracy depends heavily on how exactly we conceive of it.¹⁶ Furthermore, the “public relations attitude,” with its focus on efficiency, might bring to cultural diplomacy a lesser respect for the autonomy of the arts—a key normative notion that we examined earlier. However, it has to be acknowledged that the role of non-state actors is increasing in cultural diplomacy as well. In a world of growing connectivity and availability of information, artists can easily find ways to go abroad without relying on the state, and non-state actors have a wide range of means at hand, including social media, to engage with the representation of a state.

Therefore, I work with a variety of stakeholders in this thesis. The crucial criterion for the selection was whether those considered in the analysis are in any way engaged with Israeli cultural diplomacy, defined above as a governmentally facilitated activity. The analyzed actors are by no means only governmental, but they are all reacting to governmental activities. If we did not adopt this criterion, a wide variety of other factors would have to be included, such as the role of the framing of Israel in the media unrelated to its cultural diplomacy, the functioning of Israeli companies in the Czech Republic, private relations between cultural stakeholders in the Czech Republic and in Israel, etc.; and thus the thesis would be engaged with international cultural relations, a separate field of study which aims at mapping non-official networks alongside official ones. However, as this thesis belongs mainly to the field of cultural diplomacy, it focuses on the multiplicity of phenomena revolving around governmental initiatives.

The audience in cultural representation

Besides stakeholders, we will also explore the role of the audience. Related to the perspective of interactionism, the thesis adopts the view of Charles Self, who sees the public not as an essence but as an activity of process. As modes of participation are increasingly varied for an increasing number of actors, the actors “require continuous engagement over the shape and direction of the flow of the public” (Self 2010, 89). As a result,

¹⁶ For instance, it depends if we require democracy to be representative of the broadest possible spectrum of opinion or if we consider it as a system where the majority should decide, etc.

The public flows across networks of dialog in an unending battle for universality. Public is the unending process of struggle, not the fortuitous grouping of demographics, psychographics, or even issues. It is a view grounded in evolving networks that share vocabularies that create the perception of issues. (Self 2010, 89).

As such, the audience is an inseparable part of public diplomacy, not its mere subject. As Fosler-Lussier has observed: “The form of globalization we see in cultural diplomacy is not primarily about mobility or even direct communication but about altering local contexts and changing the frame of reference in which people think about themselves and others.” (Fosler-Lussier 2015, 2019)

Despite the audience’s centrality for cultural diplomacy, studies are seldomly preoccupied with it. I argue that the role of the audience is indispensable for any study of cultural diplomacy, and a whole chapter is devoted to it.

Representation

The thesis works with the notion of representation both in a broader and a narrower sense, connecting them in a specific notion useful for the examination of cultural diplomacy in two major ways.

Representation in the broader sense is an “essential part of a process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture” (Hall 1997, 15)¹⁷— and between members of different cultures too, as in the case of cultural diplomacy. Importantly, Hall’s conception allows us to see representation as a process, not as an act depicting a reified state. Multiple circumstances can influence this process.

For instance, Turino works with the notion of the importance of expectations for representation practices, emphasizing the importance of expectation especially for “discursively produced categories” such as nations.¹⁸ These categories should be “subjects for social analysis rather than objective rubrics,” so they have to be understood in relation to discourses (Turino 2008, 103). That is why we will be

¹⁷ Hall suggests three approaches to representation: the reflective approach, which sees language as a reflection of an existing meaning; the intentional approach, which sees language as a direct reflection of what the actor wants to say; and the constructionist approach, which emphasizes that the meaning is constructed in the process (Hall, 1997). The thesis works with the latter notion.

¹⁸ I believe that we can extend this notion to a state which is not discursively constructed in physical reality but, as the concept of soft power suggests, whose standing is rather significantly determined by international discourse.

examining the representation of a discourse on a specific state as a changing and interdependent phenomenon, not the image of a state as an “objective rubric.”

Representation in the broader sense builds on two necessary components (according to Hall): mental representation (“a shared set of ideas”; what is represented), and signs that carry the meaning. In other words, there has to be an idea of the represented subject and there has to be a way to transmit this idea. Again, these two phenomena interact with one another: the way in which the subject is represented further shapes its understanding, and vice versa. In this sense, cultural representation is also a process of meaning-making.

In the narrower sense, specifically within the field of international relations, representation is “advancing the interests of a given constituency through communication” (Huijgh 2012, 364). This definition allows us to acknowledge the existence of constituencies, their interests, and their variety—and the fact that these interests are represented in the actors’ communication.

Importantly, the notion of “interest” cannot be understood as an explicit or necessarily conscious agenda. Rather, it should be connected to Bourdieu’s conception of strategy that includes a multitude of conscious and non-conscious circumstances, including actors’ aims, their position within the field, their habitus, and the issue at stake. Therefore, the interest represented is also contextually determined.

Building on these two claims—representation as a process, and interest as a part of a strategy in Bourdieu’s sense—allows us to see *cultural representation* as an ever-evolving phenomenon that changes with the reactions of the environment, the positioning of the actors, their mutual relations, etc. Applied to our case, the thesis will argue that various actors have various ideas of what “Israel” means for them and adopt various tools and positions to represent their stance while constantly adapting these tools and positions to their environment.

Other scholars also see the cultural representation of a state as a reflection of a “dynamic array of artistic and political interests” (Fosler-Lussier 2015, 11), negotiated in the interplay between various actors (Fosler-Lussier 2015; Clarke 2016). This view goes against the notion of cultural representation as a “translation” of a specific agency into culture. An important consequence is that we do not see a distinction between the original aim and the outcome, and thus do not consider “authenticity” an issue in the

sense that there would be an “authentic” notion that is more or less “distorted” in representation. As Fosler-Lussier puts it, “once the mediation of ideas is part of the landscape, authentic behavior is no longer separable from behavior meant to convey a message” (Fosler-Lussier 2015, 2018). Therefore, we will not be searching for any “hidden motives” of the actors and we will not be conducting interviews to discover them. The thesis rather supposes that notions of “Israel” exist in parallel in their multiplicity in the various engagements of various actors.

Furthermore, linking the notion of cultural representation to the notion of symbolic capital introduced earlier, we should consider how mere engagement with the topic becomes a tool of increasing symbolic capital within each actor’s field (Solomon, 2014, 145). Picking up the topic of Israel as a primary act is a statement, in some cases allowing the actor to interact with other, prestigious actors, and in some cases bringing the actor more attention, as we will see.

In sum, the thesis aims to explore the process of creation of a state’s cultural representation at a given moment, without considering the actors and their representation of the topic hierarchically. Mere engagement with the given topic is an act of representation. Its specific form then depends on a variety of factors, as we have already seen. The process of cultural representation is an ever-evolving and interactive one, forming the worldviews not only of third parties, but also of the actors themselves. At the same time, the actor’s symbolic capital is influenced by its involvement with the issue at stake.

The notion of identity

The last aspect to examine in relation to the representation of a certain topic is that it can be considered an aspect of self-understanding.

Stuart Hall (1990) relates representation to identity: “...we should think ... of identity as a ‘production,’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, *representation*” (Hall 1990, 222; my emphasis). However, in this thesis, we will adopt Brubaker and Cooper’s claim that “identity” is too vague a term and will use the notion of self-understanding as a basis for social action. But Hall’s claim that self-understanding/identity is constituted in a process of representation is a core notion of our view on the issue of cultural representation. This process has several

crucial components: the actors, their self-understanding, representation as a social action, and the audience.

The thesis suggests that various social actors engage with Israel's cultural diplomacy on the basis of their self-understanding—"particularistic understandings of self and social location"—which they make explicit through their political and social action in relation to the topic. Self-understanding is a way in which one can "characterize oneself, ...locate oneself vis-a-vis known others, to situate oneself in a narrative, to place oneself in a category" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, loc. 240 of 899), and thus is an inherently contextual phenomenon. In Brubaker's and Cooper's words:

In some settings, people may understand and experience themselves in terms of a grid of intersecting categories; in others, in terms of a web of connections of differential proximity and intensity. Hence the importance of seeing self-understanding and social locatedness in relation to each other, and of emphasizing that both the bounded self and the bounded group are culturally specific rather than universal forms. (Brubaker, Cooper 2000, loc. 299 of 899)

This point of view allows us to underline the importance of the special social and political context of the two countries—the Czech Republic and Israel—where the examined actors behave in a specific manner that might differ vastly from the behavior of actors in other countries where seemingly similar actors adopt radically different stances. For example, churches in the Czech Republic tend to be rather pro-Israeli, whereas in Scandinavia a large anti-Israeli Christian movement has been born.¹⁹ Self-understanding also changes with context; this thesis examines only one point in time.

On the following pages, we will encounter the term identity, which is very often used by the actors themselves and echoes in scholarly works on representation, cultural diplomacy, culture, etc. The term is not being used as a tool of theoretical analysis but rather as a notion from social and political practice. Avoiding the term "identity" (with its connotations of hypothetical common characteristics) as an analytical category also allows us to show how groups whose members share similar characteristics can also be divided over the issue of Israeli cultural diplomacy (such as the Jewish Diaspora). While various members or sub-groups of the group aim for social action on the basis of

¹⁹ See, for example, Church of Sweden backs Israel Boycott Campaign, <http://www.anglican.ink/article/church-sweden-backs-israel-boycott-campaign>.

their self-understanding, a common group identity does not necessarily have to be a result of the process. An emphasis on self-understanding, not on “identity,” allows us to accommodate the existence of a variety of groups of diverging traits, sizes, and levels of interconnectedness, as well as individuals engaged in social and political actions related to Israeli culture. Self-understanding, characterized above by Brubaker and Cooper, is a trait common to every social actor; identity would have to be defined in such a way as to allow us to ascribe it to every acknowledged actor yet maintain its analytical qualities, which seems to be an impossible task.²⁰

Multiple scholars see meaning-making in the field of culture as a major part of identity building (e.g., Clarke 2016). However, just as in the previous paragraphs, it needs to be emphasized that I do not consider art to be a direct representation of a group identity, and therefore this thesis does not fall in line with the “reflection theories” that see artists as speakers of their group. As we will see further, many of them feel highly uncomfortable with this status. Also, such theories presuppose a correlation between the group and the mode of expression, and homogeneity of the group in their views on a certain subject (Bourdieu 1993, 11).

3.5 Research topic

The thesis seeks to closely examine one specific case, Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech Republic, examining the mutual interactions of actors involved in the process of cultural representation: the Israeli foreign policy institutions, artists engaged in cultural diplomatic activities, the Diaspora, audiences, various Czech non-governmental actors including pro-Israeli support groups, BDS movements, and others. In doing so, the thesis follows its central paradigm, cultural diplomacy as a contextually rich phenomenon, and uses this perspective to analyze one specific case.

Why was Israel selected for this research? I have been engaged professionally with Israeli cultural diplomacy for three years and found it striking how polarizing it is. In the polite, optimistic and plurinarrative world of cultural diplomacy, the case of Israel highlights features of cultural diplomacy that are only seemingly non-conflictual, because cultural diplomacy as such is currently only rarely examined in the context of conflict.

²⁰ See Brubaker and Cooper (2000) for a detailed discussion.

Israeli society is deeply divided (see below) and thus the mechanisms that are inherent in many practices of cultural diplomacy but not very visible in a non-zero-sum context (such as competition of narratives, conflicts between domestic structures dealing with cultural diplomacy, etc.) clearly surface in this case. Examining the phenomenon of cultural representation in the case of a divided society, specifically Israel, allows us to observe the phenomena of a multitude of actors with varying agencies in a paradigmatic form. Domestic divisions translated into cultural representation, the varying expectations and preconceptions of the foreign audience, the competing narratives within Israeli cultural representation, and other phenomena are all rather clearly visible due to the heightened political and cultural context.

Thus, the research topic of the thesis is *cultural representation of a divided society*, with a focus on these issues: How does Israel's cultural representation in the Czech Republic look at the moment of research, and what are the trends? Who are the major actors, how do they approach the issue of Israel publicly, and how do they tailor their strategies to changes in the context? How is the current environment shaped by circumstances such as the history of bilateral relations, and the Jewish history of the Czech Republic? What is the position of the audience in this case? And what is the role, or what are the diverse roles, of the crucial agents of cultural representation, the artists?

In sum, the research topic of this thesis is the effect that deep divisions may have on the cultural representation of a society abroad, illustrated by the case of the representation of Israel in the Czech Republic. It will be examined from the angle of representation—i.e., how is the topic of Israel employed and enacted through culture by various actors engaged with it.

This thesis has a theoretical-critical, a constructive and a normative aim: It seeks to point to the insufficient conceptualization of cultural diplomacy; it seeks to show a path forward by proposing an interdisciplinary cultural representation analysis merging notions from international relations and anthropology; and it considers normative aspects of the cultural representation of a divided society within this framework.

As we will see, concepts from the field of international relations focus on institutions, strategies and content, while those related to anthropology allow us to analyze cultural diplomacy as representation and provide tools for the examination of the role of the audience.

Hopefully, my research will allow both practitioners and scholars to develop a more contextual, nuanced and realistic understanding of the phenomena of cultural diplomacy and cultural representation, thereby providing a space for better policy design as well as better scholarly analysis of the phenomena, paying attention to the specific benefits and opportunities as well as the perils that the conduct of cultural diplomacy holds. However, the thesis does not aim to evaluate the efficiency of the cultural diplomacy it examines. This can be achieved only against the background of the real ambitions of the government, which have not been examined as they are usually not publicly announced, like other governmental policies, for security and diplomatic reasons.

Divided society

From the beginning, the issues related to the conflicts inherent in cultural representation were brought to my attention due to the case of Israel, where they are especially pronounced as the actors are highly motivated to promote their idea of Israel abroad in view of the fact that the stakes—legitimacy, recognition, the support of international actors—are high. I am persuaded that inconsistencies and conflicts are present in a number of cultural diplomacies. They can be visible, as in the case of US cultural diplomacy, that included the export of anti-regime leftist rock bands that criticized US policies abroad (Fosler-Lussier 2015); they can be suppressed, as in the case of the Spanish nation branding project *Marca España*, that excluded minority Basque and Catalan stakeholders from the process of representation (Uldemolins and Zamorano 2015); or they can be incorporated into the dominant narrative in a controlled way, like the issue of Tibet that is presented within Chinese cultural diplomacy as one of the stones in the mosaic of peaceful, colorful, multiethnic China (d’Hooghe 2015).

The Israeli case displays divisions in a rather clear manner. Israel is often labelled as a “deeply divided society” (Al-Haj 2002; Avraham 2003; Yaish 2001; Lerner 2011). Societies can be divided in various ways— for example, over national, ethnic, religious, and other social issues. In deeply divided societies multiple divisions overlap (often including spatial division), stratifying and segmenting the society, and are accompanied by parallel institutions with authority over separate groups. Simultaneously, communication among groups is sparse, and perception among the groups is negative, often characterized by a view of “the other” as an enemy by definition and the balance of power as a zero-sum game, so that the groups function antagonistically. The issues of particular identity vis-à-vis the other are paramount (Zureikh, Moughrabi and Sacco

1993), making agreement on a decision-making process impossible, resulting in a lack of national political legitimacy and an increased potential for conflict along the divide (Guelke 2012).²¹

In the case of Israel, deep divisions run across several divides: national (Palestinian/Jewish, and Israeli Arab/Jewish divide),²² religious (Druze/Christian/Muslim divide; religious-Jewish/non-religious-Jewish divide), and ethnic (Sephardi-Jews/Ashkenazi-Jews; Smootha 1978). However, according to most scholars, “the national division is ... the deepest and the most salient” in Israel (Al-Haj 2002, 173) and provides the best opportunity to follow the presence of artists from both (Jewish and Arab) groups in Israeli foreign cultural representation, their stances, and reactions to their engagement or a lack thereof.²³

3.7 Reasoning behind the research topic

Cultural diplomacy is a term pervasive not only in scholarly literature, but also in practice. In Europe, most states have a vast network of cultural institutes responsible for cultural diplomacy, and the EU aims to develop its own cultural influence abroad to “secure its role as a global cultural player” (Euractive.com 2011) even though European cultural diplomacy’s golden era, along with the European influence on the world stage, might be gone (for an account of the British Council’s declining influence see Gillespie et al. 2014). Similarly, in the US, the kind of boost the Cold War gave to cultural diplomacy (Glade 2009) has been absent for the past two decades, but culture has not lost its significance for US foreign affairs: the country led a “cultural offensive” (Farouque 2011) during Barack Obama’s term, even though Trump’s presidency has changed the game. In other corners of the world, cultural diplomacy has been gaining

²¹ For more on the issue, see Lustick 1979, Dryzek 2005, Du Toit 1989, and Lederach 1997.

²² The highly complex issue of the definition and self-definition of inhabitants of Israel of Arab ethnic origin is a topic in itself. The term “Israeli Arab,” quoted here from Smootha (1978), is far from accepted by a majority of scholars. Often, the term “Israeli Arab” is perceived as disregarding the self-identification of Arabs living in Israel who prefer to call themselves Palestinians (Peleg, Waxman 2011, 3). Among common terms used by scholars we can thus find “Arab citizens of Israel,” “Palestinian citizens of Israel,” “Arab minority,” and “Palestinian minority” (ibid.). In this thesis, I mostly use the term “Palestinians” because this is the most comprehensive one in the public narrative that we are examining. Also, for an anthropologist, the self-definition of an ethnic group is a crucial criterion. Importantly, within the context of Israeli cultural representation, the term in this thesis relates not only to Arabs with Israeli citizenship, but also to Palestinians from other territories, such as the West Bank. The narratives of Arabs with Israeli citizenship and Palestinians living outside the territory of Israel are often intertwined in cultural production, as we will see. On certain occasions, the term “Arab” or “Arab minority” is used when the context is ethno-cultural rather than political.

²³ Among other deeply divided societies, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Ethiopia, and Eastern European countries (Smootha 1997) or India and Ireland (Lerner 2011) are listed, for instance.

prominence, and Asian powers have been increasingly active in this field. China announced “ambitious plan for one thousand [cultural] institutes by 2020” (Osgood and Etheridge 2011, 3); Japan launched its massive “Cool Japan” campaign in 2010 (Brienza 2014); Russia has not stayed outside the debate, as President Putin has called for an enhancement of its soft power, in his words “promoting one’s interests and policies through persuasion and creating a positive perception of one’s country, based not just on its material achievements but also its spiritual and intellectual heritage” (Putin 2012, quoted in Simons 2014).

Therefore, the study of cultural diplomacy is crucial if we are to elucidate one of the prominent dynamics in international relations.

Examining the topics outlined above in relation to Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech Republic is pertinent for several reasons. First, Israel places a great deal of importance on public diplomacy—the overarching term for various tools, including cultural diplomacy, that aim to influence the foreign public’s opinion—as attested by scholarly contributions (Cummings 2016; Medzini 2012; Attias 2012) as well as vivid public discussion (Puder 2016). The Israeli public diplomacy apparatus is well-financed and its actions do have consequences for the international scene because they change the framing of Israel-related political issues (Sheafer and Shenhav 2014; Avraham 2009). Israeli public diplomacy in general is an internationally visible and well-studied phenomenon for good reason.

Israeli public and cultural diplomacy is pertinent not only for its quantity, but also for its specific qualities. Due to the attention that it encounters internationally, the phenomena that this thesis strives to illuminate—the influence of a domestic society’s divisions, of audience preconceptions, and of competing narratives on cultural diplomacy—are clearly represented in the Israeli case. Israeli society is characterized by a large number of conflictual topics whose influence can be traced in the country’s cultural representation abroad; the international environment is rarely neutral towards Israel and thus positive as well as negative reactions to its activities can be traced and described in great variety; and there are a number of competing actors that cultivate counternarratives to Israeli public and cultural diplomacy. Therefore, Israeli cultural representation is an especially pertinent case for the study of problems related to cultural diplomacy in general.

Furthermore, Israel is representative of a certain group of cases. As argued below, the traditional conceptualization of cultural diplomacy derives from dominant Western practices of cultural diplomacy, such as those of France. They take place in a context very different from the Israeli one: their perception abroad is not so polarized; their societies are not deeply divided. Therefore, the examination of Israeli cultural diplomacy should allow us to enrich the traditional conceptualization of cultural diplomacy by focusing attention on aspects significantly shaping the practice for non-Western states: a limited understanding of the domestic political situation and the country's international image lagging behind its economic standing. Public and cultural diplomacy have frequently been used as tools of image-improvement by countries striving to normalize their standing on the international scene after a major crisis, such as Germany and Japan after the Second World War (Paulmann 2007; Collins 2007), or Eastern European countries after the end of the Cold War (Kaneva and Popescu 2011), and will probably continue to be important for states that strive to bolster their symbolic standing in a manner that supposedly does not provoke any resentments.

Despite its generalizable features, Israel is a rather unique case and the thesis should be instrumental in illuminating its particularities. From the political culture formed by the diaspora to its immense criticism on the international stage—along with its consequences for Israeli cultural diplomacy, such as the international cultural boycott—Israel as an initiator of international cultural relations is in an unparalleled position that warrants deeper understanding.

Finally, studying Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech Republic has its merits as well. Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech Republic is not a minor part of Israel's global cultural diplomacy. Even though the bulk of Israeli public diplomacy efforts are directed towards the USA, the country's focus has recently also been on post-Communist European states, the Czech Republic among them, that are perceived as a gateway to the EU, with a more favorable public environment compared with that of Western Europe.²⁴ There are more than a hundred Israel-related cultural events in the Czech Republic per year that are supported by the Israeli Embassy,²⁵ making Israeli cultural representation in the Czech Republic significant even in the context of bigger

²⁴ I refer to Joanna Dyduch's conference paper at Israel Week 2016; see Dyduch 2016.

²⁵ See the monthly newsletter on Israeli culture in the Czech Republic, as well as the annual reports on Israeli cultural activities in the Czech Republic, on the website of the Embassy of Israel in Prague. See *Kulturní oddělení Velvyslanectví Státu Izrael v České republice*, <https://embassies.gov.il/Praha/Departments/Pages/Kulturni-oddeleni.aspx>.

players, such as the UK or Italy, that organize a comparable number of cultural events within Czech borders. Therefore, Israeli cultural diplomacy is a relevant case for research, and its cultural diplomacy in the Czech Republic has the potential to shed light on wider trends.

3.8 Literature review

3.8.1 Literature on cultural diplomacy

The body of literature on cultural diplomacy is not overwhelming, but provides a sufficient basis for further research. Notably, I consider two recent major contributions to be crucial for my research: *Searching for Cultural Diplomacy* by Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried (Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010), and the monograph *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy* by Danielle Fosler-Lussier (Fosler-Lussier 2015).

The latter book is an informative and analytically sound recent account of US Cold War musical diplomacy. The author manages, through rigorous and open-minded research, to vividly capture the US musical diplomacy of a certain period, dealing in detail with the roles of various stakeholders, illustrating the influence of enthusiastic ambassadors, energetic local cultural entrepreneurs, and the role of the local press and audiences for the outcome of cultural diplomacy. Fosler-Lussier shows that despite Washington's view of cultural diplomacy as a unilateral instrument of influence the outcome was shaped by a much more complex reality in which the embassy officials were placed in networks of relationships with local stakeholders, and, most importantly, were dependent on the participation of the local audience. "If a potential audience was not receptive, there was little the embassy could do to reach them" (Fosler-Lussier 2015, 5). Fosler-Lussier shows that, despite the governmental conceptualization of cultural diplomacy as a one-way process, the historical account reveals that, when observed from the bottom up, it turns out to be an "intensive process of negotiation and engagement" (ibid.) in which the content is not created unilaterally "but reflect[s] a dynamic array of artistic and political interests" (ibid.).

Fosler-Lussier's study was immensely inspirational for me in its rootedness in practice and ability to draw general conclusions from very specific and detailed research. But where Fosler-Lussier's study focuses on different topics presented in US musical diplomacy and is, in its structure, rather content-oriented, I put forward an actors-based

analysis that allows us to focus on the process while capturing the multiplicity of motivations and methods of engagement in a state's cultural representation.

The second book that has made a major contribution to the canon of cultural diplomacy recently is *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy* (Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010), a collection of studies on cultural diplomacy deriving from the thesis that the current, Western-based conceptualization of cultural diplomacy is not able to cover the broad range of practices labelled today as cultural diplomacy in the global context. This angle provided an insight that is important generally as well as for my own research, testifying to the overwhelming diversity of cultural diplomacy practices, and their global dispersion, despite the previous heavy emphasis on the Western sphere.

Through a set of studies of non-Western cultural diplomacies (from the former European colonies, the Soviet Union, Asia, and Eastern Europe) the book illustrates how heavily cultural diplomacy depends on context, or, as Gienow-Hecht and Donfried say, how “the intentions inherent in cultural diplomacy depend very much on the cultural mindsets of the actors involved as well as the immediate organizational and structural circumstances” (Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010, 8). The book is not only the latest broad study on cultural diplomacy but also a precious one, as it points to the shortcomings of contemporary research and draws some useful general conclusions. However, it also has several weaknesses that I have summarized in my review for the *International Journal of Cultural Policy* (Jurková 2015). First, most of the studies deal with cultural diplomacy practice in the first half of the twentieth century. However, all communicative practices have been re-shaped by the information revolution and globalization, and cultural diplomacy is no exception, increasingly involving new media. This cannot be omitted from any study of cultural diplomacy that aims to contribute to the design and understanding of current cultural diplomacy practice. Second, the book did not help to clarify the definition of cultural diplomacy. Drawing from studies using very diverse conceptualizations of cultural diplomacy, the authors conclude that cultural diplomacy is “an exchange of ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, and beliefs... with the intention of fostering mutual understanding” (ibid., 23). Such a conceptualization obfuscates our understanding of cultural diplomacy with the idealistic aim of “mutual understanding,” which is not always its real motivating force, as we have shown above. Therefore, Gienow-Hecht's and Donfried's book is valuable for its questioning of the prevalent conceptualization of cultural diplomacy and

for its emphasis on non-Western states, but is not persuasive when constructing a new conceptualization.

Besides these two monographs, there are other valuable contributions, too. A collective monograph, *Cultural Diplomacy: Beyond the National Interest* (Ang et al. 2015), compares different types of practices within cultural diplomacy, from residential artists' programs to media strategies and support of the expansion of pop culture. Based on a comparison of various case studies, the book concludes that there are dramatic differences in cultural diplomacy practices, and it pleads for anthropologically oriented research into cultural diplomacy, with an emphasis on the practical dimension of each case. This book, like Fosler-Lussier's (2015) monograph, added to the recently growing body of literature pleading for a revised methodology in cultural diplomacy studies.

An ever-growing number of interesting studies of particular cultural diplomacy practices (among the most appreciated is Arndt's account of US cultural diplomacy, Arndt 2005) has recently been enriched by papers on Chinese cultural diplomacy (e.g., Zhang 2011; Zhao, Tan 2007; Lai 2006; Klimeš, 2019) that examine this ambitious chapter in contemporary cultural diplomacy. Here, as well as in other studies, an emphasis on regionally-focused research has proven to be fruitful since it is best able to reveal locally specific features and ascertain intrastate dynamics.

I deem the most successful studies on cultural diplomacy to be those that are able to capture it in a rather complex way. These studies usually focus on its practice while employing on-the-ground research. Among them, Joanna Elfving-Wang's (2013) paper on South Korean cultural diplomacy is immensely inspirational due to its thorough field research that uncovers differences among the agencies of various actors engaged in South Korea's cultural diplomacy. Against the background of a broader analysis of South Korea's international status and the issues it encounters in external communication (such as the negative image of its "relative" North Korea, and the legacy of the Korean War), Elfving-Wang examines encounters taking place during the festival of Korean films in Frankfurt, and the diverging motivations of various participants: Frankfurt students, members of the Korean-German Network, etc. This particular study is valuable in its ability to capture both the macro-level and the micro-level, including interpersonal relationships, of one practice of cultural diplomacy, and as such was an inspiration for my thesis.

In the Czech environment, it is imperative to mention the pioneering international relations monograph focused on France by Eliška Tomalová, *Kulturní diplomacie: Francouzská zkušenost* (Tomalová 2008), that was the first major Czech work on cultural diplomacy. Recently, a very detailed historical study by Petra Baštová, *Třetí pilíř zahraniční politiky?: Západoněmecká zahraniční kulturní politika v šedesátých a sedmdesátých letech 20. století* (Baštová 2018) was published, dealing with the German cultural diplomacy of a specific period. This study exemplifies how a well-researched historical work can be informative for topics that belong more to the field of international relations. A monograph edited by Ondřej Klimeš, *Kulturní diplomacie Číny a její regionální variace* (Klimeš 2019), looks at current Chinese cultural diplomacy from various research perspectives, bringing to the domestic environment a very well-informed and critical analysis of Chinese cultural diplomacy that is visibly present in the Czech public space and in Czech political discourse.

Besides studies dealing with specific cultural diplomacy practices, several innovative studies examining the potential cultural diplomacy of international organizations such as the European Union have recently been published (Isar 2015; European Union 2014a). Studies that do not take a state as their object lead to novel questions. For instance, some scholars expect growth in the field of supranational cultural diplomacy to resolve public diplomacy's dilemma between its state-centered practice and the diminishing appeal of nationalistic practices on the international scene (Ang et al. 2015). Similarly universal questions are posed by the collective monograph *Culture and External Relations: Europe and Beyond* (Bátora and Mokre 2010), in which the authors review the notions of universalism and particularism, the role of borders, and possible coordination of cultural diplomacies.

Among the papers searching for answers to broader questions is a well-written study by David Clarke, *Theorising the role of cultural products in cultural diplomacy from a cultural studies perspective* (Clarke 2016). Starting out from the notion of cultural products as the center of the meaning-making process in cultural diplomacy, Clarke explains how various actors engaged with cultural diplomacy (NGOs, etc.) interpret the guidelines according to their own notions or convictions about the importance of different genres etc., or, in short, according to their institutional or personal identity (ibid., 150). This supported my personal experience with the field and encouraged me to continue with my research.

Moving on from the body of literature on cultural diplomacy in general, and on the cultural diplomacies of other states, the following paragraphs sum up the status quo of the literature on Israeli cultural diplomacy specifically.

3.8.2 Literature on Israeli cultural diplomacy

Unlike literature on cultural diplomacy in general, scholarly literature on Israeli cultural diplomacy is scarce. One of the two major sources in English is the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya (Appel et al. 2008). Its authors bring forth a number of interesting theses and topics, but they employ the aforementioned unsubstantiated assumptions. Notably, they consider cultural diplomacy as a path towards “mutual understanding” (ibid., 7) where mere exposure to culture eliminates frictions and prejudice, claiming:

...Cultural diplomacy programs are able to counter misunderstanding, ignorance, and baseless hatred that people in other countries may bear toward a certain country. This benefit is especially relevant to Israel, as most of the world learns about Israel through media channels, which most often portray Israel solely through the lens of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with little or no emphasis on Israel’s flourishing culture, developed society and successful business arena. (ibid., 11)

According to the authors, the exposure of foreigners to Israeli society will show them that “Israel’s ... people are human, law-abiding and affable” (ibid., 11). This is, unfortunately, not necessarily the case, as prejudices are not always overcome with a one-time experience, as we will see in the chapter on audiences. In its assumptions and conclusions, the paper is not a rigorous critical account of Israeli cultural diplomacy.

A rich resource of information on Israeli cultural diplomacy can be found in the European Union’s report *Culture in EU External Relations* (European Union 2014b). The report meticulously maps the structures responsible for Israeli cultural diplomacy, its budget, and its relation to EU. However, it cannot be counted as a scholarly paper; it is rather an administrative report.

I know of no other major contributions on Israeli cultural diplomacy in English language scholarly journals. On the other hand, scholarly literature on Israeli public diplomacy and nation branding is much more abundant. In 2016, Jonathan Cummings’ *Israel’s Public Diplomacy: The Problems of Hasbara, 1966 – 1975* (Cummings 2016) was published, making a major contribution to an already solid body of literature on Israeli public diplomacy, notably a comprehensive historical account by Meron Medzini

(Medzini 2012), an account of current challenges to Israeli public diplomacy by Raphael D. Harkham (Harkham 2015), a study of the failures of hasbara by Ron Schliefer (Schliefer 2003), and the influential critical study by Eytan Gilboa from 2006 (Gilboa 2006). Additionally, a substantive study from the field of PR by Margalit Toledano and David McKie, called *Public Relations and Nation Building: Influencing Israel*, was published in 2013, examining the role of PR professionals and mass media in the internal as well as external dimensions of Israel's nation building (Toledano and McKie 2013). Most recently, Gal Hadari and Asaf Turgeman's article summed up the findings, adding some recommendations for Israel's public diplomacy (Hadari, Turgeman, 2016). Papers on Israeli nation branding by Eli Avraham are a significant contribution to the field (Avraham 2009; Avraham 2013). They map branding strategies used by the Israeli government to improve its image riven by the prolonged crisis and testifying to the effect these strategies can have when used properly.²⁶

Harkham's, Gilboa's, Toledano's, McKie's, and especially Cummings' accounts are detailed examinations of Israeli structures responsible for the cultivation of its foreign reputation, tracing trends that have shaped them from the establishment of the state until today and carefully evaluating the interplay of the international political context, the domestic situation, and public diplomacy efforts. As such, I build on their work when establishing the context of Israeli cultural diplomacy. However, since the focus of these studies is information techniques (as the pivotal tool of public diplomacy), they have only limited applicability for my inquiry about the role of representation through the arts in international relations.

What is the reason behind the notable discrepancy between the body of work on Israeli public diplomacy and Israeli cultural diplomacy? It cannot be explained only by the fact that public diplomacy is a broader term. There are several alternative possibilities.

First, some scholars have recently suggested that, with cultural exchange becoming a standard part of the functioning of many institutions, governmentally orchestrated cultural diplomacy becomes obsolete and takes a back seat to government-facilitated humanitarian aid and academic exchange (Glade 2009). However, others use the concept of New Public Diplomacy, pointing to the potential of governmental bodies to function as liaisons, facilitating the emergence of networks and partnerships with non-

²⁶ We will examine most of these contributions in detail in the chapter on governmental actors.

state actors (Snow and Taylor 2001). Public and cultural diplomacy thus do not have to fall prey to the growing prominence of non-state actors.

A second explanation seems more plausible. The neglect of cultural diplomacy probably stems from the current preference for policies that are also efficient in the short term, reflected in the scholarly texts on public diplomacy. Calls for the harmonization of public diplomacy with short- and long-term policy goals and synchronization across various administrative and political units have been frequent, which probably benefits information campaigns (Avraham 2009b) but is contradictory to most cultural diplomacy efforts that are deemed to be efficient only when rather independent from immediate political goals (Gienow-Hecht, Donfried, 2010). This thesis also embraces the notion of cultural diplomacy as the less “efficient” tool (in the sense of providing immediate support for political goals) in comparison to public diplomacy. Therefore, states that encounter daily political challenges, such as Israel, rely more on the “muddling through” style of politics (Cummings 2016), requiring quick adaptation to the present situation. This would explain why cultural diplomacy takes a back seat when a prompt and large-scale reaction to change is required, as policy makers as well as a significant part of the domestic audience are persuaded, in Israel and elsewhere. We will come back to the status of cultural diplomacy in Israeli policy making, but will make a preliminary conclusion that the lack of literature on Israeli cultural diplomacy reflects neglect of the practice.

3.9 Contribution of the thesis to the field

This thesis is based on the two presented bodies of literature, and hopes to add to them in several ways. First, it should be a significant contribution to the literature on Israeli cultural diplomacy, as there is much space to explore. Second, it will enrich the literature on cultural diplomacy with an in-depth study within the best practice of papers that are able to elucidate broader phenomena shaping a cultural diplomacy practice while at the same time fruitfully examining the nuanced warp and weft of the on-the-ground reality.

Finally, through Israel as its central case, the thesis brings forward the little-discussed question of the cultural representation of a divided society. While highlighting the specific dynamics that the division brings to the nation’s representation abroad, it asks about more general phenomena and dilemmas related to national representation, such as ethics, and the absence of certain voices.

3.10 Methodology

Anthropology is, above all, an approach that aims to understand varied societal processes (Stöckelová and Abu Ghosh 2013). Ethnographic methods are pertinent for our case as they allow us to examine the organization of social action in a particular setting (Silverman 1993). Based on the outlined theoretical frameworks, the thesis examines a whole variety of actors that are engaged in or react to Israeli cultural diplomacy, forming a complex cultural representation of Israel.

In general, the thesis employs a double methodology: when analyzing the historical and global context of engaged actors, it derives from the existing scholarly literature and other resources. When examining separate actors' strategies in the Czech Republic, it employs more ground-based research, based on ethnographic methods.²⁷

As each of the actors is of a different type, from governmental agencies to audience members to the artists themselves, each chapter uses slightly different tools. However, the emphasis is always on the application of the outlined theory: the methodology is based on the theory of interactionism which examines how meanings arise in the context of behavior, studying both process and stability (Silverman 1993). Thus, for each actor, the respective chapter aims to analyze the context as thickly as possible.

A range of qualitative ethnographic methods has been used: observation, interviews, and document analysis. The primary data-collection method used was observation, defined by Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman as "the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (Marshall, Rossman 1989, 79). Observation enables a researcher to examine nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, in which ways, and how frequently (Schmuck 1997).

The rendition of Israel in a cultural content was analyzed through detailed observation of 43 events (over the course of a year-long background research period). A key qualification for the events was that they were co-sponsored, co-organized or promoted by the Israeli Embassy in Prague and as such qualify as a part of "cultural diplomacy."

²⁷ I am aware that the combination of the perspective of the discipline of international relations and of anthropology might be seen by some as reduction of the ethnographic method to "(1) an empiricist data-collection machine, (2) a writing style, or (3) a theoretical sensibility," as Vradi suggests (Vradi 2008, 279). I am willing to bear this accusation of reductionism as I am convinced that the proposed interdisciplinary approach delivers valuable results.

Both mediated cultural content (such as films and literature) and real-time interactive performances were considered.

The involvement of each type of actor was analyzed, and the explicit as well as implicit ways in which Israel was represented in the actors' environment were examined. Because the analysis deals with a cultural practice rather than a system more attention was paid to the signifying practices employed by the actors than to institutional factors. In particular, attention was paid to "signs that carry the meaning" in Hall's sense of the word (Hall 1997, 13) while embodying the topic of Israel for each of the actors (organizers of the events as well as performers). Verbal and non-verbal signs were considered, including the self-descriptions of the actors, their aims as identified by themselves, and the ways the actors metaphorically related to Israel, but also visual motifs used to mark the events, the venues where the events take place, and partnerships in which the events were organized. When analyzing artists' performances themselves, attention was paid to words, self-conduct, CD covers, body language, etc., as suggested by Turino, who sees music (related, in our case, to other performing practices) as a signifying practice for collective identity (Turino 2008, 2).

Asking the stakeholders for their motivations was not a major part of the research process as, in line with Bourdieu's claims, explicit aims are only one among multiple motivations for specific behavior. Silverman emphasizes that observation should focus on what people do rather than what people say, thus allowing for examination of the claim's function rather than its content (Silverman 1993). Thus, complex observation was conducted to allow for a more complex description. Political and historical context for each type of actor is provided as their role for symbolic production is crucial (Lundberg 2010).

In some cases, additional research methods were employed, notably semi-structured interviews with the audience of Israeli cultural events (31 respondents at five events).

It is important to make clear thought that I did not conduct these interviews myself due to my position as Cultural Officer at the Embassy of Israel, that I held for most of the research period. Being interviewed by such an individual might hamper the honesty of interviewees as they could feel pressured to behave more officially and restrain their expression. Also, in some cases, I was working at the events in an official capacity, and thus would not have been able to conduct interviews for scheduling reasons. Therefore,

I collaborated with a student of anthropology, who conducted the interviews according to my guidelines.

I did not use the interviews to benefit my official posting in any way, and I have not used any documents that would not be publicly accessible while establishing socio-political context for the analysis.²⁸ My position did not provide me with any specific information used in the research that would not be accessible to any other scholar. If my post was beneficial for the research in any specific way, it has enabled me to identify the key phenomena and to search for resources in an efficient way—in other words, to look into a direction that would allow for the most coherent explanation.

At a later stage of the research, four additional interviews with personalities with a substantial knowledge of the perceptions of Israeli culture in the Czech Republic, and of the Czech perception of its Jewish history, were conducted, to provide more contextual information—notably in the chapters on bilateral relations, and the chapter on audience.

The interviewed subjects were aware of the objective of the research and my supervisor at the Embassy was aware of my work, too. Not all of the events, claims, and observations that are part of this thesis were gathered with the purpose of including them, though. Therefore, not all of those whose public claims I quote were aware that research was being conducted, as my ideas about the structure of the research were not clear from the very beginning. I was making field notes and studying theoretical as well as practitioners' materials over the whole course of the research, but only at a later phase did the specific phenomena that were significant for the topic start to emerge. The research did not start with a specific hypothesis. Rather, its findings crystallized in the process.

Interpretation of the findings was a key part of the research. As Horský claims, because the object of examination is constructed by people quantitative analysis is not possible, and interpretation remains the most suitable method (Horský 2009, 63).

As anthropology insists, the researcher himself/herself is the ultimate research tool. However, I have treated this assumption carefully. I have attempted to adhere to Weber's ambition not to deny the presence of values in the research but to provide explanations that are as plausible as possible. To make my biases clear and thus to allow

²⁸ I have not used any unofficial knowledge of the prominence of certain actors for the analysis; but I did make use of all the public reports by Israeli officials and other actors engaged in Israeli cultural representation.

the reader to evaluate the angle the interpretations are coming from, I have included an autoethnographic chapter at the start of the thesis.

3.11 Conclusion

In the introductory chapter, we have delineated the most common notions of cultural diplomacy, outlined their shortcomings, and created a practice-driven definition. The chapter outlines the path from cultural diplomacy, “governmentally facilitated communication with a foreign audience through whatever is considered as culture,” to cultural representation, a highly contextual phenomenon that emerges through the interaction of various actors involved with a state’s representation. Thus, our analysis will be actor-based, and perceives cultural representation as a process.

Importantly, actors involved with the landscape of cultural representation have various motivations and strategies, conscious and unconscious. Their engagement with the cultural representation of a state points to their strategies (and thus also to their self-understanding), but is simultaneously changed in the process. Representation becomes agency, and these two layers become intertwined.

In the thesis, I am not looking for the “true motivations” or “true nature” of the actors (that is why we have also discarded terms such as identity, or the notion of relationships defined primarily by power). I am rather interested in describing one special case of cultural representation: that of Israel in the Czech Republic. The analysis should be instrumental in pointing to different types of actors, and the different ways in which they are involved with the process (often in mutual interaction).

The case studied in this thesis is that of the cultural representation of a divided society. As outlined above, this allows us to underline Bourdieu’s claim that the issues at stake influence the strategies of the actors.

In the following chapters, we will examine each of the actors first in the global context and then in the specifically Czech-Israeli context, thereby deconstructing the cultural representation of Israel in the Czech Republic.

4. ISRAELI GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR FOREIGN POLICY

We will commence with the chapter dealing with Israeli governmental actors responsible for foreign policy and thus also cultural diplomacy.

Israel is one of the most negatively perceived countries globally (Avraham 2009b, 203). While conflict is the primary negative association with Israel, the Israeli public and Israeli institutions believe that the country's cultural and other achievements can help to improve its international image (Avraham 2009b, 202). Therefore, cultural diplomacy appears to be an appropriate technique to enhance the country's image, and to reduce its isolation. The Israeli audience has strong expectations of techniques oriented towards foreign audiences: "The Israeli public relates to the problems of *hasbara*,²⁹ particularly at times of crisis and danger, in a way that seems to have become a matter of obsession which is not easy to explain. In any event, it has no parallel in any other country in the world," scholars have observed (Cummings 2016, loc. 96-99 of 5476). The government has always been expected—and has aspired—to play a major role in this regard.

Within our conceptualization of cultural diplomacy as "governmentally facilitated communication with a foreign audience through whatever is considered as culture," governmental initiative is a condition *sine qua non*, and the indispensable level on which to consider cultural diplomacy. Governmental structures establish, motivate, and limit cultural exports.

The role of governmental institutions tends to be more decisive for smaller cultures, such as Israel. Big states do not need governmental institutions to make their culture visible around the world—American cultural dominance is well known without any impetuses of this kind—but for smaller states governmental facilitation and motivation can be a major component of their cultural presence abroad, as demonstrated in the scholarly literature—for instance, in the case of Taiwanese government support for film exports, and its tremendous impact on Taiwanese filmmakers' presence abroad (Rawnsley 2017).

Exactly how governmental structures are involved with the export of culture, what type of actors they cooperate with, and how the importance ascribed to cultural diplomacy

²⁹ Hasbara is the Israeli rendition of public diplomacy; the term will be discussed in detail later.

within governmental institutions translates to funding varies from case to case. A major factor is political culture, or “orientations towards the political system” (Wedeen 2002, 713). Wedeen sees political culture as one type of “practice of meaning-making” that has “effects on institutional arrangements, on structures of dominations, and on strategic interests” (Wedeen 2002, 714). In her conceptualization, political culture thus has major implications for the practice of diplomacy. Political institutions and political culture are intrinsically linked.³⁰

The following pages will examine the governmental structures dedicated to cultural diplomacy in Israel, and will try to answer the question of what the institutional dimension tells us about the role ascribed to cultural diplomacy in Israeli foreign policy, and in Israeli diplomatic relations with the Czech Republic. Specifically, this chapter aims to illustrate that despite the common conceptualization of cultural diplomacy as a part of public diplomacy³¹ the two operate on very different grounds in the Israeli context. While Israeli public diplomacy (which involves information campaigns, which are expected to be helpful in managing imminent political challenges and in explaining Israeli political positions to various audiences) is a prominent tool of foreign policy, cultural diplomacy, which is (especially in an Israeli context, as we will see later) less straightforward, takes a back seat. This contrast can be related to a number of Israeli domestic factors. Among the major reasons, as we will argue, are the reactive character of Israeli image management and the predominance of activist culture within Israeli foreign policy structures. Cultural diplomacy’s lower status is related to a lack of financing, but also to its decentralization and lack of strategic management. The resulting multivalence makes Israeli cultural diplomacy especially prone to various types of employment of the topic of Israel through culture by various actors with diverse intentions, as will be illustrated in the following chapters. However, as we conclude, it also provides cultural diplomacy with opportunities.

The chapter outlines the context, development, and institutional level of Israeli public diplomacy, analyzes its position vis-à-vis Israeli cultural diplomacy, and specifies the institutional structures of Israeli cultural diplomacy. As public diplomacy usually forms

³⁰ I do not consider political culture to be something inherent or fixed. As we will see in the chapter on governmental actors, there are major trends changing political culture, too, such as the prevalence of one narrative or approach over the other in the long term.

³¹ As specified in Chapter 1, while public diplomacy is understood as a broader effort to increase the attraction of a state in the eyes of a foreign public, cultural diplomacy is the part of this effort that employs art.

the broader framework of cultural diplomacy, we will start by analyzing Israeli public diplomacy and move on to Israeli cultural diplomacy later.

4.1 Israeli public diplomacy

‘Hasbara’ is a key term in the study of Israeli public and cultural diplomacy. This Hebrew term is roughly equivalent to public diplomacy, but with distinctive traits. In the extensive study *Israel's Public Diplomacy: The Problems of Hasbara, 1966-1975* by Jonathan Cummings, the author deals with the terminology as well as the historical development of hasbara in detail. His account demonstrates the hopes attached to public diplomacy by the Israelis, as well as limitations that derive from the lack of any domestic consensus about its specific desired outcomes.

According to Cummings, hasbara is “a concept unique to the Zionist movement and the State of Israel. Its roots are in the biblical expression ‘sever panim,’ meaning countenance or facial expression, which was familiar in 1960s Israel as a slogan for encouraging incoming tourism” (Cummings 2016, loc. 203 of 5476). Later, though, with the growing complexity of the political situation,³² this concept was transferred to public discourse as “an emerging term of art in the field of propaganda and public relations” (Cummings 2016, loc. 207 of 5476) that drew hopes of being able to secure international support much needed by Israel in the state’s long conflict with its neighbors and over the Palestinian issue. Today, hasbara is an Israel-specific rendition of the field of public diplomacy focused on clarifying and explaining Israel’s position in order to secure foreign support for the country’s actions (Cummings 2016, loc. 2017 of 5476).

There are those who want to abolish the term, advocating for “public diplomacy,” as “hasbara” does not include use of social media and public initiative (Frantzman 2014, 12), and so is a more state-centric notion. However, most literature still refers to Israeli public diplomacy as “hasbara” and we will continue using the term in this thesis.

Historical development of hasbara

Meron Medzini, a former director of the Israel Government Press Office (1962–1978) gives an account of the development of Israeli public diplomacy, pointing to the inherent dilemmas the practice has embodied up to the present day, in his *Reflections on*

³² During the administration of Levi Eshkol, the third Israeli prime minister (1963-1969) and the first head of government to deal systematically with the issue of Israel’s image abroad (Cummings 2016, loc. 1226 of 5476).

Israel's Public Diplomacy (Medzini 2012). Israel's image became topical only after the consolidation of the new state had been completed. In the 1950s, the first decade after the state's establishment in 1948, Israel was treated by the international community "with kid gloves out of the desire not to attack Jews so soon after the Holocaust" (Medzini 2012). But the '60s had an entirely different atmosphere: Eichmann's trial in 1961 turned the world's attention to the new Middle Eastern state, bringing hundreds of international reporters to Jerusalem. Three years later, the visit of Pope Paul VI had a similar effect. Well organized media coverage "afforded many reporters a glimpse of Israel they never knew existed – a country quietly going about its way in developing science, technology, medicine, literature, dance, drama, cooperative agricultural settlements such as Kibbutzim and Moshavim and even successfully reviv[ing] its ancient language" (ibid.). Israelis were becoming aware of how the outside world perceived them.

Already, these early moments brought a dilemma not resolved to this day: Should Israel brand itself as a nation at war, which is a more advantageous initial position for fundraising and a strategy that worked well during the '50s, or should it strive to be portrayed as a regular member of the international community of states facing specific, but not overwhelming challenges, an image that Israel gained in the 1960s, which is more of an incentive for the development of tourism and investments (ibid.)? The fact that consensus on this matter has never been reached has resulted in a long-term inability to create an efficient public diplomacy structure. The consequences of this were seen after the Six Day War in 1967—the first big test of Israel's abilities to manage its image abroad under unfavorable circumstances. While the war brought a sweeping military victory, it was bad news for Israel's soft power. Israel walked out of the war as a shining victor, increasing its territory. But while before and during the short war Israel was perceived in the West as the underdog, and European and American public opinion was firmly on its side, the sweeping victory changed a lot for Israel's image. Now Israel was seen as a militarized state rather than a victim, the hasbara apparatus struggled with both declining international support, and with the externally visible domestic clash of opinions on the handling of gained territories. The plight of Palestinian refugees from the occupied territories could not be hidden from the outside world as numerous foreign press correspondents stayed in the country. "Unwelcome comparisons were drawn with rogue states such as South Africa, Portugal, and Rhodesia and with the domestic turmoil in the United States in the era of Vietnam and the civil

rights movement,” Cummings notes (Cummings 2016, loc. 1543 of 5476), pointing to the analogy that has accompanied Israel ever since. In relation to that, another troubling trend occurred—a significant proportion of the international reporters present in the country were Jews. Wanting to be perceived as honest and open-minded, they were particularly critical of Israel, while the Israelis expected their unequivocal support. This caused additional scars on Israel’s image (Medzini 2012).

Therefore, after the Six Day War, Israel was, for the first time, seen as the occupier. In the context of the contemporary European debate about decolonization, too, the focus has shifted from Arab-Israeli conflict to Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, the domestic population became increasingly aware of its image problem as the first local TV broadcast was finally launched (*ibid.*),³³ calling the government’s ability to handle information management into question. The first opinion polls on this topic were conducted, showing a steep decline in public trust in the government’s hasbara capabilities (Cummings 2016, loc. 2528 of 5476). Thus, the Six Day War laid bare hasbara’s structural problems for the first time, leading to the first major efforts to establish an efficient structure responsible for public diplomacy.

The first inquiry into hasbara was commissioned in 1969. The designated committee, headed by Elad Peled (thus called “Peled Committee”), came forward with a comprehensive analysis, including several recommendations. First, hasbara could not entirely turn around the perception of unpopular policies, but, with better coordination, it could help counter the well-financed Arab public diplomacy that at that time was celebrating its first victories that had involved “creating an image of a romantic, heroic Arab freedom-fighter in the mold of Viking warriors or Che Guevara–style guerrilla fighters. This image was underpinned by Arab claims that Israel was an outpost of Western imperialism,” resonating with intellectual circles in the West and in the developing world (Cummings 2016, loc. 2669 of 5476). The paper suggested creating a special Information Authority to which information attachés at embassies around the world would report. However, as might have been expected, such suggestions encountered staunch resistance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose competences would be largely diminished by such an arrangement. Without proper political backing, Peled’s plan was destined for shelving. In the following years and

³³ The broadcast was launched after a heated discussion about the role of television in Israeli society. Eventually, it served nation-building in the domestic context, while abroad the television was a useful tool of hasbara, especially in neighboring Arab countries (Medzini 2012).

decades, several sophisticated reports were written, but most fell prey to short-term thinking, personal political battles, discord about the preferred narrative, and desultory implementation (Cummings 2016). Meanwhile, Israel's image continued to deteriorate.

Major global attention was directed to the peace process in the 1970s, but the Egyptian president, Anwar Sadat, handled the media better than the Israeli prime minister, Menachem Begin (Medzini 2012), and the Israeli authorities failed to make use of this media opportunity. Moreover, the peace process had mobilized segments of society that would later engage in a heated domestic debate. The longest-running Israeli pro-peace movement, Peace Now (*Shalom Achshav*), was formed in 1987 in the wake of Sadat's visit, when it began pleading with Begin not to lose this chance for peace.³⁴ Peace Now has since been a powerful voice in public debate both domestically and internationally, represented by first league artists such as the Nobel Prize nominee Amos Oz, his colleagues, the writers A. B. Yehoshua and David Grossman, and others. However, large expectations bred big disappointment: the failure of the peace process led to the outbreak of the First Intifada in 1987³⁵ that was much better handled by Palestinians than by Israelis on the information front, and left Israel's image badly damaged (Medzini 2012). Similarly, major deterioration of Israel's image followed the two Lebanon wars and operation Cast Lead in Gaza (2008-2009).

Throughout the decades, Israeli governmental structures have missed many opportunities to effectively employ public diplomacy to improve the country's image abroad. Finally, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, something changed. In 2006, a detailed critical analysis of Israeli public diplomacy by Eytan Gilboa was published under the title *Public Diplomacy: The Missing Component in Israel's Foreign Policy* (Gilboa 2006). Gilboa describes the previously disregarded scrutiny of the public diplomacy efforts as follows:

In 2001 and 2002, the State Comptroller examined the Hasbara system, including activities by the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and IDF, the Ministry for Public Security and the Police as well as the Intelligence Services. The results were extremely critical. The report concludes that although the government recognizes Hasbara as one of the most

³⁴ See Who We Are, <http://peacenow.org.il/en/about-us/who-are-we>.

³⁵ "Shaking off" in Arabic—Palestinian popular uprising against Israel. The First Intifada took place from 1987 to 1993, the second from 2000 to 2003 (McElroy 2014).

important tools in the formulation and implementation of foreign policy, (...) the system has failed to prepare for, and to deal with, Arab and Palestinian propaganda. The report attributes failure to the following factors: a lack of a 'supreme head' and coordinator for the national Hasbara effort; a lack of coordination among the ministries and agencies involved in Hasbara; a lack of Hasbara strategies and programmes; and insufficient resources. The report defines 'Arab propaganda' as a 'strategic threat' and recommends the development of an effective PD programme that includes adequate conception, structure and resources, and, most importantly, the selection of a 'supreme head' to administer the programme. It also recommends the creation of a PD mechanism for the Arab world. (Gilboa 2006, 737)

Gilboa adds his own scathing criticism, chastising the Israeli government for largely "missing" public diplomacy, and for its indecisiveness, amateurism, and lack of conceptual clarity, when it was occasionally employed.

In reaction to this, a major redesign of hasbara structures was initiated. A 2012 report by the independent think-tank *Molad: The center for renewal of Israeli democracy* deals in detail with the new public diplomacy apparatus, now moved under the auspices of the Prime Minister's office (previously it had been dispersed across various institutions responsible for communication with foreign press and public) as the National Hasbara Forum, which

includes the chief of the hasbara staff from the Prime Minister's Office, the IDF spokesman, the police spokesman, the hasbara representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, spokesmen from both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense, the media advisors of ministers from those offices as well as from the Government Press Office. The official purpose of the Forum is to establish internal and external hasbara policies and to form official positions, messages and responses, which then become the standard for all hasbara bodies — from official spokespeople for the State of Israel within the country to informal, non-governmental agents throughout the world. (Greenfield 2012, 28)

The new apparatus tailors its messages according to the immediacy of challenges (distinguishing between immediate, medium-term and long-term challenges), and

employs a vast array of non-governmental actors (e.g. non-governmental organizations, transnational movements, the Diaspora, and other stakeholders) in the process (ibid.).

This period saw a major upsurge in hopes for the new Israeli public diplomacy, even leading to the creation of the Ministry of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora in 2009. The ministry had three main tasks: to find Israeli civilians who could contribute to Israel's image cultivation abroad; to identify major problems with Israel's image abroad; and to build a public diplomacy relationship between the Israeli government, the Israeli public, and the Diaspora (Attias 2012). In 2010, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs increased its marketing budget from 40 million NIS to 100 million NIS in order to develop an effective branding involving cooperation between the public and private sectors, and concentrating on "six areas of Israeli advancement: the environment (with an emphasis on desert agriculture); science and technology (medicine, Internet, and high-tech); arts and culture; diverse populations and traditions; lifestyles and leisure culture; and 'tikkun olam'³⁶ (supporting populations with special needs)" (Greenfield 2012, 33).

Innovative initiatives were supposed to support these efforts, such as new "peer-to-peer diplomacy" encouraging Israelis, largely frustrated by their misrepresentation abroad, to act as individual ambassadors of Israel. A website preparing them for encounters with preconceptions and stereotypes was prepared, and printed materials were handed out at Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv (Attias 2012).

The Molad study, conducted in 2012, evaluates the changes as highly effective and the new Israeli hasbara apparatus to be "an elaborate, well-coordinated, sophisticated mechanism that adjusts to emergency situations and is able to facilitate cooperation between a varied set of players" and sees Israeli public diplomacy as "particularly effective in using new media and informal communication" (Greenfield 2012, 7). It concludes that the "Israeli 'hasbara problem' is a myth that diverts focus from Israel's real problems which are the results of problematic policy, not flawed hasbara of appropriate policy" (Greenfield 2012, 8). Others are not so favorable in their evaluation (Cummings 2016, loc. 96 of 5476) and they have good reason to say that the battle is not over: the Ministry of Public Diplomacy was abolished in 2013 and the website for peer-to-peer diplomacy does not function anymore.

³⁶ The term "tikkun olam" refers to a theological concept in Judaism often interpreted as an imperative to act beneficially for others.

Moreover, conflict fatigue is growing internationally, the horrors of the Holocaust continue to recede into the past, and antisemitism is on the rise (Medzini 2012). Israel's international image is not thriving: it is still that of "an unsafe area, dangerous for tourists with every case of violence reported in the media turning into a prolonged tourism crisis in all the surrounding countries" (Avraham 2009, 203). Israel's media image tends to be more favorable in the USA than in Europe (Avraham 2009, 204) but, despite that, in a very recent poll only 39% of US college students said they believe that Israel is a civilized, Western country, only 31% said they believe Israel is a democratic country; and only 28% said they believe that the United States should side with Israel in the current conflict (Lipman 2016).

It is certainly true that a country's international image is not only a matter of a well-conceived public diplomacy. Actions of a state that are deemed unacceptable by the international community cannot be painted pink by any marketing strategy, or, as the father of the "soft power" concept, John Nye, said: "Even the best advertising cannot sell an unpopular product, and policies that appear as narrowly self-serving or arrogantly presented are likely to consume rather than produce soft power" (Nye 2004, 10).

The efficiency of Israeli public diplomacy is further limited by the country's political culture.

Political culture and public diplomacy

The Israeli political environment has multiple determining characteristics, deriving from internal as well as external conditions. First, policy-making in Israel has a reactive and improvisational character, described by Cummings as "muddling through": everyday challenges, which are immense due to frequent existential threats, are met with a preference for quick adaptation and a strong role of individual politicians (Cummings 2016, loc. 2881 of 5476), which obviously hampers the development of comprehensive strategies and long-term frameworks.

Second, Israeli political culture is extremely pragmatic (Shlaim, Yaniv 1980, 252) and does not offer much space for lofty and idealistic concepts. Cultural diplomacy, by its definition a long-term effort with hardly measurable outcomes building on the assumption of the ability of art to bring people together, does not fit well into this environment.

Third, Israeli public and cultural diplomacy is determined by the structure of Israeli foreign policy, which is characterized by the prevalence of security structures above the diplomatic ones (Kliemann in Cofman Wittes 2005, 81),³⁷ or, as Cummings names it, the prevalence of “activist” over “diplomatic” political culture. “Activist” politicians are related to military structures, preferring the “security first – talk later” approach, as opposed to the “diplomatic” group that emphasizes the need for normalization of Israel’s standing through diplomatic means (Cummings 2016, 4). The “activists” tend to be suspicious toward transparency in the handling of information, *hasbara* not excluded. In the first years of the State of Israel, media censorship was commonplace. That is not the case today, as the Israeli media scene is varied and democratic, and major media outlets (such as the daily *Ha’aretz*) frequently harshly criticize the government. However, prominent figures do not shy away from expecting others to bow down to their idea of the state’s interests even today. Most recently, the current Minister of Culture, Miri Regev, who is a former army censor, threatened to deprive artists critical of the state’s policies of any state support (Margalit 2016). The idea of *hasbara* as an open-ended, network-based technique (the popular concept of New Public Diplomacy; Melissen 2005) thus encounters a more authoritarian view of *hasbara* based in the activist culture. “Activist” politicians occasionally question the very necessity of image management—of Israel’s self-justification. “Shimon Peres, who served as a prime minister, a foreign minister and a defense minister, held the opinion that if a country has good policies, it does not need PR, and if the policy is bad, the best PR in the world will not help,” says Gilboa (Gilboa 2006, 735). Cummings adds that the Jewish Diaspora’s traditional suspicion towards outside authorities plays into this trend (Cummings 2016, loc. 132 of 5476).

The superiority of the activist relative to the diplomatic groups in foreign policy-making also translates into the institutional level. The Ministry of Defense plays a major role in relationships with foreign governments, in peace talks, etc., while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible mostly for implementation—not formulation—of foreign policy (Kliemann 2005, 89). Therefore, whether *hasbara* should be managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by the Office of the Prime Minister, or by a separate

³⁷ The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a role only in implementation—not formulation—of foreign policy. Foreign policy formulation is the domain of the Ministry of Defense, which also plays a major role in relations with other governments. Additionally, the “security” or “activist” approach that accentuates recurrent threats, in comparison to the “diplomatic” approach that strives for normalization of relations with other countries, is more popular with both Israeli elites and the Israeli public (Kliemann 2005, 87).

ministry has often been a matter of disagreement, while in reality public diplomacy functions have often been executed by military institutions, especially during wars.

Additionally, the Six Day War created a sharp division between the “hawks” and the “doves” across all segments of society—political parties, ethno-cultural groups and religious constituencies, elites, and the public (Shlaim and Yaniv 1980). This division, a mobilizing factor for clashes of the opposing camps (that are often supported from abroad), further contributes to the inability to find a consensual and positive public diplomacy narrative.

In sum, the Israeli hasbara tends to be an “instinctively defensive and tactical, persuasive, and Jewishly rooted attempt to obtain and maintain international support for Israeli policy” (Cummings 2016, loc. 278-79 of 5476), displaying domestic inconsistencies, and trapped in wall-to-wall attempts to improve Israel’s image, especially in times of crisis. The arts do not automatically and quickly react to a specific challenge in a desired way; thus, cultural diplomacy does not comply with the functions that Israelis request from image management and cannot play a key role in public diplomacy.

Adding to that, the fragmentation and contradictions among Israeli domestic civil society actors further complicate the formation of a coherent public diplomacy. The Israeli media are traditionally highly critical of the government, which is reflected in the foreign press. The political scene remains fragmented, and multiple non-governmental actors are vigorous watchdogs of their government, publishing their criticism internationally. A strong accent on the democratic character of hasbara has been present in the discussion for decades, leading, for instance, to the refusal of occasional suggestions that an institution responsible for hasbara within Israel be established (Cummings 2016, loc. 2644 of 5476). As Medzini sums up:

This may be confusing but Israel prides itself on its democracy which admittedly, makes it impossible to control the media, both domestic and foreign.... In the battle between freedom of the press, democracy and the right to know, against information convenience and control of the press for the purpose of gaining a better image, the choice is obvious – democracy and free press. (Medzini 2012)

Some authors contradict the claim that Israeli public diplomacy is entirely democratic. In one of the most prominent books on this topic, the very recent *Public Relations and*

Nation Building, Margalit Toledano and David McKie (2013) argue that Israeli society has been predominantly shaped by the security focus and the constant influx of immigrants. The security focus, based on a permanent external military threat, “obliges individual[s] to trust the state and its moral justifications” (Toledano, McKie 2013, 3). The constant influx of migrants from very different cultural backgrounds creates a need to establish a unified system of symbols essential for national consolidation (ibid.). Therefore, Toledano and McKie argue, Israeli public diplomacy is in fact marked by a high level of self-censorship, enabled by the extreme loyalty of the majority of the citizens, and has traditionally advanced national unity rather than democratic criticism of the government’s efforts.

We will consider these competing claims when we examine Israeli cultural diplomacy on the ground in the Czech Republic.

4.2 Israeli cultural diplomacy

Israeli cultural diplomacy institutions

As suggested above, Israeli cultural diplomacy takes a back seat in Israeli foreign policy. In the long and heated debate on *hasbara*, the role of the arts has been discussed only rarely. Scholarly examination of Israeli cultural diplomacy is very rare indeed (see the Literature review subchapter).

Based on the analysis of existing scholarly and practical resources, we can observe three major traits of Israeli cultural diplomacy: (1) low institutional prioritization; (2) a lack of finance; and (3) the belief in the intrinsically positive value of the arts, resulting in a lack of strategic conduct. All these factors feed into the primary characteristic of Israeli cultural diplomacy: its **decentralization**.

Let us start with the factor of low prioritization, and the corresponding **institutional backing**. The body responsible for Israeli cultural diplomacy is the Division of Cultural and Scientific Affairs of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Israel’s principal agency for external cultural and scientific relations responsible for formulating and implementing the strategies and policies on culture in international relations” (European Union 2014b, 6).

The Division consists of several specialized departments: the Arts and Literature Department, the Department for Cultural and Scientific Cooperation, the Iberian Institute, and the Management and Budget Department. The first of these bodies—the

Arts and Literature Department—is the one working with Israeli embassies in the world, while the Cultural and Scientific Cooperation Department deals with bilateral and multilateral agreements and cooperation programs in the field of culture and science. The Iberian institute focuses on cultural ties with the Spanish and Portuguese speaking world, and the Management and Budget Department deals with respective practical issues.³⁸

The pivotal (for cultural diplomacy) Arts and Literature Department further consists of the Literature Unit, the Performing Arts Unit, the Cinema and Television Unit, the Plastic Arts Unit, and the Cultural Relations with the Arab World Unit. Each of these units works closely with cultural attachés and officers at Israeli embassies worldwide, as the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not have a network of semi-independent cultural institutes, such as Germany’s Goethe Institutes or the Czech Centers established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

Thus, whereas public diplomacy initiatives are directly under the Prime Minister’s office, Israeli cultural diplomacy is conducted by a division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, separate from the larger public diplomacy apparatus, which also gets more attention due to its more central position within the administrative framework. Given the lower importance of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs compared to the Prime Minister’s Office in foreign policy making, this administrative division also testifies to the marginal importance of cultural diplomacy relative to public diplomacy. As per the Israel country report from the publication ‘Culture in EU external relations,’ “the Israeli government does not attempt to project Israeli culture on a large scale abroad,” prioritizing other areas, such as defense (European Union 2014b, 4).

Aside from its location within a less prominent branch of the administration, another symptom of cultural diplomacy’s low priority is a **lack of finance**. Budget is a substantial limitation for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ work in the field of cultural diplomacy, as per the EU’s country report, which states:

about... 14,000 euros [of the MFA’s budget] are earmarked for culture. Though the Israeli government funds some programmes, the vast majority of programmes are financed either by private initiatives

³⁸ See Division of Cultural and Scientific Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/abouttheministry/pages/division%20for%20cultural%20and%20scientific%20affairs.aspx>.

in Israel or abroad, or by foreign countries. Even programmes that are organised with the logistic help of the Israeli MFA are usually funded privately or with the help of foreign countries. (European Union 2014b, 10)

Furthermore, “this budget decreases significantly in difficult times, and the funds that are cut are transferred to the Ministry of Defence” (Appel et al. 2008, 43). It is thus evident that “cultural exchanges are not a priority for the Government of Israel,” as Appel et al. note (*ibid.*, 39).

In addition to the lack of finance, there is **a lack of any sophisticated notion of the role of the arts in foreign relations**, which may be—more optimistically—seen as a belief in the intrinsically positive value of the arts. Governmental authorities responsible for cultural diplomacy believe that the world outside will see Israelis in a more favorable light by mere exposure to Israeli culture. Since the encounter with Israeli culture is supposed to be absorbing enough, no strategy is needed. Appel et al. (2008), in a rare scholarly study of current Israeli cultural diplomacy, expresses it in the following manner:

...cultural diplomacy programs are able to counter misunderstanding, ignorance, and baseless hatred that people in other countries may bear toward a certain country. This benefit is especially relevant to Israel, as most of the world learns about Israel through media channels, which most often portray Israel solely through the lens of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with little or no emphasis on Israel’s flourishing culture, developed society and successful business arena. (...) One can assume that a country such as Israel, which boasts a flourishing society and culture, a beautiful landscape, a highly successful high-tech industry, and some of the greatest legal scholars in the world, will only have what to gain through exposing foreigners to its culture, society, and people. (Appel et al. 2008, 11)

The exhibition of Israeli society to foreigners will show that “Israel’s ... people are human, law-abiding and affable” (*ibid.*).

However, this claim is insufficient, as we will see in the chapter focused on audiences.

The low priority and the lack of finance combined with the belief in the intrinsically positive value of the arts leads to a **lack of strategic thinking about cultural**

diplomacy. A coherent strategy for cultural diplomacy has never been developed. The website of the Division of Cultural and Scientific Affairs quotes the latest directive for cultural diplomacy which dates to 1994 (*sic!*). This directive states that the cultural, academic and scientific activity in the international arena has these objectives:

- 1) To strengthen the peace process by developing and expanding cultural ties with the Arab world, and acquainting each people with the other's culture.
- 2) To develop cultural ties and activities with the non-Arab Moslem states.
- 3) To reach out to those places that until recently barely knew Israel such as China, India, Korea, Japan, Russia and the other countries of the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe.
- 4) To strengthen ties and contacts with intellectual and artistic circles.
- 5) To improve the quality of cultural life in Israel through greater interaction with the cultures of the world.
- 6) To improve and expand activities in the field of education by promoting pedagogical methods, youth exchanges and sporting activities.
- 7) To cultivate and strengthen scientific relations and exchanges and to share Israel's experience and knowledge with the world scientific community.³⁹

The fact that the directive was issued in 1994 testifies to the absence of any ongoing evaluation of cultural diplomacy. The goals are mostly general enough not to be anachronistic today, with the exception of the regional emphasis, which has become obsolete with the years because Israel's relationships with Japan, the Russian Federation and other countries have significantly changed since the '90s (European Union 2014b, 174).

Interestingly enough, the Ministry website also says:

No longer the image of a besieged people, of a country excelling primarily in defense and security, Israel can now concentrate more on its cultural and scientific excellence. In light of this change, the

³⁹See Division for Cultural and Scientific Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/abouttheministry/pages/division%20for%20cultural%20and%20scientific%20affairs.aspx>.

Foreign Ministry is focusing more and more on the task of bringing the products of Israeli intellect and creativity to the attention of the world community.⁴⁰

This supports the Medzini's and others' claims that there is a clash of views between "activist" and "diplomatic" foreign policy actors, in which the diplomatic ones, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aim to present Israel as a regular member of international community, as we see in this example.

The factors described above—lack of priority and finance, an insufficiently determined role of the arts in international relations, the lack of any critical conceptualization of cultural diplomacy—lead to a vague delimitation of the field of Israeli cultural diplomacy. Israeli governmental structures responsible for cultural diplomacy thus have a free hand within the broadly defined objectives of cultural diplomacy and this, combined with the lack of finance that pushes the administrators into alliances, leads to the rather decentralized nature of Israeli cultural diplomacy. The administration functions within the framework of multiple and varied alliances to advance exports of Israeli culture, engaged more as a facilitator than a strategist.

Only rarely does the Israeli administration act as a self-standing organizer of cultural events. Israeli embassies and the Division of Cultural and Scientific Affairs predominantly provide logistical and financial support to facilitate the presence of Israeli artists at various festivals, conferences and lectures, and international art and literature fairs around the world, organized by local promoters. They also create digital content that can be used by various entities worldwide, such as the YouTube channel CultureBuzzIsrael,⁴¹ that features videoclips from Israeli cultural festivals, interviews with artists, writers' readings, etc. This content is further used by a variety of actors from both the governmental and non-governmental spheres.

A number of cultural activities abroad are co-organized with local stakeholders—Diaspora groups, private entrepreneurs, and supporters of Israel. As described by the EU report: "Though the Israeli government funds some programmes, the vast majority of programmes are financed either by private initiatives in Israel or abroad, or by foreign countries. Even programmes that are organised with the logistic help of the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ See CultureBuzzIsrael, <https://www.youtube.com/user/CultureBuzzIsrael>.

Israeli MFA are usually funded privately or with the help of foreign countries” (European Union 2014b, 10).

Partnerships are also forged domestically. The Division of Cultural and Scientific Affairs co-organizes annual showcases of Israeli art together with Israeli cultural institutions, including the “International Exposures” in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, which present current trends in the Israeli cultural scene in jazz and rock music, visual arts, theatre and puppet theatre, and dance. The showcases are co-organized with Israeli cultural promoters (for the dance exposures, for instance, it is the Suzanne Dellal Centre for Dance and Theatre in Tel Aviv; Ingber 2013; for the music exposures, the ministry’s counterpart is the Yellow Submarine Club in Jerusalem⁴²) who select the performers for several days of shows or gallery visits, attended by dozens of key festival directors, institution managers, agents, producers, and journalists from around the world. It is important to reiterate that—just as with the facilitation of artists’ presence at cultural events abroad—the Ministry does not have any control over the event’s outcome. Thus, the showcases are a testament to the decentralized, network-oriented nature of Israeli cultural diplomacy.

The following chapters will examine different examples of these actors and testify to the fact that, due to the decentralized nature of Israeli cultural diplomacy, exports of Israeli arts initiated by the Israeli administration are often appropriated by another actor in the process, and the message is framed according to its agency. The lack of priority ascribed to cultural diplomacy, along with other factors, leads to a lack of conceptualization and strategic control over the message. This makes Israeli cultural diplomacy a field of multivalent representation of Israel by various actors with differing strategies.

4.3 Israeli cultural diplomacy vis-à-vis Israeli public diplomacy

Is there still a role for Israeli cultural diplomacy within the framework of public diplomacy? Due to the political culture, institutional setup, and attendant political challenges, cultural diplomacy can hardly become a primary means of repositioning Israel on the international scene in the near future. However, due to its nature, Israeli cultural diplomacy has the potential to influence foreign relations in three ways.

⁴² See International Showcase Festival Rock and Indie, <http://yellowsubmarine.org.il/?show=international-exposure-rock-and-indie-5&lang=en>.

First, as the arts are often perceived as the very antithesis of militarism, cultural diplomacy may help to expand the Israel-related foreign narrative beyond conflict, which was identified as being among the key needs of Israel's image management by a report of Abba Eban's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' committee in 1970 (Cummings 2016, loc. 3074 of 5476).

Second, cultural diplomacy fits well into the currently popular decentralized, democratic model of public diplomacy, inclusive of non-governmental actors, advocated by many, and deemed suitable for the contemporary international order (Attias 2012; Melissen 2005). In this model, it is not the unity of the message being spread but the process of dialogue that changes relationships. Also, artists are perfect "people's ambassadors," perceived as more credible than diplomats (e.g., Aguilar 1996, 94), and art is often perceived as an inherently dialogical exercise. As such, cultural diplomacy may complement public diplomacy effectively.

Third, art, as opposed to information campaigns, does not need to reconcile contradictory narratives. Art that is not aiming at nation-building or mobilization often works with the tension between contradictory stances. Some, such as the famous Israeli conductor Daniel Barenboim, even claim that maintaining contrasting positions as part of expression is the essence of true art (Barenboim and Said 2004, 43). As such, art may better communicate the conflicting realities of Israeli society without compromising the democratic desideratum.

Therefore, despite its obvious sidelining relative to public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy still has a valuable role to play in Israel's foreign relations. Israeli cultural diplomacy—even if it does not succeed in changing the framing of specific policy issues—has the capacity to create "space[s] for further cultural affinity" (Elfving-Wang 2013, 25). This thesis will further examine how that is being achieved in the case of the Czech Republic. We will start by examining the strategies of governmental actor in the Czech Republic: the Embassy of Israel in the Czech Republic, which is responsible for conducting Israeli cultural diplomacy there.

[4.4 Czech-Israeli diplomatic relations](#)

To better understand the Israeli Embassy's activities in the Czech Republic, we first need to examine the broader context of Czech-Israeli diplomatic relations. Their

specificity is underlined by the brief summary of EU-Israeli diplomatic relations that follows.

The Czech Republic is, in regard to Israel, a surprising ally: a European country, and a member of the European Union as well as the Schengen Area, with a strong tradition of pro-human rights stances in foreign politics, demonstrated in its staunch support for Tibet and other international “underdogs.” At the same time, the Czech Republic is currently one of the friendliest countries towards Israel globally, holding periodic joint governmental sessions and supporting Israel in international forums. Israel, while remaining lukewarm towards the EU, praises the Czech Republic as a great friend, and Prague is an extremely popular destination for Israeli tourists. This stands in contrast to Israel’s relations with the European Union.

Israel has major commercial ties with the EU, which is its main trading partner (Ferrero-Waldner, 2007, 3), and maintains close cooperation with Europe on multiple platforms, notably within the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The ENP was launched in 2004 and revised in 2011 and then again in 2015. It “serves to develop closer and more coherent economic, political and social relations between the EU and all of the Union’s neighbours, in the Middle East (including the State of Israel), North Africa and Europe that currently have no prospect of membership in the EU” (Harpaz, Shamis 2010, 586). Within the ENP, there are a number of educational and cultural exchange programs, joint forums on heritage protection and research, etc., that Israel takes part in.⁴³

Israelis identify themselves to some extent with Europe and the country’s cultural scene is aware of its European cultural roots and feels a strong affinity with European culture (European Union 2014b, 324). But, at the same time, a sense of misunderstanding and injustice is often felt in relation to Europe due to past events (notably the Holocaust) and the current critical stance of multiple European countries towards Israel. In Israel, there is a “deep-rooted and, in recent years, growing mistrust of European intentions towards the region ... Israel has developed an ambivalent relationship towards the EU and, in recent years, have become quite antagonistic towards Europe for what they perceive as a pro-Palestinian bias. This is reflected in anti-European statements from political leaders and anti-European articles in [the] main media” (Newman and Yacobi

⁴³ A comprehensive list of goals and instruments can be found on the website of European External Action; see European Neighborhood Policy, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/330/european-neighborhood-policy-enp_en.

2004, 1, 24).⁴⁴ Besides the “pro-Palestinian bias,” which makes Europe an illegitimate political broker and harmful to the Middle East peace process from an Israeli point of view (Harpaz and Shamis 2010, 588), Israelis also tend to distrust the European Union as a result of historical and current antisemitism (Newman and Yacobi, 2004, 30), differences in political culture (Smootha 2005), mistrust of international institutions (Harpaz and Shamis, 2010, 591), and for other reasons.⁴⁵

Europe’s relations with Israel have cooled in recent decades. Europe aims to play a major role in the Middle East, but in spite of this ambition its alienation from Israel is growing. The original support of European countries for the new Jewish state has transformed significantly, especially with the 1967 war, when the focus shifted from the Arab-Israeli conflict to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Israel was for the first time considered Goliath, not David (Medzini 2012). Simultaneously, the Arab states had several advantages when negotiating with Europe—notably oil, and relationships based on the colonial past. Also, Israel has changed: the first generations of socialist Zionists of European origin have lost prominence while religious movements and the population of Oriental Jews has risen, leading to a cultural change that has been difficult for Europe to relate to (Keridis 2004, 9).

The political development of the Middle East has converged with the new framing of the EU as a “Normative Power.” While Europe’s (at that time the European Economic Community’s) relations with Israel were originally “mainly economic and trade-oriented with no discernible normative dimension” (Harpaz, Shamis 2010, 585), the position has slowly changed. In general, the shift towards the concept of Europe as a “Normative Power” is represented by the shift in European values, moving increasingly away from militarism, and “softening” Europe “into a space where the use of force in inter-state relations has not only become illegitimate but virtually unthinkable” (Keridis 2004, 7). In the matter of Israel and Palestine, where Europe has been increasingly supportive of the Palestinians since 1960s, the tilt toward the concept of Normative Power demonstrated itself officially when the 1980 Venice Declaration recognized the

⁴⁴ A recent poll concluded that Israelis are currently more adversarial than friendly towards the EU—see Ahren 2018.

⁴⁵ The stance of Israelis towards the European Union is more varied than presented here, though, encompassing those supportive of the European Union and its normative role, and those aiming for close economic cooperation despite political discord. A detailed account can be found in Harpaz and Shamis (2010).

right of the Palestinians to self-determination, claiming that the EU has a “special,” normatively based role to play in the conflict (Harpaz and Shamis 2010, 585).⁴⁶

Europe still maintains strong ties—commercial as well as cultural—with Israel, but is rather critical towards the country. While, as mentioned above, Israel is engaged with the EU on multiple platforms, the EU also spends significant amounts of money on Palestinian cultural (and other) organizations and uses the method of “carrots and sticks” with Israel, punishing it for policies it deems unacceptable. In the cultural sphere, European countries have, on multiple occasions, voted against Israel in UNESCO (Lazaroff 2017), and in 2013 the EU adopted a binding directive prohibiting the issuing of EU grants, funding, prizes, or scholarships within the Creative Europe program to Israeli entities operating outside of the pre-1967 borders (“the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967”; Official Journal of the European Union 2013). At the same time, the EU has significantly increased its aid to Palestine, especially since the Oslo accords in 1993. Today, the EU is the largest donor to the Palestinian Authority, and Palestine is the largest recipient of the EU’s foreign aid (Newman and Yacobi 2004, 19). All of this has led to a worsening of bilateral relations between Europe and Israel. Israelis today tend to be disillusioned about Europe (ibid., 16), as reflected in Israel’s weakening efforts to “impress” Europe, which is deemed a hopeless task. In public diplomacy, Israel has put significantly more effort into cultivating its relations with the USA whilst neglecting European public opinion (Avraham 2009b, 211).

Israel and the Czech Republic

The Czech Republic, though a member of the European Union, does not take the general EU line in its stance towards Israel. It is perceived as one of the countries most friendly towards Israel globally, as is repeatedly reiterated by Israeli ambassadors in Prague and other representatives.⁴⁷ The Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that “Israel has no better friend in Europe than the Czech Republic” in 2013 (Kapusnak 2013), Israelis describe Prague as one of their favorite cities, and Israeli

⁴⁶ Israelis tend to be rather disapproving of this claim: “Israel’s historical approach towards Normative Europe can be characterized as oscillating between feelings of admiration and of belonging and those of bitter cynicism and resentment” (Harpaz, Shamis 2010, 588).

⁴⁷ In a recent interview, the new Israeli ambassador to Prague, Daniel Meron, characterized the Czech Republic as “one of the closest friends of Israel” (Klesla 2017); the previous ambassador Gary Koren spoke about “extremely good relations with the Czech Republic” on multiple occasions (e.g., Jemelka 2015).

elites fondly remember Czech support for the state of Israel in the 1940s, when Israeli pilots were trained in Czechoslovakia and Prague was the only capital sending arms, including 80 planes, to the newly established state, breaking the UN embargo (Kalhousová 2014, 85). For Israel, the Czech Republic is an important ally within Western structures that are, in general, more critical towards the Middle Eastern country. For the Czech Republic, there is a strong tradition of public and elite pro-Israel stances which was interrupted during the communist era, renewed after the Velvet revolution, and is currently undergoing some transformation.

The close relationship between the two countries started before the birth of the State of Israel. The first Czechoslovak president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, before assuming his mandate, exposed the antisemitism that was then widespread throughout Europe, notably through his engagement in the “Hilsner affair,” an unjust legal process that led to the conviction of a young Czech Jew for the alleged ritual murder of a Christian girl. Jews were widely believed to use the blood of young Christian girls to bake Passover matzot, and Masaryk came forward vigorously to fight these and other popular anti-Semitic superstitions as highly detrimental for the Czech nation. Masaryk was criticized and condemned for this stance by the general public as well as by his colleagues and students at Charles university⁴⁸ in Prague, but it also brought him international acknowledgement as an advocate of Jewish rights. Masaryk later observed that his stance during the Hilsner affair gained him many influential Jewish American supporters, as well as the official support of the Zionist Organization of America for a crucial political move, the establishment of an independent Czechoslovakia in 1918 (Pojar 2017, 166). After the disintegration of the Austrian-Hungarian empire, Czechoslovakia became the only democratic state that granted its Jews not only full individual rights, but also collective (national and religious) rights (Pojar 2017, 168). As Miloš Pojar writes:

It was an immense advantage of the Jewish citizens of the new [Czechoslovak] state that it was led by a man who had sympathies towards Jews and who fought for their political rights.... Masaryk was the only dominant politician in the whole of Central and Southeast Europe who identified with the campaign against anti-Semitism (Pojar 2017, 169, translation JPJ).

⁴⁸ At that time the Czech-German “Charles-Ferdinand University”.

Masaryk was not only a fighter for Jewish rights; he was also a long-term supporter of Zionism. Already around the year 1900, Masaryk, as an influential figure and a known intellectual and politician, publicly expressed sympathies towards Zionism, especially for its ability to awaken the “courage and self-confidence” of Jews (Pojar 2017, 162). He maintained this stance, praising Zionism’s “moral value” in 1918 (Pojar 2017, 168).⁴⁹ His election to the presidential office was warmly welcomed by Prague Jews as well as by the World Zionist Organization (Pojar 2017, 170). After becoming President, Masaryk became the first head of state to visit the mandate of Palestine in 1927. Also, due to his engagement, Czechoslovakia was among the few countries of that era to recognize Jews as a nation; and during Masaryk’s mandate, three World Zionist Organization congresses took place in Prague and Karlovy Vary. Masaryk himself was a keen supporter of Zionism.⁵⁰ In remembrance of this attitude, several squares and streets are named after Masaryk in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and other Israeli cities, as well as several kibbutzim (Kfar Masaryk, among others). On the occasion of his 85th birthday, Masaryk was granted honorary citizenship of Tel Aviv by the mayor, Dizengoff. Overall, the importance of Masaryk’s personal involvement in Czech-Jewish relations cannot be overestimated. The weight of his personality not only contributed to better perceptions of each nation in the eyes of the other, but it also laid the foundations for unusually close political relations between Czechoslovakia and the Jewish state.

After the Second World War, Czechoslovakia was an avid supporter of the establishment of the State of Israel, and the foreign minister (and T. G. Masaryk’s son) Jan Masaryk lobbied for this in UN. After the Communists took over the government, support for the new Israeli state continued for a certain period of time. Czechoslovakia acknowledged Israel’s independence only 5 days after its declaration and the two countries established diplomatic ties in July 1948. Both the training of Israeli military pilots by their Czech counterparts and the delivery of Czech arms supplies significantly contributed to the chances of Israel winning the first war with the Arab states and are still remembered to this day.

⁴⁹ He felt warmest, though, toward “cultural Zionism,” which would establish a center of Jewish culture in Palestine, thus allowing for a worldwide moral, spiritual and religious renaissance of Judaism. Masaryk did not believe Zionism to be a solution for the “Jewish question,” probably also because at that time (before the establishment of an independent Czechoslovakia), a majority of Czech Jews were for assimilation and supported the Czech emancipation movement; only a small Czech Jewish minority considered itself to be Sionistic (Pojar 2017, 160).

⁵⁰ See more on Masaryk’s bonds with Jews in Miloš Pojar’s book “T. G. Masaryk a židovství” (Pojar 2017).

However, during communist times, Czech/Czechoslovak foreign policy was necessarily brought into line with that of the Soviets, which, after a brief period of Soviet hopes for Israel as a socialist state and a counter-balance to pro-Western Arab states, became an increasingly cold relationship due to Israel's alliance with the West. This development was also related to anti-Semitic trials in Czechoslovakia in the 1950s, which resulted in the withdrawal of the Israeli ambassador in 1952, and finally in the cessation of Czech-Israeli diplomatic relations in the aftermath of the Six-Day War in 1967 (Adamec 2017). But this period did not damage the Czech image in Israel as it was—and still is—perceived as enforced by the USSR. Israelis followed the Prague Spring with great sympathy, and its violent end was lamented by a legendary Israeli singer of popular music, Arik Einstein, in his widely known song *Prag*. Thus, the communist era does not have negative connotations for current Czech-Israeli relations, which continue in the pre-communist pro-Israel tradition.

Indeed, ties were promptly re-established in 1990 as one of the first foreign policy moves of the new democratic state. President Václav Havel declared “normalization” of relations with Israel to be one of the primary foreign policy goals in his very first New Year's speech in 1990, just days after assuming his position. Diplomatic relations were renewed as early as February 9, 1990, less than two months after the overthrow of the communist regime, and Havel and his team visited Israel two months later, in April 1990.⁵¹

While communist Czechoslovakia voted for UN General Assembly Resolution 3379, which labeled “Zionism as racism,” in 1975, the democratic Czech Republic has a radically different record in the UN. In 2012 it was the only European state to vote against the Palestinian bid for statehood in the UN (Kapusnak 2013). And the extremely good relations are also documented by other, more systematic policies. Notably, the Czech and Israeli governments periodically hold joint sessions, which, in the case of Czech foreign policy, only occurs with Israel, Slovakia, and Poland (Pojar 2017, 9). The Czech Republic is also often a dissenting voice among those more critical toward Israel

⁵¹ A complete overview of official events marking the two countries' diplomatic relations is available on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic—see *Vztahy se Státem Izrael*, http://www.mzv.cz/telaviv/cz/vzajemne_vztahy/vztahy_se_statem_izrael/index.html

within the EU, as exemplified by the Czech vote against Palestinian semi-statehood in 2012, which was the only EU “no” vote (Winfrey and Muller 2012).⁵²

Furthermore, Israel is (not counting the EU) the third biggest commercial partner for the Czech Republic, after the USA and China (Kalhousová 2014), and popular sentiments toward Israel remain warm, which is often explained by the shared experience of small nations surrounded by large enemies, and by the major importance of the Jewish aspects of Czech history, as well as a joint widespread interest in Jewish culture and Holocaust-related issues.⁵³

However, the radically different relations with Israel in the present, as opposed to the past, acquire tangible form in the Palestinian Embassy in Prague. Although it was originally a residue of the communist policy of support for Palestinian aspirations,⁵⁴ the young Czechoslovakia did not want to damage ties with the entire Arab region by expelling the Palestinian ambassador from Prague in 1990, even though the highly ideological gesture of hosting an embassy of a non-existent state was anachronistic in the context of the new foreign policy. Currently, the Palestinian Embassy in Prague is well-established and active in all fields, including the cultural one, organizing “days of open doors” (Česká televise, 2014) and various cultural events.⁵⁵

Importantly, the EU and its foreign policy is now a reference point for Czech foreign policy. On average, EU states are more critical than the Czech Republic, as we have argued. Lubomír Zaorálek, the socialist Czech minister of Foreign Affairs during the time this thesis was being researched (2014–2017), sought to take a stance more in line with the EU mainstream, underlining this point on notable occasions, and equating it with a need for friendly, yet critical relations with Israel (e.g., Zaorálek 2015). In general, under the socialistic government, Czech foreign policy underwent a change, leaning less towards the United States and its allies and giving more space to partners perceived only a short time ago as controversial, such as China. Therefore, the Czech

⁵² However, this varies with administrations, the right-center parties being more anti-EU and pro-Israel, the left-centre Social Democrats pleading for more compliance with the EU mainstream (Winfrey, Muller 2012).

⁵³ For a detailed discussion, see Prostor 2014.

⁵⁴ Even today, virtually all Western European states host Palestinian “Missions” or “General Delegations”; not “Embassies.” See [Embassypages.com](https://www.embassypages.com/palestine), <https://www.embassypages.com/palestine> or [Embassy.goabroad.com](https://embassy.goabroad.com/embassies-of/palestine), <https://embassy.goabroad.com/embassies-of/palestine>.

⁵⁵ See, for instance, invitations of the Palestinian Embassy for cultural events celebrating the declaration of Palestinian independence—Pozvánka na Mezinárodní den solidarity s palestinským lidem a oslavu výročí deklarace nezávislosti Státu Palestina, <https://www.palestine.cz/cz/newsd-pozvanka-oslavu-27-vyroci-deklarace-nezavislosti-statu-palestina>.

Republic started to emit more mixed signals towards Israel too. To make things even more complicated, at time of writing there is a visible discord between the Czech President (who is strongly pro-Israeli, but also rather anti-American and extremely anti-Muslim—an example being the President’s presence, and strong statements,⁵⁶ at the AIPAC⁵⁷ Policy Conference 2015; iDnes.cz 2015) and the Czech Prime Minister and his Foreign Minister, whose views tend to be closer to those of the EU, as when the Foreign Minister claimed that the continuation of Israeli settlements implied the country’s lack of interest in peace for the Times of Israel (Ahren 2014). In sum, the tradition of Czech support for Israel, very clearly delineated before the communist era and after the Velvet Revolution, has become more ambiguous. The influence of EU foreign policy will most likely continue to be significant for the Czech Republic. However, the EU’s stance might be transformed by the current struggle with the wave of Islamic terrorism, and wider anti-Muslim sentiment, and thus the Czech-Israeli relationship might develop in various directions.

The history of the two countries’ relations testifies to the expectations they have for each other. Later chapters—especially the one dealing with Czech audience for Israeli cultural diplomacy—compare these expectations with actual cultural interactions, and reveal the discrepancy between them.

Governmental actors of Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech Republic

The division of public and cultural diplomacy in Israeli foreign affairs is reflected in the structure of Israeli embassies’ departments around the world. Just like other embassies, the one in Prague has separate departments of public diplomacy and cultural affairs.⁵⁸

The Public Diplomacy Department, according to the Embassy’s website, is more focused on providing information about Israel and managing academic and scientific exchange, while the Cultural Department deals with cultural exchange and offers support to the organizers of Israel-related cultural events in the Czech Republic.

⁵⁶ Zeman called himself “Jewish,” spoke in Hebrew, referred to Mossad as “single efficient one... secret service [in the world]” (Zeman 2015), etc.

⁵⁷ AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, is a lobby group based in Washington, DC. Scholars have described its major role in pro-Israel US foreign policy (e.g. Mearsheimer 2007).

⁵⁸ Website of the Israeli Embassy in Prague, see Oddělení Velvyslanectví Státu Izrael v České republice - <http://embassies.gov.il/Praha/Departments/Pages/Departments.aspx>.

The fact that the cultural affairs of the Israeli Embassy to the Czech Republic are managed by a local⁵⁹ junior staff (including the author of this thesis) testifies to the relatively low degree of importance allocated to cultural diplomacy.⁶⁰

The Israeli Embassy's role in the Czech Republic

The website of the Embassy offers comprehensive reviews of events that the Embassy has participated in—usually around a dozen a month. They include theater performances by Israeli playwrights in Czech theaters, performances of Israeli bands at festivals, translations of books by Israeli writers into Czech, collaborations of Israeli and Czech dancers, joint exhibitions of Israeli and Czech artists, lectures by Israeli architects for Czech students, and many others.

There are no visible themes, either annual or longer-term. In the years of my service for the Embassy, the only major theme I worked with was the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Czech Republic and Israel. Other than that, there is no specific narrative that could be traced in the Embassy's activities, and the forms of its engagement are varied.

According to the Head of Cultural Affairs at the Embassy at the time this chapter was written, Tereza Regnerová,⁶¹ in most cases the Embassy is involved with logistical help, functions as a liaison, occasionally provides moderate financial support (e.g., for a flight ticket), and provides patronage. The events are often initiated by a Czech organizer who approaches the Embassy with a request for support. Occasionally, they are an outcome of previous networking, for instance during the International Exposures in Israel; sometimes they emerge from an Israeli artist's request for help with performances abroad; and only rarely are they initiated and fully organized by the Embassy—as was the case for the Israeli film festival.⁶²

An example of an event initiated by a Czech entrepreneur is the theatrical adaptation of A. B. Yehoshua's book *The Lover* (*Milenec* in Czech) by the center of contemporary arts Meet Factory in Prague. After deciding to stage the book, the center approached the Embassy with a request for support with the translation of the text and with promotional activities, which the Embassy catered to.

⁵⁹ Meaning non-Israeli, non-diplomatic.

⁶⁰ Indeed, at other Israeli embassies around the world, cultural officers might be more senior diplomatic staff.

⁶¹ 2016.

⁶² E-mail correspondence with Tereza Regnerová, 2 February 2017.

The Lover is a theatre play dealing with war and relationships between Jews and Arabs in Israel. Written by A.B. Yehoshua, one of the Israeli pro-peace activists (as we will see in the chapter dealing with Israeli artists), the topic is not necessarily flattering for Israel, and does not help the state distract attention from the conflict, which might be one of the reasons for cultural diplomacy, as we have said in the introduction. The support of the Embassy thus shows that Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech Republic does not limit itself to themes that allow it to escape difficult or unpopular issues.

The Lover was staged by a popular film director, Radim Špaček (this was his first theatre play to be staged),⁶³ and was on the programme of Meet Factory for at least a year.

An example of an event when the Embassy was the initiator of a project that was implemented in cooperation with a Czech partner is the publication of the book *Let There Be Water* (*Budiž voda* in Czech), dealing with Israeli water management. The Embassy brought the book to the attention of a Czech publishing house, Aligier, which purchased the rights and managed the publication by itself. Later, the author of the book, Seth Segal, embarked on a lecture tour of the Czech Republic with the support of the Embassy.⁶⁴

As we have mentioned, another way the Embassy conducts cultural diplomacy is to send Czech cultural stakeholders to Israel for annual artistic showcases, from contemporary dance to theatre and music.⁶⁵ According to my experience, the Embassy selects a candidate from the Czech Republic—usually a director of a festival, a journalist, or a performer. They are then free to select content fit for their platform or outlet and work with it in their own way. The possible artistic collaboration between a Czech and an Israeli subject, if it happens, is not directed by the Embassy, unless the organizers request this.

Therefore, the Israeli Embassy plays a rather limited role—that of a minority sponsor or a partner. The reader is encouraged to consider the possibility that Czech partners of the

⁶³ See Milenec, <http://www.meetfactory.cz/cs/program/detail/milenec>.

⁶⁴ I was personally present at one of the events.

⁶⁵ Complete programs for all the previous music showcases can be found online (see Music Showcase Israel, <http://www.musicshowcaseil.com/en/>); the dance showcases can also be found online (see Suzanne Dellal International Exposure, <https://www.suzannedellal.org.il/en/International-Exposure>); theatre and visual arts showcases are referred to by various sites, but do not have a centralized one.

Embassy might feel bound by Embassy support and provide self-censorship. It was not within the scope of this thesis to examine that. However, given the fact that multiple examined cases did not shy away from controversial topics (see *The Lover* above), it is at least not a determining or a conditioning factor of Israeli cultural representation.

How does the Embassy mark its partnership? It is usually marked by its logo on the materials of the partner; occasionally, the Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission or other staff give a speech at the event. But, given the number of events supported by the Embassy, speeches do not happen in the majority of cases—which, again, testifies to the lack of importance ascribed to cultural diplomacy.

In sum, in accordance with the first part of this chapter, governmental structures (the Embassy) are an important, but—due to their facilitating rather than managing structure—a non-determining factor in Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech Republic. We will examine other actors that enter the field of Israeli cultural representation in the following chapters.

The cultural diplomacy strategy of the Israeli Embassy in the Czech Republic

To conclude, let us recapitulate the strategy of the Israeli Embassy in Prague in cultural diplomacy, and make one additional point.

Just as in the global context, Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech Republic is not tightly centrally managed. The heterogeneity of Israeli culture is evident in productions officially representing Israel. That should be ascribed, in the Czech Republic as elsewhere, to the lack of prioritization in the reactive environment of Israeli foreign policy, and probably also trust in the intrinsic value of the arts.

The fact that there is a lack of structured agency prevents us from observing any major changes in such agency.

It should not be forgotten, though, that despite prominent diplomatic relationships between Israel and the Czech Republic the relative importance of this tie is still globally rather low. Therefore, if the observation was conducted in other, more strategic regions, cultural diplomacy departments of embassies there would most probably display more sophistication (including more senior leadership).

Nevertheless, as we have observed above, a decentralized cultural diplomacy also offers major opportunities: relationship building, and, specifically in the Israeli case, extending

the image beyond conflict. Relationship building is an aspect of cultural diplomacy characterized by multiple scholars as its most precious role. Ang et al. argue that in cultural diplomacy, unpredictable as it is, the national interest cannot be predetermined. Relationship building is, in this sense, a way of going beyond the national interest while still maximizing the effect of cultural diplomacy (Ang et al. 2015, 377). As a result, Ang et al. argue that examining cultural diplomacy only from the governmental perspective does not make much sense; we should focus also on its participants and audiences. That is exactly what the following chapters will do.

The last point to be made concerns the division in Israeli society that we have outlined in the theoretical chapter. While all types of content are included in the presentation, including content that relates to Palestinians (such as the case of *The Lover* above),⁶⁶ the official channels certainly do not emphasize the non-Jewish side,⁶⁷ as indicated by the notable absence of Arabic in all promotion materials, despite the fact that Arabic is an official language of the State of Israel. The divisions of Israeli society as reflected in cultural diplomacy will be further highlighted in the following chapters.

⁶⁶ See the chapter on artists.

⁶⁷ Cultural diplomacies adopt different stances towards national minorities, from disregard, as in Spanish cultural diplomacy (Uldemolins and Zamorano 2014), to proclamatory but falsified inclusion, as in Chinese cultural diplomacy (Klimeš 2019), to the emphasis on the topic of minorities *per se* (Goethe Institut events—for example, see Syria Art Project, <https://www.goethe.de/ins/be/en/kul/prj/tourab.html>).

5. CZECH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS

This chapter aims to demonstrate the role of local, Czech stakeholders that are engaged with the topic of Israel through culture. Just as with other actors in the domain of cultural diplomacy, their impact is varied. Furthermore, each of them selects a strategy for performing Israel-related themes publicly, interpreting Israel through culture on its own terms.

Despite the formerly predominant focus of cultural diplomacy studies on institutions and the message, valuable scholarly papers have recently pointed to the crucial impact of local stakeholders' agency on cultural diplomacy. In her paper titled *New perspectives on instrumentalism: an empirical study of cultural diplomacy*, Nisbett (2013) describes how major British cultural institutions engage in cultural diplomacy to raise their power, prestige, and body of resources—for instance by gaining knowledge, expanding collections, securing international funding, building capacity, and generating income (Nisbett 2013, 561). Nisbett points to instrumentalism as an inherent phenomenon in the relations of diplomatic and non-diplomatic structures.⁶⁸

However, this claim does not apply only to non-governmental institutions of the country conducting cultural diplomacy, but also to those in the recipient state. There have been studies taking this angle too: Brienza (2014) illustrates, using the example of Japan's effort to export manga to the USA, how a governmental initiative can be "hijacked" by the local stakeholders and tailored for their purposes in a way that makes the concept of soft power effectively void. In her case study, the genre of manga, designated by the Japanese government for export in order to help increase the "cool factor" of Japan abroad, was hijacked by local American promoters who kept the attractive form but reframed the socio-cultural context of their production, making it complicit with US norms. Thus, in this case, Japan was not successful in spreading its norms and values. Brienza's paper points to the fact that local cultural stakeholders play a major role in cultural diplomacy, framing its outcome, to some extent, according to their interests.

The role of local cultural promoters is also discussed in detail in Fosler-Lussier's book on America's musical diplomacy during the Cold War (Fosler-Lussier 2015). She argues that, while the governmental actors envisaged cultural diplomacy as a one-way

⁶⁸ Above all, Nisbett demonstrates how institutions make use of the restraints under which democratic governments operate to dictate the agenda of cultural institutions, using governmental resources but shaping the agenda according to their own needs.

process, the authorities responsible for cultural diplomacy's implementation on the ground (i.e., US embassy workers) were "placed in network of relations with cultural stakeholders" (Fosler-Lussier 2015, 4) in which participation of the citizens of the host country was essential. Therefore, also in Fosler-Lussier's view, cultural diplomacy is a bottom-up "intensive process of negotiation and engagement" (Fosler-Lussier 2015, 6) where the programming was "never unilateral but reflected a dynamic array of artistic and political interests" (ibid., 11). She also makes the point that participation in cultural diplomacy activities was a source of increased prestige for the local cultural promoters (ibid., 23).

The role of various agents as "meaning-makers" in the process of the foreign cultural representation of a state is also underlined by Clarke (2016), who emphasizes the role of cultural practitioners and individuals engaged with cultural products, alongside policymakers, institutions, and individuals implementing cultural diplomacy. Clark's study shows that the meaning constructed by each of the agents in the process is not necessarily in line with original governmental policies. In accord with Nisbett, Clarke also says that the level of "straightforward instrumentalism" may vary, with some agents looking first at the benefits of engagement with governmental institutions for their activities, and some primarily considering their ideational agenda (Clarke 2016, 156). This is also true for many of the events in this thesis, as exemplified in the chapter on governmental structures, which emphasized the rather hands-off role of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Israel's cultural representation.

In the following subchapters, we will illustrate various ways in which cultural diplomacy was made a part of different local cultural stakeholders' particular agenda. We will talk about Christian groups supportive of Israel and neutral towards Israel, cultural promoters with and without political and social agendas, a private college, and actors with Israel-related economic agendas.

5.1 Pro-Israel Christian groups

Israel, as the birthplace of Christianity, has a long tradition of support from Christian groups. The identification with a shared religious heritage, and the New Testament appeal to all to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalms, 122, 6) are major drivers of this phenomenon. There are multiple local and transnational groups and movements pledging allegiance to Israel on Christian grounds, such as the US association Christians United for Israel (CUFI), that states on its website:

As the world grows increasingly dangerous, Israel has become an even more significant force for moral clarity and strength.... CUFI's mission is to educate America's Christians about the biblical and moral imperative to support Israel through hundreds of pro-Israel events in cities across the U.S every year.... CUFI's mission is winning the long-term battle for hearts and minds so that Christian support for Israel will survive for generations to come.⁶⁹

However, anti-Israel Christian movements also exist, and they have been on the rise lately, especially in Scandinavia and the USA. For instance, the Presbyterian Church USA supported BDS⁷⁰ last year (JNS 2016), as did the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Church of Sweden, etc. (Herbst 2016). There are multiple sources interpreting this as a result of supersessionism (the belief that Christians replaced Jews as the chosen people of God), liberation theology (a theological stream that accentuates liberation of the oppressed as the core of Christianity), and the support for Palestinian Christians,⁷¹ indicating that there are anti- as well as pro-Israel Christian groups globally.

In the Czech Republic, there is no pro-BDS Christian group that I am aware of. But, as has already been outlined in the autoethnographical chapter, a number of Christian churches express strong pro-Israel stances. We will examine this phenomenon through a case study of the Sion community and its Days for Israel event.

Sion is a non-denominational charismatic Christian community located in Hradec Králové, one of the larger Czech towns. It brings together Christians for joint services and sharing, runs a private kindergarten, an elementary school, a high school, and a sports team, and also organizes a cultural festival called Days for Israel once a year.⁷² The festival has been running since 1997 and, according to its website, aims to develop friendly relations between the Czech Republic and Israel, to address broad public and political representatives of all levels, and to express support for the State of Israel that has been a target of violence and terrorism for a long time. Days for Israel represents Israel, relays truthful information about its past and present, and simultaneously

⁶⁹ The complete mission statement is on CUFI's website—see Christians United for Israel, <http://www.cufi.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about>AboutCUFI>.

⁷⁰ The anti-Israeli Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement—see chapter on BDS.

⁷¹ Personal discussions with participants in the Oxford Summer Institute for Curriculum Development in Contemporary Antisemitism 2017.

⁷² There is more on Sion's activities on its website—see Křesťanské centrum SION, <http://www.sion.cz/sion/index.php/krestanske-centrum-3>.

promotes Jewish culture in all its variety. The event is aimed at the public, politicians, and students. The program includes discussions, exhibitions, memorial events, and other cultural events featuring well-known artists.⁷³ The festival takes place under the auspices of the Embassy of Israel, the President of the Czech Republic, the Head of the Senate, etc. Its website claims that the Embassy of Israel is a co-organizer.

The festival takes place at various venues across the city—in public spaces as well as in cinemas, cafés, and theatres. Every year, it is opened by a gala evening, regularly attended by top politicians: the Czech President Miloš Zeman appeared on several occasions, and leaders of the main political parties as well as ministers are regularly seen in the audience. The gala evening welcomes a VIP audience of around 500. Aside from top politicians and representatives of the Israeli Embassy, local politicians and representatives, members of the community, and Holocaust survivors are also present. The evening’s program consists of speeches by the most notable guests, small cultural entrées, and a subsequent reception. Israeli artists or Israeli-themed culture is regularly on the program. For instance, in 2014, the Israeli jazz band Shai Maestro trio performed, and a Czech singer sang several Israeli songs, including *Jerusalem of Gold*, a well-known tune depicting Jerusalem as the target of universal human and spiritual aspirations. The speeches are, as is probably to be expected, highly supportive of Israel.

The Israeli Embassy supports the festival, and the Ambassador speaks at the event. Therefore, it is clearly part of the cultural diplomacy of Israel. At the same time, Sion manages to make itself visible in the city and beyond, attracting VIP guests, including top statesmen who cannot be seen in the town very often.

Here, Israel is presented through the Christian lens as a place where Jesus was born, and to which he will return. The representation is rather specific to a Christian community of the Pentecostal style: the speeches are long and emotional; the music is popular and accessible and does not take up too much of the program. Clearly, the VIP evening’s main aim is not to be a cultural event, but rather to make a statement and a high-level showcase of support for Israel and for the church’s agency. The strategy is to attune a prominent—as well as a broad—audience to the narrative of the Christian church as a staunch supporter of Israel in the Biblical sense (as the homeland of the Jewish people). Importantly, here “Israeliness” means “Jewishness” and Christianity as the related

⁷³ Full mission statement on the festival’s website—see Dny pro Izrael, <http://www.dnyproizrael.cz/dpi2/index.php>.

spiritual stream. In contrast to the case of the Catholic church, as presented in the following subchapter, Palestinians or Arabs are not a part of this narrative.

The following festival days feature Israel- and Jewish-related events, including tastings of Israeli wine, screenings of Israeli movies, the exhibition of photographs from Israel, and a public assembly in support of Israel.⁷⁴

Similarly, there is a rather active branch of the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ) organization in the Czech Republic, established in 1980 “in recognition of the biblical significance of all of Jerusalem and its unique connection with the Jewish people,” as the organization’s website says.⁷⁵ It adds: “Today, it represents millions of Christians, churches, and denominations to the nation and people of Israel. We recognize in the restoration of the State of Israel God's faithfulness to keep His ancient covenant with the Jewish people.” ICEJ helps on the ground in Israel, assisting children, the poor, and the elderly, and advocates pro-Israel positions in individual countries. In the Czech Republic, it does so, among other things, via the annual event called Through Culture Against Anti-Semitism that brings to the gardens of the Czech Senate top politicians, well known artists, and a wider audience (mostly Christians) for a program consisting of pro-Israel speeches, prayers, cultural entrées, and a march of several hundred in support of Jerusalem. In addition, this event, just like the one in Hradec Králové, regularly features Israeli artists. In the program for 2017, the Israeli jazz band Nitai Herskovits trio is featured.⁷⁶

In this way, both Christian organizations employ Israeli culture to make their message more pronounced and plastic, symbolizing how essential Israel is to their mission by including Israeli artists in their event’s program. They cooperate with the Embassy of Israel on these events, legitimizing their actions by making the Embassy their partner.

5.2 Catholic church

Unlike the evangelical Sion group, the Catholic Church has tried to maintain an even-handed approach towards Israelis and Palestinians,⁷⁷ and has not engaged in

⁷⁴ The complete program of Days for Israel 2014 is on the festival’s website—see Dny pro Izrael 2014, http://www.dnyproizrael.cz/dpi2/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=254&Itemid=144

⁷⁵ More in the “About Us” section of ICEJ’s website—see ICEJ, <https://int.icej.org/about-us>.

⁷⁶ Full program on the event’s website—see Všichni jsme lidi, <http://www.vsichnijsmelidi.cz/>.

⁷⁷ Pope Benedict XVI visited Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian territories in 2009, supporting the two-state solution with these words: “The Holy See supports the right of your people to a sovereign Palestinian homeland in the land of your forefathers, secure and at peace with its neighbors, within internationally recognized borders.” (Benedict XVI 2009); Pope Francis’ visit to Israel and the

unidirectional support activities either globally or in the Czech Republic. However, it has been engaged with Israeli cultural representation during the examined period in line with its own interest.

During 2014 and 2015, a touring exhibition called *Pope Francis in the Holy Land*, manufactured by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs after the Pope's visit to Israel, could be seen in several Catholic churches around the Czech Republic, from Prague and other large cities to small regional towns. The exhibition was first presented at St. Týn, the main Prague church at Old Town Square, in the period of Advent in 2014. The opening brought together Cardinal Dominik Duka (the archbishop of Prague and thus the highest representative of the Catholic church in the Czech lands), the Ambassador of Israel, and some other prominent representatives of the Czech Jewish community and Czech Catholic community. During the event, both the Cardinal and the Ambassador gave speeches, emphasizing the desire for peace felt deeply in the pre-Christmas period, and the importance of Holy Sites for both nations. Christian songs were sung by a children's choir and glasses were raised. A consensus about the importance of the Pope's visit to Israel was displayed and celebrated at a high level.

The exhibition was on display in the church, so it was easy for believers and tourists to look at. Printed on standing panels, it started with an introductory word from the Cardinal and from the Ambassador of Israel, and displayed approximately 30 pictures of the visit of Pope Francis in Israel: the Pope planting a tree with President Peres, praying at the Western Wall, visiting the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and so on. The Pope's presence at these sites, for the Catholic Church, is a symbolic confirmation of the church's powerful presence at the holiest sites of Christianity. It gives the church's teachings about Jesus' life a more plastic, realistic grounding. Furthermore, especially for regional churches, the visit of the representative of the Israeli Embassy is a prestigious moment. Therefore, without delving into political topics or clearly siding with any of the subjects in the conflict, the Church got engaged with a particular part of Israel's cultural diplomacy that was conducive to its own narrative, namely the narrative of its highest representative, the Pope, as a peacemaker.

Palestinian territories in 2014 was marked by his support for and recognition of both sides of the conflict.

5.3 Cultural entrepreneurs

Just as the topic of Israel can be part of a Christian organization's agenda, it can also be incorporated into the programming of cultural entrepreneurs and institutions in a way that complies with their stances.

In the Czech Republic, this can be illustrated using two examples: the art gallery DOX, and the documentary film festival in Jihlava. Both these institutions aim at presenting pressing social issues via their activities.

The DOX Centre for Contemporary Art is an artistic gallery in a large renovated industrial building in Holešovice, a hipster area of Prague. It is privately owned and sponsored, and since its establishment in 2008 it has acquired the status of one of the most popular artistic institutions in the Czech capital, especially for contemporary art lovers. However, it does not aim solely to exhibit trending art; it also has a broader social and intellectual goal. Its mission is “to create a space for research, presentation, and debate on important social issues, where visual arts, literature, performing arts, and other disciplines encourage a critical view of the so-called reality of today's world.”⁷⁸

The website further states:

The name DOX is derived on the Greek word *doxa*, which among other things means a way of perceiving things, an opinion, a conviction. DOX's programme differs from other similar exhibition institutions (the combination of a 'kunsthalle' with a multifunctional cultural centre) primarily through art projects incorporating *critical reflection on current social topics and issues overlapping with other 'non-artistic' areas* and disciplines such as psychology, philosophy, history, sociology, political science, etc.⁷⁹

Therefore, through artistic exhibitions, DOX aims to promote deliberation on social issues. The programming reflects this intention: in 2016, along with an array of “purely artistic” exhibitions, it hosted displays of contemporary Arab caricature, an exhibition on the role of money in current society, and on social exclusion.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ More about DOX on its website—see DOX About Us: <http://www.dox.cz/en/about-us/about-dox>.

⁷⁹ Website of DOX; emphasis added.

⁸⁰ The complete program of DOX on its website—see DOX Program, <http://www.dox.cz/en/program?year=2016&submiter=Display&exhibitions=on&date=14.02.2017&type=archive&pagination=2>.

Israel was made part of the gallery's programming on several occasions. For instance, it premiered the internationally discussed exhibition *This Place* that portrays Israel through the lenses of 12 renowned photographers, mostly rather critically. But as no Israelis were involved in this enterprise, the Israeli Embassy was not involved and thus we will not consider the exhibition part of Israeli cultural diplomacy. However, a cooperation between the Embassy and the gallery took place on another occasion. In 2014, the gallery hosted an exhibition called 'The Poster in the Clash of Ideologies 1914 – 2014,' which aimed to "show, from the perspective of the current social situation, the link between the poster as a propaganda medium and the message of dominant ideologies over the last hundred years."⁸¹

The opening of the exhibition on February 13, 2014 attracted a large crowd of frequent DOX goers: a young creative urban audience, artists, and journalists. Walls of the two floors of the gallery's main exhibition premises were covered in posters with socially engaged topics. Works of the Israeli artist Yossi Lemel were featured as well, including his poster commenting on the Israeli security barrier—the wall dividing Israeli and Palestinian territory. Lemel's poster mimicks the multiculturally-minded ads of the United Colors of Benetton brand, depicting a huge surface of the gray wall with a woman in black walking along it. The company's logo, "United Colors of Benetton," sits in the corner of the poster. As such, the work depicts Israel in a critical manner and works well within the gallery's aim to "encourage a critical view" of contemporary issues. Lemel's lecture was a part of the exhibition accompanying the program. It is also important to note that works of a Palestinian artist, Khaled Jarrar, who works with the symbol of the wall as well, were also part of the exhibition, helping the gallery to develop the topic of the wall while engaging both sides (in terms of ethnicities, albeit not necessarily when it comes to opinions) of the conflict in the event. Therefore, while the Embassy of Israel cooperated in bringing Yossi Lemel to the exhibition to put on a display of one of Israel's most famous poster artists, the DOX gallery incorporated Israeli cultural diplomacy into its activities in line with its general mission, and according to the expectations of its audience.

Another example of such an approach is the Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival. The festival team states that they "approach documentary films primarily as

⁸¹ For more about the exhibition see *The Poster in the Clash of Ideologies*, <http://www.dox.cz/en/exhibitions/the-message-the-poster-in-the-clash-of-ideologies-1914-2014>.

unique artworks dealing with significant topics. To us, the festival represents an artifact inspiring a playful reflection of the world from various perspectives.”⁸² In 2016, among the films featured in festival competition were films dealing with the issues of minorities, migration, stigmatization of mentally ill people, etc. In 2015, the festival cooperated with the Embassy of Israel, bringing Israeli filmmakers to Jihlava and screening *Beyond the Fear*—a hot new documentary about Jicchak Rabin’s assassin and the assassin’s wife coping with the prospect of his life-long imprisonment. Screened at one of the biggest festival halls, the documentary attracted a large, young, liberal audience, probably largely consisting of students and regular festival goers who mostly commute from other big cities. Again, the documentary did not create a particularly positive picture of the State of Israel as the assassin and his wife could be characterized as religious fanatics.⁸³ Furthermore, the festival chose to screen a short documentary from the Palestinian territories as a pre-film before *Beyond the Fear*. The short movie depicted night raids of Israeli soldiers into Palestinian households. As such, the festival engaged with Israeli culture in a manner that would still support its identity as a place for a critical, left-leaning political debate, likely appealing to its audience.

Other cultural entrepreneurs include Israeli culture in different types of missions. For instance, one of the largest Czech popular music festivals, Colours of Ostrava, takes pride in its multicultural atmosphere and is open to a great multitude of genres. Its audience recruits both from fans of big stars of mainstream music, who are the festival headliners every year,⁸⁴ as well as fans of alternative genres and music of diverse cultures, that forms a large part of the program on the smaller stages. In 2015, the festival featured a musical performance by several stars of Israeli music with diverse ethnic backgrounds: Mark Eliyahu, a kamancheh player originally from Dagestan, was joined by the large ensemble Alaev Family originally from Tadjikistan, and by Rita, a pop-music singer originally from Iran. They played in front of an attentive audience that was, on average, older than the crowd cheering the band Augustines, who were on the main stage at the same time. A mix of Rita’s oriental pop, Eliyahu’s subtle melodies and Alaev Family’s wild energy was probably not the most sophisticated enterprise musically speaking, but as a powerful and enthusiastic melting pot of diverse musical traditions it was applauded enthusiastically. Therefore, the festival’s mission to bring

⁸² More about the festival on its website—see Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival, <http://www.dokument-festival.com/festival>.

⁸³ The rationale for Rabin’s assassination was allegedly his big concessions to the Palestinians.

⁸⁴ Such as Kasabian in 2015 and Chet Faker in 2014

novel, diverse and communicative music to the Czech audience, with the support of the Israeli Embassy, aptly completed the line-up of the festival.⁸⁵

Obviously, many Czech music clubs bring Israeli bands of their favorite genre; design shows select Israeli designers according to their aesthetic preferences, etc. This subchapter does not merely argue that cultural entrepreneurs select what fits their line-up or the preferences of their audience the best. It rather points to the ideational dimension of these choices, showing that they engage with the cultural diplomacy of the State of Israel in a way that allows them to support their self-understanding and standing as an actor with a specific societal agenda and values. The agents select, from a wide array of stances presented in cultural products of Israeli origin, those that most closely match their goals and preconceptions, interpreting Israel to the audience in a way that supports their uniqueness.

5.4 The Czech-Israeli Mutual Chamber of Commerce

The Czech-Israeli Mutual Chamber of Commerce (CISOK) was established in 1996 with the aim of facilitating commercial exchange between Czech and Israeli subjects. It does so by “initiating and enhancing contacts between commercial subjects from both countries, providing information service to businessmen, and securing expert care for business deals.” Importantly, its mission statement further says:

For our members, we organize activities that support their development at home and that are mutually very beneficial, not only in the domain of commercial and economic relations. Such activities notably include social events where our members have the opportunity to strengthen their business relationships, to inform themselves about their entrepreneurial activities, and to discuss issues relevant and important to them. The Chamber traditionally organizes encounters with top representatives of political and business life as well as with important artists from both countries.⁸⁶

Therefore, clearly, CISOK includes cultural events among its activities to provide its members prestigious platforms on which to meet.

The research has confirmed that CISOK engages with Israeli cultural diplomacy in a way that serves its goal. CISOK does not participate in many cultural events related to

⁸⁵ More about the festival on its website—see Colours of Ostrava, <https://www.colours.cz/>.

⁸⁶ Quote from the Chamber’s Mission statement, translated by JPJ. More on the website of the Chamber—see CISOK, <http://www.cisok.cz/>.

Israel. During the research period, it participated in two major events: Days of Jerusalem, and the exhibition of photographs by David Rubinger.

We will elaborate on the exhibition of David Rubinger's photographs—a major event co-organized by CISOK and the Embassy of Israel in Prague. The exhibition took place from July 4 to 24, 2014 at the exhibition premises of Prague's Old Town City Hall, one of Prague's most iconic sites. The exhibition premises are on the ground floor and thus are easily spotted and accessible for thousands of passers-by every day. Therefore, any exhibition held there has great visibility. The prestige of this medieval building that bears Prague's famous astronomical clock cannot be accentuated enough, even though the exhibition premises are not of the highest quality and thus are not used for high art.

The opening was attended by the Chamber's and embassy officials, by VIPs of Prague's cultural life (such as directors of photographic galleries and notable photographers), Czech TV's general director, a number of politicians and diplomats, and by the 90-year-old legendary photographer, David Rubinger, himself.

After the exhibition's preview, speeches given by Rubinger, the Chamber's president, and the Ambassador of Israel were followed by a reception on the City Hall's first floor.

The exhibition, called *Israel through My Lenses*, was billed as the “best of” Rubinger's work. The photographer was born in 1924 and due to his long photographic career, as well as the access given by his status as the primary photographer of Time-Life magazine for the region, he has been present at many iconic moments of Israeli history. His picture of Israeli soldiers praying at the Western Wall after its recapture in the Six Day War is among the most famous Israeli images of that period. Rubinger is also the author of other iconic pictures of Israel's politics, such as Golda Meir smoking, Israeli jets above Egypt, etc. (McGir 2008). Rubinger was the first photographer to be awarded the Israel Prize and can be considered a semi-official Israeli chronographer. His picture of the soldiers at the Western Wall was proclaimed by the Israeli Supreme Court to be “the property of the entire nation” in 2001 (Knesset 2001).

Therefore, for the Czech-Israeli Mutual Chamber of Commerce, he is an ideal figure to represent Israel on a very official level, bringing his prestige and status alongside his pictures. The nature of the event helped to elevate the status of the Chamber by reaffirming its image as a prestigious institution that maintains friendly relations with officials of both nations and the most valued Israeli artist at the same time.

A similar strategy was selected by CISOK when it participated in Days of Jerusalem. This cultural festival, that used to take place in Prague annually, will be analyzed more in the chapter on boycott, but let us note here the form of engagement that CISOK selected there: despite the fact that the festival is a rather informal 4-day-long event with multiple concerts, screenings, and lectures aimed at a young audience, CISOK engaged solely in the opening of the festival, which was attended by the Chamber's president and its other members. The festival's opening hosts VIP representatives of all the engaged and interested parties—the municipalities of both Prague and Jerusalem, the Jewish community, and notable figures of the Czech-Israeli scene. The Chamber's president gives a speech alongside the Israeli ambassador and other VIPs. Therefore, it is an ideal opportunity to network with important figures and to enhance the prestige of the organization.

Thus, at both of these events, CISOK chose a strategy that represented Israel publicly in a way that supported its self-understanding as upstanding, noble and historical, while being able to remain within elite society.

5.5 Václav Havel Library

One of the previous chapters detailed the exceptionally friendly nature of Czech-Israeli diplomatic relations, and the role of the first Czechoslovak president after the Velvet Revolution, Václav Havel. Havel, just like many other presidents in the Czech Republic, in the USA, and elsewhere, has his own “library”—an institute that safeguards and develops his legacy. According to its website,

The Václav Havel Library collects, researches, disseminates, promotes and advocates the spiritual, literary and political legacy of a great figure of modern Czech history - the author, playwright, thinker, human rights defender and Czechoslovak and Czech president. It also focuses on people, events and phenomena related to the legacy of Václav Havel and strives to place them in the context of the times and of the present.⁸⁷

The library holds around 20 events each month, either directly related to Václav Havel (such as readings of relevant books), intended to develop his legacy of human rights activism (e.g., it often hosts Russian dissidents), or promoting the work of people close

⁸⁷ The complete mission statement is on the institution's website—see Václav Havel Library About Us, <http://www.vaclavhavel-library.org/en/about-us>.

to Havel's circles (e.g., readings from books of his close ones) and on Havel's favored topics (foreign policy, the European Union, the arts). The Library also annually awards the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize in Strasbourg.

As mentioned earlier, diplomatic relations between the Czech Republic and the State of Israel were very quickly renewed after the fall of communism by Václav Havel—less than two months after he assumed the post of president—on February 9, 1990. Shortly thereafter, in April 1990, Václav Havel embarked on his first state visit to Israel.

Naturally, the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Israel and the Czech Republic in 2015 was an event that the Israeli Embassy in Prague wanted to celebrate publicly, and Václav Havel's library was a logical partner. Thus, a joint event was organized by the Embassy and the Library—a conference with local as well as international guests from politics, culture, and academia, and a concert involving a Czech and an Israeli band. For the Embassy, it was a major event, advertised in a special edition of its newsletter and highlighted in its yearly account of cultural activities.⁸⁸ For the Václav Havel Library, the event obviously played a smaller public role, since it was not highlighted in any way in its program. This might be understandable in the contemporary political context: Václav Havel was a prominent human rights activist,⁸⁹ so naturally, with the growing prominence of the Israeli-Palestinian issue and Israel's deteriorating international image in the area of human rights, the alliance might have been difficult for part of its audience. However, it cannot be erased from Václav Havel's biography. Thus, the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of Havel's trip to Israel were not a pillar of the Library's spring agenda, but did form a part of its rich program.

The conference took place on the public premises of the Václav Havel Library, in a medium-sized, stylishly renovated lecture room in the center of Prague. A large portrait of a happily smiling Havel hangs on the front wall, behind a small podium where the speakers were seated in a rather informal set up. Václav Havel was an intellectual and also, due to his persecution, lived most of his life in rather modest conditions, therefore pompous decorations typical of other presidential libraries would not be suitable here.

⁸⁸ For the full overview of the Embassy's cultural events in 2015, see Israeli Culture in the Czech Republic 2015, <http://embassies.gov.il/Praha/Departments/Documents/CultureOverview2015.pdf>.

⁸⁹ One of his major symbolic legacies is the unusual esteem that Czechs ascribe to the Dalai Lama, who was Havel's close friend and who visited Prague on multiple occasions.

The site has a modern, understated look. A contrasting element was provided by the vigorous security checks of all the guests by embassy personnel.

The conference was very well attended by the Library's regular guests that recruit mostly from the Prague intelligentsia, the academic community, and human rights activists; the regular visitors of Israel-related activities (Jewish journalists, etc., who were also present at many of the events described above); and a number of elderly people, who were probably active participants in the Velvet Revolution who had closely followed the events of 1990.

The conference was composed of two panels. The first (called *The 1990 Journey to Israel*) consisted of members of Havel's delegation to Israel in 1990: Michael Žantovský, Milan Kňažko and Alexandr Vondra, former Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Moshe Arens, and first Ambassador of Israel to Prague Yoel Sher. The second panel (called *Czech Republic and Israel Today: The Legacy of Václav Havel*) hosted former Ambassadors to Israel Daniel Kumermann and Jiří Schneider, political scientist Shlomo Avineri, and Hebrew-Czech translator Magdalena Křížová. The guests discussed the anecdotes of the new Czech governmental elite's first attempts to comply with unfamiliar etiquette, and the more serious topic of interstate relations. In general, it was a sophisticated, friendly afternoon.

After the conference, there was a concert of two rock bands—the punk-jazz band Malox, detailed in the chapter on Diaspora, and the Czech band Garáž, a legend of underground music, closely associated with Václav Havel's circles. Both bands were similar in their independent style, close to that of many Czech underground bands from the communist era. The concert took place in a brewery, in a reference to Havel's job in another brewery during communist times when he was forbidden from public engagements. Video samples from Havel's visit to Israel were screened on the white walls of the modern premises of the newly-opened brewery. Over the course of the next two weeks, the brewery also hosted film screenings, workshops for kids, and a theatre performance. All in all, the whole event was conducted in an informal spirit characteristic of Havel, who was well known for his dislike of ceremonies, but placed in a contemporary, sophisticated environment.

As such, the event not only helped the Embassy to remind the Czech audience of the strong Israeli heritage of their first president, but was also consistent with the style of

the Václav Havel Library, supporting Havel's intellectual, nonconformist legacy and unique personality. By avoiding formality, it also did not overtly accentuate relationships with, or any approval from, the current Israeli administration or the world of Israeli politics. The event did not include any representatives of the current Israeli administration (except for the Israeli ambassador, naturally). In contrast to the Czech-Israeli Mutual Chamber of Commerce's engagement with Israeli cultural activities, that focused on the parading of official personalities and symbols, the Václav Havel Library de-emphasized the state-to-state level, focusing on the atmosphere and the individuality of the former president and his relationship with Israel.

5.6 CEVRO

CEVRO Institute is a private university in Prague that has the reputation of being related to the center-right conservative political party ODS.⁹⁰ Two major figures of this party represent the school: Tomáš Pojar, the former Czech ambassador to Israel, who is a vice-rector of CEVRO, and Alexandr Vondra, the former Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is a guarant of one study program. The school's curriculum puts emphasis on economics, security, law, and politics, and is clearly based on the free-trade doctrine. The school's institutes are partners of various conservatively-minded institutes from abroad, such as the Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists, as well as domestic ones, such as the Prague Security Studies Institute. It often hosts foreign speakers who give lectures on various subjects, including, for example, a lecture on the implications of Hayek's⁹¹ theories in justice, a defense of capitalism, and many others.⁹²

CEVRO cooperated with the Embassy of Israel by bringing Ambassador Dore Gold for a lecture about Jerusalem.

Dore Gold spoke at CEVRO on December 8, 2014. Gold was, at the time of this research, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, and formerly served as an advisor to Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu and at various other political postings. He has established and led a conservatively minded research institute and think tank, the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, that advocates lasting control of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Golan Heights, highlights the issue of Iran as a major threat to Israel, and conducts research on anti-Semitism and public diplomacy. In the Czech

⁹⁰ ODS is the acronym for Občanská demokratická strana, or Civic Democratic Party.

⁹¹ Friedrich August Hayek was an Austrian economist, renowned for his defense of classical liberalism.

⁹² The complete list of foreign speakers is on the website of CEVRO—see CEVRO Foreign Speakers Gallery, <http://www.cevroinstitut.cz/cs/clanek/foreign-speakers-gallery/>.

Republic, Dore Gold presented the Czech translation of his book *The Fight for Jerusalem*, that advocates continued Israeli control over the whole of Jerusalem, arguing that the Jews have proven themselves to be the only ones capable of maintaining free access to the holy sites of all three monotheistic religions.

Dore Gold was welcomed at CEVRO's stylish, modern premises in the center of Prague. Gold was talking to an audience of several dozen listeners, mostly men, students and older people alike, most likely upper middle class and rather conservative-looking. Wearing a kippah, Gold presented his arguments in a very organized manner and later reacted to some comments from the audience, including a very angry one by the Egyptian Ambassador, who did not agree with Israel's claim to the holy city. Gold's official status (at that time, he held the position of Prime Minister's Advisor) was beneficial for the school's prestige, especially with regard to CEVRO's ambition to tutor the next generation of top state's administrators and politicians, as its website claims.⁹³ Hence, this event was clearly selected by the stakeholder (i.e., CEVRO) to support its symbolic standing and underpin its self-understanding.

5.7 Khamoro

A rather contrasting case is the engagement of the World Roma Festival Khamoro with Israel's cultural diplomacy. Khamoro is the largest festival of Romani culture in Europe. Every May, it brings Romani music bands and artists from all around the world to Prague for a week of performances in the streets and in various clubs and concert venues, and a vast accompanying program consisting of discussions, summer schools, exhibitions, screenings, etc. This is an excerpt from the "About Us" section of the festival's website:

Over the past 17 years, in which the festival has brought the best of Roma culture to Prague every year in the last week of May, the Khamoro has established itself not just as a celebration of one community but also as a social cultural event. It is an event of which Prague and the whole of the Czech Republic can be proud. The Khamoro is no longer only attended by the Roma; on the dance stages and in the halls people of every age and nationality have great times

⁹³ See, for instance, CEVRO Veřejná správa, <http://www.cevroinstitut.cz/cs/clanek/verejna-sprava/>, and other sections of CEVRO's website.

together. And in addition to introducing Roma culture with all that it can offer to the world, this is the festival's main mission.⁹⁴

Therefore, the festival aims to present the richness and uniqueness of Romani culture to mainstream society.⁹⁵

The festival was established by Yugoslavian migrants to the Czech Republic who, after their horrifying experience with racism in their own country, decided to do whatever it took to prevent it in their new home.⁹⁶ The organizing NGO, called Slovo 21, also initiates other minority-friendly programs, such as joint lunches of immigrants and native Czechs, language and law courses for foreigners, etc. Indeed, in the Czech Republic, the Romani minority has been a major source of division in society. Right-wing parties have rallied against them, and politicians have built their careers around the issue.⁹⁷ Therefore, organizing a festival of Romani culture has never been a particularly popular enterprise and the community around the festival recruits from alternative and human rights-oriented circles.

In 2015, the festival hosted the Israeli band Swing de Gitanes in cooperation with the Israeli Embassy. They are not Romani musicians, as this ethnicity is very rare in Israel, but Jewish musicians playing Gypsy Jazz. During their show in a chic Prague jazz club, Jazz Dock, the long-haired musicians performed songs inspired by Django Reinhardt in an informal atmosphere with drinks and a lot of chatter among the audience of several dozen jazz lovers and upper-middle-class concert-goers. The artists described Israel during their performance as “a melting pot,” thus conforming to the narrative of the festival.

At noon on the final day of the festival, a parade of all the bands, dance groups, actors, etc. who have performed during the festival gathers in the center of Prague and walks through the main square in colorful attire, stopping to play and dance multiple times. Flags of all the states represented at the festival are carried at the head of the procession by young Czech Romas. Due to the Swing de Gitanes’ presence, on this occasion the Israeli flag was flying too.

⁹⁴ For the complete statement, see Khamoro About Us, <https://www.khamoro.cz/index.php/en/about-us/about-the-khamoro>.

⁹⁵ And to the Roma themselves, as I know from conversations with the organizers.

⁹⁶ Private communication with the founder, Jelena Silaidzic.

⁹⁷ Recently, the topic was overshadowed by the European immigration crises and right-wingers gathering around the “threat of Islam,” but until then Romas were the only minority awaking wide-spread antipathies.

Thus, including an entirely different cultural content than the previous case of the conservative, establishment-oriented CEVRO, Khamoro used Israeli culture alongside many others to enhance its message of multiculturalism, the internationalism of Romani culture, and probably also the humanistic angle of the festival. By presenting the coexistence of multiple cultures in various states, the festival demonstrates that it is also possible in the Czech Republic.

5.8 Conclusion

The examined cases have demonstrated that Israeli cultural diplomacy stretches into multiple corners of the Czech scene. The Israeli Embassy uses its name to support a variety of events that present Israel in dramatically different ways. Local stakeholders use these varying representations of Israel to publicly support their respective missions, and are thus rather instrumental in their strategies. The extreme liberty to represent Israel in heterogenous, probably also contradicting, ways is related to the rather minor role of the Embassy. In some cases (such as the Jihlava festival), the message might even have been detrimental for Israeli representation. What is there for the Embassy, then?

Ang et al., in *Cultural Diplomacy: Beyond the national interest?* (Ang et al. 2015), dismiss the possibility of unifying the narrative in contemporary cultural representation:

“From a cultural-theoretical point of view... we should problematize this concern... In today’s globalised world, characterized by intensifying, multidirectional transnational flows, the attempt to impose a unifying national narrative on the intrinsically diverse range of cultural diplomacy/relations activity may prove an elusive pursuit.” (Ang et al. 2015, 377)

and they urge their readers to “adopt an understanding of culture and communication derived from contemporary cultural theory, which stressed culture as an ongoing process and as inherently relational, and communication as a social process of co-production of meaning” (ibid.). In their opinion, relationship-building is the most valuable tool of cultural diplomacy. A similar stance is taken by Fosler-Lussier:

Musical diplomacy calls ... not to conceal the political sponsorship of the enterprise but to engage people, building relationships that encompass both political and artistic experiences. Distinguishing which is the primary objective and which is the by-product is entirely a matter of perspective. (Fosler-Lussier 2015, 13).

According to her, “the channels of communication were often (the cultural diplomacy’s) most important legacy” (ibid., 224).

In this case, it is possible that the lack of any clear narrative-oriented strategy of the Embassy is a success, and the goal of a mutual public representation of Israel is achieved both by non-state actors and by the Embassy.

6. THE CZECH JEWISH DIASPORA

6.1 Diasporas and cultural representation

With the decentralization of foreign policy formulation, diasporas are becoming an important phenomenon for a state's cultural representation. A state aiming to engage diasporas to cultivate its image abroad can court the diasporas of foreign countries within its territory so they can in turn help to improve its image in their homelands;⁹⁸ or it can consider mobilization of its own diaspora abroad, if there is one. We will focus on the second type of influence—Israel's diaspora abroad, specifically in the Czech Republic.

As Cull suggests, the contemporary mobilization of diasporas for cultural diplomacy is directly related to new media and connectivity, amplifiers of a diaspora's influence and reach. He illustrates this using the case of Brazil's infrastructure for Brazilian nationals that allows them to share their artistic creations globally (Cull 2009, 53). Israel was also instrumental in creating platforms for its citizens abroad, as we will see.

There are multiple examples of states using their diasporas abroad as advocates. The Indian diaspora has been a major target of India's foreign cultural centers operated by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, and thus an active component of India's cultural diplomacy (Mark 2009). China is also very active in this field. Its Premier Wen Jiabao has called on the Chinese diaspora to "promote cultural exchanges all over the world," and China is active in establishing pro-China organizations within Chinese populations overseas (d'Hooghe 2014, 161). The mobilization of the Chinese diaspora proved to be efficient: it was actively engaged in support of the Olympic Games in Beijing and in promoting the Shanghai World Expo. Chinese governmental structures increasingly work with the diaspora, distributing materials about Chinese culture among its members, organizing media workshops for them, and so on (d'Hooghe 2014, 162).

Diasporas might associate themselves with a country's cultural identity, but do not necessarily associate themselves with its national identity (d'Hooghe 2014, 42). That is why, while they often share cultural symbols and practices, they do not always share the same political ideology. Therefore, a diaspora's engagement with its homeland is not necessarily always in accordance with prevalent national narratives. While the Chinese

⁹⁸ As highlighted by Cull (2009) and d'Hooghe (2014).

diaspora is largely nationalistic (d’Hooghe 2014, 262), the Jewish Diaspora’s stance towards Israel is highly varied, as we will see in the following subchapter.

6.2 Israel, its Diaspora,⁹⁹ and cultural representation

Globally, the Diaspora is very active, and visible in its efforts to represent Israel through culture. This is, however, done in various ways. Let us introduce three examples.

The “Jerusalem 1000 – 1400” exhibition, open throughout the autumn of 2016 in the grandiose Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, portrayed the Middle Eastern metropolis as the city of “every people under heaven.” Artifacts related to various communities—Jewish and Arab, European and Syrian, Egyptian and Armenian—were on display. Regardless of the current bitter conflicts and ethnic claims, Jerusalem was portrayed throughout its past as a city of multiple communities engaged in a vivid cultural dialogue. According to the donors’ list, major Jewish foundations made the exhibition possible.

At the same time, in another part of the United States, a different representation of the same place was on display. At Pittsburgh University, the so-called “Nationality Rooms,” classes turned into modest museums, present to university students an array of national cultures. Each Nationality Room was designed in cooperation with the local diasporic community (the Austrian Room together with the Austrian community in Pittsburgh, the Indian Room with the local Indian community, etc.). The Israel Heritage Room, built in cooperation with the university and the local Jewish community, is decorated in Jerusalem stone and displays Torah scrolls, Bible verses written in Hebrew, and Bible-related symbols of the 12 Israeli tribes. Jerusalem and Israel are united here as one culture: that of Judaism.

In a third example, every December, the film festival *The Other Israel* takes place in New York. Most of the movies on the program touch on difficult or controversial issues related to Israel: a story of an Orthodox couple stricken by a terror attack; a narration of post-military service trauma; a portrait of a Palestinian family’s life and its perils. Among the main partners of the festival is the American Jewish Committee.

All three cultural events are examples of how the US Jewish Diasporic community engages in or initiates representation of its homeland, Israel. The Jewish Diaspora is a

⁹⁹ Using a capital “D” while writing about Jewish Diaspora is customary in the context of Jewish and Israel studies.

common denominator of these events, but Israel, as represented, looks different every time.

The global Jewish Diaspora numbers around 14 million people (Attias 2012, 479).¹⁰⁰ Donniel Hartman has described the Jewish Diaspora's widely-shared experience of participating in Israel-focused activity (Hartman 2007). There is a body of work on the Jewish Diaspora's relationship with Israel, the most well-known example of which is probably Mearsheimer's and Walt's *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Mearsheimer and Walt 2007), which however, focuses only on one type of the Diaspora's activity, namely political lobbying in support of Israel. While there is only a small body of academic literature on the Diaspora's role in Israeli public and cultural diplomacy, examined in the following paragraphs, hasbara professionals were often preoccupied with the topic, as we will see.

In the scholarly literature, there are two novel contributions to the discussion: those of Stoler (2012) and Hadari and Turgeman (2016). Stoler discusses the identity-related basis of Israel's public diplomacy, suggesting that due to the importance of the Zionist project for Jewish identity, based on the idea of "carrying of the Jewish example to the non-Jewish world" (Stoler 2012, 55), the failure to assert Zionist legitimacy abroad leads to a loss of support for the respective leader. This would back claims about the major concern of Israelis being their perception in the world, which Cummings argues for, as we have seen in the chapter on governmental actors. In relation to that, Stoler claims, Israeli public diplomacy, in accordance with the needs of the Diaspora (especially the Soviet Jewish Diaspora which was for long years in dissent), is unwilling to settle for a mere justification of the Jewish state's right to exist. Extending its claims to universal questions, it brings up concepts from the fields of human rights, democracy, justice, and international norms (Stoler 2012, 56). Following on from that, Hadari and Turgeman assert that universalist claims lead Israeli public diplomacy to communicate with the Diaspora, especially on the topics of nationalism and sovereignty, democracy, science, history, and peace (Hadari and Turgeman 2016, 399).

The discussion among practitioners is more abundant when exploring the pragmatic level of the Diaspora's importance for public diplomacy. The most comprehensive (though never implemented) report on public diplomacy, Peled's report of 1967,

¹⁰⁰ This number relates to the "core" Jewish population, e.g., a collective "mutually exclusive with respect to other population," as opposed to persons with multiple identities that would constitute a larger total number (Dashevski et al. 2016, 6).

suggested that one of the main responsibilities of the proposed Information Authority—the institution potentially responsible for public diplomacy—would be the “direction of different *hasbara* bodies (official and semi-official) at home and overseas (mass communications, Jewish communities, Jewish intellectuals, Jewish and Israeli students overseas, etc.)” (Cummings 2016, loc. 4545 of 5476, emphasis in original), thus counting the Diaspora among the major stakeholders in *hasbara*.

The State of Israel considers the Diaspora to be an active agent of its cultural diplomatic efforts. After all, even the body responsible for public diplomacy was, between 2009 and 2013, the Ministry of Public Diplomacy *and Diaspora Affairs* (Cummings 2016, loc. 222 of 5476; my emphasis). Its main challenges were identified as:

first, locating and finding Israeli civilians who can be part of an effective public diplomacy campaign platform; second, identifying urgent problems, including isolating the major weaknesses in Israel’s global image, while emphasizing Israel’s strengths; and third, building an immediate, mutual, public diplomacy working relationship between the Israeli government and the Israeli public and Jewish diaspora, in order to improve Israel’s global image (through tools, messages and campaigns). (Attias 2012, 475)

According to the Molad study, the Israeli Diaspora is valued especially as a tool for the cultivation of long-term relationships:

In recent years, the Ministry of Public Diplomacy has organized dozens of seminars in critical Jewish communities – Austria, Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Brazil, Mexico, Columbia, Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, and Costa Rica – with the aim of recruiting them to the *hasbara* effort. Another example is a project called ‘Developing Zionist Leadership in the Diaspora’, intended to train young Jews from around the world to be Zionist leaders in their communities (with the cooperation of the World Zionist Organization). In addition to these projects, whose purpose is to create and maintain a strong network of connections specifically with organizations and Jewish communities in the Diaspora, Israel’s public diplomacy apparatus is actively involved in the internal operations of Jewish organizations. Among other things, it supports the production of *hasbara* materials, supplies those materials

to state hasbara spokespeople, and helps shape unique hasbara programs to fit the needs of different organizations (these relationships are handled by the hasbara headquarters in the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the 'Nativ' liaison bureau, the Jewish Agency, the American Joint Distribution Committee and additional Jewish organizations). (Greenfield 2012, 35)

The presence of the Diaspora also has an impact on the targeting of Israel's public diplomacy, as states with large Diaspora communities, such as the United States, Russia, Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico (European Union 2014a, 10), are its main focus.¹⁰¹

Members of the Diaspora are a crucial source of finance for various activities representing Israel abroad (ibid.). Among major donors to Israeli representational activities abroad are Jewish Agencies for Israel (with branches in more than 80 countries), Jewish Federations of North America, and the American Jewish Committee (European Union 2014b, 9). The World Jewish Congress (which was a co-organizer of the Build Bridges, Not Boycott conference in the UN, mentioned in the following chapter; World Jewish Congress, 2016) and the European Jewish Congress are also among the major supporters of pro-Israel events.

In 2011, Israel launched an initiative, *Faces of Israel*, mobilizing Jewish students on US campuses to engage in the representation of the "diversity, tolerance, openness, and authenticity" of Israel (Attias 2012, 480). Jewish students are a fought-for segment of the Diaspora, probably also due to rising anti-Israeli sentiment on US campuses. There are various initiatives targeted at them:

Israel invests no small number of resources in cultivating hasbara agents among Jewish students in the Diaspora itself. The official hasbara bodies of Israel are responsible for the following projects: the organization and production of Israeli cultural events on campuses in the United States with the goal of strengthening Israeli identity among Jewish students or their connection to Israel (Ministry of Public Diplomacy); flying American students to Israel under the auspices of

¹⁰¹ A detailed account of Israel's relationship with the Australian Jewish Diaspora can be found in Burla and Lawrence's book *Australia and Israel: A Diasporic, Cultural and Political Relationship* (Burla and Lawrence 2015).

education programs such as Taglit-Birthright and ‘MASA’ programs during which they participate in hasbara workshops (Jewish Agency); empowering Jewish students on campuses with rhetorical skills for hasbara and new media (Ministry of Public Diplomacy); amending curricula which relate to Israel on campuses throughout the world, to emphasize ‘Israel’s heritage and the long standing connection of the Jewish people with the land of Israel’ (Ministry of Public Diplomacy); bringing Jewish high school students from the Diaspora to train them in hasbara and prepare them for ‘going out onto campuses where they will fight against the phenomenon of the delegitimization of Israel’ (Ministry of Public Diplomacy); sending IDF officer delegations abroad for hasbara trips, including meetings with local Jewish communities and symposia for target audiences (Ministry of Public Diplomacy). Based on the above data, it can be estimated that Israel's informal hasbara apparatus includes hundreds of Israelis and non-Israelis working to advance Israel's hasbara goals in public opinion centers both in the United States and throughout the world.” (Greenfield 2012, 30)

Initiatives of the short-lived Ministry of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs were also closely tied to new media and connectivity. The creation of a website, www.masbirim.gov.il, was designed with content aimed at global sharing and improvement of Israeli advocates’ skills (Attias 2012, 477). With the ascent of social media, multiple initiatives of the Diaspora promoting Israel were established through these channels, such as Israel21c.org or The Israel Project, both run by the Jewish-American community, and successfully functioning on various social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter.

But the forms of the Diaspora’s engagement with Israel’s image differ widely. As Vital has described, Israel and the Jewish Diaspora do not share a physical reality; they live in different worlds (Vital 1990, 12). In regard to political stances, besides Diaspora members who center their activity around unconditional support of Israel, others see critique as their central obligation (Zvi Baron 2015, 27), and still others take a different stance, such as “pro-Israel, pro-peace Americans” at the J-Street advocacy group.¹⁰² Furthermore, there is a growing community of those who left present-day Israel due to harsh living conditions, rising living expenses, army duty, and disagreement with Israeli

¹⁰² See JStreet.org, <https://jstreet.org/>.

policies. An example of that is the writer Lizzie Doron, who, after a controversy about her involvement in a joint artistic project with a Palestinian, decided to move part-time to Berlin.¹⁰³ Similarly, the writer Sayid Kashua moved away from Israel for explicitly political reasons (see the chapter on artists).

In the following paragraphs, we will briefly introduce the Diaspora in the Czech Republic and examine its role in the cultural representation of Israel.

6.2.1 The Jewish Diaspora in the Czech Republic

Like everywhere else in Europe, the Jewish community emerged from the Second World War devastated. In Czech and Slovak lands, where there were 137 000 Jews in 1937, only 15 000 survived.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, around five thousand left—both legally and illegally—immediately after the war with Palestine. The Jewish community was further devastated by the communist regime during anti-Semitic trials in the 1950s. The regime adopted, along with its Soviet masters, staunch anti-Zionism from the 1960s on. The life of the Jewish community was, like that of other religious organizations, controlled by the communist administration through the “support” of the Jewish community in Prague. After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, this centralization was quickly disrupted by the emergence of multiple new Jewish bodies independent from the state—Jewish sports clubs in Prague and Brno, the Jewish women’s union Ester, the Theresienstadt Initiative, the Czechoslovak Union of Jewish Youth, the Jewish Liberal Union, and so on. Also, various international Jewish organizations opened branches in Prague, such as the Jewish agency Sochnut, and Beit Simcha. Today, different Jewish bodies advocate for diverse understandings of Judaism and Jewish identity, ranging from the idea of Jewish institutions as community institutions to a more strictly religious understanding of their mission (Heitlingerová 2009). The decentralization and diversity are significantly related to renewed contacts with foreign and transnational Jewish organizations.

The contemporary Czech Jewish minority has several thousand members and is officially established in ten cities (Prague, Brno, Pilsen, Karlovy Vary, Teplice, Ústí nad Labem, Děčín, Liberec, Olomouc, and Ostrava). While maintaining their traditions and

¹⁰³ Personal communication.

¹⁰⁴ This number does not include the Jewish population of Trans-Carpathia, a region only temporarily (1919–1939) part of Czechoslovakia. The focus of this thesis lies elsewhere so it will not consider the Transcarpathian Jews, an entity with its own characteristic history, mostly separate from that of Czech and Slovak Jews.

specific narratives, Czech Jewish communities remain very much a part of Czech society, participating in the majority of Czech state celebrations—a strategy labelled as “conscious citizenship,” and including a double, Czech and Jewish, identity (Soukupová 2009, 226). At the same time, the Czech Jewish community maintains a vivid religious and communal life with regular services, celebrations, and gatherings, publishes several journals, has its own radio program, and runs a Jewish school (ibid.).

The Prague Jewish community has retained its prominent standing, partly due to its ownership of very lucrative sites in Prague. All communities are gathered under the umbrella of the Federation of Jewish Communities, which has its own magazine and established the Jewish Museum in Prague and the Endowment Fund for the Victims of the Holocaust. Czech Jews lean towards different sides of the religious spectrum. Most are rather liberal, but the elites tend to be more orthodox, which influences the community as a whole (ibid.). In sum, the contemporary Czech Jewish community is, despite its small size, diverse. However, the overwhelming majority of its members, regardless of their religious affiliation, were not publicly critical towards Israeli policies during the period of research (ibid., 219), which is not necessarily the case in the US Jewish community. In the concluding remarks of this chapter we will see that this has changed.

In the observed period, several types of Diasporic body partnered up with the Embassy to represent Israel through culture: the Jewish Museum in Prague as a major representative of the Diaspora as a whole, various Jewish communities that differ in their strategies, as we will see, and Jewish festivals, that have a weaker link with the Diaspora, but do play a role in this field.

We will deal with each of these, describing which types of Israel-related events they organized in the research period, and we will draw conclusions as to the part they play in Israel’s cultural representation in the Czech Republic.

6.2.2 The Jewish Museum in Prague

The Jewish Museum in Prague is, as described above, an institution established by the Federation of Jewish Communities, and thus we can consider it representative of the Diaspora as a whole. It is a major institution¹⁰⁵ responsible for Prague’s Jewish sites (four synagogues, the Jewish cemetery, a library, and many others). Apart from its

¹⁰⁵ Its annual budget reaches almost 200 million Czech crowns (Jewish Museum in Prague 2016).

historical sites, the Jewish Museum runs, among other institutions, the Educational Center, which has several public programs per month, mostly dealing with Jewish topics (lectures on Jewish history and holidays, Czech Jewish sites, etc.), and the Robert Guttmann gallery, which hosts exhibits with Jewish themes. During the research period, three events introducing Israeli guests organized by the Jewish museum and supported by the Israeli Embassy took place: a concert of the Gary Bertini Israeli Choir; an introduction of the book *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death*; and a screening of the movie *Gisi* by the Slovak-Israeli director Natasha Dudinski. Let us first briefly summarize each of the events.

The Gary Bertini Israeli Choir is a well-known ensemble that came to the Czech Republic for a short tour. At Prague Conservatory, they performed a piece by Haim Permont, a contemporary Israeli composer; in the Czech Museum of Music, they performed world-music repertory together with a German band, Assamblea Mediterranea. We will focus on the third performance, the concert in the Spanish Synagogue which was co-organized by the Embassy of Israel, the Jewish Museum in Prague, and a Czech promoter.

The concert took place on October 11, 2014, at 7 pm, in the aforementioned Spanish Synagogue—a unique architectural site built in 1868 in the Moorish style (inspired by the Alhambra) that is administered by the Jewish Museum in Prague. Its usual public program consists of concerts for tourists (“The Best of Gershwin” and the like) organized by private agencies¹⁰⁶ and sophisticated concerts with Jewish repertory. The synagogue also hosts events exclusively for the Jewish community, such as regular services and celebrations of Jewish holidays.¹⁰⁷

At this concert, in contrast to the other two Prague concerts of the orchestra, the audience in the sold-out hall (around 200 seats) was largely composed of regular Jewish-event-goers who are often seen at other events of the Jewish Museum and are probably recipients of the Jewish Museum’s newsletter. The program of the concert, unlike that of the other two concerts that included more contemporary pieces, consisted of classical Ladino Jewish songs,¹⁰⁸ including the well-known Morenica. The space was

¹⁰⁶ As is clear from the advertising of events in the synagogue: those organized directly by the Jewish Museum are advertised on the museum’s website; those organized by private subjects are advertised on ticket portals such as Ticketpro.

¹⁰⁷ For details, see Spanish Synagogue—<http://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/explore/sites/spanish-synagogue/>.

¹⁰⁸ Ladino is the language, and culture, of Spanish Jews.

decorated in a style exactly corresponding to the style of the music, and the audience was virtually transported to the realm of an unspecified flourishing Ladino Jewish community. Despite the fact Ladino was probably not a musical genre commonly performed in the Spanish Synagogue in the past, the synthesis of visual and auditory impressions was very powerful.

The second event was a presentation of the Czech translation of the book *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death* by Otto Dov Kulka, an Israeli historian, professor emeritus of Hebrew University specializing in the Holocaust,¹⁰⁹ and brother of the well-known Czech professor of aesthetics Thomas Kulka.¹¹⁰ Published in several languages, including Czech, in 2013 and 2014, the book quickly gained recognition around the world as one of the most notable accounts of the Holocaust. Otto Dov Kulka came to the Czech Republic to present the fresh Czech translation in the Václav Havel Library and in the Educational Center of the Jewish Museum in Prague on September 18, 2014. In the modest, slightly hidden (most probably on purpose, for security reasons) classroom-like space of the Education Center, the audience of approximately 50 people was composed again at least partly of regular Jewish Museum event-goers and historians. They listened attentively to the almost 81-year-old professor recounting his personal history and the horrors of the Holocaust, which decimated the Czech Jewish community.

The third event involving cooperation of the Embassy of Israel in Prague and the Jewish Museum that took place during the research period was a premiere of the movie *Gisi*—a biographical movie by the Slovak-Israeli director Natasha Dudinski depicting the life story of Gisi Fleischmann, a Jewish female leader of a resistance group in Slovakia who “tried to stop the transports to Auschwitz by bribing Nazi officials.”¹¹¹ The screening was held in a central Prague boutique cinema, Světozor, in the presence of the director, main actors, curators of the Jewish Museum, and Israeli Embassy representatives on January 20, 2015—very close to the date of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which is January 27. The audience of approximately 300 (the hall was completely sold out) contained many familiar faces from other Jewish Museum events. The movie was

¹⁰⁹ Otto Dov Kulka has authored multiple scholarly books on the Holocaust during his lifetime; but only later in his life did he decide to work through his trauma from Auschwitz by writing a personal account, a book of “private mythology,” as he said during the event.

¹¹⁰ While Otto survived the Second World War and emigrated to Israel right after that, his father stayed in Czechoslovakia and remarried; Thomas Kulka is his son from a second marriage.

¹¹¹ Full summary in the IMDb profile of the *Gisi* movie—see *Gisi*, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3576248/plotsummary?ref=tt_ov_pl.

partly documentary, retelling the story of the Slovakian Jewish community and resistance, partly re-enacting Gisi's life story. The subsequent debate with the director and the actor concentrated on the research that had been conducted into this hero of the Holocaust period.

When examining these three events, we see that all three of them relate to topics common to the whole Diaspora: Jewish culture at large, and the Holocaust.

While the Gary Bertini Israeli Choir's concert evoked a different cultural milieu to that of Central Europe, it still emphasized a common Jewish heritage, not least through its aesthetic link to the Spanish Synagogue.

The two other events concerned the Holocaust, which is a topic common to the whole Diaspora, regardless of the personal political stances or specific cultural and personal backgrounds of its members. The Jewish Museum in Prague thus partnered up with the Israeli Embassy to fulfill its mission while representing Israel through culture, "to perform cultural and educational activities related to Judaism, Jews, and their history."¹¹² Therefore, from a range of events co-organized by the Israeli Embassy in the Czech Republic, the Jewish Museum participated in those emphasizing universally-minded Jewish narratives.

6.2.3 Jewish communities

While the Jewish Museum aims to represent all Czech Jewish communities, we can also trace differences in strategies representing Israel while looking at them individually. As outlined above, there are multiple Czech Jewish communities with different religious directions and missions. This is illustrated in the three following examples observed in the research: a lecture about Jewish refugees from Arab countries and Iran, a concert of the band Malox, and the Light of Understanding concert.

The first example is the lecture on Jewish refugees from Arab countries organized by the Embassy of Israel in Prague to commemorate the annual remembrance of the expulsion of 850 000 Jews from Arab lands and Iran in the course of the twentieth century. This topic, also accentuated by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is remembered by Israeli embassies around the world through events taking place around

¹¹² The statement continues with "...in the Czech lands and in Moravia." It is indeed the case that a large part of the Museum's program focuses on Czech Jews, but despite this being the focus we can often find events exploring Jewish heritage from other parts of the world. For a complete mission statement, see the Charter of the Jewish Museum in Prague, <http://c.jewishmuseum.cz/files/documents/stanovy-2015.pdf>.

November 30, which has been the official date of the event's commemoration since 2015.¹¹³ The Embassy in Prague was no exception: in 2015, it brought Ambassador Zvi Gabbay (former Israeli ambassador in Egypt) to talk at the venue of the Jewish Community in Prague,¹¹⁴ and introduced an informative exhibition on the topic on the same premises. The venue of the Prague Jewish Community can be accessed by invitation only, so the event was only open to a limited audience, mainly consisting of members of the community. After Ambassador Gabay's lecture, several Sephardi songs were played and a modest banquet featuring Sephardi Jewish cuisine was held.

By hosting this event, the Prague Jewish community provided its members with the opportunity to discover more about the history of another Jewish community, and to experience its culture for one afternoon. Like the events co-organized by the Jewish Museum, this event also focused on Jewishness as a shared cultural characteristic. Moreover, this event is consistent with Hadari and Tugerman's claim, outlined above, that the State of Israel communicates to its diaspora about topics related to nationalism, sovereignty, democracy, history, and peace. The theme of Jewish refugees from Arab countries coming to the State of Israel in a period of conflict and being integrated there fits this aim exactly.

The second example is a concert/klezmer workshop of the Israeli band Malox in the Prague café and music club Už jsme doma on April 27, 2015. The band was brought to the Czech Republic for another event by the Embassy of Israel in Prague, and this additional concert was jointly organized by the Czech Union of Jewish Youth, Moishe House, and Tagliot. Tagliot is a community and a shared platform for young people that enables them to share their experience from Taglit—state-sponsored trips to Israel for young non-Israeli Jews.¹¹⁵ Moishe House is a global initiative that emerged in the USA in 2006 and today encompasses 85 Moishe Houses in 22 countries. Per their website, Moishe House is “the global leader of Jewish life for young adults.... [that] trains, supports and empowers young Jewish leaders as they create meaningful experiences in their local communities for themselves and their peers.”¹¹⁶ The Prague branch joined the

¹¹³ For full reasoning, see Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jewish refugees expelled from Arab lands and from Iran, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Issues/Pages/Jewish-refugees-expelled-from-Arab-lands-and-from-Iran-29-November-2016.aspx>. The official commemoration might have been established in reaction to the accentuation of the issue of Arab refugees in European media.

¹¹⁴ The history of the Prague Jewish Community can be found on its website—see Kehila Prag, <http://www.kehilaprag.cz/cs/stranka/obec/vseobecne-informace>.

¹¹⁵ For more, see Tagliot, https://www.facebook.com/pg/tagliotcz/about/?ref=page_internal.

¹¹⁶ For more, see Moishe House, <https://www.moishehouse.org/>.

network in 2014¹¹⁷ and, just like the other houses, organizes Jewish-related events primarily for young Jews which are often open to non-Jews too.¹¹⁸ The Czech Union of Jewish Youth aims to bring together “young people of Jewish origin from around the Czech Republic.”¹¹⁹ It does so by organizing a wide array of often youth-focused events such as a Star Wars-themed carnival for Purim.¹²⁰

The venue of Malox’s concert, the Už jsme doma café, is a well-known small music café that often hosts alternative bands and is popular with the artistic community. On the evening of the concert it was packed with regular concert goers as well as members of the three Jewish organizations, students, and music lovers.

Malox is a drums and saxophone duo with a pronounced underground look (both members wear long hair and long beards). Their music can be described as a combination of klezmer and punk—an unorthodox, highly dynamic mix. Both musicians jump around the room during the workshop and concert. The event was held in a very free spirit, and brought together young Jews and non-Jews in an environment not associated with typical, more official Jewish events. Thus, this cooperation of Jewish bodies with the Israeli Embassy approached the Jewish topic from a very different angle than the previous event described. Rather than focusing on an explicitly Jewish topic, it used Israeli musicians with global appeal to bring together young Jews and non-Jews, thereby fulfilling the mission of the organizers. Also, it allowed the governmental bodies of Israeli public diplomacy to approach students, one of its preferred publics, as described above.¹²¹

It is worth noting that the Prague Moishe House and its representatives were active in various initiatives with a pronounced universal appeal, including the current migrant crisis, in which they helped refugees from Muslim countries in transit through the Czech Republic by donating food, clothes, etc.¹²² So, this Jewish body complies with the ambition to emphasize the universal values inherent in Jewishness, such as

¹¹⁷ For more, see Moishe House Prague, <https://www.moishehouse.org/houses/prague>.

¹¹⁸ Personal communication with members of Moishe House Prague.

¹¹⁹ For mission and conditions of membership, see Jewish Lauder school in Prague—http://www.lauder.cz/cs/zajmova_cinnost/cuzm.html.

¹²⁰ Purim is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the time the Jews were saved from the genocide planned against them by Haman, a Persian vizier. Wearing carnival costumes is a part of the celebrations.

¹²¹ The other activities of the State of Israel aimed at Jewish students in the Czech Republic, such as recruitment for Taglit etc., are not public and thus were not part of this research.

¹²² Personal communication with members of Moishe House Prague.

compassion, the concept of *mitzvah*,¹²³ leading by example, etc. Again, here, the narrative goes beyond Jewishness, just as it did in the cultural event.

The final example is the Light of Understanding concert, which is organized every year by another Prague Jewish body, Beit Simcha. Its motto is “Prague Jewish open community.” It was established in 1994 “for Jews permanently living in Prague as well as for those who only visit,” welcoming “all Jews – reform, orthodox, secular and believers as well.” It offers “educational, cultural, religious and other events for Jews”¹²⁴ and has a reputation as a very liberal community. The observed event was the only cultural event co-organized by Beit Simcha and the Embassy in the research period.

The Light of Understanding concert has taken place in Prague every November since 2005. Organized by the head of Beit Simcha, Peter Györi, it consists of two simultaneous concerts—one in the aforementioned Spanish Synagogue, and the other in the nearby St. Spirit Catholic Church. Both concerts introduce Jewish, Christian, and secular musicians, some of whom are very well-known and others less so. The event is promoted by major Czech media, probably more for its educational and multicultural character than for its musical program.¹²⁵ In 2014, the concert took place on November 4 and, as well as Czech musicians, it also introduced Alex Bershadsky, an Israeli bass guitarist who had travelled with the support of the Israeli Embassy to perform there. Thus, the Jewish-Israeli performer was brought to a multicultural event by a Jewish community claiming to build its identity about openness, and thus contributed to a diverse mosaic alongside multiple Czech performers, but also alongside a Macedonian oriental band, etc.¹²⁶

By going beyond Jewishness and underlining the aim to create bridges with communities of other faiths, the cultural program—including its Israeli component—served as a means of representing dialogue. Therefore, in this case, Israel was represented in line with the self-understanding of this particular Jewish community, and

¹²³ “A good deed,” a concept central to the Jewish law of halakha.

¹²⁴ Quoted from the website of Beit Simcha, which also offers more information on the organization—see Beit Simcha, http://www.bejt-praha.cz/o_nas.html.

¹²⁵ Coverage of the 2013 Light of Understanding by Czech TV—see Light of Understanding, <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10472342965-svetlo-porozumeni/21256226456/>

¹²⁶ More on the idea of the concert on the Beit Simcha website—see Beit Simcha Koncerty, <http://www.bejt-praha.cz/images/koncerty.pdf>.

rather differently from the example involving the Prague Jewish Community, for instance.

6.2.4 Jewish festivals

Finally, we will explore Jewish festivals as Jewish actors representing Israel through culture in the Czech Republic. There are several Jewish festivals in the Czech Republic, all of them outside of Prague: the Jewish festival Shamayim in Třebíč; the Week of Jewish Culture in Holešov; the Week of Jewish Culture in Olomouc; and the Jewish festival Cimes in Teplice.

Their link to the Jewish community is not as direct as in the previous cases, but can still be considered relevant. Three of the festivals are organized, co-organized or supported by subjects that claim affinity to the Jewish community—by the Olomouc Jewish community, by a local practicing Jew Ahab Haidler in Holešov, and by the local Hebrew-speaking community Ulpan in Teplice.¹²⁷ The Shamayim festival is not organized by a Jewish community as there is none in the town. Rather, it is organized by the municipality, which also takes care of the local synagogue.

The festivals, in general, are significant cultural events for the size of the towns they take place in (despite rather modest means and budgets). Their importance for local political representatives is illustrated by the fact that all of them are organized, co-organized or supported by the relevant municipalities and affiliated institutions, such as local information centers (Třebíč) or museums (Olomouc). Due to the relative importance of the festivals for local cultural programs, and the relative scarcity of other cultural events, the festivals are attended both by local culture-goers in general, and by those interested in Jewish traditions in particular.

The festivals' programs consist of readings, plays, lectures, and exhibitions with Jewish themes. They explicitly relate themselves to Israel in two ways: First, they take place under the auspices of the Embassy of Israel, and Israeli ambassadors make an appearance every once in a while. Second, they occasionally include Israeli art on their programs. During the research period, the Shamayim festival hosted the theatre

¹²⁷ As the rules of Jewish communities as to who is a legitimate member differ, and are not relevant to this thesis, we will apply the criterium of self-definition here.

performance *With Unarmed Forces* by Israeli Clipa Theatre, and the Israeli music band Bill and Murray (both in 2014).¹²⁸

None of the performances explicitly deals with a Jewish or specifically Israeli topic. *With Unarmed Forces* is a non-verbal object theater/dance performance depicting the effect of violence on interpersonal relationships¹²⁹ and Bill and Murray is an English-singing “eclectic alternative pop band based in Tel Aviv”¹³⁰ that has no explicit markers of Jewish or Israeli identity. Therefore, the mere fact that they are Israeli was the reason for bringing them to the festival.

The lack of conceptual clarity can be explained by the relative lack of Jewish cultural context among the organizing institutions. They are isolated in their regions, made up of individuals with modest means, trying to define what Jewishness means in their case with a much smaller and less sophisticated network than the bodies in Prague. While the Jewish Museum in Prague is representative of a large community, has a considerable budget at its disposal, and is staffed by qualified personnel, and while the Moishe House builds on a global network of similar institutions with leadership from the US, regional festivals take on board anything they can from the not-so-abundant Jewish material in their locale. Even the fact that an Israeli band is performing in the town in the first place is relatively significant. Simply by including Israeli performers, the festivals claim affinity to Israel, the Jewish state.

6.3 Conclusion

While we have seen in this chapter that the means of representing Israel through culture differ significantly across Czech Diaspora groups, there was—during the examined period—a single common denominator: general support for Israel, or at least an absence of public criticism. This is consistent with the statement from Soukupová’s study quoted

¹²⁸ For more see the Cultural Department of the Israeli Embassy in Prague—Kulturní oddělení Velvyslanectví Státu Izrael v České republice, <http://embassies.gov.il/Praha/Departments/Pages/Kulturni-oddeleni.aspx>; festival Shamayim, <https://www.samajim.cz/>; festival Cimes, Ulpan Teplice, <http://www.ulpanteplice.cz/>; Days of Jewish Culture in Olomouc, <http://www.olmuart.cz/dzko/#golem-a-alchymiste>; Festival of Jewish Culture Ha-Makom in Holešov, <http://www.zidovskyfestival.cz/#uvod>.

¹²⁹ Obviously, the topic of violence is related to the conflict(s) Israel is involved in; furthermore, the author theatre troupes (the Israeli Clipa Theatre and the Czech-Russian Teatr Novogo Fronta) claim that the performance was created while they were residing and creating together in Tel Aviv, which was under rocket attacks from Gaza at that time (website of the Czech Center in Tel Aviv—see Teatr Novogo Fronta, <http://tel-aviv.czechcentres.cz/cs/program/detail-akce/teatr-novogo-fronta-clipa-theater-with-unarmed-for/>); however, no markers on the stage point specifically to the Israeli reality.

¹³⁰ Per the band’s facebook profile—Bill and Murray, https://www.facebook.com/pg/billandmurray/about/?ref=page_internal.

above that, in general, the Czech Jewish community is supportive of Israeli governmental policies (Soukupová 2009, 226), or at least does not object to them publicly.

However, this has changed over the period during which this thesis has been written (after the collection of research material). In 2018, a major initiative of several dozen Jewish figures launched a group, “Jews for a Just Peace” (Židé za spravedlivý mír),¹³¹ who are “formulating an appeal, from the position of Jews,¹³² to the current Israeli government”, claiming (among other things): “We understand the fears of people in Israel, and many of us have relatives and friends among them. But we reject current Israeli policy, which misuses these fears to legitimize growing repression in Palestinian lands.”¹³³

This illustrates how the public stance of the Czech Diaspora has changed over time (relatively speaking, it is not as homogenous as it used to be), and, importantly, it supports the claim outlined in the thesis’ introduction that the strategies of different stakeholders change over time too.

¹³¹ Židé za spravedlivý mír, https://www.facebook.com/zidezspravedlivymir/?hc_ref=ARQowPM_Fv-qEFiNuJ1q5pZyXG2nI8VYKH9AQ5ZZL4qWdm5eGD0iDGY4yEEyKH4OgI&fref=nf.

¹³² In regard to Jewishness, the statement reads: “With this statement, we want to remind the world that the Israeli government does not speak in the name of all Jews. In particular, we would also like to open more critical discussion of this question among Czech Jews. For us, it is a matter of human dignity, and it is immaterial to us whether the victims of indignity are Palestinians, Jews, or anyone else. We come forward as people of varying opinions and varying connections to Jewishness. Thanks to our parents, grandparents, and those around us, who have spoken to us of their experience in the concentration camps, we have gained a respect for human rights. And we have learned that racism is a scourge on humanity, and that it comes in many forms. We cannot accept the logic that some people are more valued than others, that some deserve more and some less respect than others, because of their origins. We refuse to adopt this way of thinking, which we see as trampling on the legacy of our forebears and on the universal message of Judaism, with its emphasis on justice, equality, and tolerance.” (Jews for a Just Peace 2018).

¹³³ Ibid.

7. THE BDS MOVEMENT AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

The same powers that fuel the importance of cultural diplomacy as a tool of states' battles for hearts and minds also motivate the opponents of such messages. While constituencies are mobilized through certain narratives, and non-state actors join forces with governments in spreading certain content, other non-state actors (sometimes in alliances with other states) work hard to present an alternative angle on the situation, to neutralize or reverse the intended effect, and to reframe the issues in their own way.

This chapter takes one of the most significant producers of a counter-narrative in the field of Israel's cultural representation, the *BDS—Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions*—movement. The BDS movement, just like Israeli public diplomacy, aims for public resonance. But contrary to Israeli public diplomacy, which wants to improve the image of Israel, the BDS movement wants to diminish Israel's standing to the level of complete international disgrace and isolation, thus pressuring the state into concessions. The following pages talk mostly about the BDS's focus on the cultural boycott, and about its impact on Israeli public diplomacy in the Czech Republic.

This chapter derives from Lock's strategic conception of soft power, that emphasizes interdependency in creating the message while using soft power. Contrary to theories of soft power and cultural diplomacy that perceive the communication process as unidirectional, Lock talks about meaning that is ascribed to the message in the interaction of all actors, including the subjects of public diplomacy.

Lock suggests that social structures cannot be owned by one type of actor. They might give some actors an advantage, but since social structures are dependent on ascribed meanings they are a product of interdependence: "such social structures are constituted through the practices of both those who are advantaged and those who are disadvantaged by their structuring effects" (Lock 2009, 12). Lock further develops his theory by claiming that the agent of soft power dynamically adjusts its strategy in expectation of the other side's reactions.

In our case, it implies that BDS may influence Israeli cultural representation in two major ways: it can proactively structure the environment into which Israeli cultural diplomacy enters (by creating new topics, new agencies, etc.); and it may also influence the actors of Israeli cultural diplomacy who preemptively tailor their movements according to their expectation of the reactions of BDS.

7.1 The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement

7.1.1 Arab boycott

Boycott—“to engage in a concerted refusal to have dealings with (a person, a store, an organization, etc.) usually to express disapproval or to force acceptance of certain conditions”¹³⁴—has been used as a tool of international political pressure for decades. Gandhi’s boycott of British goods is one of the best known early examples.

The anti-Israel boycott has its origins in the Arab League’s boycott of “Zionist goods,” formalized in 1945. Today, the boycott is administered by the Central Boycott Office in Damascus, a specialized office of the Arab League (Weiss 2006, 1). In 1948, the originally anti-Zionist economic boycott was formalized against the State of Israel and expanded to include all “diplomatic, political, cultural, social, and economic interaction with Israel” (Reingold and Lansing 1994, 336), prohibiting the import of any cultural goods related to Israel.¹³⁵ In the same year, it was also extended to subjects cooperating with Israel (Weiss 2006, 1). The principle of a ‘three-tier’ boycott was implemented: not only Israeli businesses were boycotted, but also foreign entities (businesses or individuals) that cooperated with Israeli ones, and entities that cooperated with these “transgressors.” The principle is well illustrated in the case of OPEC’s oil embargo from 1973, that included indirect embargoes against countries that conveyed oil for the United States or the Netherlands, who were doing business with Israel. By then,

Saudi Arabia developed a complex classification of consumer nations. ‘Most-favored’ nations such as Great Britain, France, Spain, Arab importing countries, Islamic countries, and African nations without ties to Israel, received as much oil as they required. ‘Friendly’ nations such as Belgium or Japan who had been neutral but had modified their policy to favor the Arab position, received the level of oil shipped before the embargo. Most members of the European Economic Community (except the Netherlands and Denmark) were subject to less severe cutbacks because they had supported the [rights] of the Palestinians... Truly neutral countries were subject to all cutbacks in production, and embargoed countries (the United States, the

¹³⁴ For the definition of boycott according to Merriam-Webster online dictionary, see Merriam Webster—Boycott, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/boycott>.

¹³⁵ Reingold and Lansing claim that as such it is in contradiction to UNESOC’s Florence Agreement, or the Agreement on the Importation of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Materials from 1950 that establishes freedom of circulation of any cultural materials (Reingold and Lansing 1994). Full text of the Florence agreement at http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=12074&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

Netherlands, South Africa, Rhodesia, and Portugal) received no oil.
(Reingold and Lansing 1994, 337)

The Arab boycott is in principle targeted against any Israel-related subjects. However, this approach encountered several problems that eventually led to the weakening of its potency (multiple Arab states have abandoned the boycott).¹³⁶ The internationally rapidly expanding BDS movement has, to a certain extent, taken its place.

The major issue is that the Arab League boycott relies on a top-down strategy. Even in cases where the government stood for it, it was difficult to apply thoroughly. This was partly because it was increasingly difficult to boycott all Israeli produce in the global economy (for instance, the Intel microchips present in a huge majority of computers worldwide).¹³⁷ However, new media also played a role, as well as Israeli governmental and non-governmental efforts to address the Arab audience. For instance, the Israeli government has developed Arab editions of Israeli TV and radio broadcasts (Cummings 2016, loc. 1476 of 5476); today, the Arab audience is one of the key targets of governmental initiatives as detailed in the section on governmental structures responsible for cultural diplomacy. Also, Israeli non-governmental subjects communicate with Arab audiences. For example, The Israel Project advocacy group and its Facebook page “Israel uncensored,” which is only in Arabic and claims to have a weakly outreach of 10 million people in the Arab world.¹³⁸ Israeli artists also sometimes try to reach an Arab audience. The popular metal band Orphaned Land has a large fan base in Arab countries who download their records and come to their concerts in Turkey—a country to which both Arabs and Israelis can travel (e.g., Noisy 2004).

The second problem of the Arab League boycott was that it encountered major legal problems—for instance US legislation forbids discrimination on the basis of nationality and thus penalizes any subjects, including domestic ones, that would comply with the Arab boycott of Israel (Reingold and Lansing 1994, 341).

¹³⁶ As the US Congress reports note, “the Arab League does not enforce the boycott itself and boycott regulations are not binding on member states. However, the regulations have been the model for various laws implemented by member countries.” (Weiss 2006, 2) Furthermore, regarding the economic boycott, even some Arab League states comply with the boycott only formally, not implementing it in cases where pragmatism wins out over ideology (Weiss, 2006; Reingold and Lansing 1994). As for the cultural boycott, no data is available. However according to the testimonies of some Israelis and my own observations it is implemented more consistently, probably because its economic effects are not too serious. The popularity of such measures might also play a role.

¹³⁷ Even though campaigning aimed to sidetrack this issue—for example, see Debunking pro-Israeli arguments against boycott, <http://pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1398&key=microchip>.

¹³⁸ See a press release on the website of TIP—Half a million likes, <http://www.theisraelproject.org/half-a-million-likes-for-israel-facebook-in-arabic/>.

And third, it did not resonate strongly enough outside the Arab world due to the regional particularity and difficult ethical position of such an approach. It did not acquire global prominence. However, the following movement, BDS, adopted a bottom-up stance which has found significant resonance in the world of political mobilization and social media.

7.1.2 BDS

The BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement in support of Palestine derives from the same logic as the original Arab boycott: the aim is to isolate Israel. BDS has only existed for a decade, but it is the most prominent global boycott movement today, and has already changed the face of Israeli cultural diplomacy, and the questions and issues related to it.

Aims, tools, and principles

Drawing upon the South African boycott,¹³⁹ the movement builds on the conviction that the Israeli regime exists only thanks to international public and private support. Therefore, isolating Israel will help to promote the Palestinian cause. The aim will have been fulfilled when:

Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law by:

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall
2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and
3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.¹⁴⁰

As is apparent in the name of the campaign, it employs three tools to reach this goal: boycotts (which “involve withdrawing support for Israel and Israeli and international companies that are involved in the violation of Palestinian human rights, as well as

¹³⁹ “Inspired by the struggle of South Africans against apartheid and in the spirit of international solidarity, moral consistency and resistance to injustice and oppression...,” as the BDS website claims in the full text of the call—see Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS, <https://bdsmovement.net/call> (Accessed February 2017).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

complicit Israeli sporting, cultural and academic institutions”), divestments (“urge banks, local councils, churches, pension funds and universities to withdraw investments from all Israeli companies and from international companies involved in violating Palestinian rights”), and sanctions (“pressure governments to fulfil their legal obligation to hold Israel to account including by ending military trade, free-trade agreements and expelling Israel from international forums such as the UN and FIFA”).¹⁴¹

There are two inherent principles that are essential for our topic.

First, the BDS movement relies on Israel’s pride in its image as a Western, democratic country; that is precisely why it is a better target of campaigns claiming its system is inherently as oppressive as notoriously authoritarian states (Hallward 2013, Chapter 1). Israel’s efforts to build up its soft power through cultural diplomacy are turned against the country by the BDS movement. The battlefield for both sides is public opinion.

Second, the logic behind the boycott that we will explore further is that every stance is political, i.e., not acting in support of Palestinians means acting in favor of Israel. This derives from the conviction that the major injustice of the present situation stems from its asymmetry. A dialogue only further maintains this asymmetry, as there is no real dialogue when one side is severely underprivileged.¹⁴² These two principles are powerful forces in cultural representation, as we will see, because they effectively contradict some of the core benefits that Israel can gain from cultural diplomacy—namely broadening the narrative related to the state beyond conflict, and finding new partners.

Structure

The origins of the current BDS movement can be traced to the US students’ movement for divestment from the early years of the Second Intifada (2000-2005). In 2004, pro-Palestinian activists established the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI). A turning point for the movement was the 2004 International Court of Justice advisory ruling on Israel’s separation barrier, asking states not to assist in its construction, which was disregarded by governments but mobilized pro-Palestinian civil society groups (Hallward 2013, 27). Formally, the BDS movement was established on July 9, 2005 by a group of Palestinian non-governmental

¹⁴¹ From the BDS movement website—see What is BDS, <https://bdsmovement.net/what-is-bds>.

¹⁴² See for instance the BDS guidelines—FAQs BDS, <https://bdsmovement.net/faqs#collapse16243>; or Hallward 2013, 24.

organizations with the call ‘Palestinian Civil Society Calls for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel Until it Complies with International Law and Universal Principles of Human Rights,’ signed by approximately 150 Palestinian non-governmental organizations, including political movements, teacher’s associations, local committees, and dance groups.

The movement is lead and supported by the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), which was established as its coordination organ in 2007.¹⁴³ The BNC functions as “a focal point for coordinating various BDS campaign efforts, since it organizes a yearly conference, formulates strategies and programs, and acts as the Palestinian reference point for global BDS activities” (Hallward 2013, 30). But, overall, the movement is rather decentralized. Local BDS branches all over the world are autonomous—not controlled by BNC, even though they are asked to “consult” it in certain cases.¹⁴⁴

Just as for Israeli cultural diplomacy structures, this proves to be both an advantage and a disadvantage at the same time. It is true that the actors do not always agree on all moves, as exemplified by the case of the West-Eastern Diwan Orchestra’s boycott, which is described below. As Hallward claims in her detailed study of BDS, it is “less a coherent, collectively organized global movement in the singular and more a network of local BDS movements, linked together via certain key activist nodes” (Hallward 2013, 2). On the other hand, decentralization allows for “context-sensitivity” (ibid.). Just like other activist movements, including those in the field of cultural representation, BDS is “rather than mobilizing around a primary goal related to a single target ... dynamic, with actors reframing their targets and goals and adjusting their tactics according to the political and social resources available to them” (ibid., 7), making use of the locally specific dynamic of contention.

As well as being geographically dispersed, BDS is not entirely unified with respect to its political goals either, as Hallward notes, remaining divided over issues related to the terms in which the origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are perceived, or its attitude towards violence.

¹⁴³ More on its mandate and members on the BDS website—see Palestinian BDS National Committee, <https://bdsmovement.net/bnc>.

¹⁴⁴ See Respecting BDS Guidelines, <https://bdsmovement.net/news/respecting-bds-guidelines-self-determination-and-international-solidarity>.

However, the overarching goal is the same: to advocate for a specific stance in relation to Israel. Therefore, public attention is the movement's main tool. That is why it is up to each regional BDS branch to select its specific goal that will resonate the most with the local public. As we will see, getting big music stars to comply with BDS or expressly support it is thus among its biggest achievements. Social media have been instrumental in this regard, providing the BDS and pro-Palestinian movement with an alternative information channel competing with large media published in Israel and improving the visibility of their message in the past few years (Frantzman 2014, 12).

According to Hallward, an important aspect of BDS activism is self-identification: "The debates over BDS touch on peoples' sense of who they are and how their actions in the world convey their most important beliefs" (Hallward 2013, 20). In other words, civic society organizations, schools and other actors who join the boycott are similar to other actors presented in this thesis that also assert their self-understanding via their demonstrated relationship to Israel.

7.1.3 Cultural boycott: Institutions and individual artists

The policy of sanctions aims at governmental and intergovernmental bodies; the policy of divestment also aims at commercial subjects. The strategy most concerned with public opinion is boycott, since it relies on the individual actions of private citizens. The streams of the BDS boycott efforts are: (a) economic boycott, (b) academic boycott, and (c) cultural boycott. In the following pages, we will examine the cultural boycott as a practice co-structuring the field of Israeli cultural representation.

Deriving from the logic outlined above, local BDS initiatives work to discourage Israeli artists from appearing abroad, and to discourage non-Israeli artists from appearing in Israel or performing with Israelis elsewhere, in a strategy reminiscent of the economic boycott.

Culture is seen as a supporting pillar of an oppressive regime. The campaign's website justifies cultural boycott in the following way:

BDS does not target artists. It targets institutions based on their complicity in Israel's violations of international law. Israel has made a deliberate decision to use culture to whitewash its crimes. As Israel's standing in the world deteriorates and isolation grows, it increasingly attempts to use culture as a tool to cover up its crimes and mitigate the damaging effects of its oppression of Palestinians on its global image.

Following the Gaza massacre in 2009, an Israeli official announced a plan to ‘send well-known novelists and writers overseas, theater companies, exhibits’ to ‘show Israel’s prettier face’. This was part of the Brand Israel project, launched by Israel’s foreign ministry in 2005 to counter the boycott.

Often when Israeli artists perform overseas using government funding, they have to sign a contract promising to ‘promote the policy interests of the State of Israel’.¹⁴⁵ Clearly such performances become propaganda activities to rebrand Israeli apartheid.

When international artists violate the boycott and perform in Israel, it helps to normalise Israel’s crimes. That’s why the Israeli government portrays concerts in Israel as a sign of support for its policies.¹⁴⁶

Elsewhere, the Guidelines for Cultural Boycott of Israel by PACBI say:

Israeli cultural institutions, unless proven otherwise, are complicit in maintaining the Israeli occupation and denial of basic Palestinian rights, whether through their silence or actual involvement in justifying, whitewashing or otherwise deliberately diverting attention from Israel’s violations of international law and human rights.¹⁴⁷

Therefore, the cultural boycott builds on the same logic as the whole movement: Israel should be perceived first and foremost as the oppressor of the Palestinians. Before this is radically solved, nothing else matters. Thus, the arts (especially when supported by the Israeli government or pro-Israel actors) can be seen only as a distraction from this issue and cultural institutions are complicit in the oppression.¹⁴⁸

When it comes to the question of boycotting individual Israeli artists, the Guidelines enter, to some extent, a grey area. At one place, the Guidelines state that individual

¹⁴⁵ This allegation has been raised by the poet and Haaretz contributor Yitzhak Laor (Laor 2008). However, his claim remained isolated and it should be noted that I have never encountered such a requirement while working at the Embassy, or heard about it from any of the artists.

¹⁴⁶ See FAQs BDS, <https://bdsmovement.net/faqs>.

¹⁴⁷ See PACBI Guidelines for the International Cultural Boycott of Israel (Revised July 2014), <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1047> (Accessed September 2016).

¹⁴⁸ One of the latest events is the Eurovision song contest, that will take place in Israel in 2019. It provoked a push from BDS and its supporters on the basis of “artwashing” the occupation (Ayyub 2019). There was also a rumor that the boycott movement influenced the decision to hold the event in Tel Aviv, not in the capital city of Jerusalem, refuted by the organizers (“No Serious Talk about Boycott of Eurovision...”).

artists should not be targeted unless they are either sponsored by the state or are directly complicit in violations of international law, specifically saying that

an individual artist/writer, Israeli or otherwise, cannot be exempt from being subject to ‘common sense’ boycotts (beyond the scope of the PACBI institutional boycott criteria) that conscientious citizens around the world may call for in response to what they widely perceive as egregious individual complicity in, responsibility for, or advocacy of violations of international law (such as war crimes or other grave human rights violations), racial violence, or racial slurs.¹⁴⁹

But the issue of the artists’ “complicity” is not very clear. The PACBI guidelines specifically say:

Anchored in precepts of international law and universal human rights, the BDS movement, including PACBI, rejects on principle boycotts of individuals based on their identity (such as citizenship, race, gender, or religion) or opinion. *Mere affiliation of Israeli cultural workers to an Israeli cultural institution is therefore not grounds for applying the boycott.* If, however, an individual is *representing* the state of Israel or a complicit Israeli institution, or is commissioned/recruited to participate in Israel’s efforts to ‘rebrand’ itself, then her/his activities are subject to the institutional boycott the BDS movement is calling for.¹⁵⁰

What does “represent the state of Israel” (especially with a lower-case ‘s’ in the word ‘state’) mean? It is not entirely clear. Given the decentralized structure of BDS, the central guidelines are adopted and interpreted selectively by each of the local BDS groups. Israeli artists have been boycotted on various grounds. In some cases, artists were boycotted because they were labelled by someone else as an “ambassador of Israel,” as we will see in the chapter on artists in the case of Bathseva, despite their own criticism of the government. In other cases, they were boycotted due to their previous contacts with other Israeli institutions. For instance, the Jerusalem Quartet was boycotted on multiple occasions on the grounds that it has performed for Israeli soldiers (Bruce 2011).

¹⁴⁹ For full text, see PACBI Guidelines for the International Cultural Boycott of Israel (Revised July 2014). <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1047>.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

Yet, in other cases, boycott translates into a ban on anything Israeli, including individual artists not representing the government in any way, outside of Israel, especially in Arab countries (as a legacy of the boycott of the Arab League). One example is the story of the movie director Eran Riklis. During his visit to the Febiofest film festival in Prague, he remembered how he sent his first movie to a festival in Egypt. The envelope came back to him unopened due to the address of origin of the sender.¹⁵¹ Similarly, Amos Oz talked in a radio interview about his desire for his books to be translated into Arabic, which happens only very rarely because most Arab publishers do not print anything by an Israeli author, disregarding his or her opinions (Raus 2008).

Finally, in some extreme cases, even non-Israeli artists are boycotted if they do not comply with the BDS stance. A famous example is the US Jewish (non-Israeli) rapper Matisyahu, who was requested to sign a statement backing the Palestinians' right to a state to be allowed to perform at the Spanish Rototom Sunsplash festival in 2015 (Lewis 2015). Festival organizers claimed they were under heavy pressure from BDS and later reversed their request. In a defense of the BDS stance, activists claim that Matisyahu's support of Zionism provides sufficient grounds for a boycott, since he is using "the platform he's received as a musician to promote his anti-Palestinian views" (Abunimah 2015). Therefore, political stances in regard to Israel have become grounds for a boycott, and are justified by some as such:

It then comes down to a matter of conscience and judgment as to whether Miller's vocal support for Israeli war crimes, his fundraising for the Israeli army, his performances for AIPAC and other anti-Palestinian organizations amount to 'egregious individual complicity'. The guidelines issued by PACBI are important, but they are not laws and Palestinians don't have the power to enforce them,

says a proponent of Matisyahu's boycott (ibid.).

Contrary to this grey area of "representation," the principle of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in the arts or elsewhere is considered and explicitly categorized as unacceptable and a clear qualification for boycott. Such cooperation invokes false feeling of symmetry of the sides, obscuring the "oppressor-oppressed" nature of the

¹⁵¹ Eran Riklis' speech before the screening of his film *Lemon Tree* during Febiofest 2015.

relationships. Calling joint cultural projects “Normalization Projects,” the Guidelines specify:

Cultural activities, projects, events and products involving Palestinians and/or other Arabs on one side and Israelis on the other (whether bi- or multi- lateral) that are based on the false premise of symmetry/parity between the oppressors and the oppressed or that assume that both colonizers and colonized are equally responsible for the ‘conflict’ are intellectually dishonest and morally reprehensible forms of normalization that ought to be boycotted. Far from challenging the unjust status quo, such projects contribute to its endurance. Examples include events, projects, publications, films, or exhibitions that are designed to bring together Palestinians/Arabs and Israelis so they can present their respective narratives or perspectives, or to work toward reconciliation, ‘overcoming barriers,’ etc., without addressing the root causes of injustice and the requirements of justice. Other factors that PACBI takes into consideration in evaluating such products and events are the sources of funding, the design of the product or event, the objectives of the sponsoring organization(s), the participants, and similar relevant factors.¹⁵²

This line does occasionally have repercussions similar to a second-tier boycott for Arabs or Palestinians who do cooperate with Israeli artists. There are even cases of cooperation of a Jewish-Israeli and a Palestinian artist that ended with isolation of the Palestinian by their own community. For instance, Lizzie Doron’s literary-cinematographic project, planned together with a Palestinian filmmaker, fell prey to pressures from within the Palestinian community for a Palestinian not to cooperate with a Jewish-Israeli artist, as detailed during her lectures in Prague. On the other hand, Doron claims that she faces harsh judgement from the Jewish-Israeli community for turning away from her previous topic of the Holocaust and taking up the new topic of cooperation with a Palestinian.¹⁵³

The only case where Israeli artists are clearly exempted from the boycott in the scope of such projects is when they explicitly endorse BDS policies. This, as we have seen

¹⁵² PACBI Guidelines for the International Cultural Boycott of Israel, <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1047>

¹⁵³ Lizzie Doron during author’s reading in Café Exil, 7 November 2016.

earlier, is a stance that Israeli artists can seldom take, as, despite their often-critical stances, their support for the existence of the State of Israel is mostly non-negotiable.

7.1.4 Israeli artists' position vis-a-vis the boycott

Israeli artists naturally find themselves in a difficult position regarding the boycott. First, they are often criticized from both sides for taking a certain stance in a field that is full of extremely politicized notions of culture. For instance, the Israeli HaBima's theatre adaptation of Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice' in London was protested against both by the theatre's Friends group because of the "anti-Semitism" inherent in the play, and by BDS, which condemned the theatre for performing in Israeli West Bank settlements illegal under international law (Yudilovitch 2012).

Probably the best example is discord related to performances by the famous Israeli conductor, Daniel Barenboim. This world-famous Israel-born conductor has been in charge of orchestras worldwide, and is currently musical director of the Berlin State Opera and the Staatskapelle Berlin, which is already an unusual posting for an Israeli. His fondness for German culture has led to fierce criticism by Israeli officials, particularly after he performed a piece from Wagner's ("Hitler's favorite composer")¹⁵⁴ *Tristan and Isolde* as an encore in Jerusalem in 2011 (after originally folding to pressure not to play *The Valkyrie* as part of the programme, replacing it with Stravinsky and Schumann). Some, including the parliamentary cultural committee, called for a boycott of Barenboim (MacAskill 2011; "Israel Calls for Barenboim Boycott"). Barenboim is also boycotted from the other side. Together with the prominent Palestinian academic Edward W. Said, a very close personal friend of his, he established the West-Eastern Diwan Orchestra composed of Israeli and Arab musicians. The orchestra qualifies for boycott by BDS as an example of a "Normalization Project."¹⁵⁵ PACBI has condemned the Ministry of Culture of Qatar for hosting the orchestra in Doha, while Said's widow, herself a supporter of BDS, criticized PACBI for doing so (Said 2010). To make things even more complicated, Barenboim has endorsed BDS as "absolutely correct, ... perfectly right and necessary," but also claimed the boycott is unable to differentiate between governmental policies and Israeli artists with critical views, and is thus "very short-term and not positive for any future

¹⁵⁴ Wagner is often characterized as Hitler's famous composer and a man whose ideas were largely intertwined with National Socialism. For media discussion, see, for instance, "Hitler and Wagner," or Kurbjuweit 2013.

¹⁵⁵ For full justification, see PACBI: West-Eastern Divan Orchestra Violates Boycott, at <https://electronicintifada.net/content/pacbi-west-eastern-divan-orchestra-violates-boycott/1040>.

for the Palestinians” (Lebrecht 2015). Barenboim himself participated in the boycott of the Israeli West Bank settlement of Ariel initiated by Israeli actors who refuse to perform there (Mozgovaya 2010). And, most recently, the boycott of Israel has led Iranian authorities to ban the performance of the Barenboim-led Berlin State Opera Orchestra in Tehran, which was commissioned by the German government (“Iran Bans Daniel Barenboim...”). Barenboim was banned from entering Iran on the grounds of his Israeli citizenship, despite the fact that he also holds Spanish, Argentinian, and Palestinian (sic) citizenships. Moreover, Barenboim’s intention to perform in Iran was initially criticized fervently within Israel.

These examples illustrate the different approaches of cultural boycotters: whereas in the case of Barenboim’s Iranian ban the citizenship, and not the artist’s political views, was the determining factor, in Matiyahu’s case the artist’s political views trumped his nationality. Barenboim’s case, in particular, is a good illustration of how one person or cultural product can be ascribed opposing meanings by various institutions that contextualize culture and boycott in their own way, reinforcing their own points of view.

7.1.5 Discouraging artists from performing in Israel

Another major line of BDS is discouraging performances of foreign artists in Israel. It argues that “performances in Israel help to create the impression that Israel is a ‘normal country’, thus whitewashing its violations of Palestinian human rights.” According to this argument, “Israel considers performances in Tel Aviv as endorsement of its policies. Palestinians reject the idea that the damage done by an artist performing or exhibiting their work in Israel can in some way be compensated for by a parallel performance or exhibition in occupied Palestinian territory. This attempt at ‘balance’ undermines Palestinian rights.”¹⁵⁶

In this way, the movement has been pressuring international stars to cancel their performances in Israel, sometimes successfully (as in the cases of Lauryn Hill, U2, and Björk)¹⁵⁷ and sometimes unsuccessfully (as in the cases of Alicia Keys, Alanis Morissette, and Macy Gray; Andersen 2013). After announcing a visit to Israel, artists are pressured by their colleagues (Roger Waters, Naomi Klein, or Ken Loach, for example) as well as NGOs and their fans in personalized letters to cancel the show. In a

¹⁵⁶ See Cultural Boycott, <https://bdsmovement.net/cultural-boycott>.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

recent letter to Natalie Imbruglia, BDS activists implore her “to recognise that your performance in Israel cannot create bridges over apartheid, oppression and suffering, merely obscure it so Israel can continue to pretend that its crimes are ‘normal’ and blame Palestinians for their own plight.”¹⁵⁸

While the Israeli artists who disregard the boycott and perform in Israel nevertheless claim that the arts have a power to build bridges and are a universal messenger of love, denying any political significance of the performer’s activity (Cohen 2013), the boycott-related narrative is based on exactly the opposite idea: all actions are perceived as political, and nothing can be devoid of politics.

7.1.6 Countering cultural boycott

While the Arab League boycott has not been consistently followed, and several Arab League members have even refrained from participating,¹⁵⁹ the BDS movement, including its cultural stream, has been able to cultivate growing popularity and claim non-negligible successes.¹⁶⁰ In 2016, the Israel Apartheid Week¹⁶¹ events were the most successful so far. Multiple regions in Spain have declared themselves “Israel Apartheid Free Zones,” refusing any import of Israeli products or ideas. Several EU states (Sweden, the Netherlands, etc.) as well as the EU as a whole have codified the “right to boycott Israel” for the first time. Student unions at major universities (New York University, for example) joined the BDS movement and great stars of pop music, such as Beyoncé and Pharell Williams, have cancelled their shows in Tel Aviv.¹⁶² Some claim that cultural boycott has been the most successful tier of BDS due to the major attention that cancellation of the shows of international stars in Israel brings (Shay 2013).

¹⁵⁸ Full letter addressed to Natalia Imbruglia at the BDS website—see Open letter urging Natalie Imbruglia..., <https://bdsmovement.net/news/open-letter-urging-natalie-imbruglia-respect-cultural-boycott-call>.

¹⁵⁹ The US Congress report on the boycott details: “Some states and entities have formally ended the boycott, or at least some aspects of it. Egypt (1979), the Palestinian Authority (1993), and Jordan (1994) signed peace treaties or agreements that ended the boycott. Mauritania, which never applied the boycott, established diplomatic relations with Israel in 1999. In addition, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia do not enforce the boycott. In 1994, the member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—announced that they would only enforce the primary boycott and, in 1996, recognized that total elimination of the boycott is a necessary step for peace and economic development in the region.” (Weiss 2006, 3).

¹⁶⁰ It should be noted, though, that these boycotts may overlap. It might reasonably be expected that the BDS events in the Arab world would attract an audience supportive of the Arab League boycott.

¹⁶¹ A week of cultural events and related efforts in support of Palestinians, organized at multiple universities and public venues around the world.

¹⁶² A complete list of major successes claimed by BDS in 2016 is available at the International Middle East Media Center’s website—see BDS Movement counts successes for 2016, <http://imemc.org/article/bds-movement-counts-successes-for-2016/>.

Israeli and pro-Israeli subjects felt compelled to react, as calls for action have slowly started to challenge the traditional approach of skepticism towards self-explanation in the face of radically anti-Israeli forces. In 2016, several conferences on BDS took place, which is unprecedented. There was the Anti-BDS Conference 2016, organized by the pro-Israel support group Stand With Us¹⁶³ in April in the US and attended by activists and academics; the high-level anti-BDS conference in Jerusalem in March organized by a major Israeli newspaper, Yediot Ahronot, and attended by top politicians, including the Israeli president, and journalists;¹⁶⁴ and, in May, the large anti-BDS conference “Build Bridges Not Boycott” was held at the premises of the General Assembly of the UN, organized by Israel’s Mission to the UN, the World Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, the Zionist Organization of America, Stand With Us, and other pro-Israel organizations.¹⁶⁵

The large-scale conferences have a mobilizing tone, characterizing boycott activists as anti-Semites and a grave danger to the international legitimacy of Israel. Cultural boycott is understood as just one of the techniques used to contest Israel’s right to exist. Some criticize these conferences as ascribing BDS too much importance and giving it unnecessary leverage by drawing attention to it through high-level activities (Tarnopolsky 2016).

Moreover, the fight against BDS is currently assigned to the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs that was previously established to deal with significant geopolitical threats, such as a nuclear Iran, and not to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was upset by this decision (Blank 2015). Gilad Erdan, the Minister of Strategic Affairs, used heavily militaristic language when talking about taking over the responsibility of tackling BDS, talking about “attacks,” “frontline,” and “battles” (Apfel 2016). This approach, as well as the tone used at state-funded conferences, confirm the previously discussed predominance of militaristic structures in Israeli foreign affairs, which has obviously become pertinent to the tackling of BDS: once the issue gained urgency, it started to be handled by security structures, not by diplomatic ones. It might be doubted that this is

¹⁶³ See the invitation and the list of speakers for the Anti-BDS Conference 2016, <https://www.standwithus.com/ppsc/bdsconf2016.asp>.

¹⁶⁴ Full programme of the conference at Stop the Boycott, <http://stopbds.ynet.co.il/english.aspx>.

¹⁶⁵ For a video recording of the conference on the UN website, see Building Bridges, not Boycotts,: <http://webtv.un.org/watch/1st-meeting-building-bridges-%E2%80%93-not-boycotts/4920912629001#full-text>.

the most efficient approach for tackling cultural boycott as the cultural community might not be on the same wavelength as militaristically-minded officials.

Another approach to anti-BDS activism has been adopted by several non-governmental actors, most notably the Creative Community for Peace (CCFP), “an entertainment industry organization that represents a cross-section of the creative world dedicated to promoting the arts as a means to peace and to countering the cultural boycott of Israel.” The CCFP’s mission statements says: “We encourage artists to participate, rather than shun, to express rather than suppress. If anything, turn up the music, expose our art to wider audiences, and encourage people from all cultures to interact, communicate and inspire peace and understanding.”¹⁶⁶ The CCFP helps artists who face boycott activists when preparing for their performance in Israel by helping with

advice, recommendations and support in monitoring and/or managing the messages on social or in traditional media, support, information, and further explanations of various accusations or threats being made... [and] Arrangements to meet with – and possibly perform with – Israelis and Palestinians who use music and art as a bridge: to connect, communicate and better understand each other’s narratives.¹⁶⁷

The CCFP also engages in responses to the BDS movement on new media. It asks musicians’ fans to encourage them online, as a counterbalance to the boycotters’ messages urging them not to perform in Israel (Brinn 2011).¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ For the whole Mission statement, see Our Mission—Creative Community for Peace, <http://www.ccfpeace.org/our-mission/>.

¹⁶⁷ More on the CCFP’s website for artists and promoters—see How CCFP can help you and your clients, <http://www.ccfpeace.org/how-ccfp-helps-artists/>.

¹⁶⁸ The Israeli government is also active in tackling antagonistic voices online, as the Molad study details: “The Israeli hasbara apparatus does not only use new media to deepen its audience’s knowledge of Israel and to disseminate responses to newsworthy happenings. One of the primary elements of the Israeli new media strategy is an initiative to undermine the anti-Israel agenda. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs employs an official, round-the-clock staff to write pro-Israeli responses on blogs, social networks, and in the comments sections of European and American news sites, and to actively participate in discussions and surveys that pertain to Israel. The Ministry of Public Diplomacy has a virtual ‘situation room’ that employs thousands of hasbara volunteers in online communication, which it successfully put into effect during the Marmara Flotilla incident. The hasbara apparatus also uses social networking to directly target anti-Israel campaigns and their manifestation on the Internet. The campaigns by the Ministry of Public Diplomacy for the removal of the “third intifada” application from the Apple store as well as their campaign to take down the Facebook page calling for an intifada are two such examples” (Greenfield 2012, 37). However, as this concerns mainly information aspects of public diplomacy, not cultural ones, we will not delve any deeper into the issue.

Thus, this approach is dramatically different from the governmental one: it is not militaristic but appeasing, sees culture not as battlefield but as a space of peaceful interaction and dialogue. By helping the artists directly on the ground, it might be substantially more efficient than high-level conferences. However, its tone might not resonate well with certain circles of activists. Rather unidimensionally, the CCFP's supporters claim that art has nothing to do with politics and is always a force for good. "Music should be separated from politics," says one of the CCFP's founders, Steve Schnur in an article for the Jerusalem Post (*ibid.*). However, at the same time he describes how Linkin Park's photo at the Wailing Wall is "great publicity for Israel," and talks about his pro-Zionist conviction (*ibid.*).

Another clear line in the CCFP's narrative is a hint of superiority over artists who need to be "informed" about the real state of affairs in Israel to make the correct decision. For instance, another of the co-founders, David Renzer, describes how the CCFP provided support to Macy Gray while she was under BDS pressure to boycott her performance in Israel. "One of our main messages to her was: 'Look, Macy, you're not a politician; you're an artist. One of the beautiful things about an artist is that when she performs, she spreads the message of love, peace and understanding and an open dialogue. That won't happen if you cancel,'" Renzer says in the same article. "She developed a greater appreciation and understanding of the issues and realized that boycotting didn't really offer any answers," he adds (Brinn 2011). Such rather pronounced neglect of the agency of the boycotters testifies to the effort to frame culture as a completely non-political phenomenon, contrary to BDS principles.

The CCFP is also criticized for being supported by a major pro-Israel think tank, Stand With Us (Nguyen 2013), which is, in turn, financed by Israel (Cohen 2015). This is not to evaluate pro-boycott financing (which is, according to multiple records, also far from being purely detached from governments; Bedein 2015; Black 2014) or anti-boycott organizations but to accentuate that the major existing anti-BDS organizations have a narrative narrowly tied to that of the State of Israel, or, in the discourse of the boycotters, the oppressors. Therefore, the narratives of BDS and anti-BDS organizations remain irreconcilable.

While one camp sees joint Israeli-Palestinian events as an opportunity for dialogue, which is necessarily a positive phenomenon, the other side sees dialogue as a means of confirmation of the status quo from which only the currently stronger side profits, since

the weaker side does not have the same power to frame the terms of debate (Hallward 2013, 20):

Indeed, the discourse surrounding the BDS movement aimed at ending the Israeli occupation illustrates ‘radical disagreement,’ the antithesis of ‘dialog for mutual understanding’ and the linguistic conflict underscores vastly different conceptions of the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict... Although forms of dialog vary, their focus tends to be on communication and understanding, whereas nonviolent resistance aims at changing relationships and structures of power. (Hallward 2013, 20, 49)

Hallward makes an important point in her excellent book on the boycott of Israel when she relates the goals of the cultural boycott to differences in the general view of the conflict:

Implicit in debates over the BDS movement are rival interpretations of the sources of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and accompanying assumptions regarding appropriate methods of conflict resolution or transformation... the BDS movement emphasizes that it is a ‘rights-based’ as opposed to ‘solutions-based’. (ibid., 24)

Despite their different claims, both sides frame the debate in moral terms (ibid, 59). The artists are trapped in the middle. Whatever their action—performing or not performing in Israel—their gesture ends up being interpreted as support for the message each side is spreading, despite not commenting directly on the issues. Alicia Key’s decision to perform in Israel was characterized as a “face-slap to anti-Israel bigotry” by the anti-boycotters (Shepherd 2013) and as a decision to “entertain apartheid” by the BDS movement.¹⁶⁹ Similarly, Lauryn Hill’s decision not to perform in Israel after facing BDS pressure, despite her personal insistence that this decision not be interpreted as a political act, has been celebrated by the BDS as a sign of understanding that “playing in Israel helps it to whitewash its colonial oppression of Palestinians,”¹⁷⁰ and criticized by anti-BDS voices as “bowing to BDS pressure” and “siding with discord” (Melman 2015).

¹⁶⁹ Dubai: Tell Alicia Keys those who entertain apartheid Israel are not welcome! <https://bdsmovement.net/news/dubai-tell-alicia-keys-those-who-entertain-apartheid-israel-are-not-welcome>.

¹⁷⁰ Human Rights Activists Thank Lauryn Hill for Cancelling Upcoming Concert in Israel, <http://bds-belgium.be/human-rights-activists-thank-lauryn-hill-cancelling-upcoming-concert-israel>.

7.1.7 Structuring the environment

The actors' positions, as well as their conscious and subconscious reasoning and self-limitations, differ dramatically. But their tools are similar: mobilizing public opinion around the topic of Israel. Given the terrain of pro-boycott and anti-boycott forces, the issue becomes one of the defining factors of the actors' strategies, as in this case it signals high stakes (ultimately, the winning or losing of the narrative in an existential battle). As suggested above, BDS is successful in structuring the field of Israeli cultural representation and influencing the strategies of other actors. It does so in several ways.

First, as we have seen, new actors emerge in response to the boycott, such as the Creative Community of Peace. Second, old actors adopt new issues, so that, for example, the boycott has gone from being a virtual non-issue in Israeli discourse to being a prominent topic. They also adopt new strategies—in this case, as we have illustrated, the topic of the boycott has been securitized and made part of the activist project instead of being handled by the structures responsible for public and cultural diplomacy. Third, artists have to react to new challenges, tailoring their strategies accordingly. This includes third-party (non-Israeli, non-Palestinian, but, for instance, US artists) to react to the boycott and often to take sides. Finally, the audience is also, on some occasions, pushed to take a stance, as in cases where they are actively discouraged from attending a performance by an Israeli artist (e.g., Ziv 2017).

The following subchapter illustrates the mechanisms related to efforts to boycott Israeli culture in the Czech Republic.

7.2 BDS in the Czech Republic: Days of Jerusalem

To illuminate the effect of boycott on Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech Republic, I will use the case of the cultural festival Days of Jerusalem in Prague.

The Czech Republic is, compared to many European countries, unusually friendly and mostly rather uncritical towards Israel, as we have seen, so BDS activities have rather limited support and BDS proponents usually come to Israeli cultural events only to monitor them, rather than to actively obstruct them. Below, I discuss one of the rare cases where BDS engagement was significant.

BDS advocacy in the Czech Republic is mainly the preserve of the Czech branch of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), a Palestinian-led movement engaged with

non-violent forms of support for Palestinians, established in 2001.¹⁷¹ The Czech branch was established in 2007¹⁷² and to my knowledge only had a few members at the time of the research. They mostly organize movie screenings and discussions on the political situation in Palestine. That is in contrast to Israeli cultural diplomacy, which spans all artistic genres and often employs those that are “non-explicit” (such as music and dance), and is only partly preoccupied with political questions, as we have seen in previous chapters. This is in accord with the premise that, while Israelis hope to broaden the picture of Israel abroad beyond the sole topic of conflict, the other side perceives the conflict to be the prism through which everything related to Israel should be perceived. While the ISM in the Palestinian territories is engaged both in public advocacy as well as on-the-ground assistance to the Palestinians, the Czech branch mostly focuses on influencing local popular discourse on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (it does occasionally facilitate volunteering in the Palestinian territories, but this does not seem to be its primary activity). Therefore, the aim is naturally to get Israel- and Palestine-related events into the media. In this framework, the festival Days of Jerusalem, one of the biggest events in the Czech Republic that has a connection to Israel, moreover with European significance in 2015, was a natural event to get involved with publicly.

The festival Days of Jerusalem has been run for the past four years by Czech NGOs, bringing together Israelis and Palestinians from the first year, albeit with varying frequency. The artists, along with their Czech counterparts, perform 3–4 days of open-air concerts, amidst culinary events, lectures, and workshops for an audience of one or two thousand people.

The Embassy of Israel was a minor partner to the festival, helping with a fraction of the budget, providing patronage and helping with logistics; but not functioning as a co-organizer or an initiator (Konrád 2015).

Among the biggest partners were the municipalities of Jerusalem and Prague, who see the festival as a platform for mutual cultural enrichment, with Days of Prague in Jerusalem being organized reciprocally (ibid.). Each year, local musicians, designers, and other artists, who see this as a rare opportunity to interact with their Israeli and Palestinian counterparts, participate enthusiastically in the festival.

¹⁷¹ More about the International Solidarity Movement on their website—International Solidarity Movement, <https://palsolidarity.org/>.

¹⁷² More about the Czech branch of ISM on their website—ISM Czech Republic, <http://ism-czech.org/onas/>.

In 2015, in its third year, the festival took place in Prague and another large Czech city, Pilsen, which that year bore the title of European Capital of Culture.¹⁷³ In Pilsen, a number of other countries had national cultural weekends, such as China, Germany, etc. In Prague, the festival was already established as a medium-scale annual independent-minded cultural event.

The 2015 festival line-up was similar to that of previous years in its emphasis on music and cuisine, and novel in its focus on contemporary art and design in Pilsen and skate culture in Prague due to that year's locations (the festival location changes every year). In Pilsen, the festival took place in a newly established space for the creative industries called DEPO; in Prague, it was in the so-called "Stalin," an area on a hill above Prague city center which is popular with skaters.¹⁷⁴

Another novelty was that the festival was endorsed by the label "Hate Free" of the Hate Free Culture initiative, which is focused on combating hate speech. Hate Free Culture is established and run by the Czech Government Agency for Social Inclusion and among its frequent topics are positive public advocacy campaigns about human rights, including those of religious and sexual minorities.¹⁷⁵ The label is claimed by its holders, not ascribed by the agency based on specific criteria, and it signals a positive approach towards diversity. The visual identity of Days of Jerusalem 2015, built on a rainbow of colours, also accentuated diversity and tolerance. This was a change from previous years when the festival was branded in blue, white, and yellow (the first two colours were a reference to the Israeli national flag).

The program of Days of Jerusalem 2015 also included two Palestinians—the chef Kamel Hashlomon, who traditionally took part, and the rapper Muhammad Mughrabi from the Shuafat refugee camp.

Paradoxically, only in 2015 did the festival start to be protested by local BDS proponents and sympathizers. In several open letters, they called upon Czech institutional partners (the City of Prague, the City of Pilsen, the Ministry of Culture) to withdraw support. A letter to the Czech Minister of Culture, Mr. Daniel Herman, accentuated that one of the gravest reservations concerning the festival was the role of

¹⁷³ The title is ascribed each year by the European Union to two European cities, and comes with financial incentives for the development of local cultural infrastructure.

¹⁷⁴ Complete program on the festival website—Days of Jerusalem 2015, <http://daysofjerusalem.com/2015/en>.

¹⁷⁵ More on its website, Hate Free, <http://www.hatefree.cz/>.

the Embassy of Israel in Prague, which was taken to mean that the festival was official state propaganda of Israel in the Czech Republic. The protesters mainly objected to the fact that, according to them, the festival represents Jerusalem as a unified Israeli capital, which is in conflict with international law. Furthermore, this stance is in opposition to the policy of the European Union, of which the Czech Republic is a member; that was accentuated in the context of the festival taking place as part of the European Capital of Culture program.¹⁷⁶ The boycotters also argued that the festival was whitewashing the discrimination of Palestinians, and that it draws the Czech audience into a political game through culture.

The move was endorsed by several major Czech names as well as by public figures from abroad, such as the philosopher Noam Chomsky, the musician Roger Waters, the writer Alice Walker, and the historian Shlomo Sand (Fraňková 2015), all of whom are long-term supporters of BDS. Among the Czech opponents of the festival were the former Foreign Minister Jan Kavan, the head of the Green Party Matěj Stropnický, figures from the International Solidarity Movement's branch in Prague, members of the Friends of Palestine organization, and other pro-Palestinian activists.

Why did these BDS activities emerge in the same year the festival adopted a more “multicultural” stance? As suggested before, the festival is relatively bigger than other Israel-related events in the Czech Republic, and thus a natural target of BDS. There are several explanations as to why the boycott emerged in 2015. First, a new Palestinian ambassador, Khaled Alattrash, arrived in the Czech Republic after the long-time ambassador Djamal al-Djamal died while handling explosives at the Embassy of Palestine.¹⁷⁷ A more energetic handling of public affairs may thus have been related to the efforts of the new ambassador. Also, the political climate in the Czech Republic changed, with the Socialist party leading the government after a rather long period of right-wing (and one administrative) governments. Third, the inclusion of the festival in the European Capital of Culture might have been a signal as well as an opportunity for the boycotters, since the festival was raised to a higher political level, while also providing more space for criticism based on the EU's policies. And finally, heightened

¹⁷⁶ Full letter in Czech can be found at the website of the International Solidarity Movement's Prague branch—Otevřený dopis ministru kultury: Respektujte prosím mezinárodní právo a odstupte od partnerství Dnů Jeruzaléma, <http://ism-czech.org/2015/06/15/otevreny-dopis-ministru-kultury-respektujte-prosim-mezinarodni-pravo-a-odstupte-od-partnerstvi-dnu-jeruzalema/>.

¹⁷⁷ The existence of a regular Embassy of Palestine in the Czech Republic is a residuum of communist times, when the Palestinian administration was among countries favored by the Soviet Union, unlike Israel.

inclusion of Palestinians might actually have been a red flag for the BDS movement based on the guidelines that specifically call for the boycott of mixed “normalization” projects.

The boycott initiative did gain attention. The effect of this call was not so significant in relation to the proclaimed goals of withdrawn institutional support—the festival took place successfully and the partners did not withdraw, maintaining that the festival was an apolitical event.¹⁷⁸ However, the results were felt on several levels. Two of the Palestinian artists performing at the festival were pressurized about their involvement (Konrád 2015). Also, the topic got rather intensive media coverage as this initiative was exceptional in the Czech context. The call was echoed in the mainstream media, Jan Kavan, one of the signatories of the letter to the partners, was interviewed by Czech Television (“Kavan: Okupování Palestiny?”), and the festival organizer was interviewed by one of the main broadsheets (Konrád 2015). Recipients of the letter were naturally compelled to react—thus, quotes from the mayors of Prague and Pilsen were also recorded by the media.

As the literature on BDS claims, the aims of the nationally-oriented BDS campaigns (i.e., campaigns targeted against a state rather than a concrete practice of a commercial company) are in most cases rather abstract: they do not call for steps that should happen as an immediate reaction to the boycott (Hallward 2013, 7). The BDS initiatives rather aim at bringing certain topics to the attention of the public and changing the narrative. To some extent, this happened in the case of Days of Jerusalem 2015 in Prague. However, no major endorsement by the general public was gained.

A year later, in 2016, the subjects involved—the festival organizers as well as the proponents of boycott—adapted their strategies.

Days of Jerusalem 2016¹⁷⁹ took place only in Prague, as in 2013 and 2014, since the rotating title of “European Capital of Culture” was no longer carried by a Czech city. The festival continued and strengthened its emphasis on diversity, keeping the Hate

¹⁷⁸ The reaction of Jiří Sulženko from the Municipality of Pilsen, a partner of the festival, was: “I want to stress that we cannot combine politics and culture, we strictly divide these two things. Days of Jerusalem is a multi-genre festival focusing on different types of audiences and includes dance, music, visual arts, film and gastronomy and in no way can it be connected with politics. We are aware of the sensitivity of this topic and moreover we support the cooperation of both Jewish and Arab artists at this festival.” (Fraňková 2015)

¹⁷⁹ I was a program advisor for the accompanying program of Days of Jerusalem 2016, as described in the autoethnographic chapter.

Free label, bringing back a Palestinian chef and Muhammad Mughrabi, and having them cook and perform together with Israelis, thus strengthening the level of cooperation. Furthermore, an emphasis on parity of Jewish and Arabic elements was visible across the festival program: there were courses on Hebrew as well as Arabic calligraphy, there was a combined lecture on Hebrew and Arabic, there was a discussion with the Palestinian manager of several East Jerusalem women's clubs. The emphasis on dialogue was translated into the Czech environment too: within the festival, an interfaith dialogue between Czech Jews, Christians, and Muslims was initiated.¹⁸⁰

Also, within the emphasis on dialogue and cooperation, a range of programs was conducted together with subjects (designers, shops, bookstores, etc.) from the district of Prague where the festival took place. As this district, Prague 7, has the ambition of becoming the creative district of Prague, and the festival venue, an open-air music venue called Tiskárna na vzduchu, is a hipster hub, the festival audience, besides the regular Days of Jerusalem fans that recruit from the pro-Israel community, consisted of young people engaged with youth culture, cultural openness, and sustainability.

The boycott initiative responded to these trends: as it became harder to continue to pursue political arguments outside the context of the EU's policies and the rather locally-oriented focus of the festival, the ISM reacted in two ways. First, it addressed the subjects cooperating locally with Days of Jerusalem—the publishing houses, designer stores, etc.—with a letter suggesting that Israel is an apartheid state, talking at length about abuses of Palestinian human rights, and pointing out the complicity of festival partners in human rights violations.¹⁸¹ In this way, it avoided the overly official tone that was used for political stakeholders the previous year, favoring a more emotional appeal.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ The complete program of Days of Jerusalem 2016 can be found on the festival website—Days of Jerusalem 2016, <http://daysofjerusalem.com/en>.

¹⁸¹ Private communication with the store owners.

¹⁸² A short excerpt: “We are Israeli citizens, including Jerusalemites, who are active against our government's policies of occupation, colonialism and apartheid. We have been promoting human rights and peace for many years within our society. This month, we are marking 49 years of a brutal Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and West bank, including East Jerusalem. We are also marking 68 years since the beginning of the Nakba, Israel's ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people. this is an ongoing process, and current Israeli actions to displace Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem are proof. We are appalled by the decision to host the official Israeli propaganda event ‘Days of Jerusalem’ in Prague. If the festival was given its appropriate name – Days of apartheid in Prague – it would make perfect sense.”—see Israeli citizens against the “Days of Jerusalem” propaganda Festival in Prague, <https://boycottisrael.info/node/258>.

Second, it emphasized the endorsement of the boycott initiative by Israeli citizens—for example, by calling the letter “Israeli citizens against the ‘Days of Jerusalem’ propaganda Festival in Prague.”¹⁸³ Furthermore, the ISM organized a small parallel event consisting of a concert of two Jewish-Israeli musicians at a nearby venue, protesting the festival. This was the boycotters’ way of dealing with the festival’s strategy of inclusion.

Third, the boycotters aimed at addressing a more general audience, building a stand across the street from the festival venue, handing out leaflets, and addressing passersby. However, due to the traditional indifference of Czechs to public matters¹⁸⁴ they did not seem to have much success. Also, due to a lower level of political exposure, the boycott in 2016 was not echoed in the media as strongly as the previous year, even though some of the media interviews continued the previous year’s inquiries about the representation of Palestinians in the festival line-up (e.g., “Dny Jeruzaléma v Praze...”).

Indeed, the BDS movement acted in both years, as Hallward characterizes transnational movements, as a “dynamic, with actors reframing their targets and goals and adjusting their tactics according to the political and social resources available to them” (Hallward 2013, 7).

7.3 Conclusion

Above, we have outlined how cultural boycott influences Israeli cultural representation in general. We could observe some of these impacts in the Czech context. Old actors adopt new issues, such as the Prague and Pilsen municipalities and their unprecedented engagement with cultural conflict. Old actors also adopt new strategies. It was probably the first effort of the International Solidarity Movement Czech branch to advocate for cultural boycott, and to join forces with major foreign names in this regard. In sum, the actors—notably Days of Jerusalem organizers, and the boycotters themselves—changed strategies in response to the specific context.

On the other hand, not all the impacts we can see globally are visible in the Czech context. For instance, the general public is less used to getting involved in politics, and the left-wing tradition of pro-Palestinian advocacy is relatively underdeveloped. Therefore, the public protests that Batsheva, Idan Raichel, or the Jerusalem Quartet

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ On the tendency of Czechs not to take part in dramatic political gestures, namely revolutions, see, for instance, Pithart (1998, 287), or Suk (2009, 23).

experienced when performing, for instance, in Great Britain did not take place in the Czech Republic, and this will probably not happen in the near future.

We also cannot rule out that institutional partners, who were under pressure to withdraw from Days of Jerusalem, will, despite their resistance to withdrawal in 2015 and 2016, be more hesitant about taking part in similar events in the following years, as the costs (difficult media navigation, pressure from abroad, negative publicity) might be higher than the benefits (taking part in a medium size cultural festival). And, indeed, the festival Days of Jerusalem itself has not taken place since the year 2016, even though there were no explicit signals that the BDS movement was the reason.

Even more importantly, the very issue of Czech-Israeli relations became a contested matter—again, not a common thing in the Czech discourse.

Finally, the impact of the boycott on the artists participating in the event should be taken into consideration. We could see that the artists were forced to react—by changing their names, for instance. This is also the case in other moments when the awareness of the boycott influences artists' stances in different ways.¹⁸⁵ Muhammad Mughrabi says: “You need to count with the reactions of each specific audience. In certain environments, I would expect protests against my music” (Švamberk 2016).

It is also reasonable to suggest that boycott may lead to a hardening of artists' positions. As described by scholars before (Hallward 2013), outside pressure leads to stronger clinging to one's own identity. This applies to artists as well. For instance, Amos Oz claims that boycott “only strengthens fear and paranoia” (“Amos Oz hovořil na BBC...”). Hallward explains this using Social Identity Theory: a “perceived attack on other in-group members ... is then interpreted as a threat to one's self, consequently enhancing processes of group closure and group think” (Hallward 2013, 36).

The strategy of the BDS movement is to raise awareness. Therefore, the public impact of boycott campaigns is more important than the individual agendas of artists. A substantial number of artists do not want to be interpreted only through politics,¹⁸⁶ but when the political level is prioritized over the individual one, they become part of the strategy of the actors in the field of cultural representation. For decentralized cultural

¹⁸⁵ In one of the cases known to me, an Israeli artist decided not to come to perform in the Czech Republic due to his negative experience with boycotters in the United States (private communication).

¹⁸⁶ As Muhammad Mughrabi told a major newspaper, Pravo, he does not agree with pressures against common activities of Israelis and Palestinians, as sharing through music is his mission (Švamberk 2016).

diplomacies, that mostly aim at building informal relationships, cultural boycotts with their effort to isolate artists are especially detrimental as they negate the main purpose of such practice.

8. ISRAELI ARTISTS

Israeli society is of immense variety in its cultural forms and societal stances. The Israeli artistic scene necessarily reflects these divisions. Due to the decentralization of Israeli cultural diplomacy, the content that foreign audiences encounter in Israeli art is everything but homogenous.

This chapter uses Erwin Goffman's notion of interactionism (1956) to highlight that artists are aware of the strategy they use in public presentations. Interactionism sees human actions and behavior as a performance since people are in constant rituals of interaction with other human beings, their counterparts. As Skořepová Honzlová writes, musicians are "active agents consciously developing the overall design of musical activities as their own self-presentation whose constitutive elements are planned in advance" (Skořepová Honzlová 2012). The claim can be extended to artists in general. For artists, the counterpart, for whom the self-presentation is designed, is the audience.

"Self-presentation," however, is not a purely individual enterprise. Each person's identity is tied to different collectives that he/she is a part of or relates to. While there are different types of such collectives ranking differently on a personal hierarchy of identity layers (Chang 2008), we are especially interested in national identity—or, if we wish to avoid the term identity, then *self-understanding* in the framework of a nation (as we are analyzing representatives of a specific nation, namely Israel), defined by allegiance to it.

Research has shown that various artists represent their nation in different ways. In fact, they choose such diverse tools to enact the same nation that different artists seem to be standing for different communities. Anderson's (1991) concept of a nation as an "imagined community" is helpful: a nation is defined as an entity whose members feel "deep horizontal comradeship" (ibid., 7) to the other members of the community despite lack of personal familiarity with them. This feeling of affinity is, however, conditioned by the fact that there are other people that are not subject to it and who do not belong to the community: the imagined community is limited. A nation is a typical example of an imagined community. But the meaning of one's own community becomes less apparent in divided societies or societies in conflict, such as Israel, where various groups identify themselves as antagonistic or in opposition to other segments of the same nation (Lederach 2008).

And not only that—the identification also contributes to the formation of an individual’s stance towards external reality. The individual dimension of a creative process is related to its social function. For example, the performer can be said to model his or her relationship to society through musical structure (Small 1998). To use Anderson’s terminology, while involved in the creative process artists refer to their imagined communities, and through their performances they present them to foreign audiences. The notion of their own (imagined) community is enacted (Reyes 2013). Therefore, art can help cast light on societal dynamics (which it is also co-creating).

This paper argues that various artists relate through their work to different imagined communities, making cultural representation heavily dependent on individuals for its results.

We will focus on two dimensions of this self-identification: the presentation of political narratives, and ethno-cultural differences.¹⁸⁷

8.1 Political stances of Israeli artists

When a Czech musician travels abroad to perform in front of a foreign audience, the probability of hostile reactions to his or her nationality is close to zero. The same goes for most of the (European) national cultural representatives—for example, German musicians invited to perform abroad in the Goethe Institut or Spanish artists performing in the Instituto Cervantes. However, for Israeli artists the situation is very different. They are routinely boycotted ad-hoc (for example, in the demonstrations in British and Australian concert halls during performances of the Jerusalem Quartet; Bray 2010), or systematically (as when movies by Eran Riklis were excluded from Arab festivals and distribution due to the director’s Israeli nationality). When interviewed abroad, questions about Israeli artists’ homeland, political situation, and their opinion of it are common. As a result, the artists are pushed to formulate a stance or adopt a strategy to approach the issue of the current political situation, Israeli nationality, and their role as its representatives.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Others might argue that these two dimensions are necessarily interrelated, which I do not deny in my work, but I will not aim to prove or describe that.

¹⁸⁸ The role of the media should be further ascertained in follow-up research. In-depth research on this topic was not conducted for this thesis, but while following media coverage of Israeli cultural events in the Czech Republic I observed—contrary to my original expectations—that the Czech media are not especially politically charged when it comes to reviewing Israeli cultural productions. Rather, artists bring the politically charged message to the fore themselves, either in the content of their work (such as Amos Oz’s book *Judas*, which deals with alternatives to the two-state solution; or the

A major aspect influencing Israeli cultural diplomacy is the fact that it involves artists who, in an Israeli context, are mostly left-leaning and often harshly critical of the government. As described above, the most notable Israeli writers have for decades been prominent figures in pro-peace movements such as “Peace Now!”. Among the most well-known was Amos Oz, the globally renowned Israeli writer, who was constantly critical of Israeli political representation. After Israel’s victory in the Six Day War in 1967, he was the first to call for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the newly gained territories (Gourevitch 2014);¹⁸⁹ he pointed to the absence of pro-peace Israeli leaders at the burial of Shimon Peres, attended by the most globally prominent figures, including the US president Barack Obama (Harman 2016); he also publicly supported the establishment of a new social-democratic party “motivated by the principles of peace, social justice, equality, education and clean politics” in 2011 (Lior 2011).

Just as Amos Oz was, until recently,¹⁹⁰ the most prominent figure in Israeli literature, Ohad Naharin is the most prominent figure in Israeli dance. He is the inventor of the globally influential dance style called *gaga* and the choreographer of the Batsheva Dance Company in Tel Aviv, one of the most influential contemporary dance ensembles worldwide. In his internationally screened biographical movie, Ohad Naharin says about his most recent choreography entitled *The Last Work*: “It could well be my last work [here], because we live in a country infected by racism, hooliganism, widespread ignorance, abuse of power and fanaticism. This influences the government we elect. This government has put at risk not only my work, but the actual survival of us all in this country, which I love so much” (Avivi 2015).

multiple other works described in the chapter on artists), which is then naturally reflected in the reviews, or by being explicit about their political stances in interviews even without being necessarily confronted about it, like Ohad Naharin in his interview with Marek Eben (See Na Plovárně s Ohadem Naharinem - <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/1093836883-na-plovarne/215522160100027-na-plovarne-s-ohadem-naharinem/>). In comparison to the USA, Great Britain, and other states, where the performances of Israeli artists are often confronted with vigorous politically-based opposition, the Czech environment does not display major support for the international boycott movement, and other forms of anti-Israel activism. An exception to that is the case of the Days of Jerusalem festival described in the chapter on Boycott, where, for the first time, Israeli cultural production was put into a political context by local pro-Palestinian activists. The media did reflect this affair, but only as a reaction to the political action taken by the activists. In the first two years of the festival, before the actions taken by the activists, there was no politically charged reflection of the festival in the mainstream media.

¹⁸⁹ In the Six Day War in 1967, Israel captured the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, and the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan (later returning Sinai to Egypt). These territories were originally proposed as the territory of an independent Palestinian state by the UN Partition plan in 1947 and were seized by the three Arab states in the 1948 war that broke out immediately after the Israeli declaration of independence on May 14, 1948.

¹⁹⁰ Amos Oz passed away on 28 December 2018.

The Israeli film industry also has its prominent critics of government. Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir*, the winner of the Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film, deals with the massacres in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon tacitly approved by the then-general and later prime minister Ariel Sharon. In related reviews in media worldwide, Folman spoke of Israel as "now more right-wing than ever" (Clarke 2014).

In another case, a group of prominent Israeli filmmakers, including the internationally award-winning Shira Geffen, Nadav Lapid, and others, interrupted the 2014 Jerusalem Film Festival to come forward with a statement condemning Israeli violence in Gaza, stating their opposition to the current military policy, demanding a ceasefire, and claiming the "children living in Gaza today" are "partners in peace tomorrow. The killing and horror we inflict only push any diplomatic solution further away" (Mitchell 2014).

Other artists do not want to be continuously confronted with questions about their political stance and prefer to be perceived first and foremost, or even exclusively, as artists. A prominent Israeli musician, Asaf Avidan, took the same stance and was willing to elaborate for the media. He distinguishes himself "not as an Israeli artist, but an artist from Israel." "I don't show up to represent Israel. I'm not a politician. I'm not a diplomat," he says (Isikovich et al. 2015). Similarly, Yiftach Ophir from the Repertory Theater that won first prize at the 2014 theater festival in Stockholm described how the actors were initially hesitant about revealing their nationality (ibid.). Due to their reluctance to display visibly their Israeli identity, these artists are far from ideal proponents of cultural diplomacy.

This is not to say that there are no Israeli artists proudly highlighting their nationality. An example of such an artist would be DJ Skazi—a producer of trance music, with a Star of David tattooed on his shoulder, who claimed for foreign media that "the audience in Israel is unique, because it is very free" and that his "unique style could come out only of the energy and passion that Israel produces."¹⁹¹ He told the English edition of the major Israeli newspaper Haaretz: "I'm proud of my Israeliness. I feel that through my music I'm another ambassador for us around the world. I pass on to all electronic-music lovers around the world that good things come from Israel." DJ Skazi

¹⁹¹ Here is Israel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ne5UAIImFun4>.

sometimes even performs with an Israeli flag on the stage. According to his own words, “being an Israeli comes first, being a musician comes later” (Isikovich et al. 2015).

However, in the examined sample the number of artists explicitly supportive of Israel was rather small in comparison to those who were critical, referred to problematic elements or did not express any specific stance. Certainly, a large portion of Israeli artists do not tend to present Israel in an unequivocally positive manner.

In the context of the Czech Republic, let me demonstrate the different ways in which artists employ their work in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict using several cases involving musicians.

8.2 Israeli artists performing in the Czech Republic

While observing Israeli cultural events in the Czech Republic, several distinct strategies could have been observed in relation to the representation of Israel: (1) denial of any major impact of the artist’s nationality’s on their performance; (2) use of an “exotic” aspect alongside usual repertoire; (3) an imagined community defined ethnically (in this case through the majority Jewish ethnicity); (4) an imagined community represented through positive characteristics; (5) an imagined community represented through ethnic characteristics, with music-making serving as a bridge towards the Other; (6) an imagined community represented critically via negative topics such as conflict; (7) refusal to participate in the representation of the country for political reasons. Let us elaborate on each of these categories, with the use of specific examples from Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech Republic.

Denial of nationality’s major impact on the artist

An example of an artist largely dissociating himself from the Israeli narrative is the bass player Avishai Cohen. When performing in the Prague Hybernia theatre on September 10, 2014, Avishai Cohen played a repertoire that could be heard in any French or American jazz bar (as far as any non-expert listener was concerned). Also, the instruments of the players in his band were typical of a jazz ensemble (trumpet, double-bass, drums), as was their New-York-ish attire. Avishai typically does not introduce himself or the band as Israeli (not even during concerts outside of Israel). In the Czech Republic, he did not touch on any political issues in his interviews, but when asked about his Israeliness on previous occasions, he answered that he does not feel the need

to be distinguished as an Israeli musician. According to him, music is a universal language and should not have national or ethnic connotations.¹⁹²

A similar approach could be seen during the Prague performances of Israeli musicians Dida Pelled¹⁹³ and Daniel Jakubovič, and several others. Daniel even presents himself in all accessible PR materials as a US artist.¹⁹⁴ Both of these artists, like Avishai Cohen, present globalized repertoire, do not bear any visual markers of Israeli identity, and do not discuss their nationality either.¹⁹⁵

Use of an “exotic” aspect alongside regular repertory

A certain group of artists add an exotic “Middle Eastern” aspect to their regular repertory. Their predominant mode of expression is devoid of any distinctly Israeli traits, but—probably in order to enhance their uniqueness for a European audience—they include an Israel-related, often oriental aspect that they often point out with a specific remark. An example of this phenomenon is the concert of the Assaf Kehati Trio on April 25, 2014, at Little Glenn—a typical small underground Prague jazz bar with an international audience, supposedly jazz-goers. The Trio’s concert consisted of jazz standards as well as their own pieces, which are not markedly Middle Eastern. However, in the second part of the concert Assaf Kehati plays a piece called *Beneath The Almond Tree*, which he talks about for a while, elaborating on its topic: the shade provided by an almond tree in the Israeli desert. The song was described by jazz reviewers as “the most obviously ‘Middle Eastern’ on the record”¹⁹⁶ and definitely sounded like the only “exotic” number on the program to my untrained ear. As such, the piece stood out not only for its melody but also due to its framing as the only clearly regionally specific tune.

A similar experience of a single “exotic” element in a program that was mostly derived from a completely different musical tradition greeted the audience of the concert of the Israeli band Betty Bear that performed on the Prague riverbank Náplavka during the Days of Jerusalem Festival on July 21, 2014. Their attire referred to the era of

¹⁹² Conversation of Dubi Lenz with Avishai Cohen, *Israeli Musical Exposures* 2013.

¹⁹³ Concert of Dida Pelled Trio, Reduta, Prague, on February 15, 2015.

¹⁹⁴ Concert of Against the Wall, Rock Café, Prague, on February 25, 2015.

¹⁹⁵ Sometimes, artists identify themselves for the audience as coming from Tel Aviv, but they do not use the word “Israel.” It might be the case that this is a strategy that allows them to refer to their origins in a less controversial manner, as the name “Tel Aviv” has the allure of a multicultural, vivid city, especially in cultural circles, while “Israel” has entirely different connotations.

¹⁹⁶ Assaf Kehati Trio Naked, <http://www.thejazzmann.com/reviews/review/assaf-kehati-trio-naked/>.

Dixieland, which was consistent with their music style. Most of their songs, such as *Fumblin' with the Blues*, and *Jack I'm Mellow*, derived from the American blues tradition. One song, however, stood out: a song called *Jerusalem*, which, according to the band leader, had been composed for that occasion. Its lyrics described Jerusalem as a mystical city, depicting alley cats and a Jerusalem night, clearly “exotically” conceived.

A third example was the Gathering of the Drummers concert—an annual public jam session of a dozen well known Czech drummers with guest musicians from abroad. In 2014 the Gathering took place in the Lucerna Music Bar (mentioned above) on November 22. Two Israelis were on the stage with the Czech musicians: the bass guitarist Alex Bershinsky and the singer Kama Kamila. They both blended in with the rest of the band, performing Czech and global repertory including two Azeri pieces brought forward by Kama Kamila, who is an Israeli born in Azerbaijan. However, at the end of the show, Alex Bershinsky and Kama Kamila performed their version of the biblical *Song of the Songs* as the evening’s only song in Hebrew, emphasizing that they both come from Israel and talking about the Jewish roots of the song’s melody.¹⁹⁷

Artistic performance as a representation of an ethnically-defined imagined community

A third group of Israeli artists enacts an ethnically defined group—in this case the Jewish majority—as the basis of their stage presence. I understand “Jewishness” in this regard as clearly identifiable signs of an exclusively Jewish tradition, as opposed to a globalized or multiethnic narrative. Typical signs of Jewish tradition are related to Judaism and include, especially, traditional attire (side locks, prayer shawl or *tallit*, *kippah*, etc.), references to Torah and related symbols (e.g., the *menorah* candleholder),¹⁹⁸ holidays (Purim, Sukkot, Rosh Hashanah, etc.),¹⁹⁹ and characters (Queen Esther, the Maccabees, etc.).²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Along with this statement, they also convey gratitude to the Embassy of Israel that supported their presence at the performance. This might point to an alternative explanation that the musicians include a regionally-specific song in their repertory to indulge the sponsor.

¹⁹⁸ Seven- or nine-branched lampstands, by tradition related to the ancient Jerusalem Temple, are used as part of traditional holiday rituals, such as the Shabbat dinner.

¹⁹⁹ Purim is the Jewish holiday remembering the saving of the Jewish people from slaughter by Queen Esther, wife of the Persian King Ahashuerus; Sukkot, or the Feast of Tabernacles, is a Jewish holiday related to the traditional pilgrimage to the Temple; Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year.

²⁰⁰ Queen Esther’s role in saving the Persian Jewish population is celebrated during the holidays of Purim; Maccabees were the leaders of a Jewish uprising against the ancient Seleucid Empire who gained control of Judea.

However, in the examined sample of Israeli cultural exports to the Czech Republic, examples of Israelis representing Israel exclusively via an explicit, traditional Jewish narrative were very rare. The few contributions to the Israeli cultural presence in the Czech Republic that dealt with the Jewish aspect of Israeli identity critically examined the issue. One example is the premiere of the play *Mikveh* by Hadar Galron in the theatre of the regional town of Mladá Boleslav. *Mikveh* premiered on October 16, 2015, in the presence of the author. The play depicts eight Israeli women who meet in a *mikveh*, a ritual Jewish bath, each with her own story of oppression by her family and community. The main topic, also characteristic of Hadar Galron's other work (Weiss 2015), is the traditional status of women in Judaism and Jewish society. Therefore, the play was rather critical towards orthodox Judaism. As such, it was a controversial event in Israel after its introduction in 2005 and was broadly criticized, but also very successful.²⁰¹ While in the Czech Republic, Hadar Galron stressed the deep discontent that her play provoked in Israel. The main interview with her for Mladá Boleslav's local newspaper was titled "I was afraid of being shot after the premiere of *Mikveh* [in Israel]" (Weiss 2015), referring to the reactions to her play in Israel.

The context, however, in which the play was introduced in Mladá Boleslav was strongly Jewish-oriented and pro-Israeli. A whole festival called Israel Week was built around the premiere, where "Israel" apparently referred to the Jewish tradition. There was a lecture about Jewish customs by the owner of a travel agency focused on Israel; a concert of traditional Jewish klezmer music by the Czech klezmer band *Koza na útesu*; and an exhibition about Czech Jewish children being saved from Nazi persecution. The Executive President of the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem²⁰² blew *shofar*²⁰³ to launch the premiere of the play. Presents in Israeli national colors—blue and white—were given away, and the theatre director wore the same colors as well. The only deviation from this discourse was the exhibition of photographs from Gaza by a Czech journalist.²⁰⁴ Therefore, a narrative critical of Judaism was placed into a rather homogenous, straightforward Jewish-Israeli context. This illustrates the role of the local

²⁰¹ According to the Israeli Dramatists Website, it was nominated for six National Theatre Awards and won two, including Israel's prestigious "Play of the Year" award, in 2005. See Hadar Galron, <http://dramaisrael.org/en/playwright/galron-hadar-2/>.

²⁰² A strongly pro-Israel Zionist Christian organization—International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, <https://int.icej.org/>.

²⁰³ An ancient music instrument made from a ram's horn and associated with Jewish religious purposes.

²⁰⁴ I explain this diversion as a result of the generally low awareness of the complexities of the situation in Israel and Palestine among Czechs.

stakeholders in framing events, sometimes in a way that is rather skewed towards the narrative present in the cultural product.

Another example of the representation of Israel via a major Jewish topic was the screening of the movie *God's Neighbors* by Many Yaesh at the 2013 Prague film festival Febiofest. The plot revolves around the radical religious Jewish youth in the neighborhood of Bat Yam who consider it their personal mission to punish those who transgress, in their opinion, religious laws. This movie, like Hadar Galron's play, displays a critical attitude towards Jewish traditions.

Thus, the examined sample did not provide abundant material on positive representations of Israel by Israeli artists through Jewish cultural symbols.²⁰⁵ But internationally there are such examples. They might be more likely to appear in countries with a large Jewish diaspora, such as the USA. An example of this is Daniel Zamir, a renowned jazz saxophonist. Being an ultra-orthodox Jew, he performs dressed in a characteristic way (wearing *yarmulke*, *tzitit*,²⁰⁶ and a long beard). His music stems from Jewish melodies (it is sometimes referred to as "Jewish jazz"),²⁰⁷ and he sings in Hebrew. Also, his CD covers are decorated with letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the names of his songs often relate to Judaism (for example, *Echad*, meaning "One," which stands for the name of God). Among other things, he claims that, through his music, he aims at the "exposure of Jewish culture abroad."²⁰⁸

The reader may ask if Jewishness is necessarily meant to represent Israeliness. This is indeed a valid question. Another of Zamir's songs provides us with an answer: he made a jazz version of *Hatikvah*, the national anthem of the State of Israel, and plays it extensively. Also, one of his albums is called *The Children of Israel*, and he often performs at events clearly intended to represent Israel abroad (Israeli Night at JazzAhead! 2013, Jazz and World Music Exposures 2013, etc.). Zamir's performances thus enact Israel as a Jewish community.

²⁰⁵ During the festivals and cultural events organized by Czech pro-Israel support groups, this is obviously the case. These events were examined in a different chapter as they do not fall into the category of representation by Israeli artists.

²⁰⁶ Ritually knitted fringes of a prayer shawl.

²⁰⁷ CultureBuzzIsrael converses with Daniel Zamir, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=at0AGMTTi_c.

²⁰⁸ Conversation of Dubi Lenz with Daniel Zamir, International Jazz and World Music Exposures 2013.

Artistic expression as an enactment of an imagined community's non-ethnically based positive traits

The fourth type of representation uses certain positive characteristics to enact the imagined community, which is not defined in ethnic terms (“ethnic” meaning composed of people of the same ethnicity). The most representative example is Idan Raichel, an international star of Israeli world music, who, from the beginning, has built his music on the inclusion of ethnic minorities in Israel by performing the music of the marginalized Ethiopian population and other minority groups. During the research period, Idan Raichel performed in Prague on February 25, 2014, in Lucerna Music Bar, one of the most central and most well-known venues for popular music; and on February 26, 2015, at the U Hasičů Theatre, a theatre that occasionally hosts jazz shows in the upscale neighborhood of Vinohrady. Idan Raichel performs with a range of musicians of different ethnic backgrounds (according to his own reports, he has performed with more than 150).²⁰⁹ For the first Prague show, he brought his Israeli Ethiopian lead singer Cabra Casay; at the second show, he performed with the Malinese guitar virtuoso and singer Vieux Farka Touré. He performed his typical repertory consisting of melodies adopted from various Israeli cultural groups, arranged in popular style while preserving the original language (Hebrew, Amharic, Ladino, Spanish, Arabic...). During the concerts, Raichel called on the audience to remember the music “as the soundtrack of Israel.” Sometimes, he even carries the Israeli flag, although that was not the case in Prague.²¹⁰ Also, in media interviews Idan Raichel tirelessly explained that “Israel is a very multicultural country,” a “melting pot.”²¹¹ He also noted: “Mostly when we perform out of Israel, people find it interesting to know about Israeli society; people are fascinated by how people that came from such diversity are singing side by side.” (Berrin 2007).

While the first performance with the Israeli Ethiopian singer emphasized the multicultural aspects of Israeli society, the second one—with the Malinese Muslim musician—showed music as a bridge between two estranged cultures. Thus, Idan Raichel employs two strategies: representing Israel through the positive trait of

²⁰⁹ Private conversation with Idan Raichel in Prague, February 26, 2015.

²¹⁰ See, for example, The Idan Raichel Project—Sememen, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axZzxXobRQo>; note that the video is a live stream from Dutch TV.

²¹¹ Na Plovárně with Marek Eben, <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/1093836883-na-plovarne/215522160100010-na-plovarne-s-idanem-raichelem/>.

multiculturalism, and using music as an “offered hand” to a stranger, which is described in the next subchapter.

Idan Raichel obviously considers the promotional dimension of his music to be an important part of his mission, since he even lowers his fee requirements in order to access new audiences who are unwilling to pay a high entrance fee for an unknown artist, such as Czech concert-goers.²¹² Idan Raichel has, for that reason, often been labelled “the best ambassador of Israel” (e.g., Book 2013). This strategy fits in well with the pragmatic concept of cultural diplomacy as “a national policy designed to support the export of representative samples of that nation’s culture in order to further the objectives of foreign policy” (Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010, 13), aimed at bolstering the national image abroad.

It is important to note that the identification of an artist as “the best ambassador of Israel” does not imply alignment between the classification of governmental structures and the stance of the artist himself. The aforementioned Batsheva dance group was identified by the MFA as “the best known global ambassador of Israeli culture.”²¹³ Despite the critical stances of its head, the choreographer Ohad Naharin, and despite some of its politically controversial work, the status ascribed to the group served in many instances as ammunition for the boycott activists, who launched protests against its performances abroad (e.g., in Edinburgh in 2012,²¹⁴ at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2014,²¹⁵ and in Ravenna in 2016²¹⁶). In this case, the MFA might have actually harmed the advance of Israeli culture internationally.

It is important to note that the “melting pot” narrative that Idan Raichel represents is a popular one for Israeli cultural representatives who aim at representing Israel in a positive light. The same conviction was also expressed by the Sobo Blues Band during the Days for Israel festival in the town of Hradec Králové, on October 12, 2014; or during the Days of Jerusalem festival. This metaphor is often advanced by the pro-Israel

²¹² Dubi Lenz’s conversation with Idan Raichel during Internatinal Jazz and World Music Exposures 2013.

²¹³ Culture: Dance, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/Culture/Pages/CULTURE-%20Dance.aspx>

²¹⁴ Pfeiffer 2012

²¹⁵ “Anti-apartheid dance...”, <https://adalahny.org/press-release/1216/anti-apartheid-dance-and-songs-meet-israels-batsheva-dance-company-protest>.

²¹⁶ “Ravenna festival...”, <https://bdsitalia.org/index.php/english/2102-ravenna-eng>.

media (e.g., Ben-Tzur 2015; Israel Seen 2012), as well as the Division of Scientific and Cultural Affairs of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²¹⁷

The metaphor of a melting pot has a surprising history that allows us to understand its prominence in the Israeli public narrative: it was coined by Israel Zangwill, a Jewish immigrant to the USA, in his theatre play *The Melting Pot* that opened in Columbia Theater in Washington, D.C., in 1908, to widespread acclaim from the American audience, including president Theodore Roosevelt, who was in attendance. The play depicts the struggles of Jewish immigrants to the USA while finding their way into American society, as well as their eventual success. The metaphor became a fundamental aspect of the US national narrative. Interpretations differ in their answers to the question of whether the play proposes that Jews (and other immigrants) abandon their heritage in favor of a new, homogenous American identity, or whether it suggests Judaism as a prominent contribution to American society (Shumsky 1975). In any case, the metaphor is tightly related to a Jewish narrative and its adoption by Israeli society is rather natural. It is not an artificial narrative invented by a modern Israeli state administration, but a part of the cultural imagination of a prominent Jewish author prior to the emergence of the State of Israel, therefore its presence in Israeli cultural diplomacy is not artificially developed but spontaneous, and accepted by artists themselves.

Art as a bridge between conflicting cultures

The fifth strategy of representation conforms to the idealistic notion of cultural diplomacy as a “way toward mutual understanding” (Minnaert 2014, 106).

It is based on the enactment of the imagined community as rooted in a certain culture (in this case Jewish) whilst aiming at reaching out through the arts to a supposedly antagonistic culture. An example of such a strategy was demonstrated at the Prague concert of the metal band Orphaned Land on October 1, 2013, in the Prague hard rock club US-Exit.

Visual markers showed a strong identification with Jewish culture: band members have tattoos in Hebrew, their music videos use stylized biblical characters, and the song

²¹⁷ Its website starts with the sentence “Somewhere between the melting pot and the pluralistic society lies Israeli culture.” See Division for Cultural and Scientific Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/abouttheministry/pages/division%20for%20cultural%20and%20scientific%20affairs.aspx>.

lyrics say “we are the orphans from the holy land, the tears of Jerusalem” and “we’re...the keepers of Or-Shalem”, i.e., one of the names of Jerusalem. However, the same text claims, “All is one,” and “Who cares if you’re a Muslim or a Jew,”²¹⁸ so here the proclamation of one’s ethnicity serves as an initial position for a dialogue with the Other.

Orphaned Land always go on tours with either a Palestinian or a Jordanian band and the Prague performance was no exception. The group was joined by the Jordanian band Bilocate. Communicating extensively with the metal audience at the venue, they proclaimed several times that their mission is to let the world know that they love Arabs.²¹⁹ Their playlist included one of the band’s greatest hits, called *Brother*, which introduces to the audience the biblical story of Abraham’s sons Isaac and Ismail, the mythological forefathers of Jews (Isaac) and Arabs (Ismail), who, even though separated by the course of events, are still brothers. This fact was also verbally emphasized. Among the band’s other songs are pieces with very telling names: *All is One*, *Let the Truce be Known*, etc.

Other examples beyond the borders of the Czech Republic show an extension of this strategy, which involves adopting the enemy’s cultural forms to show openness towards mutual dialogue. For instance, the Israeli singer Zehava Ben released an album of Arab songs including those of the Egyptian (and harshly anti-Israeli) musical legend Umm Kulthum as an expression of longing for peace with Arabs. He performed this repertory at the Jaffa Peace Festival in 1995, claiming to hope it would serve “as a bridge between people” (Lohmann 2010, 55).²²⁰ According to Lohmann, such a strategy is rather popular within the Sephardi artistic community in Israel, whose members feel closer to Arabs than the Ashkenazis: “Claiming that their shared cultural link with the surrounding Middle East was a path for peace, many Sephardic Jews began to promote cultural methods of integrating Israel and the Arab world in the 1990s” (Lohmann 2010, 55).

However, even though this strategy complies with the view of cultural diplomacy as a bridge towards other cultures, it also shows the limits of such a view, which are a

²¹⁸ Lyrics of the song *All is One*.

²¹⁹ Like all Israeli artists, Orphaned Land are not allowed to perform in Arab countries, but they often tour throughout Turkey, attracting a large Muslim fan-base and even Arab fans, who travel to see them from Arab countries.

²²⁰ Lohmann, though, notes that such a strategy could also serve as an advantage on the international market (Lohmann 2010, 56).

political reality. Because Israel does not have diplomatic relations with most Arab countries and Israeli artists are not allowed to enter these countries physically or even participate in art competitions there using recordings, such efforts have a limited impact. As other studies have confirmed, cultural diplomacy cannot reach where the political borders do not allow it to go (Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010).

Politically critical art

Many artists represent Israel through art explicitly critical of their country when abroad, and this trend is also apparent in the Czech Republic. However, even though they are showing a negative side of their homeland, these artists do not refuse to be acknowledged as Israelis and they do not question the legitimacy of Israel as part of the community of nations. One example of such an artist is Eran Riklis, who was a guest of the Febiofest film festival in Prague in March 2014. Riklis' movies in general, as well as those screened at the festival, depict problematic parts of Israeli reality. The movie *Lemon Tree* is about a Palestinian widow's lemon orchard, which is destroyed so the private mansion of an Israeli politician can be built nearby; *Dancing Arabs*, shot according to the book of Saying Kashua, a Palestinian writer, examines the grim reality of Palestinian lives full of discrimination and alienation. However, during the following debates, Eran Riklis pursued a moderate tone, refusing one-sided judgements of the situation, characterizing Israeli reality as "very complex" and Israeli society as "democratic," and thus not posing any obstacles while introducing the movie on the market.

A similar narrative was presented during the appearance of the writer Yishai Sarid at the Prague Writers' Festival, an annual event bringing together big names of international literature for several days of readings and discussions. The Prague Writers' Festival 2015 took place from November 6 to 9 at the premises of the Czech Senate and its topic was "Fear." Yishai Sarid read from his book *Limassol*, a spy novel examining the devastating effects of the militarization of society on peoples' souls. The excerpt he was reading depicted a rather excruciating scene of a Palestinian prisoner's interrogation and, again, was not flattering for Israel's image. But the following debate again showed the writer in a less radical position, despite the fact that the debate was hosted by Petr Drulák, a left-wing Foreign Minister's advisor who is notoriously critical of Israel, and whose questions were steering Sarid towards criticism. Sarid maintained a balanced stance throughout. For instance, Drulák asked, "Is it possible to say that just as a

frightened person behaves violently towards others, Israel behaves towards Palestinians?”, to which Sarid responded, “Circumstances do lead to certain kind of behavior.... But Israeli regime is not from its essence repressive.... We are a democratic country... I am a Zionist.”²²¹

Elsewhere, Ohad Naharin, a choreographer renowned for his groundbreaking work as well as for bold political gestures, together with his dance group Batsheva, refused to perform during the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of Israel’s independence in front of global political leaders because they were asked beforehand by the Israeli government to adopt less revealing attire (Kisselgoff 1998). He has also been critical towards Israel in multiple interviews. On Czech TV, he talked about “guilt that he feels ... for his nation abusing power.”²²² References to violence and war are frequent in his work. But he has also stressed that his stances are

not about love towards the country and hate towards the government as the government was selected by the people of the country. But there is also this part of Israel that is related to beautiful thoughts, many generous, liberal and sincere people live there. ... Israel does not have a monopoly on aggression or the abuse of power, it is everywhere, in almost every country... (“Naharin nabídne na závěr...”).

Thus, Naharin too is critical but does not see criticism of Israel as the only way of looking at the country, which is the main difference from the boycotters of Israel.²²³

Among the critical group of artists, it is difficult to infer if these approaches have the same reasoning. Some artists (Ari Folman, Ohad Naharin) claim that they create primarily out of their need for expression which stems from the topics they encounter daily—conflict being one of them. The political message is then a mere “byproduct,” as Naharin put it (Avivi 2015). They do not primarily aim to criticize Israel on the international scene and sense that a foreigner’s understanding of the Israeli situation might be limited.

Amos Oz (2003) has put it aptly in his piece for the Guardian talking about how only Israelis and Palestinians understand the situation thoroughly enough:

²²¹ Conversation of Petr Drulák with Yishai Sarid, International Writers Festival Prague 2015.

²²² Na Plovárně with Ohad Naharin, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/1093836883-na-plovarne/215522160100027-na-plovarne-s-ohadem-naharinem/>.

²²³ See the chapter on BDS.

Because we and they have experienced 36 years of intimacy. Yes, a violent, bitter, warped intimacy, but intimacy, because only they and we, not the Jordanians and not the Egyptians and certainly not the Swiss, know exactly what a roadblock looks like and what a car-bomb sounds like and exactly what the extremists on both sides will say about us. (Oz 2003)

In any case, while representing their state abroad, a substantial group of Israelis do not shy away from harsh criticism of their home country but seemingly feel the need to put their work into the context of a complex reality where there is no black and white, or at least where there should not be any judgements by foreigners.

Jewish Israeli artists refusing to take part in Israeli cultural diplomacy

Finally, there are cases of Jewish-Israeli artists who refuse to take part in any event sponsored by the Israeli authorities.

One of the biggest critics of government-sponsored foreign cultural enterprises is Eyal Sivan, a star Israeli film director, who rose to fame with his movie *The Specialist, Portrait of a Modern Criminal*, a documentary about Adolf Eichmann's trial, showing Eichmann in a similar light as Hannah Arendt's report: as a frighteningly normal person. Sivan's second internationally successful movie was *Route 181, Fragments of a Journey in Palestine-Israel*, a documentary co-directed with the Palestinian filmmaker Michel Khleifi, conveying the oral history of people who live along the partition line that was supposed to divide the Israeli and Palestinian states in 1947. Eyal Sivan is a well-known activist, who took part in a campaign pressuring the Locarno Film Festival management to cancel the spotlight on Israel in 2015 (Irving 2015). The statement, signed by Eyal Sivan and dozens of other filmmakers, claimed:

It has come to our attention that the Locarno Film Festival has chosen to place Israel as the center of this year's festival in its 'Carte Blanche' initiative, in cooperation with the Israeli Film Fund. This fund is an Israeli government-funded agency which receives support from the Israel Film Council, the government appointed film funding advisory body, as well as support from the Film unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs whose aim is to 'promote Israeli films abroad' with the support of the cultural attachés in the Israeli embassies throughout the world.

We, the undersigned filmmakers and industry professionals, would like to express our deep concern with the fact that the Locarno festival is choosing to partner with the Israel Film Fund and Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, despite the fact that Israel has not just continued, but intensified its decades-old occupation, colonization, and ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian people.

...

Given the current belligerence exhibited by Israel in its ongoing brutal attacks on Palestinian civilians and infrastructure, justified by the same Ministry of Foreign Affairs that you have chosen to be a partner of the festival, we demand that the festival organizers reconsider their relationship to the government of Israel, and withdraw their partnership with the Israel Film Fund, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and all other official Israeli entities. If the idea is to support individual Israeli filmmakers or screen Israeli films, there are many ways to do so without accepting funding or other forms of support from the Israeli state and government organizations.²²⁴

Eyal Sivan has, on this and other occasions, protested against events endorsed by the Israeli government as the work of a “fascist regime.”²²⁵

In the Czech Republic, a similar case occurred in relation to the Days of Jerusalem festival, which triggered a protest reaction from the BDS movement and pro-Palestinian activists in the Czech Republic.²²⁶ An event called Alternative Days of Jerusalem was organized by a coalition of subjects and individuals, including two Israeli artists, Jasman Wagner and Ofer Golany, who performed at the time of the festival at a nearby venue demonstrating thus their dissent from Days of Jerusalem as a government-supported event. There were several letters protesting against the Days of Jerusalem festival, one of them by the “Boycott! Supporting the Palestinian BDS Call from Within” organization of pro-BDS Israelis, claiming:

We are Israeli citizens, including Jerusalemites, who are active against our government’s policies of occupation, colonialism and apartheid.

²²⁴ The full statement can be found on the website of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, see Film Industry to Locarno Film Festival, <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=2702>.

²²⁵ The statement closes with Walter Benjamin’s quote about standing up to fascism.

²²⁶ See more in the chapter on BDS.

We have been promoting human rights and peace for many years within our society.

...

We are appalled by the decision to host the official Israeli propaganda event ‘Days of Jerusalem’ in Prague. If the festival was given its appropriate name – Days of apartheid in Prague – it would make perfect sense. The upcoming festival is an act of propaganda carried out by means of celebrating the so-called ‘United City of Jerusalem’, which is in reality one of the most divided and explicitly racist cities in the world today...²²⁷

However, the wholesale dismissal of any cultural event with government sponsorship tends to be rather rare among Israeli artists.

Borderline examples and changes in strategies

The above examples were deliberately selected because they are especially pronounced. Nevertheless, not every artist fits one of the outlined strategies. The most common strategy of Israeli artists in the Czech Republic was the first one. A significant proportion of artists do not demonstrate their national affiliation strongly or maneuver around nationality issues, refraining from using the word “Israel.” Some artists shift from one strategy to another over time, like Idan Raichel during his last tour with the Muslim musician from Mali, Vieux Farka Touré, framing and defining the tour as a “bridge between Bamako and Tel Aviv,”²²⁸ and thus getting closer to using his performance to reach out to an estranged community. Furthermore, the frequency of different types of identification changes over time (the current generation of artists is more internationalized than preceding ones). It also changes with the political situation (it is reasonable, for example, to expect that Israelis will be asked with more urgency about their political stances during times of heightened confrontations with the Palestinians, such as during military operations with multiple human casualties), and, finally, with different audiences (some audiences, such as the British, are more likely to demonstrate negative reactions to the presence of artists from Israel, compared to the Czechs). All these factors influence the artists’ strategies of representation.

²²⁷ Website of the Boycott! Supporting the Palestinian BDS Claim from Within – See Israeli citizens against the “Days of Jerusalem”, <http://boycottisrael.info/node/258>.

²²⁸ Idan Raichel during his concert with Vieux Farka Touré, 26 February 2014.

8.3 Ethno-cultural background of artists

Israeli society is not only very politically diverse, but also has a striking variety of ethno-cultural groups. Thus, Israel has often been described to me in personal conversations as a set of micro-bubbles. This subchapter deals with the accuracy of the representation of different ethno-cultural groups in Israeli cultural diplomacy.

Israeli Jews and the cultural representation of Israel

The major divide within Israeli society is usually considered to be the one between the Jews and the Arabs. However, many deep ethnic divisions run through these communities. Indeed, 75% of the Israeli population is ethnically Jewish.²²⁹ Due to the demographic development of Israel, various Jewish communities display striking differences when it comes to their level of religiosity, their cuisine, customs, attire, cultural background, and their presence on the Israeli cultural scene.

The ethnic divisions are a source of crucial societal dynamics as they, in large part, translate into other, economic and cultural inequalities. This is due to demographics: each ethnic group reached Israel in a different period and thus was given a different amount of time, and a different space vis-à-vis its cultural tradition and the cultural space of Israel that they were coming into, in which to integrate. The following timeline is very rough, serving to give a basic idea about the emergence of Israeli ethnic, economic, and cultural heterogeneity.

One of the clearest divisions within the Israeli Jewish community is that between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews.

The original Israeli elites recruited from Ashkenazi Jews—those of central and Eastern European origin. They came to Israel from the beginning of the Zionist movement at the end of nineteenth century through persecutions in Germany in the 1930s and the Holocaust to the post-Holocaust influx of immigrants in the 1940s. It might be said that they defined the cultural standards of the new state. Until very recently, political, economic, and cultural elites recruited from the Ashkenazi community.

²²⁹ For complete demographics, see Demographics of Israel, <https://cijja.ca/resource/israel-the-basics/demographics-of-israel/>.

Sephardi Jews²³⁰ came to Israel from Arab-influenced Spain and North African Arab countries in the 1950s, with the end of colonialism and the accompanying surge of Arab nationalism, and then in a large wave after the Six Day War in 1967, which sharply increased anti-Israel sentiments and anti-Semitism in Arab countries. Jews from Arab countries, who had often been well-off, were faced with the harsh reality of the new Ashkenazi-dominated State of Israel where their traditional communities, based on patriarchy, religion and social cohesion, were shaken to their core. Decomposition of their traditional values led to disorientation in their new homeland, accompanied by economic deprivation (Shavit 2015).²³¹

But other significant ethno-cultural minorities came throughout the history of the State of Israel as well, changing the dynamic every time. In the 1990s, a major influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union further changed the country's demographics. And, during the course of history, other, smaller or more continuous *aliyot*²³² took place: the influx of Ethiopian Jews, today considered to be the most impoverished Jewish minority in Israel, in several large waves from the 1970s to today; the aliyah of Latin American Jews reacting to economic crisis in Argentina and other Latin American states in the 2000s; and, most recently, the influx of Jews from France in response to allegedly growing anti-Semitism.

These ethno-cultural groups have varying ideas about the cultural identity, present and desired, of the State of Israel. For instance, a far larger percentage of Sephardi Jews, compared to the Ashkenazim, want Israel to be a Mediterranean-type country rather than a Western one, while 54% of immigrants from the former Soviet Union do not want Israel to be a Western country (Katz and Sella 1999). Therefore, ethno-cultural diversity has had a major impact on the diversity of views on Israeli cultural affiliations and Israel's standing in the world.

²³⁰ Some sources differentiate between Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews, Sephardi being those of Iberia and the Spanish diaspora, and Mizrahi being those from Arab countries (Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, etc.). However, for our purposes, we will content ourselves with the rougher differentiation.

²³¹ In his book *My Promised Land*, Ari Shavit interviews Arje Deri, the founder of Shas, the first relevant Sephardi-oriented Israeli political party, who describes how his movement rose on the back of frustration with the exclusion of Sephardi newcomers to Israel. Their emancipation, emerging in the '90s, decades after the influx of Sephardim to Israel, demonstrated itself in the Shas party growing in power, but also with the current prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who claims to have Sephardi roots (Eichner 2016), the current minister of culture Miri Regev, who has based her popularity on the Sephardi community (Margalit 2016), and other representatives of the rising Sephardi elite. Currently, the community is also catching up economically (Georgi 2015).

²³² *Aliyah* (in plural *aliyot*) means "coming up" and refers to immigration from the diaspora to Israel, in the general sense as well as in the sense of a specific wave of immigration at a certain period of time (1st Aliyah 1882–1903, 2nd Aliyah 1904–1914, etc.).

Ethno-cultural dynamics are also reflected in Israeli cultural production. The Israeli cultural industry, just like the political and economic fields, has been dominated by Ashkenazi culture due to the “recent cooperation between the global music industry and nation states,” where local industries serve as gatekeepers to the national musical field by “marginalizing the hybrid music of subaltern musicians,” thus legitimizing the musical genres of dominant groups (Saada-Ophir 2006, 208). In the process of establishing Israel’s image as that of a quasi-Western society, the Mizrahi musicians with Arab heritage were expected to “erase their cultural origin and adopt the dominant ... Israeli culture” (ibid., 205). Mizrahi music, considered to be a lesser genre, was thus pushed to the margins of the industry, its performers seeking cultural visibility through alternative strategies to create their own space—for example by concealing their Mizrahi origin, creating a Mizrahi hybrid cultural form “that corresponds with the dominant Israeli identity,” and creating a pan-Mizrahi–Jewish identity “through their social and cultural marginalization” (ibid., 2015) “that conceals the national differences” between Jews from Lybia, Morocco, Yemen²³³ (ibid., 2018).²³⁴

Nevertheless, only rarely do the marginalized communities have a chance to become a part of the mainstream nationalized musical scene representing Israel abroad, thus becoming internationally visible. This often happens through an alliance with a musician from the dominant group (ibid.). It can be demonstrated in the case of the Idan Raichel Project, the multiethnic band assembled by a star (Ashkenazi) performer of world music, Idan Raichel, from representatives of different ethno-cultural minorities, including the very much visible Ethiopian singer Sabra Casay, the Arab singer Mira Awad, the Mizrahi (Jewish Yemenite) singer Shoshana Damari, and others.²³⁵

²³³ Saada-Ophir uses the term “Arab Jews” where I use Mizrahi. According to her, using the term Mizrahi “masks the cultural proximity between Mizrahim and Christian and Muslim Arabs, including Palestinians” and “creates a dichotomy of ‘Arabs’ and ‘Jews’ as two antagonistic groups locked in endless conflict.” (Saada-Ophir 2006, 205).

²³⁴ However, even within this marginal cultural space perceived from outside as a homogenous field of Mizrahi music there are differences in ethnically-based cultural prominence. The biggest success was achieved by musicians of Yemenite origin, who became “the elite of the musical borderland” and “the spokespersons for the Arab Jewish borderland” (Saada-Ophir 2006, 2015), controlling the alternative Mizrahi music industry. But even this status quo is in flux: the Sephardi and Mizrahi community is slowly gaining prominence and this will most probably also be reflected in the cultural industry and Israeli cultural exports.

²³⁵ Through alliance of the minority representatives with Idan Raichel, the minorities became visible to the whole world, even though not through music typical for the community, but through a “vernacular cosmopolitanism” in music. Vernacular cosmopolitanism, according to Webster Kogen, combines ethnic particularity (Ethiopian and other group-specific narratives) with a cosmopolitan narrative in which multiple types of cosmopolitanism—immigrant, elite, and so on—are blended together in a homogenous whole (Webster-Kogen 2014). Specifically, the Idan Raichel Project’s musical style

During the research period, the Israeli cultural presence in the Czech Republic revealed the topics of Israeli Jewish minorities and of the conflicts related to ethno-cultural variety only very rarely. Their significant signs can be traced in A. B. Yehoshua's book *Journey Towards the End of Millenium*, that was published in Czech at the end of 2013, dealing with the question of Ashkenazi-Mizrahi differences, and in the screening of the movie *Sound of Torture* by Keren Shayo, which deals with Ethiopian immigration to Israel (One World film festival 2014). The topic of Mizrahi Jews was leveraged by the Israeli Embassy during the annual event commemorating the Jewish exodus from Arab countries through a small cultural event and exhibition, but it did not refer to the negative aspects of the phenomenon.²³⁶ For the Czech audience of Israeli cultural representation, these topics remain invisible because certain ethnic groups have a limited access to the cultural market within the domestic Israeli cultural scene, and because work addressing this topic is not encouraged by Israeli cultural and political elites to a degree visible in the Czech Republic.

Palestinians and the cultural representation of Israel

On the other hand, the topic of Palestinians²³⁷ is rather pronounced in Israeli cultural representation. There are two major trends informing the presence of Palestinian artists in the representation of Israel abroad.

First, most Arab citizens of Israel define themselves as Palestinians²³⁸ and thus do not wish to represent the State of Israel internationally, as was concluded by the Beracha report in 1999. They “wish to cultivate their own self-representation – *of* themselves, *by* themselves and *for* themselves.... They want to be seen, by themselves and by others, as Palestinian citizens of Israel, not Israeli Arabs.” (Katz and Sella 1999, 76; emphasis in original). Therefore, the ethno-cultural category to a large extent overlaps with a political category—the wish to be a self-sufficient actor outside the State of Israel.

With the growing conflict fatigue, even those who used to act and be perceived as external representatives of the Palestinian minority in the framework of the State of Israel have sometimes refrained from playing this role, such as the writer Sayid Kashua

“does indeed mix together both the musical styles and the life narratives of Ashkenazi Jewish elites, often-subversive Palestinian-Israeli/’48 Palestinian minorities, and Ethiopian-Israeli citizens who arrived as refugees as a single cosmopolitan style” (ibid., 29).

²³⁶ There are multiple journalistic or scholarly Israeli materials dealing critically with the issue. However, I do not consider information materials to be a part of cultural diplomacy, as explained previously.

²³⁷ The reasoning for this terminology can be found in Chapter 1.

²³⁸ Referring to the ambition for a future Palestinian state.

who moved out of the country after decades of attempts to encourage Israeli-Palestinian dialogue domestically and abroad. His move was triggered by growing anger after the murder of three young Jewish men by Arabs, and the retaliatory murder of a Palestinian teenager by a Jewish perpetrator (Margalit 2015).

After moving out of Israel and settling in the US, Kashua printed an explanatory letter in the international media revealing his resignation:

[Originally,] I wanted to tell the Israelis a story, the Palestinian story. Surely when they read it they will understand, when they read it they will change, all I have to do is write and the Occupation will end. I just have to be a good writer and I will free my people from the ghettos they live in, tell good stories in Hebrew and I will be safe, another book, another movie, another newspaper column and another script for television and my children will have a better future. Thanks to my stories one day we will turn into equal citizens, almost like the Jews.

...

Twenty-five years of writing in Hebrew, and nothing has changed. Twenty-five years clutching at the hope, believing it is not possible that people can be so blind.

...

Twenty-five years that I am writing and knowing bitter criticism from both sides, but last week I gave up. Last week something inside of me broke. When Jewish youth parade through the city shouting 'Death to the Arabs,' and attack Arabs only because they are Arabs, I understood that I had lost my little war.

I listened to the politicians and the media and I know that they are differentiating between blood and blood, between peoples. (Kashua, 2014)

Kashua gave up because after decades of struggle to bring the communities closer, he felt that his mission had produced no results.

The second factor is that even if there are Arab citizens of Israel who do participate in Israeli cultural enterprises internationally (such as the famous singer Mira Awad

performing with the Jewish singer Noa at Eurovision 2009²³⁹), they find themselves between a rock and a hard place, never truly accepted by Jewish Israelis and strongly criticized by their own community. “I’m tired of being cornered all the time, of having to explain myself. Most of the time I’m making both sides unhappy because I don’t do what they want,” is how Mira Awad describes her uneasy position (Sherwood 2010). The situation has become even more difficult with the growing power of the BDS movement.

Even though joint cultural activities are encouraged and supported by external actors such as the EU (European Union 2014b), multiple authors have described the criticism from their own communities such engagement brings. For instance, the writer Lizzie Doron talked during her visit in Prague about the process of writing her book *Who the Fuck Is Kafka*, that originally emerged as part of a joint literary-cinematographic project describing an evolving relationship between her, a Jewish Israeli writer, and Nadím, an Arab filmmaker from East Jerusalem. Lizzie Doron started to write a book about this process and Nadím was shooting a documentary, encouraged by international peace activists and representatives of the European Union. They were both wary of the other side, but what they found in the end, according to Lizzie Doron, was that “the worst enemies awaited in their own camps.”²⁴⁰ The criticism was so strong, that Nadím²⁴¹ decided to destroy his almost completed documentary; Lizzie did go ahead and published her book, but said she encountered strong criticism from the Jewish Israeli community and her status as a celebrity writer was revoked.²⁴² Therefore, also in this story, the voice of the Arab remains unheard (based on his own decision).

This phenomenon has been described by scholars before. As Adelaida Reyes writes, if the conflict is asymmetrical (which is the case with Israeli Jews and the Palestinian minority), the weaker side avoids conflict-generating issues and the “interaction is restricted to what is mandatory” (Reyes 2010).

Nevertheless, Arabs are often represented in Israeli cultural activities abroad, but mostly either indirectly, their work being selected—and their narrative thus brought forward—by Jewish Israelis or foreigners, or because they are represented in the work of Jewish

²³⁹ See the full performance at Noa & Mira Awad, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RN8B1xvCxI0>.

²⁴⁰ Public presentation of the Czech translation of the book ‘Who the Fuck Is Kafka’ and discussion with the author; November 7, 2016, Café Exil, Prague.

²⁴¹ The real name of the Palestinian filmmaker is different; it has been changed to Nadím for security purposes.

²⁴² Lizzie Doron talking about her book, Café Exil, 17 November 2016.

Israelis. A large proportion of Israeli artists is left-leaning and critical of their government and the representations of Arabs in their work are empathetic, presenting the hard reality of their lives and their harsh treatment. For example, Sayid Kashua's book, *Dancing Arabs*, depicting his difficult destiny as the only Arab teenager in a Jewish school, was filmed by the internationally acclaimed Jewish Israeli director Eran Riklis.

Palestinians in Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech Republic

Both these trends—the rare appearances of Arabs as the representatives of the State of Israel, and their difficult position if they decide to do so—were visible in Israeli cultural representation in the Czech Republic, namely during the Days of Jerusalem festival. Here, the Arab/Palestinian presence was facilitated by a Czech stakeholder in different ways, in correspondence to the development of the philosophy of the festival.

The development of the festival's mission illustrates this point well. In its first and second years, 2013 and 2014, the festival's mission was defined in a rather simple manner:

[Festival] of unique dance, videoart, music, film and culinary art festival

Modelled on the successful Days of Prague in Jerusalem, the festival is very unique in its wide scope and great variety of genres. The festival is also the only event representing Jerusalem culture in such a comprehensive manner outside of Israel.²⁴³

In 2015, the organizers changed, and with them the festival's philosophy. Subsequently, in 2015 and 2016, the festival's mission was defined in this way:

The name of the DAYS OF JERUSALEM festival is derived from the historic name of a town which is considered to be one of the most important places in the history of humankind. In the course of three millennia Jerusalem was destroyed and re-built on several occasions. However, it always remained a point of spiritual and cultural intersection – a centre fostering the development of society. Days of Jerusalem present Jerusalem as an open space for peaceful coexistence of people of different religions, a place where religions can learn

²⁴³ For the full mission statement, see the website of Days of Jerusalem 2013 and 2014, <http://www.dnyjeruzalemavpraze.cz/en/home/>.

about each other, sharing a life in tolerance. It is a place where Jews and Arabs, supporters of Judaism, Christianity and Islam can cooperate. The Days of Jerusalem festival is proud to have the Hate Free Fest label, granted by the Hate Free Culture initiative, whose ideas and values are reflected in the nature of the festival.²⁴⁴

...

The aim of the festival is to give our visitors an idea about the reality of a city which is intimately linked to European culture despite its distance in space and time. This link can probably be best expressed by local artists. Days of Jerusalem is an apolitical multicultural event which offers space to creative Jerusalemites of different confessions and ethnicities. The festival sees its aim in serving as a platform for meetings and debates as well as a platform for confrontation of a diverse spectrum of artistic views and directions, which have been dynamically evolving in the heart of this ancient cultural, spiritual and civilizational centre for centuries.²⁴⁵

We can thus observe a significant change in the narrative of the festival with the change of organizers. With the new organizational structure, the festival has adopted a markedly multicultural narrative and thus the employment of Palestinian artists and Arab culture has become a *raison d'être* of the festival.

In its first year, 2013, the festival introduced only one Palestinian, the chef Kamel Hashlomon. But in 2016 the festival included a Palestinian rapper from the Shuafat refugee camp in Eastern Jerusalem, Muhammad Mughrabi, the Palestinian cook, Um Sami, and Widad Othman, an Arab woman responsible for women's wellbeing in East Jerusalem. They mostly performed or talked alongside Jewish Israelis or Czechs to compare their perspectives: Muhammad Mughrabi performed with the Jewish-Israeli band Beta Zinq and with the Czech band Fast Food Orchestra; Um Sami cooked with the Jewish Israeli chef Ilan Garousi; and Widad Othman participated in a discussion panel with the Czech journalist and specialist on women's issues Silvie Lauder. This is also in contrast with the first year of Days of Jerusalem, when most of the performances

²⁴⁴ "HateFree" is a label awarded by "HateFree Culture," an initiative of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic aimed at decreasing prejudice and hate speech in Czech society. It is important to note, though, that the "HateFree" label is not reserved for subjects that comply with any specific criteria—it is awarded to any organization that expresses a desire to promote the message (and does not violate major principles of the initiative in a gross manner).

²⁴⁵ Days of Jerusalem 2015 and 2016, <http://daysofjerusalem.com/en>.

were by Jewish Israelis (bands, dancers, artists) and the dialogical aspect was much weaker. The change might be ascribed to the change of organizers between the years 2014 and 2015, and the new organizers putting more emphasis on the arts as an opportunity for dialogue.

But, apart from Days of Jerusalem, the participation of Palestinian artists in Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech republic was virtually non-existent, which, given the 20% share of Arabs in Israeli society, makes Israeli cultural diplomacy unrepresentative in this regard.

On the other hand, Palestinians were often represented in the work of Jewish Israelis. For instance, the 4+4 Days in Motion dance festival featured a theatre performance by the Jewish Israeli choreographer Hillel Kogan entitled *We Love Arabs* in 2014. The performance depicted Jewish treatment of Arabs as still based on stereotypes, even if it was well-meant. It opens with the dancer representing a Jew asking an Arab: “From which village do you come?” The Arab responds: “From Tel Aviv.”

Another example is the screening of a collection of graduation movies from the Sapir College at the Prague Film Academy FAMU. Sapir College is an Israeli film school located only few kilometers from the border with Gaza. The geographical location and issues related to it—especially frequent alarms announcing rocket attacks from Gaza, and the proximity of Israeli military operations in Gaza—incites social awareness in the movies that are created there. From the four movies presented by Sapir at Prague Film Academy, the first was directed by a Palestinian citizen of Israel, the second depicted a cross-border radio initiative of Israeli Jews who aim to reach out to Palestinians, the third was critical towards military service, especially towards the frequent anti-Arab rhetoric present in the army, and the fourth depicted the life of “Jewish Arabs,” who are Arab citizens of Israel who speak Hebrew. These movies were selected and presented by the Jewish head of the documentary class—thus, here too, the presence of the Arab narrative was facilitated by a Jewish Israeli.

This phenomenon—the representation of Palestinians and Arab citizens of Israel in the work of Jewish Israelis—has been seen by certain researchers as serving the Jewish Israeli agenda. For instance, Meiri (2011), whose analysis is based on the representation of Palestinians in Israeli movies, claims that the cinematic image of Palestinians serves as a mirror in the Israeli identity-making process, the Palestinians functioning as “the

Other Within,” and helping to construct Jewish Israeli identity with narratives from Palestinian culture while the notion of cultural proximity is simultaneously repressed:

...the historical events and psychological mechanisms behind the attempt to achieve a stable national identity were based on general misrecognition(s), historically involving the use of the indigenous Palestinian as an ideal mirror image in the process of (re-)creating an imaginary ancient type of Hebraic identity, including the bond with the land. (Meiri 2011, 245)

Various interpretations of the image of Arabs in cultural diplomacy are not within the scope of this work, but it is important to realize that the representation of minorities in cultural diplomacy must take multiple factors into account, especially in the normative sense.

8.4 Conclusion

In sum, this chapter helped us to answer the question of whether cultural diplomacy can ever be just, adequately representing all the ethnic groups encompassed by a given state. Probably not—and this is not only because one party might try to monopolize the representation,²⁴⁶ but also because the marginalized group recuses itself from representation. In the end then, the minority is represented *by* or *due to* the majority, and its own voice is not included in the representation of the country.

In a decentralized cultural diplomacy, like that of Israel, an array of intra-societal phenomena are represented, explicitly or by their absence. This chapter has proven using specific examples that: (1) the cultural representatives of a divided nation with a contested image are pushed to select a strategy to represent such a society; (2) following on from that, due to the decentralization of cultural diplomacy there is a range of possible strategies, using different imagined communities, and ascribing various levels of importance to the representation of the imagined community; (3) individuals play a major role in portraying the society to a foreign audience in a decentralized cultural diplomacy; and (4) the audience of outsiders sees only a partial representation of the society, as inequalities in relationships in the represented society are mirrored in the absence of certain groups or topics. We could argue, then, that foreign cultural representation thus remains a matter for cultural elites.

²⁴⁶ As described for the example of Spain, whose cultural diplomacy once entirely omitted the minorities of Catalunya, Pays Basques, etc. (Uldemolins, Zamorano 2015).

9. THE AUDIENCE

After considering the roles that the artists, local organizations, governmental structures, and other actors play in cultural representation, we will now consider the role of the audience in the target country. The role of the audience is essential for public and cultural diplomacy. Some definitions of public and cultural diplomacy even include the term “audience”—such as Mark’s notion of public diplomacy (and cultural diplomacy, as its subset, within his conception) as a “government’s communication with foreign audiences in order to positively influence them” (Mark 2010, 65). My own definition of cultural diplomacy as “governmentally facilitated communication with a foreign audience through whatever is considered as culture” also fits into this category.²⁴⁷

Among the clashing schools of cultural diplomacy studies, those deriving from public relations theory tend to emphasize the audience much more than those deriving from historical studies, political science, and international relations, that focus more on institutions. A recent example of the former approach is Fitzpatrick’s call for a definition of strategic publics in public diplomacy (Fitzpatrick 2012). Fitzpatrick treats the audience directly as a stakeholder, but this thesis does not accept her view: the audience, unlike local stakeholders, does not have a specific agenda. Its role is to “be present.” Nevertheless, it still influences the cultural representation of a state in multiple ways. The audience influences cultural diplomacy both passively—mere awareness of it influences the stakeholders’ activities—and actively, as a partner in the communication process.

As for the first dimension, the cultural diplomacy initiator’s notion of the ideal audience determines the outline of their activities. For example, cultural diplomacy might target mostly educated audiences, i.e., opinion makers, through high art (Grincheva 2010), or it might aim to reach broader audiences through popular culture (Aguilar 1996). In practice, most states would try to aim for both, employing a mixture of high art and popular culture.²⁴⁸ In this way, states are able to reach multiple social layers and cultural

²⁴⁷ See Chapter 1.

²⁴⁸ There are notable variations. For instance, the USA focused originally only on high art to make up for its “cultural deficit” as perceived both by Europe and the US domestic audience after the Second World War (Fosler-Lussier 2015, 23). In contrast, Germany refrained from any culture that would imply its superiority after the war and displayed cultural artefacts illustrating its daily life (Paulmann 2007). In the case of Israel, the genres presented as part of cultural diplomacy varied from “classical” high art, such as performances of the stars of Israeli opera and symphony music, to their more alternative versions, such as the exhibitions of Israeli conceptual artists; they also included popular

cohorts. This chapter aims to examine the role of the Czech audience in Israeli cultural representation.

Notably, the audience defines the terrain into which cultural diplomacy steps. It is not a *tabula rasa*, but rather holds preconceptions and prejudices about the state in question, often in the form of pervasive stereotypes. As one author puts it:

A country's image has many components, including location, leadership, kind of regime, economic situation, government stability and more... Although the design of an image seems highly dynamic, it is actually based on a stereotype. We think of a country in a stereotypical manner, hence these images are so hard to change.
(Elizur 1987, 203)

Besides stereotypical beliefs, the audience structures the terrain of cultural diplomacy in other ways. Some scholars emphasize that the audience from the periphery will appreciate the mere fact that a quality performance takes place in their region; this gives the local audience a feeling that a foreign power cares for them and, within the logic of the exchange of gifts, already leads them to feel emotionally bound to it. Fosler-Lussier explores in her paper on a jazz ensemble tour around Latin America how important it was for the local audience to feel that they “mattered to the United States” (Fosler-Lussier 2010, 84). In her later book on US musical diplomacy during the Cold War, she describes tours of US bands to the Third World as a “gift economy,” exploring how “citizens of nation-states could and did judge the importance of their states relative to the US ... by what music was sent,” characterizing state-sponsored music tours as “affirmation” (Fosler-Lussier 2015, 44, 29). Within the context of Israeli cultural diplomacy, it could be observed, for instance, in the case of the play *Mikveh* in Mladá Boleslav how much such an event resonates in a small town that rarely welcomes prominent foreign artists. As we have seen previously, local cultural entrepreneurs built a whole series of events around the visit of the Israeli playwright, and the local media paid attention.

In other cases, the audience's expectations can be rather specific and prevent cultural diplomacy from attaining its desired goals. For instance, Brienza has described how local expectations can alter cultural representation in the example of the US manga fan

Israeli culture, from movies to music, in its both more and less sophisticated forms. This is, once again, the result of the decentralization of Israeli cultural diplomacy.

base, which appropriated Japanese manga production and tailored it to domestic demands. “Manga did not conquer America,” she concludes. “Ultimately,... transnational cultural production simultaneously reinscribes and rearticulates the very same imbalances of national power that otherwise might seem to have been transformed by it” (Brienza 2014, 396). Several studies demonstrate more successful attempts to work with audience expectations: for instance, Aguilar shows how German cultural diplomacy worked with the traditionalist, patriarchal image of a German family in the US by publishing books providing a different view on the matter (Aguilar 1996). As Gienow-Hecht concludes in a different study on US-German relations: “Diverse as these studies are, they concede that cultural transfer existed, but locals often resisted, modified, and even corrupted it.” (Gienow-Hecht 1999, 8)

In multiple studies, the importance of intermediaries—mostly embassy officials responsible for the cultural programs—is underlined (e.g., Fosler-Lussier 2015; Gienow-Hecht 1999; Arndt 2005). The studies mostly conclude that if they were context-sensitive, their work was highly beneficial as they were able to ascertain what kind of cultural program would succeed among the local audience, and what kind of program would help to achieve the goals of cultural diplomacy in the specific region and period (such as changing the perception of the USA as a racist country by bringing Afroamerican jazz musicians; Fosler-Lussier 2015). For instance, while talking about US cultural diplomacy in post-war Germany, Gienow-Hecht emphasizes the role of “self-conscious transmitters as interpreters in the process of cultural diplomacy” while describing how the editors of a German-language newspaper, who were mostly American émigrés with a German background, were able to advance the goals of cultural diplomacy thanks to their “singular understanding of how to present U.S. values to a German audience because they themselves were deeply immersed in German culture” (Gienow-Hecht 1999, 2).

These and other studies show how important the factor of expectations is. It is obviously very much dependent on local context, and diverse audiences display not only various pre-existing ideas but also varying degrees of resistance to change. That is why the local audience should be examined independently every time. The Czech audience of Israeli cultural representation is examined in the following paragraphs.

9.1 Czech audience expectations of Israeli cultural representation

As Goffman suggested in his groundbreaking work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman 1956), we put on certain acts in response to the expectations of the environment. These acts tend to stabilize themselves, gaining the form of “collective representations.” Thus, expectations can have a major, long-term effect on cultural representation.

As the main concern of this thesis is the “ecosystem” of cultural representation, and the interactions of various actors in the process, we will also deal with the audience of Israeli cultural diplomacy.

In the chapter on diplomatic relations between Israel and the Czech Republic, we have examined how close the two countries are, and how these extraordinary relations were founded by elites in the first half of the twentieth century. This chapter claims though, that while governmental relations are excellent, the countries’ populations do not genuinely understand one another. While there is a common past, along with common reference points of which cultural diplomacy could make use, political circumstances prevent it from doing so and thus it does not contribute to increased mutual understanding on a large scale.

For centuries, Jewish culture was an intrinsic part of the Czech cultural landscape. There are a number of important Jewish cultural sites across Czechia (the Třebíč and Prague Jewish quarters are listed as world heritage sites by UNESCO), and Jewish mythology and philosophy contributed significantly to Czech literature (the legend of the Golem inspired numerous stories). For our subject, it is crucial to remind ourselves that attitudes towards Jewish culture became an important trait of modern Czech political life, notably in the figure of the “President Founder” of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, as we have examined in the chapter on governmental structures and diplomatic relations. Masaryk himself, a sociologist, a philosopher, and a politician—a pivotal figure in the diplomatic negotiations to establish the new state on the rubble of the Austrian-Hungarian empire after the First World War—was a staunch supporter of Jewish rights, and of Zionism at the same time. Masaryk aimed at the rationalization of stances towards minorities, including the Jewish one, seeing “medieval premonitions” as incongruous with a modern humanistic state.²⁴⁹ This, like his other views and stances

²⁴⁹ Personal interview with PhDr. Milan Lyčka, PhD. Prague, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University. 8 June 2017.

(e.g., towards women's rights, Catholicism, etc.) became a founding idea of Czech statehood (Pojar 2017).

The interconnection of the two states is reflected also in melodies significant to each of them: the Israeli anthem *Hatikvah* starts with a sequence of tones that are strikingly similar to the most well-known Czech symphonic piece, *Vltava*²⁵⁰ by Bedřich Smetana.²⁵¹ This rather emotionally laden resemblance illustrates the seeming closeness of the two nations. Rather often, references to another strong commonality—that of two small states surrounded by large enemies—echo in the press,²⁵² and in politicians' speeches.²⁵³

However, this chapter claims that this familiarity is merely a “false familiarity.” Today's Czech expectations towards Israeli culture, still grounded in the historical experience with the European Jewish population, have been departing further and further from the Israeli reality with all its growing heterogeneity, political complexity and discontents (and its reflection in Israeli cultural production presented in the Czech Republic). Subsequently, the cultural contexts have drifted far apart with the decades and Israeli culture has become barely comprehensible for the general Czech audience.

This poses an obstacle to Israeli cultural diplomacy, as we will see. Familiarity of presented content is a condition for successful cultural diplomacy efforts, as has been described before (e.g. Kushner 2002, 19). It enables the audience to form an emotional connection to the other side through culture. But the Czech audience encounters in Israeli cultural production a universe that is difficult to grasp. As an extensive public opinion poll²⁵⁴ from 2014 showed, “the associations linked to Israel are rather negative, most often the Czechs associate Israel with war, army, fighting as well and terrorism (37,0 %) together with riots, problems, danger (20,7 %). Only 1,7 % of Czechs spontaneously associate Israel with prosperity and a modern state” (Herzmann 2015, 3). And, while the Czech and Israeli governments do not hesitate to qualify their relations as one of the best and most important globally, as we have seen in the chapter on

²⁵⁰ “Vltava” is the name of the longest and most renowned Czech river. The Vltava runs through Prague and its banks are the setting for multiple episodes from Czech mythology.

²⁵¹ Musicologists ascribe it to a common Eastern European folk song (Ben Zion 2013).

²⁵² For a complex debate, see *Kontrasty a paradoxy současného Izraele*.

²⁵³ Recently, for instance, characterized as such by the Czech President Miloš Zeman on the TV show *Týden s prezidentem—A Week with the President*, <http://www.barrandov.tv/video/96458-tyden-s-prezidentem-27-4-2017>.

²⁵⁴ The poll was conducted by Herzmann, s.r.o., between November 29 and December 10, 2014. It comprised 1020 computer aided face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of the Czech population, selected by quota sampling (Herzmann 2015, 6).

diplomatic relations, 53.7% of Czechs do not think that cooperation between the Czech Republic and Israel is very important (ibid., 4).

At the same time, the heritage of Jewish people ranks higher than Israel's popular culture (ibid., 11). Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that, while Czechs have a positive stance towards Jewishness, Israeli culture is much harder for them to understand and relate to.²⁵⁵

This has been corroborated by my field research. A series of semi-structured interviews was conducted for this thesis with the audiences of five concerts of Israeli performers, with 31 respondents in total. The concerts were purposefully selected from various genres in order to display either similarities or differences between the audience responses: a concert of the northern soul band Men of the North Country in a small club, Buben; a concert of the star of Israeli world music Idan Raichel at the theatre U Hasičů; the performance of a DJ duo Black Girl / White Girl in the new Brno club; the concert of the Dida Pelled Trio in the famous Prague jazz club Reduta; and the joint concert of the Czech popular ska band Fast Food Orchestra and the Israeli band Los Caparos in the large Prague club Roxy. The interviews were conducted both during and after the concerts so the interviewees had the opportunity to discuss their impressions. The interviewees were asked about their expectations for the evening, whether they were fulfilled, and their relationship to Israeli culture. The interviews were semi-structured, so the specific answers of the various interviewees differed substantially from one another. This research was too limited, given the broad profile of Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech Republic, to cast light on major trends. However, the participants' answers were instrumental in identifying several points pertinent to the issue of Israel's cultural representation.

First, the overall behavior of interviewees differed largely between cultural cohorts. In the club Buben, which attracts a rather coherent community of fans of soul and punk rock, most of the interviewees attended not specifically to see the Israeli band, but rather to see their friends or to "hear some good music," which they are used to hearing at the venue.

²⁵⁵ There are obviously differences between different gender, age, and educational cohorts in their views of Israel. But for our research the fact that the tradition of governmental and diplomatic relations is based on different grounds than popular sentiments (which also lay the ground for cultural diplomacy) is crucial.

“I come here all the time,” claimed Interviewee 1. “I am glad there are so many people here today.” Interviewee 2 said: “I am here more than at home. I come here to attend the classes of northern soul dance regularly.” Interviewee 3 noted that “the owner of the club is her friend.” Interviewee 6 noted that “Buben is a club where people enjoy no matter who performs.”

But people mostly came to the concert of Idan Raichel, which was organized by an experienced promoter of jazz, to hear quality music. There, Interviewee 8 characterized his accompanying wife “as a real expert in this kind of music,” while Interviewee 12 claimed that he “frequently goes to the concerts organized by this promoter as he always brings new and interesting stuff.” Besides the explicit claims, to which we ascribe only limited significance, differences in the behavior of the respondents were obvious: those from the events that were attractive primarily for the venue or for the crowd formulated their stances less carefully and occasionally interrupted the interviews to go dancing or to greet their friends. Those attending the events with more knowledge about the performers were ready to elaborate on their music experiences in general as well as this specific music experience. Overall, the reasons for attending a particular concert differed substantially across the venues and this was reflected in the claims and the behavior of the respondents.

Second—and related to the first point—those who considered themselves pickier about music and attended the concerts because of the supposed quality of the music, and not because of the venue or their friends, were more informed about the performers. They were aware that they were going to hear an Israeli band and in several cases had a preexisting relationship to the State of Israel or to Jewish culture. At the concert of Idan Raichel, Interviewee 10 claimed that she had studied Raichel’s music before the concert, and that she is a big fan of Israeli music, mentioning for instance Avishai Cohen as another of her favorite musicians. Interviewee 12 claimed that he had heard Israeli musicians “at least 15 times” in his lifetime, and he came especially to hear Idan Raichel perform with Vieux Farka Touré.

Third, the concerts of Israeli musicians were often attended by people that already have some awareness of Israeli culture. Those who knew that they were going to a concert of an Israeli band in some cases tended to emphasize Israel’s positive traits in relation to music. At the concert of Idan Raichel, Interviewee 8 shared his impression that “the way the Israelis are able to make delicious food from entirely unlike ingredients, ...they

are able to do the same in music.” Interviewee 7 claimed to “hear the sun and the sea and the relaxed atmosphere in the music.” Interviewee 11 claimed that “besides loving Israeli literature and music, she is in general a fan of Israel.” For these interviewees, it seems, quality Israeli music complements their positive picture of Israel. Doc. Šedinová, and Dr. Eva Janáčková, a curator and expert focused on Jewish and Israeli visual culture, have testified to this claim as well: Israeli cultural events are most often attended by those who are interested in Israel in the long-term, and such people often have a favorable view of Israel.²⁵⁶

Compared to the positive stances of the informed audience, those who did not come intentionally to the concert of the Israelis but rather attended the event because of the nature of the venue or of the event itself seemed to have either no preexisting ideas about Israel, or very exotic and traditionalistic ones. In club Buben, Interviewee 1 claimed that he thinks “there is Middle Ages in Israel now”; Interviewee 2 claimed that he “had no idea about Israeli music before.” Interviewee 25 in Roxy claimed that the only thing he knows about Israel is that “there is Mossad and disputes between Israelis and Palestinians.” All of them claimed that they did not know they were coming to a concert of an Israeli band, or that this was not important to them.

Also, some of the interviewees (Interviewees 16 and 18) claimed that the “exoticism” of Israeli music was, for them, one of the reasons why they are interested in Israeli productions. This was also supported by Jiřina Šedinová, a prominent Czech Hebraist and translator of Israeli books, who told me that “war and espionage are topics attractive for the Czech audience” and that the exoticism of Israeli culture seems to be a selling point (Šedinová, 2017). This might hamper the efforts of the Israeli government to present Israel as a modern state, and to draw attention to other issues than the war.

What is especially striking is that several interviewees who had a rather traditionalist view of Israel related to a general lack of information maintained their views despite their experience with contemporary Israeli music. In Roxy, at the joint concert of Fast Food Orchestra and Los Caparos, where most of the interviewees came to hear the Czech band, Interviewee 26 claimed that “Israeli music most probably consists of

²⁵⁶ Personal interviews with PhDr. et Mgr. Eva Janáčková, Ph.D., Institute of Art History, The Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, 12 June 2017; and interview with Doc. PhDr. Jiřina Šedinová, CSc., Department of Middle Eastern Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague, 20 June 2017.

synagogue chants and Hatikvah.”²⁵⁷ Interviewee 1 (in Buben) claimed that he thinks Israeli music sounds “like the music from the movie Aladdin.”

There were also some very polarized views of Israel: Interviewee 4 (also in Buben), in a very short interview, labelled Israeli music as fascist. On the other hand, Interviewee 15, a visitor of the Black Girl / White Girl concert in the Vibe club, labelled himself as “a huge supporter of Israel,” saying that he loves it because “it is the only country that managed to defend itself against Islam,” characterizing the Israelis as “amazing, strong people with great politics.” Similarly, Interviewee 14 at the same concert claimed that “he welcomes anything related to Israel with enthusiasm.” However, none of these interviewees related these feelings to the concert in any way. They were not aware that they were going to a concert of Israelis and they claimed that they do not follow the Israeli music scene at all. Therefore, also in these cases there did not seem to be any link between the actual musical experience and preexisting notions of Israel.

These quotes seem to be pointing to the conclusion that people tend to fill in their pre-existing cognitive frames with information that completes them—e.g., the fans of Israel with sophisticated Israeli music—while leaving out information that could distort their ideas. Thus, rather similarly to the actors actively engaged in Israeli cultural representation, the audience only seems to address the aspects of the topic that support their worldview. This seems to support Clarke’s pessimism in regard to performances as a tool of soft power promotion: he claims that the important part of cultural diplomacy is the process, not the message, but that the process needs to facilitate genuine human contact and it is doubtful whether an encounter between a performer on the stage and the audience is profound enough (Clarke 2016). Also, Fosler-Lussier notes in her research on US musical diplomacy that the examined concerts had a profound effect on relationships if the musicians had an opportunity to talk freely with the people, or jam with local musicians, and thus create a more immediate type of connection than a mere concert can provide (Fosler-Lussier 2015, 14).

However, there are also hints of conclusions more positive for cultural diplomacy. First and foremost, there were some instances where the visitors reflected on their preconceptions of Israeli culture after experiencing the concert. Interviewee 18, who claimed that “Israel, just as Iran, is only about war and other bad things,” did conclude during the concert of Black Girl / White Girl that “if they play house music, they

²⁵⁷ Hatikvah is the name of the Israeli national anthem.

probably [have other culture than just Oriental dances].” Interviewee 17, at the same concert, suggested that, even though he does not know anything about Israel, it seems “that they have the same music scene there as we do in the Czech Republic.” Therefore, it seems that, with some visitors, the concerts may actually slightly contribute to a better image or a better idea of the country.

Also, support of culture seems to be a good branding for the institutions involved in cultural representation. Two interviewees (3 and 20) expressed their appreciation for the fact that the Israeli Embassy in Prague supports culture. On other occasions (i.e. not as part of this research) I have encountered very positive reactions in cases where the Embassy supported cultural projects that contained ambiguous or even negative portrayals of Israel, such as the visit of Yishai Sarid, who presented his book dealing with torture in Israeli prisons, and the visit of Lizzie Doron, who harshly criticizes Israeli policies towards the Palestinian territories. In other cases, though, the Embassy’s support for critical content was deemed cynical²⁵⁸ or even a reason for a boycott.²⁵⁹ Therefore, official institutions’ presence can play both a positive and a negative role in cultural representation.

Finally, the effect of a personal encounter with representatives of another nation cannot be disregarded. Even in instances where the interviewee had a negative opinion of the state as such, a personal experience was deemed positive and provoked further interest. For instance, Interviewee 14 claimed that despite the general picture of Israel as a militarized state impacted by terrorism he has a different idea because he “met two Israelis through a friend... they were part of the compulsory military service... but they looked like very fragile boys who studied art. They had big curly hair and you would never say that they would be able to carry a gun. So Israelis cannot be all militaristic.” Similarly, Interviewee 15, who was overtly very positive about Israel, claimed that he had encountered Israelis in Europe before and had a great time with them. Importantly, both of these interviewees claimed a heightened interest in news related to Israel—they “follow whatever is written about Israel in magazines” (Interviewee 15) and follow the news (Interviewee 14).

²⁵⁸ Such as this review that sees the Israeli Embassy’s support for a dance performance dealing with violence as “cynical”: <https://magazin.aktualne.cz/kultura/divadlo/dot504-prosli-ocistnou-katarzi-nasilim-mimoradne-desivou/r~c38b233659ea11e4b6d20025900fea04/> (Accessed March 2017).

²⁵⁹ See the chapter on BDS.

These observations are too weak to suggest any causality. But it is worth taking them into account as they support scholarly claims about the importance of the “cultivation of audiences.” According to Fosler-Lussier, US musical diplomacy was most successful if it “prepped” the audience in the weeks before the concert—for instance, by informative radio broadcasts about US music (Fosler-Lussier 2015, 36). Also Jiřina Šedinová and Eva Janáčová have both emphasized the positive effect of long-term information efforts consisting of Israeli artists’ repeated visits, long-term press coverage, and advertising by the Embassy. “Guided tours [through Israeli exhibits] would attract more audience [beyond the already interested one] and help to explain the context,” suggests Janáčová.²⁶⁰

It seems, then, that if a broader array of information is floating in the public space, different fragments of information can have a mutually reinforcing effect: people tend to connect them and create an increasingly coherent picture of the country. However, the effect of contradictory information, necessarily related to a divided society’s cultural representation, on a public discourse remains open to question. This should be the subject of future, large-scale qualitative as well as quantitative research in the field of communication science.

9.2 Conclusion

In the Czech-Israeli case, cultural diplomacy encounters “false familiarity”—familiarity based on a context that no longer exists. Outstandingly good relations between the Czech and Israeli governments are the outcome of a joint history, which nevertheless remains in the past and might even be an obstacle for contemporary cultural diplomacy. This study points to the important yet underestimated role of the audience’s expectations in cultural representation. While policies have remained unchanged, the communities have moved further apart throughout history. Such bottom-up research of cultural diplomacy can thus point to disruptions in mutual communication, and currents determining international relations that are not visible when taking a top-down view.

²⁶⁰ Personal interviews with PhDr et Mgr. Eva Janáčová, Phd. (Prague, 12 June 2017).

10. CONCLUSION

The thesis' research topic was the cultural representation of a divided society. This topic was examined using the case of Israeli cultural representation in the Czech Republic in the period 2015–2016.

The thesis' introduction marked out three general aims: a theoretical-critical one (to point to the insufficient conceptualization of the cultural diplomacy of divided societies and to show a path forward through the proposal of an interdisciplinary cultural representation analysis); an analytical one (to apply it to a specific practice of cultural representation); and a normative one (to consider normative aspects of the cultural representation of a divided society).

10.1 Summary of partial findings

In order to fulfill the critical aim, the thesis reviewed the existing literature on cultural diplomacy, including that with a focus on Israel, and it suggested analytical developments. Among its key theoretical statements, the thesis differentiated between cultural diplomacy—governmentally facilitated communication with a foreign audience through what government agents consider as culture—and the cultural representation of a state—the resulting picture of a state that depends on a multiplicity of narratives that emerge when various actors use the topic of the state to publicly assert their self-understanding.

The thesis has used two major approaches: for each actor, it has—based on the analysis of relevant literature and publicly available sources—outlined its global context and the logic of its relationship to Israel, and examined the possible fragmentation of its stances, its functioning, its relative importance, and limitations to its actions, with regard to the bilateral Czech-Israeli context. After that, each chapter featured an ethnographic section that built on field research and examined the actor's engagement with Israeli cultural representation on the ground, establishing its strategy towards the topic. This combination of approaches was selected to take the research of this practice as close to what is happening on the ground as possible, without neglecting the political context from which it is derived. It is probably also an outcome of my dual training in international relations and in anthropology.

In this way, the thesis has fulfilled the critical and the analytical aim—it proposed and applied a research method based on the outlined methodological combination. In this

sense, it responds to existing scholarly papers asking for an anthropological approach to the study of cultural diplomacy (Ang et al. 2015), developing this idea further and applying it to major research material. Hopefully, in its scope, it is a novel contribution to the field that mostly works with methods from international relations (e.g., Gienow-Hecht; Donfried 2010; Arndt 2005), area studies (Klimeš 2019), and history (Fosler-Lussier 2015).

It has become clear that this approach is contributive in general, but is especially fruitful when analyzing the cultural representation of a deeply divided society where actors take up mutually exclusive representations of the country. In contrast to the oft-repeated understanding of cultural diplomacy as a representation of a homogenous entity (e.g., Daliot-Bul 2009; Girginov 2008; Liu 2006), this perspective offers a notion of a society composed of parallel or even opposing segments. It also allows us to understand the field in cases where the stakes are high (Bourdieu 1993, 17) and where there is a zero-sum-game principle in the field of representation (e.g., one narrative contradicts the other; Zureikh et al. 1993). The international relations perspective allows us to understand the specific context of a country's foreign policy and the political stakes of each of the segments of society, while anthropological methods allow us to observe exactly how the self-understanding of the actors is translated into their representation of the topic, and how these representations respond to the strategies of other actors.

In order to specifically ascertain the cultural representation of the State of Israel in the Czech Republic, the thesis followed major players in the field—Israeli governmental institutions, a wide array of Czech non-governmental actors, the Czech Jewish Diaspora, the BDS movement, and Israeli artists—looking at how each of them represents the topic of Israel, how this functions within the general public strategy of the actor, and how these strategies are adjusted in interaction with other entities. The analysis was thus actor-oriented: it examined the ways in which various actors enact the topic of Israel through cultural events, appropriating it in a way that suits their self-understanding. The notion of self-understanding of the actors allowed us to include the notion of instrumentalism, i.e., taking part in the cultural representation of a state for the actor's own purposes, without deeming it cynical. For the actors involved, representing Israel in a certain manner is, in multiple cases, an issue of responsibility towards the outer world (as in the case of pro-Israel Christian churches). They do so mostly through public events such as those that were analyzed. It is crucial that the research deals in

large part with Czech actors. It is their use of the rather symbolic topic of Israel that is the focus of our attention, and not the state's conduct itself.

Fulfilling the normative aim, the thesis has positioned the analysis of Israeli cultural representation in the Czech Republic against the notions of deliberative democracy and propaganda and we have concluded that the traits of propaganda are not present in Israeli cultural diplomacy. We have evaluated the practice as highly decentralized, polyvocal, even incongruent.

Besides contributing to the literature on cultural diplomacy in general, the thesis thus also adds to the modest body of work on Israeli cultural diplomacy. It is also the first contribution on Israeli cultural diplomacy in the Czech context.

10.2 Synthesis of the findings

The thesis arrives at four different types of conclusion: (1) those related to the role deep divisions in a society play in cultural representation; (2) conclusions about Israeli cultural representation in the Czech Republic specifically; (3) new light cast by the thesis on the issues of cultural diplomacy and cultural representation in general; and (4) methodological conclusions. Let us examine each of them separately.

Deeply divided societies and cultural representation

Irreconcilable divisions in a society (in our case defined as national division) influence its cultural representation in several ways. First, they enhance the variety—not necessarily in the sense of multiplicity, but indeed in the sense of distance between the notions—of the ways in which the society is represented by various actors abroad. In our case, we have seen Israel represented as a multicultural paradise; as a Jewish national homeland; as a military regime; as a country like any other, etc. This, along with other factors, probably also contributes to the multiplicity of actors that get engaged with representation of Israel: for each of them, this theme, due to its public magnitude, becomes a strong symbol, albeit a symbol of very different things. The thesis has demonstrated this through the observation of a plethora of Israel-themed events in the Czech Republic.

Second, the factor of deep societal divisions raises the stakes of the actors, as postulated by Bourdieu (1993, 17). We have seen that, indeed, Israeli cultural diplomacy, especially in times of heightened attention (such as the occasion of the Czech town of Pilsen being the European Capital of Culture), leads certain actors to put increased

pressure on the dissemination of their own notion of Israel, involving other high-standing actors in their games, increasing communication with the public, and adjusting their strategies to the reactions of their counterparts.

This brings us to the third and fourth points: deep divisions lead to straightforward contradictory messages in cultural representation, as was observed. Thus, the effect of cultural diplomacy is hampered, and the idea of improving the international standing of a state through the support of cultural activities might even lead to the contrary — exacerbating the situation and focusing more attention on problematic aspects of the state's image. What are a state's possible responses to this risk? Very roughly, the state might try to eliminate any contradictions, and push a specific narrative, centralizing its cultural diplomacy as much as possible (as in the case of China; Klimeš 2019). Or it can sideline cultural diplomacy and use it only as a complement to its foreign policy without putting too much pressure on its outcome, leaving it rather decentralized, as in the case of Israel. We have also looked into the normative implications of this dilemma, the second being much more in line with the “democratic” potential of cultural diplomacy in the processual sense, emphasized by some. This state of affairs, however, might be a very unstable one. Recent events in Israeli cultural diplomacy hint towards attempts at taking a tougher line, as we have illustrated using the claims of the current Minister of Culture, Miri Regev.

Finally, the thesis points to the uneasy role of the artists engaged with the cultural representation of a deeply divided society. They are often expected to take a politicized stance, which is rather uncomfortable and unnatural for a number of them due to the universalist ambitions they have for their art. However, this dilemma can hardly be resolved. Appropriation is one of the central techniques of cultural representation, as we have seen. Action, counteraction, or even inaction is, especially in the highly charged context of a divided society, almost always interpreted in a certain way.

Cultural representation of Israel in the Czech Republic

The thesis dealt in detail with all the major actors involved in the cultural representation of Israel in the Czech Republic. It points to two conclusions that I consider crucial: First, it shows that the specific bilateral context in which cultural representation takes place is pivotal. The influence of the personality of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and the central role he ascribed to national emancipation (including Zionism as a form of it), the

long and significant Jewish history of the Czech lands, combined with the memory of antisemitic policies induced (not only! but to a large degree) by external regimes—first the Nazis, and then the Soviet communist regime—led to the prominence that the post-communist elites, including Václav Havel, ascribed to closer-than-normal relations with the State of Israel. This provides a framework for intensive communication between the Czech and Israeli governments, and a generally positive stance of Czech politicians towards Israel, which is rather rare in the European context. However, our second major observation claims that this feeling is not necessarily shared by the general public. The research of the audience of Israeli events corroborates previous statistical research: while Czechs in general have positive emotional associations with Czech Jewish history, or their idea of it, the context of modern Israel, drifting further away from the originally shared reality of central Europe over the decades, is more difficult for a common Czech participant in a particular event to relate to. This is a major obstacle for cultural communication between the two countries.

General conclusions about cultural representation

In the area of observations applicable to cultural representation in general, we have seen cultural representation as a dynamic field, an “ecosystem” of actors that work in mutual interaction (albeit often with contradictory ambitions), where, in some cases, the existence of some actors is conditioned by the existence of others. What would be the *raison d’être* for the cultural boycott movement if there was no cultural diplomacy? I would argue that this is a rather unique insight into cultural representation, that only a rather detailed examination such as ours could bring forward.

Second, we have observed that cultural representation remains a matter of elites—actors with a large enough audience or sufficient mobilization potential, artists, and cultural stakeholders. Simply put, those with access to public attention. Therefore, while we can see its democratic potential in the communicative aspect, we would not be able to characterize it as “democratic” in the representational sense, i.e., the whole society will hardly be represented in cultural production in a bottom-up manner. The voices of minorities will likely be represented either by the government, in order to enhance its image as a tolerant entity, or by the representatives of groups that already have public attention (often traditional cultural elites).

Third, we have seen that the role of government in contemporary cultural representation is a limited one. It can indeed postulate a general philosophy of cultural diplomacy (in the Israeli case making it a rather marginal technique and rather supporting the actors involved with it for their own reasons), but only with major difficulties can it influence general tendencies, such as the domestic political development of the host country. Even if it tries, this is a rather uncertain enterprise. Therefore, this thesis adds to the body of research that sees the potential of cultural diplomacy mostly in the area of personal relationships that are initiated by a governmental action, but later unfold independently (Fosler-Lussier 2015; Ang et al. 2015) and thus fall into a domain that can hardly be fully under governmental control. If governments are willing to take this risk, the cultural representation of states in a strained position in general, and deeply divided societies in particular, will probably remain a question with a constantly uncertain answer. Furthermore, the boycott efforts are most detrimental precisely for cultural diplomacy derived from relationship-building.

Limitations and recommendations for further research

It was not within the scope of this work to map out the entirety of Israeli cultural representation. We have not included all the individuals active in representing Israel through culture in the Czech Republic, for instance. We have also not included a profound analysis of the media coverage of Israeli cultural events for methodological reasons. Furthermore, we did not include the broader context of Israeli public diplomacy in the Czech Republic (tourism campaigns, etc.), as this goes beyond scope of a dissertation thesis. This could be a topic for further research.

Also, the research spanned only one year; thus, it was able to capture only a single case of a major change of an actor's strategy. A longer research period would probably facilitate the discovery of more complex behaviors among the actors. For example, we could discover if/how they react to the behavior of other actors, the delay between changes in governmental policies in Israel and in the Czech Republic, etc. Contrary to claims that cultural representation is a highly dynamic field, the strategies of most of the actors seem almost linear here.

Finally, we should not forget that from a more global perspective Israeli cultural representation in the Czech Republic is of relatively low importance as the Czech Republic has only small to medium weight in international affairs. Thus, we can

assume that if we were examining the same phenomenon, for instance, in the USA, the stakes for the actors would be much higher, influencing their strategies. Our claim about the decentralization of Israeli cultural diplomacy would also be put to the test. All these issues are left for further research, broader in scope, or of a more comparative nature.

10.3 Self-reflection

I started with an autoethnography, and so I want to include a short, self-reflective subchapter in the conclusion. During the research and the writing process, I had to tackle two major personal issues. The first—and the easier to deal with—has to do with the scope of the field. As I combined two approaches, and dealt with a topic that is not so traditional for anthropology, the abundance of concepts, but also of research material (both on the ground and in literature) was sometimes overwhelming. I had to remind myself of what Mansbach and Rhodes (2009) say—that scholarly work does not aim to capture a totality of certain phenomenon, but rather is a pursuit of disciplined thinking. I leave it to the reader to evaluate if I have succeeded in this regard.

The second, more severe issue had to do with the research topic itself: as has been reiterated several times, Israel is a subject of strong identification for many, and even an existential issue (in the physical or psychological sense of the word). While some would swear that the country is proof of metaphysical laws, or a role model in some regards, other see it as fundamentally evil. The chapter on BDS exemplified the conviction of some that before the situation of Palestinians is better, dealing with anything else is highly cynical. Even in a less extreme context, many would argue that Israeli cultural enterprises seek to cover up for other highly problematic aspects of Israel's international (and domestic) conduct. While trying to keep a rather reserved stance during the research towards all the presented narratives, I could not at times escape anger at multiple actors involved in the issue. Some stances seemed cynical to me, some shallow, and some intentionally uninformed. I tried to make two provisions to avoid drawing a reader or a colleague into a particularistic narrative, or presenting my stance as an “objective” scholarly stance: First, I introduced the positioning chapter, in which I tried to be as honest as possible about my personal context. And second, I provided the reader with the opportunity to follow an alternative perspective in the introduction, referring to literature presenting the issue from a very different angle.

10.4 Where does this leave us?

The thesis did not have the ambition of providing political advice to any of the actors in the field of Israeli cultural representation. However, we can probably conclude that cultural representation, especially that of deeply divided societies, also functions as a testing ground for all types of narratives, interactions, etc. For instance, during the Cold War, the USSR not only sent their artists to the USA, but also very meticulously followed media reactions to their performances, to evaluate the public perception of the country beyond mere political issues in the narrow sense of the word (Fosler-Lussier 2015, 5); cultural diplomacy was described in a similar way in the case of Israeli-Korean relations (Podoler 2014). The field of cultural representation is, as we have seen, a field of negotiation, of various interactions, of reactions to them and of reframing strategies, and in this sense, we have seen on multiple occasions the mutual reactions of various actors and their audience in the field of Israeli cultural representation in the Czech Republic. I believe that the field of international relations should be examined in this way, as the interaction between the arts and politics, or between representatives of two nations, might, upon closer inspection, uncover trends that would otherwise be hard to spot.

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Appendices

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 –List of attended events – Israeli cultural representation in the Czech Republic

Appendix 1: List of attended events – Israeli cultural representation in the Czech Republic

Against the Wall Concert. Rock Café, Prague, 25 February 2015.

Assaf Kehati Trio concert. Little Glenn/U Malého Glenna, Prague, 25 April 2014.

Avishai Cohen concert. Hybernia Theatre/Divadlo Hybernia, Prague, 10 September 2014.

Black Girl/White Girl. Club opening concert. VIBE, Brno, 4 September 2015.

David Rubinger: Israel Through My Lense/Izrael mým objektivem. Exhibition opening. Old Town Hall/Staroměstská radnice, Prague, 3 July 2014.

Days for Israel/Dny pro Izrael. Gala evening. Aldis, Hradec Králové, 6 October 2014.

Days of Jerusalem/Dny Jeruzaléma 2013. Various premises, Prague.

Days of Jerusalem/Dny Jeruzaléma 2014. Various premises, Prague.

Days of Jerusalem/Dny Jeruzaléma 2015. Various premises, Prague and Pilsen.

Days of Jerusalem/Dny Jeruzaléma 2016. Various premises, Prague.

Dida Pelled Trio concert. Reduta, Prague, 15 February 2015.

Dore Gold: Radical Islam, the West, and the Future of the Holy City. Public lecture. CEVRO, Prague, 8 December 2014.

Gary Bertini Israeli Choir concert. Spanish Synagogue/Španělská synagoga, Prague, 11 October 2014.

Gathering of the Drummers concert. Lucerna Music Bar, Prague, 22 November 2014.
Hadar Galron: Mikveh/Mikve. Theatre play premiere. City Theatre Mladá Boleslav /Městské divadlo Mladá Boleslav, Mladá Boleslav, 16 October 2015.

Herz Frank: Beyond the Fear/Kromě strachu. Film screening. Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival, Dukla Edison, Jihlava, 1 November 2015.

Hillel Kogan: We Love Arabs. Dance performance. 4 + 4 Days in Motion festival, Ponec, Prague, 15 November 2014.

Idan Raichel and Vieux Farka Touré concert. U Hasičů Theatre/Divadlo U Hasičů, Prague, 26 February 2015.

Idan Raichel concert. Lucerna Music Bar, Prague, 25 February 2014.

Israeli student films at FAMU. Film screening. FAMU, Prague, 17 April 2014.

Jewish Refugees from Arab Lands/Židovští uprchlíci z arabských zemí. Discussion and concert. Jewish Community/Židovská obec, Prague, 30 November 2015.

Journey to Israel/Cesta do Izraele. Panel discussion. Václav Havel Library/Knihovna Václava Havla, Prague, 28 April 2015.

Keren Shayo: Sound of Torture/Zvuky mučení. Film screening. One World Film Festival, Světozor, Prague.

Light of Understanding/Světlo porozumění. Concert. Spanish Synagogue and St. Spirit Church/Španělská synagoga a kostel Sv. Ducha, Prague, 4 November 2014.

Lizzie Doron: Who the Fuck Is Kafka/Kdo je to, sakra, Kafka? Presentation of the book. Café Exil, Prague, 7 November 2016.

Los Caparos and Fast Food Orchestra. Concert. Roxy, Prague, 13 November 2014.

Malox and Garáž. Concert. Vinohrady Brewery/Vinohradský pivovar, Prague, 28 April 2015.

Malox. Concert and workshop. Už jsme doma, Prague, 27 April 2015.

Many Yaesh: God's Neighbors/Boží sousedé. Febiofest festival, Cinestar Anděl, Prague, 15 March 2013.

Mark Eliyahu feat. Alaev Family and Rita. Concert. Colours of Ostrava festival, Gong, 18 July 2015.

Men of the North Country. Concert. Buben, Prague, 6 April 2014.

Natasha Dudinski: Gisi. Film premiere. Světozor, Prague, 20 April 2015.

Ohad Naharin: Last Work. Dance performance. Dance Prague festival, Karlín Theatre/Divadlo Karlín, 26 June 2015.

Orphaned Land concert. US-Exit, Prague, 1 October 2013.

Otto Dov Kulka: Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death/Krajiny metropole smrti. Book presentation. Educational Center of the Jewish Museum/Oddělení pro vzdělávání a kulturu Židovského muzea, Prague, 18 September 2014.

Pope Francis in the Holy Land. Exhibition opening. Týn Church/Týnský chrám, Prague, 17 December 2014.

Seth Segal: Let There Be Water/Budiž voda. Book launch. Česká spořitelna, Prague, 6 December 2016.

Swing de Gitanes concert. Khamoro festival, Jazz Dock, Prague, 25 May 2015.

Teatr Novogo Fronta & Clipa Theater: With Unarmed Forces. Theatre performance. Shamayim Festival, Třebíč, 1 August 2014.

The Lover/Milene. Theatre play premiere. MeetFactory, Prague, 1 May 2014.

The Poster in the Clash of Ideologies 1914 – 2014/Plakát v souboji ideologií 1914 - 2014. Exhibition opening. DOX, Prague, 13 February 2014.

Through Culture Against Anti-Semitism/Kulturou proti antisemitismu. Public event. Valdštejn garden/Valdštejnská zahrada, Prague, 19 April 2015.

Yishai Sarid: Limassol. Book presentation and discussion with the author. Prague Writers Festival, Prague, Senate of the Czech Republic/Senát České republiky, 24 November 2015.