



DW Proposal

11th of April, 2019



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RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

First Pictures

While it has been mostly absent from authoritative texts and writings on cinemas, and its documentation through time incomplete, the history of Lebanese cinema is in fact a rich, diverse and oftentimes eventful one. Its first traces date back to the end of the 19th century, as some early Lumière films were shot on location in Beirut. Since then, Lebanese film production, despite difficulties and obstacles, never went interrupted.

The films of the pre-World War Two period constitute a first corpus of Lebanese cinema. What remains of this era is a few key dates: in 1909, the first movie theatre, *The Flower of Syria* opens in Beirut. A few others follow, screening silent French films for the most part. From 1927 onwards, silent Egyptian films also become a staple of movie theatres in the country.

In 1929, the silent movie *The Adventures of Elias Mabruk*, considered to be the first Lebanese film is made. Directed by the Italian Jordano Pidutti, it reflects on the Lebanese obsession with exile to America, a result of the traumatic famine that eradicated one third of the Mount Lebanon population. This is also a period of significant rural exile, one that caused the complete upheaval of the Lebanese economic system. The film then already has for theme exile and return, which will become archetypal of Lebanese cinema. The civil war only exacerbated this trend, and it continued in its aftermath. As for the first Lebanese film to be part of the Cannes Festival selection in 1958, George Nasser's *Ila Ayn*, it similarly tells the cautionary tale of a family living in a small village, their dreams and disillusionment with abroad. Nasser was inspired by his travels to Brazil, where he saw the struggles of the Lebanese immigrant community.

In the context of the French mandate, the first steps into filmmaking are not bound by rules, and these early films are met with enthusiasm by the public. Their cultural and economic successes encourage businessmen to invest into the budding industry looking to turn a quick profit. In 1933, Herta Gargour founded Lumnar Film Company which will produce *Amongst the ruins of Baalbek*, the first Lebanese "talkie", and the first film to be entirely produced in an Arab country. The borders between the roles of producers and directors were blurred, leading in certain cases to tensions between filmmakers and their financial associates. Despite its early take-off production is interrupted by the beginning of World War Two.

It's in 1952, with the successful setup of two fully-equipped film studios, Studio Haroun and Studio Al-Arz, that production picks up again: early in the decade, local films made in the Lebanese dialect and shot in the countryside start to appear. They however do not connect with their target audience, and consequently fail commercially: this is due to the small size of the Lebanese market, and the lack of large-scale interest for social films that question the state's power and responsibility.

As a result, film production falls under the monopole of the Egyptian model, which allows it to reach the Arab market, much more substantial than what a small country of 3 million people can offer. Hence, cult Lebanese films of this era are directed by two Egyptian directors with Lebanese origins: Henry Barakat and Youssef Chahine.

Nationalization in Egypt and its repercussions on the Lebanese industry

In the 1960s, a true industrialization of Lebanese cinema begins to take place. Nationalization of Egyptian cinema in 1963 will trigger to departure of Egyptian directors and movie stars to Lebanon, marking the rise of a "golden era". The small country becomes a privileged hub for film producers all around the Middle East, and despite its size, statistics show in 1961 a level of attendance in theatres four times higher than France's and ten

times higher in Egypt. Trends come and go, sing and dance features are followed by bedouin stories, and eventually a wave of Palestinian films accompany the start of Palestinian resistance. A cinema club in Beirut frequented by the Lebanese intelligentsia is set up, allowing cinephiles to discover classic international features, and inviting renowned filmmakers such as Alain Resnais, Agnes Varda and Pier Pablo Pasolini to come present their films. In 1961, the first international festival of cinema takes place.

Despite this boom, and the quantity of production in the country, the 1960s did not set the foundations of a national industry, as social and cultural issues at risk of upsetting communitarian sensitivities were avoided in movies. The start of the war in 1975 slows down the process of industrialization, before it has time to consolidate itself.

Wartime and postwar films: political engagement and trauma

Nonetheless, around the years 1975- 1980 which represent the beginning of Lebanese civil war, a generation of young filmmakers, formed in, and subsidized by Europe come to make films towards the end of the conflict. Namely, Borhane Alawiye, Maroun Baghdadi, Jocelyne Saab, Jean Chamoun, Randa Chahal and Heiny Srour. Hence production continued thanks to a handful of filmmakers who recorded, archived, and transcended the omnipresent events that will be so defining of modern Lebanese narratives and identities. If cinema during that time can be considered an “art of survival” the period immediately following the end of hostilities, with the Taef Agreements of 1990, is an “art of revival”, or even a renaissance – films that delved into the traumas of war and its impact on post-war society. To the ranks of filmmakers that emerged during wartimes, we can add the names of Samir Habchi and Jean-Claude Cods. Beyond their qualities as movies, films of the time are also a precious archive that shows a destroyed Beirut, before post-war reconstruction took place. One particular film by Jocelyn Saab, “Once upon a time, Beirut” allows us to rediscover the history of Beirut through cinema and rare images of downtown Beirut in 1995.

This era also witnessed a development and a profusion of festivals that became a platform of exchange and a springboard towards international markets for independent movies. In a number of universities, formations in cinema are launched, while associations like Nadi Le Kol Nass and Fondation Liban Cinema emerge.

Stepping away from war narratives and recent successes

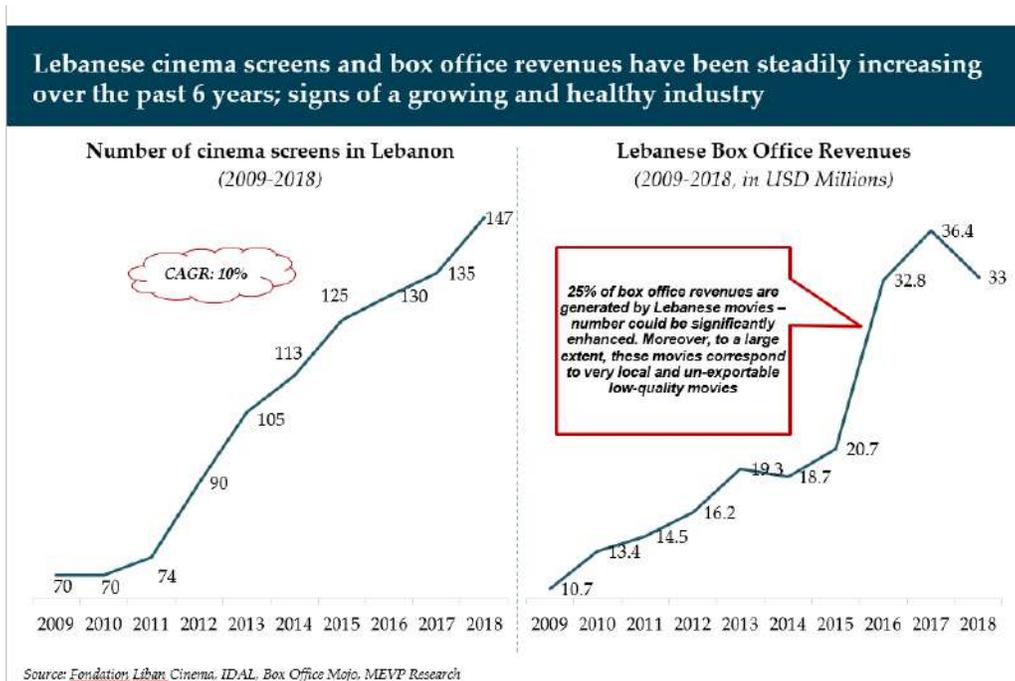
With the onset of the 21st century, two films constitute an early turning point for Lebanese cinema, away from these narratives and into more commercial or mainstream tendencies: Philippe Aractingi’s *Bosta* and Nadine Labaki’s *Caramel* both mark an era of cinema in Lebanon that has reconnected with a sense of light-heartedness, without completely leaving behind the lingering shadow of war. Lebanese cinema, indeed, has not only been commenting throughout the years on this sense of “suspension” that has come with the fifteen years long conflict, but was also directly affected by it: and the struggles of filmmakers and film lovers to make Lebanese cinema perennate up to this day despite a lack of support and industry in proper standing are reflected in the very fabric of the films produced.

Despite all, we can assess today a true diversity in genres and subject-matter has been achieved - oftentimes by getting around censorship-, which allied to the higher quantity of production have made of Lebanese cinema the mirror of society, and of its geopolitical position. While auteur films or artistic films still encounter difficulties in finding funding, there exists today a true market for “cheaper” more commercial features that routinely rival with Hollywood blockbusters in the cinemas, as well as one for TV Series, the Lebanese “mosalsalat” that have become a popular staple of all local television channels.

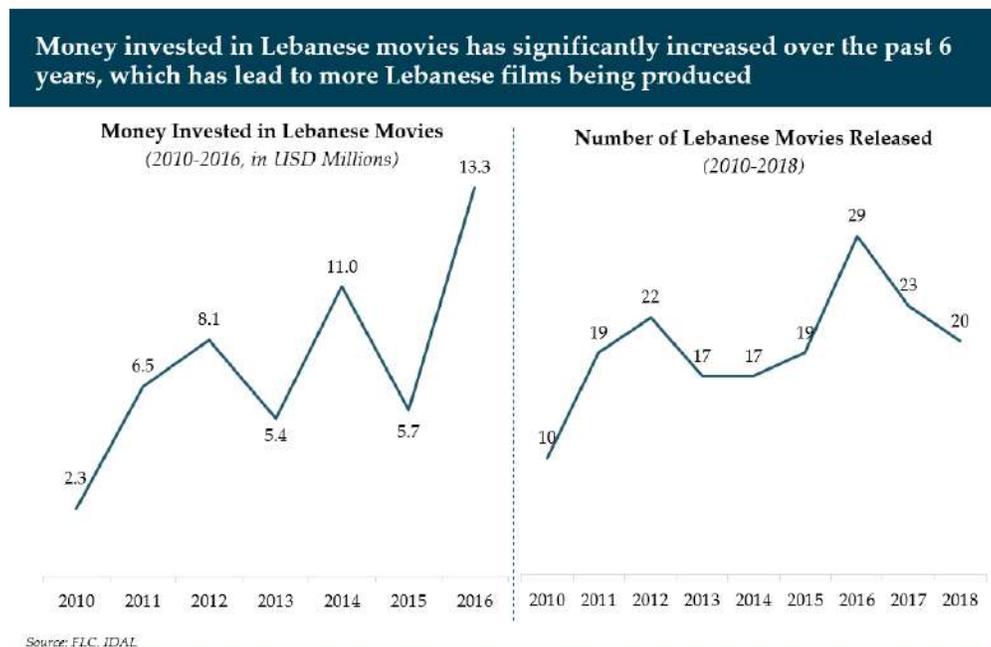
These developments have been happening, generally speaking, outside of the international eye, Lebanese cinema remaining a cinema of the margins. But the recent international successes of *The Insult* and *Capharnaum*, both Oscar nominees, two years in a row could be marking a hopeful new era for the country’s film production, one of international recognition.

Trends and Development

From a more data-driven perspective, the current general situation is moving in a positive trend – both the number of Lebanese movies released, and the box office revenues associated has been steady increasing over the past decade, and we have been witnessing a solid growth in interest across all fronts

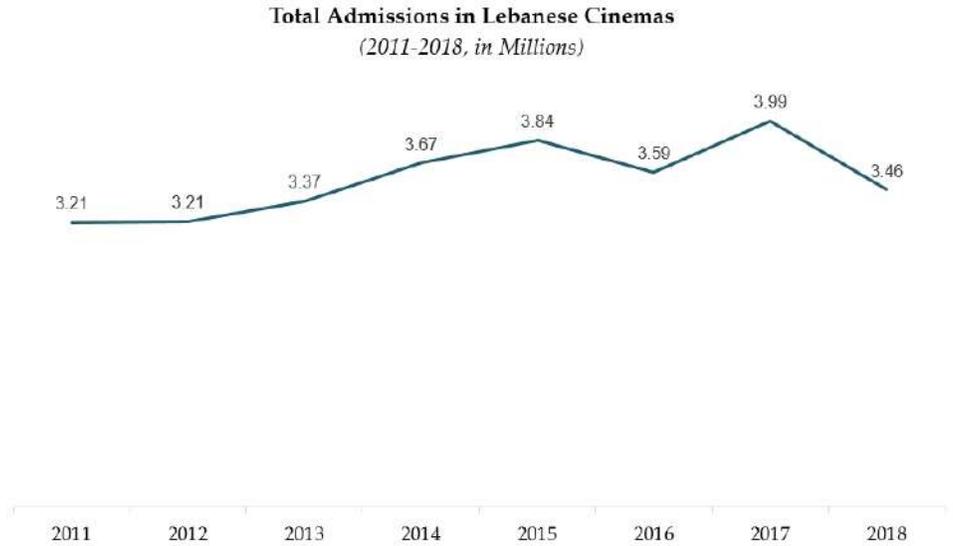


Film production has increased at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 29% between 2010 and 2017



Today, the average cost of producing a feature film in Lebanon ranges between \$750,000 to \$900,000, with certain notable exceptions such as 'The Insult' or 'Capharnaum'

Total admissions in Lebanese movies have been steadily increasing over the past decade



Source: FLC, IDAL

Furthermore, the Lebanese media industry is a major contributor to the Lebanese economy

Lebanese Media Industry is a major contributor to the Lebanese economy and the highest in the region

\$	Financial Impact	\$	👤	Social Impact	👤
	Media industry accounts for ~5% of Lebanese GDP			~4.5% of Lebanese workforce is employed in the Lebanese media sector	
	\$20M+ in local box office revenues alone (2016)			400 companies in this sector (~100 audiovisual production and post-production companies)	
	Lebanon has the highest advertising spending in the Levant with ~\$500M spent (2015) [TV, Online, Billboards]			1000+ people 'directly' working in the production of films	

Source: MEVP Research, IDAL, WIPO, MPAA

Moreover, Lebanon is unique in its resources, mainly through:

Filmmakers can take advantage of Lebanon's unique filming resources including:

1. **Media Talents and Production Companies:** Lebanon's audiovisual industry has gained a unique position locally and regionally. Lebanon offers a good depth of experienced crews speaking fluent English, French and Arabic at a low cost relative to the region.
2. There are around **97 production/post-production houses** in Lebanon that offer a wide spectrum of production facilities like professional studios equipped with state of the art facilities.
3. **Filming Scenery:** Filmmakers can take advantage of Lebanon's unique and diversified scenery resources including a blend of Middle Eastern, European and ancient architecture, that could cater to almost any type of staging required, namely beaches, country sides, and urban cities. Furthermore, the diverse history of Lebanon enables us to gain access to widespread resources in terms of both scenery and skillset – within 30 minutes, a movie can be shot at the beach or in a snowy mountain. We can also shoot scenes which offer insights into very ancient 'Phoenician' architecture and then travel a short duration to shoot modern / 21st century architecture.
4. **Cultural Diversity:** Lebanon has been through countless trials over the history of its existence, starting from the Phoenician civilization, going through various empires such as the Ottoman, to the French mandate, to a significant 15-year war, has led to a very culturally diverse society that also provides a very unique edge when compared with regional counterparts
5. **Film Location Permits:** Lebanon is one of the most liberal countries in the Middle East. It is relatively easy and quick to get a filming permit in Lebanon, granted by the General Security

MAIN PART

1: CAPACITY BUILDING

1) Degrees in Lebanon; Degrees abroad - Atypical paths and self-education

"To study cinema implies becoming its spectator and its critic, sometimes even, re-writing history".

Borhane Alawiye, in an interview for *Pictogram* in December 2016.

Interviewing professionals in the world of Lebanese cinema provided insights into an interesting and eclectic mix of backgrounds: in a country where the development of a film industry has been historically halted by a fifteen year long war, film lovers have often had to study cinema, both "practice" and "theory", in non-conventional ways. Looking back at the development of capacity, skills and knowledge in the field of cinema is a testament to the resilience of Lebanese filmmakers and an important reflection on how and where experience can be gained.

In this sense, the most common degree these filmmakers received is no degree at all, with filmmakers such as Ghassan Salhab and Wissam Charraf being "self-made men" – after obtaining their French baccalaureate, they delved straight into practicing cinema filmmaking, earning experience solely "on the ground". Wissam Charraf considers that the majority of filmmakers of his generation, who started right after the end of the war, gained similar experience through extensive practice: *"Working in television was accessible to everyone. I knew how to edit and shoot when I arrived in Paris, so I was able to start working quickly"*. Similarly, people in the field of distribution, production and post production in Lebanon have not necessarily followed academic paths to get to their position: Bassam Eid, who has been a programmer at Empire Circuits, the biggest distribution circuit in Lebanon, for the past 30 years does not have a background in cinema. Film producer Gabriel Chamoun studied in the United States where he obtained a license in management and an MBA, before investing in a production house set up by a friend of his and becoming a partner in charge of management. As for Ghada Oueidat and Mahmoud Korek, they set up their

post-production company, Post Office, following studies in communications and civil engineering, respectively. In this sense, cinema as a field of work has also been understood by many in the industry as a financial endeavor, which requires skills and knowledge of management, economy and technology, as any other profession does.

Furthermore, even pioneers of Lebanese cinema such as Heiny Srour or Jocelyne Saab, have not pursued studies in cinema. Instead, the two women have degrees in social sciences and economy. In this sense, the importance is placed on the ability of people to prove their capacities in the context of shootings, pre or post-productions.

2) What universities offer

Following the end of the civil war, it became possible to enroll in cinema studies in Lebanon. Numerous departments specialized in the discipline were created in different universities. As of today, we can list the following universities as those that offer degrees in cinema and film studies:

- The Lebanese University of Fine Arts (ALBA)
 - Ranked first in Lebanon in terms of quality of education in fine arts
- St. Joseph University (USJ - audiovisual department known as IESAV)
- Lebanese American University (LAU)
 - Considered one of the best universities in the Middle East
- Notre-Dame University (NDU)
- The Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK)
- The Lebanese University
- Al-Kafaat University.

Thanks to the development of university classes, a new generation of filmmakers was given the opportunity to undergo academic training in cinema.

3) Remaining gaps

Still, there remains a lot of work to do in terms of capacity-building. *“I’m not a firm-believer in schools because they tend to format rather than form”* explains Carol Mezher, who founded Bande-a-Part productions, and the Lebanese universities are not without shortcomings of their own: a recurrent complaint is with the trainings themselves, considered too generalist. **This especially affects scriptwriting in the country.**

Elie Yazbeck, director of the audiovisual department at St-Joseph University (IESAV) considers that the *“auteur”* tradition inherited from the French New Wave of combining the roles of writer and director is still very much present in Lebanon, oftentimes at the detriment of the films’ quality. Similarly, Samir Habchi (who teaches at the Lebanese University) criticizes university degrees that do not cater to the specializations needed for a well-rounded knowledge base. Despite the workshops and the *“on-the-ground”* experience that allow people in the industry to develop their script-writing skills, it is still rare to find someone who has specialized in that field, and who possesses the correct technique or style to write different scenarios. Yazbeck identifies the reasons for these shortcomings as financial: according to him, even if they were to open classes exclusively tuned towards scriptwriting, they would remain uninteresting to the students, as there is no ‘job security’ in our market today as a scriptwriter. Similarly, ALBA attempted to launch a degree specialized in production, but not enough students enrolled. Ultimately, this is linked to the lack of unions or syndicates and lack of awareness at an earlier level.

Other weaknesses

Alongside scriptwriting, Ghassan Salhab also identifies a few other roles as lacking qualifications in the training market: those of make-up for **special effects, Mixing, and Production Designers** - all skills he does not consider likely to develop in the future for lack of *“occasions to practice”* within the production fieldwork. Wissam Charraf also singles out weaknesses and shortcomings in the professions of **Electronic Chiefs and Machinist Chiefs**. Finally, Hania Mroue singles out distribution as an aspect of filmmaking that is devoid of professionals and is done in an amateur way by the directors themselves. While she assesses that, in comparison to other Arab countries, the Lebanese manage to work well together and praises their sense of solidarity, she recognizes both **the lack of**

structure and of well-determined lines between different roles: *“Everybody wants to do everything, everybody thinks they’re an expert.”* This sentiment is echoed by Mahmoud Korek and Ghada Oueidat who wish for a better work culture within cinema production, one that valorizes a bigger array of professions, beyond that of the director: *“The key word is ‘workflow’ says Korek, “with a better workflow you can do a better job with the same amount of money”.*

4) The importance of workshops

To help fill the gaps still present, an array of workshops offered to Lebanese students and professionals play an important role. Hania Mroue highlights the importance of workshops like “Beirut Talent” that **allow students and young graduates to get them in touch with the theory behind their technical works**, and meeting professionals in the industry that share their own ways of thinking. **As for Fondation Liban Cinema**, it **works to professionalize the sector and its different trades**, through the organisation of workshops but also by supporting initiatives of continuous professional formations. Namely, it organizes the annual Feature Fiction Rewriting workshop in partnership IFL, as well as the global Media Makers Workshops catered to professional producers and distributors and the Beirut Cinema Platform in collaboration with Beirut DC which is designed to bring Lebanese and Arab independent filmmakers and producers to meet industry professionals, hence encouraging co-productions, collaborations, and partnerships. Other workshops include Torino Film Lab Extended which focus on different aspects of production and post-production, the Good Pitch hosted by Beirut DC that caters to the documentary films community, Beirut-Locarno Industry Academy Industry organized by Metropolis Cinema Association that tackles challenges of the independent movie industry within the Arab World. More focused on script-writing, Nadia Tabbara’s Fade In pushes writers to go through the entire creative process with the pressure of a deadline while May Kassem’s focuses on stimulating the imagination and enabling the writer to narrate in an audio-visual language. Muriel Aboulrouss proposes an alternative experimental filmmaking workshop that includes a self-portrait of the filmmaker and their film in 3 minutes, while Bassem Breich’s Scenario Beirut offers more traditional script-writing classes to the wider public. **The Lebanese Film Academy also offers classes in cinematography, lights and camera, acting, and editing**, given by Toni Farjallah and Takla Chamoun. Finally, the University of California is launching a training program for Middle Eastern TV producers and writers called the Middle East Media Initiative, promising collaborations with professionals in the US.

Another interesting avenue that goes beyond formation is Carol Mezher’s script-writing project, **FFFMed**, that **caters to french-speaking women across the Mediterranean region** and is headed towards its second edition in November 2019. It attracted TV5 Monde’s program “Destination Francophonie” that came to film Lebanon and captured the beauty of Deir el Qamar’s precious heritage, for its 150 000 viewers on Facebook only, and the BBC emission “BBC XTRA, with 938 000 views on Facebook only. Furthermore, the residency’s impact was expressed in different ways as two out of six of last year’s participants have turned towards Lebanon as the setting for their films: Danielle Saba (Brazil), winner of the 2018 edition has a new script-writing project that will take place in the country, while Aline Fischer (Germany) adapted her current scenario, from taking place in Kurdistan to Lebanon, following her stay in Deir El-Qamar.

Through this social endeavour, not only does FFFMed succeed in catering to scriptwriting, an essential skill in movie-making, but also decentralizes arts and culture away from Beirut, by valorizing different regions of the country both as tourism locations (its first edition saw participants not only from France in Lebanon but also from places such as Germany and Brazil), and potential shooting locations, ultimately creating jobs outside the capital.

5) Potential, despite weaknesses

Ultimately, capacity-building has followed a clear path of progress since its beginnings. While films produced in Lebanon before the end of the 1990s were overly reliant on technicians and in particular chief operators and cinematographers from abroad, this has not been the case in the past ten years, as Lebanese “know-how”

developed in all disciplines. *“Back in the days, you’d never have a chief operator from Lebanon [...] that’s not the case anymore today”* asserts Michele Tyan, founder of “Djinn House Production”. Hence, **it is possible today for the whole chain of production of a film to take place in Lebanon, from pre-production to post-production.**

In particular, Muriel Aboulrouss can be considered not only the first female DOP in Lebanon but the first one to truly understand the profession as an artistic one, rather than a technical job. She laid down foundations by turning towards the profession at a time when most DOPs were consistently being hired from Europe. Furthermore, she broke boundaries by proving that the somewhat more physical job could be done by women. While Lebanese women have been far from absent from the field of cinema since its very beginning, it is nonetheless crucial for such representation to pave the way for others, especially in terms of positions of responsibility in the sector of production.

Hence, with an array of qualified professionals and a trend that positively goes towards a diversification of films, Lebanon today harbors important potential in terms of movie-making.

And the sector is growingly attractive to young people: as Maya de Freige states, there are more than 250 graduates in audiovisual studies, each year. *“The talent is present.” she adds “and to encourage them to stay, we must develop the sector.”*

Created in 2003, Fondation Liban Cinema has endorsed and supported this mission.

Through numerous workshops and trainings, as well as organizing knowledge-sharing platforms between producers in Lebanon and abroad, the FLC has successfully supported filmmakers in bridging global gaps. In 2016, Fondation Liban Cinéma, in partnership with About Productions, placed young up and coming Lebanese talents on the steps of the Cannes red carpet. Four of them (Ahmad Ghossein, Rami Kodeih, Shirin Abou Shaqra, Mounia Akl) presented their short films, all of which were created in partnership with foreign filmmakers.

FLC has acted in support of this socio-economic sector, with belief in the role and capacity of the Lebanese film industry as a sustainable and crucial sector. Through amounting schematic efforts on behalf of the industry, FLC helped and acted to forge alliances warranting a viable mechanism of production financing and film promotion and is aiming to continue its mission by supporting Lebanese Cinema and helping it grow and expand more and more...

- **Over the years, FLC managed to play a role of a federator to the Lebanese cinema, leading it to: The sigf a MOU with IDAL- Investment Development Authority in Lebanon in order to attract investments to the media field and help it grow and compete.**
- **The signature of a MOU with the Ministry of Culture to take any initiative aiming at developing and structuring the sector.**

2: PRODUCTION/POST-PRODUCTION:

Production and Funding

As mentioned in the introduction, Lebanon and its cinema have been on the map recently, with the presence of *The Insult* and *Capharnaum* at the Oscars reaching levels of exposure never seen before for the small country. With forty feature films between 2016 and 2017 against one or two only in the end of the 1990s, Lebanese cinematographic production showcases an unprecedented good health. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the paradox at the heart of Lebanese film production has gone away: despite its history, key themes, movements, styles – and the fact it has continued despite hardships to make films, year after year, Lebanese cinema still is not a film industry in good standing. In order to understand production in Lebanon, it is essential to take a look at what constitutes the landscape of funding opportunities and financial avenues available to filmmakers in the country.

1) International Recognition

A quick look at films having obtained international prizes reveals the evolution of the cinema sector in Lebanon:

In 2008, *I Want to See*, by Joana HadjiThomas and Khalil Joreij is selected in the “Un Certain Regard” selection of the Cannes Festival.

In 2012 is a year of multiple successes including Nadine Labaki *Where do we go now?* which opened the Bayard d’Or at the International Festival of the Francophone Film of Namur is also selected at the Cannes Festival where it obtains the Francois Chalais award.

In 2015, *Waves 98* by Ely Dagher is awarded the short films Palme D’Or at Cannes. That same year, *Very Big Shot* by Mir-Jean Bou Chaaya racks up awards and nominations: It’s notably selected at the Sundance Film Festival and TIFF and wins Best Film at the Morocco International Film Festival. *Trêve* by Myriam el Hajj, produced by About Productions is selected at Visions du Reel and awarded Best Documentary at Fidadoc.

In 2016, three Lebanese films feature on the Cannes Festival program, with another About Production, Vatche Boulghourjian’s *Tramontane* selected for the Quinzaine des Realisateurs, Wissam Charaf’s *Tombé du Ciel* part of the ACID section and Mounia Akl’s *Submarine* part of the Cinefondation Section.

In 2017, *Bil Halal* by Assad Fouladkar is selected at Sundance, Rotterdam Film Festival and others. A Rouge International production, *The Insult* by Ziad Doueiri is an important success: selected at the Venice festival, nominated at the Oscars. Other highlights include Mazen Khaled and Diala Kashmar’s *Martyr* (selection at the Venice Biennale), *Insyriated* by Philippe Van Leeuw and produced by Pierre Sarraf (selected at TIFF and Berlinale Forum), *Tshweesh* directed by Feyrouz Serhal, produced by Lara Bou Saifan (selected at Locarno Film Festival.)

In 2018, the string of successes continues, carried by Nadine Labaki and Mooz Production’s *Capharnaum*: Winner of the Cannes’ Jury Prize, nominated for Best Foreign Language Academy Awards at the 2019 Oscars, nominated for

Best Film Not in the English Language at the 2019 BAFTA. Other auteur films, Ghassan Salhab's and Maher Abi Samra's are praised at DIFF and others.

2) Finding Financing

So how are these films produced? In terms of budget, the average film costs between 650 000 and 900 000 dollars to make, a drop of water in comparison to Hollywood productions (Fast and Furious cost 230 millions dollars.) Despite these numbers and the increasing productions, a truly profitable model that extends beyond the very commercial features struggles to take shape. First of all because of a lack in broadcasting. Where big American and European cinema industries are able to ensure the broadcasting of their films through partnerships with television channels, such distribution networks have trouble finding a structure in Lebanon.

Fondation Liban Cinema aims in this context for an accompanying and framing role that attempts with the modest means at its disposal to encourage initiatives and bring projects to the screen.

Finally, FLC acts in the public sector realm to put together a regulatory framework within which this industry can grow and of mechanisms of financial support: it elaborated with IDAL the current project of tax exemption of profits relative to production societies; it worked with the Bank of Lebanon to issue a directive 416, which authorizes banks to bring forward subsidized credits to producers. However, this tool barely benefited cinematographic production as filmmakers stayed dependent on the personal guarantees called upon by banks.

Concerning the public sector, the Ministry of Culture does dedicate a very small part of its budget (around \$200,000) to help fund Lebanese films – but the bureaucratic process is not very encouraging for filmmakers, and some have pointed out that they often have to wait two or three years before getting the money promised by the Ministry, if getting it at all. And the budget itself, representing no more than a mere symbolic sum, discourages artists. Instead of turning towards the state for financial help, directors therefore reach out to European and Arab subventions.

3) European and Arab Funds

“Everyone is knocking on the same doors” asserts Ghassan Salhab when asked about where him and others get the money to realize their projects. And indeed, a list of usual suspects did not fail to come up in the interviews, almost all of them located abroad. First of all Europe, and in particular France, is still seen today as the primary resource for financial support (thanks to its privileged cultural ties to Lebanon)

Concerning the role of French funds in influencing the content of the film, there is a certain amount of disagreement – some pointed out the requirements that came with the money, while others have dismissed the ‘political agendas’ as myths. Overall, it seems that while the language quota is rarely a requirement or a point of contention nowadays, European and French money do come with conditions – namely that their technicians and/or equipment are involved and purchased for the making of the films, more often than not in the context of co-productions agreements.

The second important regional source of financial support comes from the Arab World – more specifically Gulf countries and the UAE and Qatar. Here however, a clear decrease of funds have been noted by the interviewees. Sabine Sidawi in particular did not see the surge of interest of the Gulf as much more than a passing trend, while Rania Stephan blamed the recent decrease on the economical crisis – in any case, these funds too came with their particular policies: they emphasized the financing of first-time solicitors, but were then reluctant to offer their support a second time around. Wissam Charraf also explained that he personally never managed to secure funds coming from this region, as they cater for traditional genres and stories, leaving little to no space for more experimental projects.

Still, the financial support that Lebanese films has been getting from the Arab World is not to be underestimated. In particular, AFAC, the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture founded by the NGO Mawred in 2007

dedicates a documentary program and a broader cinema program that both offer grants to eligible filmmakers. It represents an important avenue for the concretization of film projects in Lebanon and across the Middle East.

Many of these films, while successful in finding funding whether from Europe, the Gulf, private investors or a mix of all are usually considered auteur films: this translates to say that they do not always succeed in making a profit.

Still, it is important to consider the indirect impact they all have on the country's economy, through the generation of employment: from the technical team to cinemas employees to a wide array of different services going from transports, hotels, catering - especially when festivals are concerned, the sector of cinema ultimately has an undeniably positive financial impact, nationally.

4) THE IMPORTANCE OF COPRODUCTIONS

"As of today", says Maya de Freige- FLC, "coproduction is essential: not only as a financial aim but also to shape a true dialogue in terms of an intelligent process, an exchange and an interaction. It does not have its unique sense of giving to the other what he wants anymore. The artistic partnership is interesting and got rid of old prejudices. There is an emergence of new producers that carry and defend their projects."

It's through such agreements that we will be able not only to finance the Lebanese films but also to export our films, find new markets and new publics" states Maya de Freige. There truly is a possibility of "making cinema, of working in cinema". There is no one public, but multiple Lebanese publics. That of popular films and that of auteur films, restricted, elitist. Only now are we starting to produce films half-way, films of the middle ground, of commercial potential since they can reach a large public, locally and internationally. It is essentially this kind of films that the Foundation wishes to develop.

In fact, FLC follows the coproduction issue on behalf of Ministry of Culture. It offers a delegation to manage the Lebanese-French agreement and to negotiate new agreements. One treaty with Belgium is about to be signed. Negotiations are in progress with Latin America countries such as Brazil and Argentina, due to the important Lebanese diaspora in this part of the world.

5) OTHER SOURCES OF FINANCING

The French Institute in Lebanon also plays a role in production, by incentivizing French-Lebanese co-production deals with FLC. It supports participates in the organization of meetings between the Fondation Liban Cinema and the French National Centre for Cinema (CNC) that allow Lebanese projects to meet potentially interested co-producers. Luciano Rispoli, deputy director of the institute emphasises that these collaborations are creative as well as financial, and mentions his wish of creating a development fund between France and Lebanon.

On a smaller scale, the Lebanese Association For Plastic Arts (Ashkal Alwan), dedicates one of its programs to video productions: thanks to grants obtained through its Video Works program, early and mid-career artists and filmmakers based in Lebanon are given the opportunity to apply for funds, and to work on their projects in a close, collaborative atmosphere.

In this sense, the most important source of financial support locally then does not come from public funds but rather from institutions, and from private investments on the part of individuals – the popular 2013 movie *Ghadi* was made thanks to the latter method. Gabriel Chamoun explains that if they had gone the more usual path, adopted by production companies such as Ne a Beyrouth or About, *"it would've taken 5 years to make the film"*.

Despite the social topic (it tackles disabilities), which earned it sponsorship from the bank SGBL, the cast of Georges Khabbaz, a television star with a lot of influence on the market, as the main actor, and the 80 000 entries it made in cinemas (an excellent number for a hybrid between auteur cinema and commercial cinema), *Ghadi* did not make a profit. Chamoun specifies that 2012-2013 was a period when Lebanese production was booming, leading to an increase of rates and more expensive production sets - but the political situation, the economical crisis and the concurrence from countries such as Egypt, Turkey and the UAE meant that this was followed in the subsequent years

with a relative decline. *Ghadi* was then an expensive film as “production values” was one of its stated aims: hence, the shooting of the film took 46 days, whereas most Lebanese production usually never take more than 35 days. Furthermore, a significant shortcoming for *Ghadi* was its failure to reach the French market, which can be very disadvantageous for Lebanese films: Fortissimo, in charge of distribution, and considered to be one of the best sales agents around went bankrupt during distribution. “*We got unlucky*” concludes Chamoun.

6) Quality and Quantity: A Clear Positive Trend

Therefore, and as About Production’s Georges Choucair states, “films today still have issues with covering financment”. Still, he is optimistic when talking about the future, and especially when looking at the state of commercial films: they have proven their ability to successfully create an independent market.

With commercial feature films made for a large public, and therefore guarantees of success in the theatres, more and more productions are able to establish a viable model. Such is Nibal Arakji, the director and producer in 2016 of *Yalla Aa’belkon Chabeb* (budget of \$ 500,000), who was able to pay back the regional private investors that financed her. Other production societies such as Eagle Films, engaged in the distribution of films and the production of television series, also succeeds in covering their costs while financing their films in their entirety. This year, their feature film *Welaane*, directed by Élie F. Habib and whose budget was of 800 000 dollars, was the most watched film in Lebanon, reaching an audience of 153 000 in cinemas.

This is indicative of the success of local films at the box office: in 2017, 21% of total admissions and revenues in cinemas were generated by Lebanese movies.

Numbers published by Le Commerce du Levant and obtained from the investment development authority of Lebanon are also very positive: In 2015, 31 Lebanese films were produced for an investment value of around \$32.4M. These numbers mark a phenomenal increase from the 2011-2014 period, which counted an average of 11 films for around \$8.8M in investments.

In 2016-2017, Fondation Liban Cinema registered 40 Lebanese productions (22 fictions and 18 documentaries) of which 19 were screened in the cinemas. This is far from the numbers achieved in the early 2000s that did not go over one or two productions per year, and reflective the important role that the Lebanese Media Industry plays, as a whole, as a major contributor to the Lebanese economy: it accounts for 5% of the Lebanese GDP, and 4.5% of the workforce. Finally, we can count 100 audiovisual production and post production companies in the sector and 1000 people “directly” working in the production of films, as a final indicator of the potential driving force behind Lebanese cinema, if and when it is channeled in an effective manner.

Impressions from young filmmakers

Mirjean Bou Chaaya

When it comes to the new generation, we find a lot of hope amongst young filmmakers as well. Mir Jean Abou Chaaya explains that none of the difficulties are insurmountable, and making a good film ultimately boils down to “*finding stories worth telling*”. He qualifies the Lebanese market as a place “*in constant development ... that should expect to be offered the best quality from content creators*” rather than the other way around. He points out the importance of taking projection of sales into consideration when breaking down the budget based on the script. Finally, he explains that his feature film *Very Big Shot* did not encounter problems with censorship, and qualifies it of a quality auteur film, that was able to cover its costs - this is probably thanks to the LBCI, a major player in the film’s marketing campaign.

Pierre Abou Jaoude

“It is absolutely necessary to create a fund for cinema in Lebanon” states Pierre Abou Jaoude. Having directed a series of documentaries for Al Jazeera and Arte, he is currently working on his first fiction, and is worried about financing. Furthermore, his film will touch upon political topics, will denounce corruption ... which might make him run into some trouble with censorship.

Mounia Akl

A scene that's growing, a new generation and more means than before but it's still at an embryo stage ; there are no public funds in the Arab World and almost none in Lebanon ; it's thanks to structures like FLC and what BCP, Ayyam organize that we have access to a few things ; for example for the development of my feature film, it started at FLC, they brought two scriptwriters for abroad that gave feedback on projects in development ; this kind of support help a lot but the rest we have to look for abroad.

So no funds, not a lot of means but a rich scene and a lot of things to say and unfortunately censorship scares us a bit because we know we can't say everything that we want to say ; we don't have the freedom that we would like to have ; when *Submarine* was screened at Ayyam (Beirut Cinema Days) we got the right to screen for one night only – that was very painful ; it's frustrating to know that we're at a preliminary stage relative to the rest of the world but at least there is a community and a lot of love in that community.

The state of production / post-production in Lebanon

1) Production: Main actors

In the field of production in Lebanon, it is important to mention a few companies that can be considered key actors today.

First of all “Neabeyrouth”, headed by Pierre Sarraf and specialized in executive production. It notably recently co produced Capharnaüm and produced Wissam Charaf's *Tombe du Ciel*(350 000 dollars), for which it obtained funding from France (Arte, CNC, Region Ile-de-France) and the Doha Film Institute. It is important to note here the important role that advertising play: it is only thanks to the work it does in advertising that Neabeyrouth, similarly to other production companies, is able to produce small budgets and in deficit films - ultimately acting as a sponsor for such filmmakers.

Secondly, About Productions, that produce and co-produce a wide array of film genres from Ghassan Salhab's auteur films *La Montagne* (170 000 dollars) and *La Vallee* (funded thanks to private funds, the Doha Film Institute as well as French and Arab funds such as the CNC, Vision Sud-Est, and AFAC) to more commercial features.

The case of *Mahbas* (750 000 dollars) by Sophie Boutros Productions is interesting as it falls somewhere in between an auteur film and a commercial feature: the first feature film by Sophie Boutros was financed thanks to private investors and tackles with humour, Lebanese-Syrian relations - it was funded thanks to private investors, Damas Jewellery and ART, and produced thanks to the latter, in co-production with Lebanon's Jam Production and Jordan's Screenproject. Not an auteur film, nor a commercial feature, *Mahbass* is somewhere between the two: the first feature film by Sophie Boutros was financed thanks to private investors and tackles with humour, Lebanese-Syrian relations. The film is available on commercial airlines (MEA). Carried by successful Arab stars (the Lebanese Julia Kassar and the Syrian Bassem Kousa) and by a marketing budget of 70 000 dollars (broadcasting on radio, television, social media, billboards), *Mahbass* was screened in 6 Arab countries (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the UAE, Kuwait, Ramallah) the film was distributed by the MC group and already racked up more 110 000 ticket sales in the region including 90 000 in Lebanon. Financially speaking, Nadia Eliewat however explains that they are yet to make profit out of these numbers. *“Cinemas can take up to 60% of profits on ticket sales and what's left essentially goes to investors. In the end of the day, that's very little money for our production house”* But the arrival of *Mahbass* in scandinavian cinemas as well as its touring of world festivals (USA, France, Italy, South Korea ...) promises the reach

of new markets -As for ART, the film’s funder and distributor amongst televisions and VOD platforms, it will be charged with prolonging the film’s lifespan on the TV screen.

Thirdly, it is essential to mention Al Sabbah, one of the biggest Lebanese and regional producers for more than 65 years: it produced the diva Sabah’s mythical movies, and more recently Nadine Labaki’s *Caramel* and the television show *Hayba* which was bought by netflix. While they succeed in generating profit, they do point out the lack of subventions that could go towards the improvement of the technical quality of its production, rather than its quantity or its market.

Key overview of the different Lebanese production houses and distribution houses below:

Key Lebanese Production Houses	
	Production Houses
1	About Productions
2	aRTrip production
3	Day Two Pictures
4	Dream Box Pictures
5	Ginger Beirut Productions
6	Né à Beyrouth
7	Orjouane Productions
8	Sabbah Media Corporation
9	Schortcut Films
10	The Attic Productions
11	The Talkies
12	Falcon Films
13	Eagle Films
14	ART Eg
15	

Post-production players: DB Studios, Lucid Post and Post-office among the most prominent local players

DB Studios and Lucid Post act as key players in the local film environment, having worked with the vast majority of Lebanese movies being released. DB Studios focuses on the audiovisual element of post-production, and as such has carved a niche for itself as the primary audiovisual post-production player in Lebanon. Lucid post, established more recently in 2016, provides a full-service post-production service.

Furthermore, Post Office, one of the most recognized post production companies in Lebanon has witnessed the consequences of discrepancies and weaknesses in the chain of production when it comes to affecting the quality of Lebanese films - this leaves it in charge of following a film’s journey from production onwards, in order to anticipate problems and receive a good product at the post-production stage. A workshop that sheds light on the entire process of movie making and connects its different stages to one another would be very useful in this context.

Due to this situation, Post Office therefore also acts, like most producers, like a sponsor. Hence, Orjouan (Sabine Sidawi) ou neabeyrouth (Pierre Sarraf) or About (Georges Choucair) all end up supporting auteur films in deficit,

because of the lack of subventions, and use the benefits made through commercial films and advertising to sometimes contribute to the production and financing of films.

Finally, we can note that the field of production was also broadened by the presence of Syrian films that can no longer be produced in Syria. Post Office therefore produced Ali Atassi's *Ibn El 'Am*, in co-production with Germany, and about the Syrian dissident Riad ek Turk who was for a long time incarcerated. Ali Atassi is the son of ex-Syrian president Nouredine Atassi, that was imprisoned by Hafez el Assad.

OBSTACLES

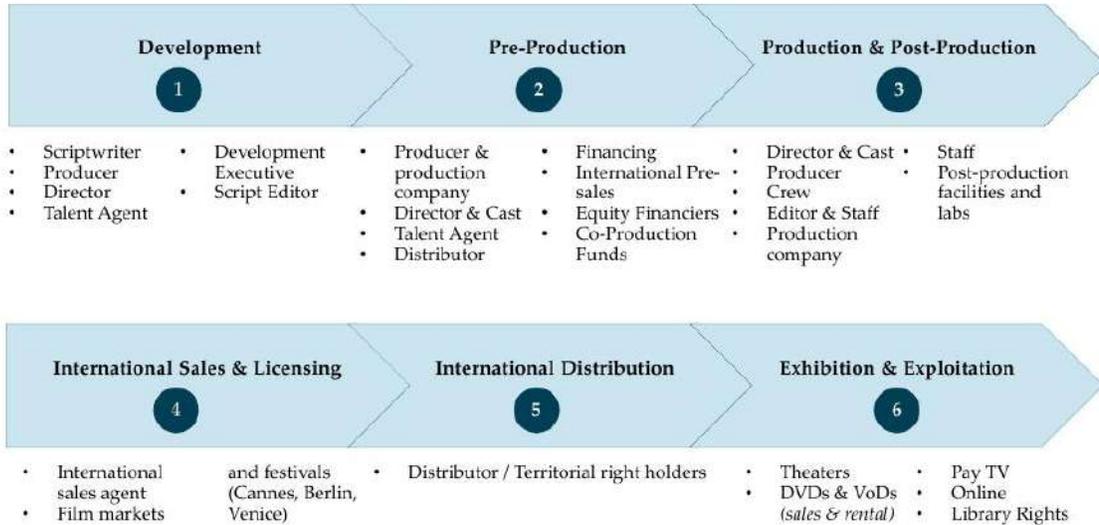
Ultimately, the lack of truly national funds dedicated to the production of films can be understood as the biggest obstacle to the building of a true industry in the country, and also has a significant impact on the kinds of films that do get produced.

The question as to whether or not certain themes are more likely to secure funds from abroad than others is up for debate – but whether the political agenda behind financial support is an implicit or explicit part of the process, it is undeniable that Lebanese cinema is constricted by the need to rely on social topics – erasing cultural specificities and diversities for the sake of giving their stories a universal feel, or relying on tropes and tones that “tell them about ourselves” rather than nurturing a cinematographic rapport with the co-productions and the investors. *Producer Myriam Sassine, reflecting on one documentary project which would have explored the tango dancing scene in the country asserted: “Films without a cause don't have a right to exist in a country like Lebanon”.*

This is echoed by Maya de Freige: “In order to reach institutional funds, Today's cinema is restricted in terms of social propositions and human behaviour. This becomes a necessity and provokes polemics. Filmmakers must possess boldness and nuance to seize genre films and say things that more directly talk to the spectators. But it is important to note undeniable progress when it comes to the expression of human behaviour, more in-depth, interiorised and intime.”

Main stakeholders in the movie-making process are listed according to their roles in the value chain

Main Stakeholders



Source: IDAL, Industry Analysis

3: SALES AND MARKET

1) Movies' short lifespan

Following production, distribution is a key aspect of filmmaking, as it is the one that ensures where and how the films made get to be seen. In the unstable context of Lebanon, many are those that call for distributors and public powers to support Lebanese artworks. Indeed, apart from broadcasting by television channels of Lebanese films' trailers in exchange for retransmission rights, local cinema suffers from a lack of promotion. *"The Ministry of Culture could make distributors apply reduced fares once a year for Lebanese films"* suggests Pierre Sarraf, director of the production house NéàBeyrouth. Indeed, after only a few weeks in cinemas, films disappear oftentimes even before creating any kind of buzz. However, with commercial feature films made for a broad public and betting on success in the theatres, more and more productions are able to establish a viable model.

Also, according to Hania Mroueh, an author film is not staying in theatres more than 2 weeks. Mario Jr. Haddad, added that what should be done is also get ready for the theatrical release 6 months ahead by grabbing the attention of the large audience to the film. As of today, multiplexes are taking over movie theatres, and with these come large expenses. Add to that a very competitive release schedule and the venues having to be very selective with the films that will generate the most money, coupled with the threat of online piracy, and it is no wonder that indie cinema finds itself on the margins - and slowly finding its place on VOD.

ART TV production, distribution

Antoine Khalife, director of cinema programming at ART, the first Arab satellite TV channel created in 1993, plays an important role in the production and distribution of Arab and Lebanese films. ART cares about its brand and therefore invests a lot in artistic films in deficit. However, it is the commercial Egyptian films programmed that actually brings it money, allowing it the luxury of becoming a sponsor for auteur films. In its impressive catalogue, we can find classic of Arab cinema as well as more recent films that are financed to some extent by ART such as *Tramontane* or *Capharnaum* and *The Insult*.

2) The lack of distribution

The number of distributors is very limited. The biggest Lebanese distributor at the moment is Sabbah, and his company Sabbah Media followed by the Empire circuit. Following, small distributors doing what they can such as MC distribution, or Mad Solutions based in Egypt but distributor of Lebanese films as well, and finally social work, such as Nadi li Lol el Nas “a club for all”, an association funded by Naja el Achkar at the end of the 1990s and that is engaged in film distribution outside of traditional or mainstream circuits.

Auteur films are often distributed in a rather artisanal way by the filmmakers, even when they are confirmed directors such as Bahij Hojeij whose last film, praised at Dubai and the press, only made 3000 entries in cinema, which is already a good number when it comes to the small Lebanese auteur films market.

Finally, some production houses such as MC Distribution cover distribution themselves - while it is a considerable amount of work, it allows the production to be in control of the film’s image.

Below a sample list of the Lebanese distribution houses

Key Lebanese Distribution Houses	
Distributors	
1	Mc Distribution
2	Televue International
3	Falcon Films
4	Crystal Films
5	Italia films
6	Four Stars Films
7	Sabbah Media
8	Jaguar Film
9	Prime Pictures
10	Circuit Empire
11	Grand Cinemas
12	Cinemall
13	Vox cinemas

In terms of sales and market, we can assess a similar feel from our interviews with professionals in the industry, one of careful optimism and belief in the importance of and interest for Lebanese films. Still, this is allied to an understanding of the limits and constrictions of the market, and clear identification of remaining flaws and work left to do. Indeed, the way distribution work in the country can oftentimes economically penalize the production of movies. Both Hania Mroue and Walid Mansour – Fund manager and member of FLC board, have

criticized the lack of distribution formations in the country, respectively qualifying them of *“amateur”*, and *“artisanal, archaic, lacking professionalism”*. The latter is especially critical of the lack of vision when it comes to exporting movies: he explains that given the size of the local Lebanese market, it is crucial for all films produced in the country to reach an international market in order to be profitable or at the very least, sustainable. Mroue also emphasizes the *“complete disconnect”* of the world of production when it comes to selling their films, and understands the role of the distributor as a link between them and their potential audiences. She sees this aspect of filmmaking as purely concerned with market interests, which is why directors turned distributors when the time comes to screen their films end up frustrated by their failure to sell, as they cannot guarantee or negotiate the number of entries they will bring to cinemas. While they both agree on the weaknesses of distribution in Lebanon, their opinions differ when it comes to assessing the role of the state in regard to this particular situation. For Mroue, the state should feel a sense of responsibility for cinema and therefore not look at it in terms of market: endorsing a financial role that would cover deficit therefore allowing Lebanese films to be screened, similarly to France where the deficit of production (around 350 films produced in a year) is covered by the state. Mansour, however, finds it naive to still hope for such a policy on the part of the Lebanese government, and turns instead towards the American example: a profitable, self-sustaining industry, powered by the private sector.

Ultimately, they both recognize that despite not always generating a direct profit, films nonetheless indirectly generate money and create employment. Gabriel Chamoun also points out the impact of the cinema industry on other sectors, and its ability of *“giving work to people who have nothing to do with the profession”*. This important reality should encourage both the state and investors to see in the cinema industry a valuable market.

It is based on this economical impact that FLC constructs its arguments in order to promote cinema to the government, and incite it to put together regulations and other policies to encourage production

While movie theatres are monopolized for weeks on end by American studios equipped with considerable promotion budgets, another problem stems from television channels, that buy less and less films and when they do, for modest prices. Here again, ideally, the state would incentivize them to endorse an important role in film distribution and screenings. Instead, they are reduced to a platform of promotion for films, in exchange for broadcasting rights to years after its cinema release (Which is what LBCI, MTV and Al Jadeed do, although less and less)

FESTIVALS: a fundamental channel for distribution

Another way in which the Lebanese cinematographic field has proven its dynamism is through the array of festivals that punctuate the year, both in Beirut itself and in other regions.

First of all, Beirut Cinema Days (or Ayyam Beirut Al Cinema'iya), a biennial film festival organized by Beirut DC since 2001, has established itself as an important showcase for independent Arab films, increasing dialogue between cultures and civilizations. The festival includes a selection of features, documentaries, student films, animation and experimental films as well as several off-festival events; training sessions, master classes with Arab and foreign experts, platforms, presentations and retrospectives.

In the north of the country, Elias Khlaf founded the Tripoli Film Festival which screens original productions and premieres aims to promote both the city and its local artists, to enrich local cultural environment and to brand Tripoli and its region as a highly promising tourist destination.

Furthermore, film festivals in Tyre (Tyro Film Festival) and Kobbayate (Al Reef festival) have endorsed similar missions in the aims of promoting and enriching culture in these respective regions.

The Cabriolet Film Festival can be considered a unique forum of exchange and dialogue between the public and the filmmaking community: it brings together artists and filmmakers champions short films, improves networking

between interest groups, and allows the public to interact with filmmakers. Now, the festival is presenting Lebanese shorts in 7 countries in collaboration with other international festival partners.

A major event, the Lebanese Film Festival (formerly ne a Beyrouth Festival) is an essential platform for the projection of Lebanese films. It was created in 2001 in order to help Lebanese movie makers show their films (shorts, Documentaries, Fiction, Experimental), meet with their audience and acquire basic financial support for their future projects.

During the festival, movie-makers, movie-lovers and professionals from the local film industry meet with the same objective: encourage and expand the Lebanese cinematographic industry.

There also are festivals that cater to certain social themes, first and foremost Karama – Beirut Human Rights Film Festival, which aims to denounce racism, hatred discourse, discrimination and injustice through cinema. Around 25 films are usually selected and screened, taking into consideration both artistic merit and human rights content. Fiction, animation and documentary films, local, regional and international are usually screened at the Karama Film Festival

In the same vein, the Arab Short Film Festival originated in 2003, when Nadi Lekol Nas started screening short student films in different Lebanese universities in the aim of introducing the audience to young filmmakers and providing a space for debates and discussions. In 2012, the Students Film Festival became the Arab Short Film Festival, in order to provide a platform to more independent filmmakers in Lebanon and Arab countries to show their work.

Concerned with the social aspect of cinema, Nadi Lekol Nas also makes a point of decentralizing movie-going, by offering screenings not only in the regions but even in the heart of refugee camps: a striking example would be when May Masri's *3000 nights*, which deals with the hunger strikes of Palestinian women in Israeli prisons, and was projected to an emotional audience, within Sabra and Chatilah itself.

Another themed festival is Maskoon, the first Fantastic film festival in the Middle East focusing exclusively on genre film, bringing the best horror, thriller, fantasy and action films from around the globe to Beirut and, by default, to the Arab World. Its primary objective is to offer a wide variety of genre films that usually don't get released in the region, both to cater to the genre's fanbase and to introduce new audience members to it - it also represents a space for Arab filmmakers, technicians and genre film aficionados to meet, debate and possibly collaborate in the future throughout masterclasses, conferences, family screenings and outdoor events.

The established Beirut International Film Festival (BIFF), oldest largest and only international film festival in Lebanon has encountered some economical difficulties lately, which is leaving the future of this important event on hold.

On a smaller scale, the Beirut Animated Festival, established by the Metropolis Association, aims to enhance and develop the animation production in the region and therefore includes animation workshops, roundtable discussions and exhibitions, in addition to screenings.

A student festival, the NDU International Film Festival, was founded in 2007 in order to promote young filmmakers by screening their films in front of a large audience base, and to promote their talents and artistic excellence.

Similarly, IESAV organises the FICMEC (Cinema School's International Short Films Festival) since 2001, giving the opportunity to young filmmakers from all over the world to share their works and experience other cultures through cinema.

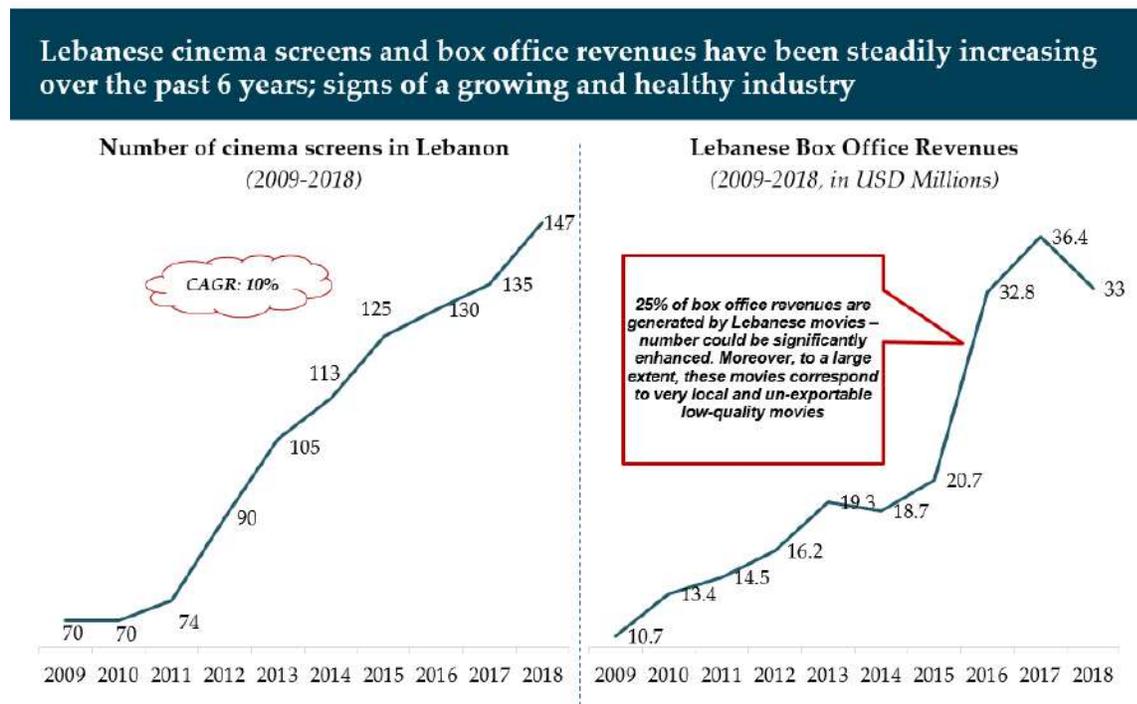
3) The Market

It is evident that in Lebanon, the biggest obstacle is the market's dimension, followed by lack of aid and support.

According to Gabriel Chamoun, the Lebanese market is very small, meaning that only small budget films are viable when solely targeting it. To target a more international market, films the likes of Nadine Labaki and Ziad Doueri are viable. Hence, he identifies two formulas that work: first of all those of "*acceptable quality*", whether for local or international markets, where investors usually manage to get back all, or the most part of, their investments. And

secondly commercial features, “*the really cheap comedies*”. While some work better than other, films of that second category are mostly profitable, and are produced by companies such as Eagle Films or Falcon Films.

That said, the market is on a fast-growth trajectory, as mentioned in the introduction and resummarized below:



Reach the international Market

On the other hand, reaching the international market, and especially so the regional Arab market, also presents its difficulties. “**It’s a lot easier for films to circulate between an Arab country and the West than within the Arab World**” explains Mroue. The reasons are oftentimes both economical and political. But the intricate relations between Arab countries can sometimes lead to unexpected avenues for controversial films to be screened: it seems that while they rarely manage to get screened in their countries of origin, they are able to bypass censorship in other countries of the region: since it is another Arab society that is represented and reflected, such a film therefore would not “pose a danger” to the country screening them. Maya de Freige concludes “Today, we are focusing on distribution because films have to be seen. We partner up with international festivals to shed light on Lebanese cinema. We award distribution prizes. Thanks to its federating role that gathers individual initiatives, FLC has contributed to the thriving of this cinema, and to the international recognition of our talents”

4) Digital Platforms

It is important to note a couple of endeavours that aim to put Lebanese and Arab content on a digital platform.

First of all M Media, which did not take off financially, but still offers an important database of Lebanese movies, documentaries and TV Shows: it adopts a paying system that asks for the spectator’s monthly subscription in the style of Netflix and others, and targets the large Lebanese diaspora as an audience basis.

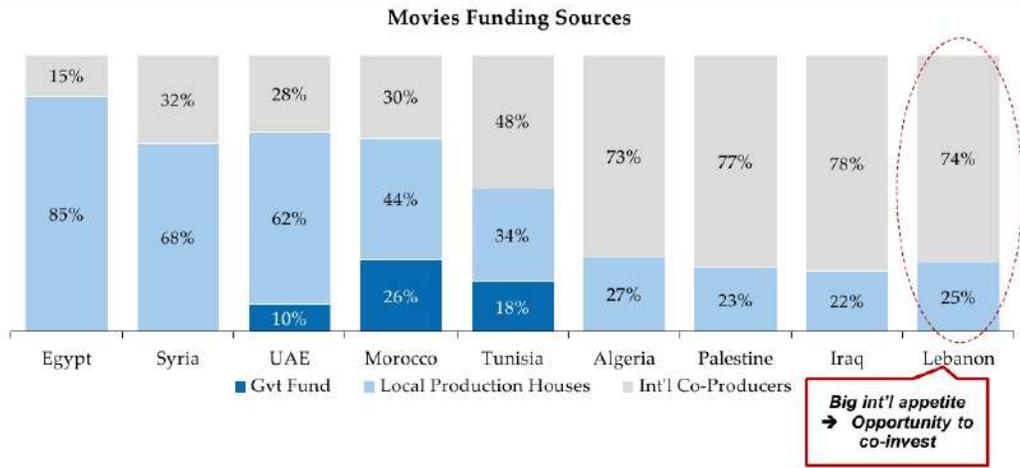
The creation of Cinemoz 4 years ago, on the other hand, is a success and revolutionizes distribution. While Walid Mansour bemoans the lack of action taken to reach the 250 millions arab spectators present on the internet, Cinemoz tackles it with the booming 33 millions audience, a number that keeps on going up: it is owned

by Moz Media and has asserted its bold commitment to a new generation of Middle Eastern audiences and talents by working on rebuilding a true value chain for Arab entertainment and media - today, it is the fastest growing Ad-based Video on Demand service and offers the largest library of Arabic, Hollywood and Bollywood films, while relying on advertisements to provide a free service.

This example sheds light on the potential use digital platforms in order to mobilize the pan-Arab platform and broadcasting Lebanese cinema to a wider audience - this could be a solution to the obstacles present such as the different dialects spoken across the Arab World, the self-censorship of directors and producers that create films far away from the realities experienced by their audiences and the lack of star system in place.

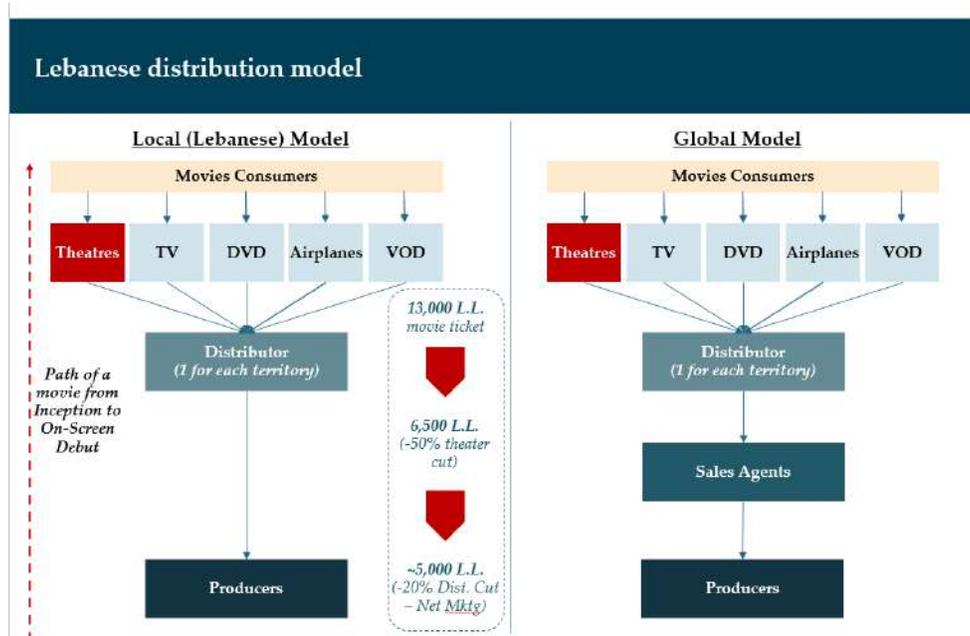
Lebanon relies predominantly on co-production houses funding movies, driven predominantly by international co-production houses – compared to regional counterparts, there is a big opportunity that is available should private funding/grants be made available to. Given the large-scale investment appetite, this indicates healthy RoI for these international co-producers

However, Lebanese movies heavily rely on private money – Government-backed funding is minimal



Due to limited government support, insufficient funding, and spiraling costs of production, Lebanon movie funding is pre-dominantly driven by international co-production houses

Below a snapshot of how the Lebanese distribution model works compared to global counterparts



Globally, Lebanese players have worked numerous sales and distribution partners to achieve highly-exportable movies on a global scale

European sales and distribution channels are numerous and easily accessible

Sales and Distribution



Sales



Distribution

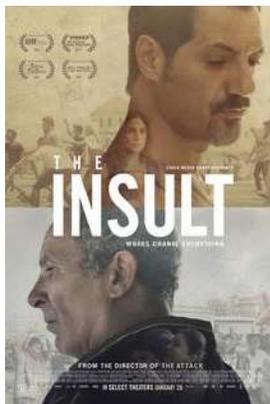


Source: Fondation Liban Cinema, IDAL, Box Office Mojo

Numerous large-scale successes have been released, the latest and biggest of which is Capernaum. Globally acclaimed, and nominated for both Oscars, Golden Globes, Capernaum received



The film debuted at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival, where it was selected to compete for the Palme d'Or. Instead, it won the **Grand Jury Prize**. The film received a **15-minute standing ovation following its premiere at Cannes on 17 May 2018**. Sony Pictures Classics, which had previously distributed Labaki's *Where Do We Go Now?*, bought North American and Latin American distribution rights for the film. It received a wider release on 20 September 2018. It was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film at the 91st Academy Awards, among several other accolades. The film received critical acclaim, with particular praise given to Labaki's direction, Al Rafeea's performance and the film's "documentary-like realism". Writing for *The New York Times*, Manohla Dargis and A. O. Scott named it as one of the **greatest films of 2018**.



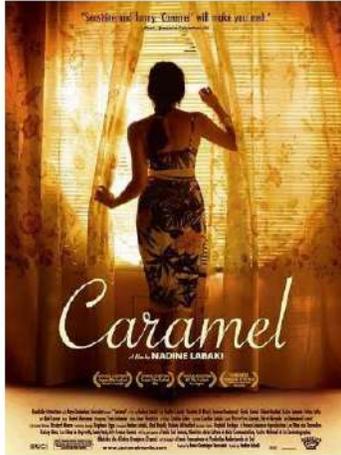
The insult is 2017 Lebanese drama film. It was screened in the main competition section of the **74th Venice International Film Festival**. At Venice, Kamel El Basha won the **Volpi Cup for Best Actor**.

It was also selected as the Lebanese entry for the Best Foreign Language Film and was nominated for the Oscars at the 90th Academy Awards

Numerous other movies have received global recognition, with a few examples highlighted below:

Caramel was the first major Lebanese movie success that put Lebanon on the **global map** and was a turning point

Caramel: A Case Study



Gross Revenues/budget: ~8.9X

Brief Overview

Directed by the famous Nadine Labaki, Caramel is a romantic comedy centered on the daily lives of five Lebanese women living in Beirut

Release Date	2007
Budget	\$1,600,000
Domestic Box Office	\$1,060,591
International Box Office	\$13,193,169

The movie was distributed all over Europe (Spain, UK, France, etc.), and the Americas (USA, Argentine, etc.). Caramel was nominated for 8 awards and received 5

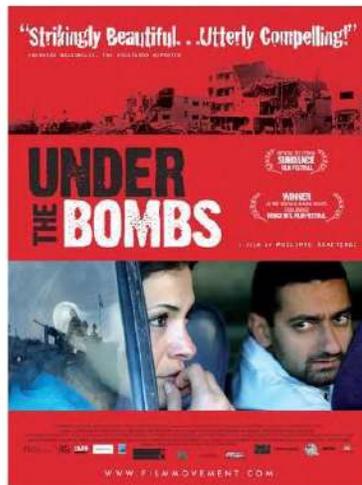
Awards

San Sebastian Film Festival 2007	Youth Award	2007
San Sebastian Film Festival 2008	TCM Audience Award	\$1,600,000
San Sebastian Film Festival 2009	Sebastian Award	\$1,060,591
Middle east international film festival 2006	Abu Dhabi Black Pearl for Best Actress	\$13,193,169
Middle east international film festival 2007	Variety Middle East Filmmaker of the Year	\$13,193,169

Nominations

Asia Pacific Screen Awards 2007	Best Feature Film	Australia
Asia Pacific Screen Awards 2008	Achievement in Directing	Australia
Asia Pacific Screen Awards 2009	Performance by an Actress	Australia

Under the Bombs: A Case Study



Brief Overview

Under the Bombs is the story of a woman in the wake of Israel's 2006 bombardment of Lebanon, that finds her way into the country convincing a taxi cab driver to take a risky journey around the scarred region in search of her sister and her son. The film was directed by prominent director Philip Aractangi.

Release Date	2008
Domestic Box Office	\$1,060,591

The film was featured at several festivals in France, Italy, Belgium, Turkey, Dubai and won many awards.

Awards

Venice Days 2005	Giornate degli Autori - Arca Cinema Giovani Award: Best Film "Other Visions"	Italy
Venice Days 2006	the Enea Human Rights Film	Italy
Festival International du Film Francophone de Namur	Jury Junior Prize	Belgium
International Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival	Critics Prize	Turkey
International Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival	NETAC Prize	Turkey
Dubai Film Festival	Best Actress Award	UAE
Dubai Film Festival	Gold Nuri	UAE
Luchon International Film and TV Festival	Prix Coup de Coeur	France
Luchon International Film and TV Festival	Best Music Award	France
Luchon International Film and TV Festival	Audience Award	-

Lebanese movies industry is maturing – heavy pickup in number of movies being exported and awarded

Year	Movie Name	Authors	Awards Won
2008	I Want To See	Joanna / Khalid Joreij	Cannes Film Festival (Un Certain Regard)
2012	Where do we go now?	Nadine Labaki	Bayard D'or (Best film at Festival international du film francophone) Namur at Cannes Film Festival
2015	Waves '98	Ely Dagher	Awarded Palme d'or for short films at 2015 Cannes festival Selected in Sundance Film Festival (USA)
	Very Big Shot	Jean Bou Chaaya	Awarded best film in Morocco International Film Festival Selected in Toronto Int Film Festival (Canada)
	Trève	Myriam el Hajj & About Prod.	Selected at Visions du Reel-Nyon (Switzerland) Awarded best Documentary in Morocco Festival (Fidadoc)
2016	Tramontane	Vatche Boulghourjian	Selected in Cannes Film Festival - Quinzaine des Réalistes
	Tombe de Ciel	Wissam & Pierre Charaf	Selected in Cannes film Festival-ACID section
	Submarine	Mounia Akl	Selected in Cannes Film Festival – Cinefondation Section
	Bil Halal	Assad Fouladkar	Selected in Sundance Film Festival, Rotterdam Film Festival
2017	The Insult	Ziad Doueiry and Rouge	Selected in the official competition of Venice Film Festival Nominated for Best Foreign Language Academy Award at 2018 Oscars
	Panoptic	Rana Eid & Myriam Sassine	Selected in Locarno Film Festival
	Martyr	Mazen Khaled & DIALA KASHMAR	Selected in the Biennale of Venice Film Festival
	Insyriated	Pierre Sarraf & Philippe LEEUW	Selected in Toronto Film Festival and Berlinale Forum
	Tshweesh	Fevrouz Serhal and Lara	Selected at the Locarno Film Festival
2018	Capharnaüm	Nadine Labaki et Mooz Production	Nominated for Best Foreign Language Academy Award at 2019 Oscars Nominated for Best Film Not in English Language at 2019 BAFTA Awards Winner of the Jury Prize award at the Cannes film Festival 2018

Sample of Lebanese Movies screened at Cannes Festival



Petites Guerres
1982, *Un Certain Regard*



Hors La Vie
1991, *Jury Prize*



Terra Incognita
2002, *Un Certain Regard*



Where Do We Go Now?
2011, *Prix Francois Chalais*



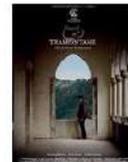
Un Homme Perdu
2007, *Directors' Fortnight*



Je Veux Voir
2008, *Un Certain Regard*

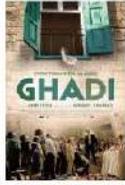


Waves '98
2015, *Short Film Palme d'Or*



Tramontane
2016, *Int'l Critics' Week*

Sample of other IFF Lebanese Movies (*Toronto / Sundance*)



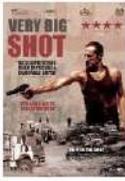
Ghadi
2014, *Busan International FF*



Tannoura Maxi
2012, *Dubai*



Ossit Sawani
2012



Very Big Shot
2015, *Toronto*



Lebanese Rocket Society
2012, *Toronto*



Halal Love (and Sex)
2016, *Sundance*

1) Forgive and Forget

Following this summary of the formations and profiles of individuals working in the Lebanese cinematographic field, and the current landscape of production and distribution it is essential to take a look at how the themes, stories and aesthetics that have come to constitute the Lebanese corpus of film and television have been articulated. As mentioned in the introduction, the 1975-1990 Civil War can be considered a defining event in the history of Lebanese cinema, halting the development of an industry in-becoming, and incepting a narrative of trauma that to this day still defines how citizens interact with one another in Lebanon's deeply-divided society. Political context is important in relation to the place of collective memory within Lebanese cinema: indeed, **the war ended in 1990 with a general amnesty** - meaning that the state's official politics concerning the transition into the post-war era was to "forget and forgive", in an effort to move the country forward. This has had important repercussions on the country's recent history and has failed to offer a common narrative and the ascription of responsibility that would have helped alleviate tensions and achieve transitional justice. Hence, **amnesty's led to state-induced amnesia**, and the ex-warlords kept their positions of power, becoming more traditional politicians rather than militiamen, in the post-war period. Hence, they pose **a great obstacle to the people and to artists, hindering them from producing works that would criticize them as individuals, to symbols of the state, to the army, general security, the police, the flag, and especially, to their own bloody past: assassinations, mass graves, forced displacement, arms trafficking, collaborations etc.**

Cinema then finds itself in a position of particular and challenging importance, as it offers images that can help the Lebanese people make sense of their histories, counteracting the state-induced amnesia that followed amnesty. When asked questions about funding, Hady Zaccak answered that *"the role of cinema is to prevent Lebanon from becoming a country without roots ... that has nothing to do with money"*. And indeed, from the wartime filmmakers that have documented and archived the events happening around them, to post-war projects that have delved into personal representations of the experience of war and its lingering effects, Lebanese cinema, and especially so in the period immediately following the return of peace, earned a reputation of being "obsessed" with the war - and was oftentimes criticized for it. While film production has since then broadened its horizons and offers a greater range of diversity in genres, stories, and aesthetics, **movies about and around the war have nonetheless achieved an important work of commemoration**: these are films that at their best, can build empathy, ease sectarian tensions and serve as a necessary reconciliatory space for national Lebanese identities. "If someone asks you what your religion is ... answer 'I'm Lebanese'" exclaims a wise old man in Doueri's *West Beirut* as the capital city finds itself on the very brink of civil war. **Throughout Lebanese cinema similar messages of unity, and warnings against the dangers of escalating, representative violence can be found.** Still, it would be a dangerous amalgam to overstate Lebanese cinema's role as a tool for national memory-building. Michele Tyan- Djinn productions, in particular, while recognizing the importance of memory in cinema, stresses the fact that these are *films one cannot make "on commission" - as it would be to the detriment of the artistry and the spontaneity of cinema.*

2) Archives

Another way in which the place of cultural heritage work in Lebanese cinema is hindered comes from the difficulty of restoring and preserving archives. Associations like Fondation Liban Cinema, Nadi Le Kol Nass and UMAM have taken up the task, as well as universities such as USEK and NDU, but they encounter difficulties in securing the financial support necessary

Monika Borgmann, director of UMAM has particularly stressed the importance of financing the restoration and digitization of reels from Studio Baalbek, first film studio in Lebanon, that hosted the sets of foreign films shot in Lebanon.

Nadi li koul el nas works on the restoration of films such as those of Maroun Baghdadi, Jean Chamoun and Randa Chahal. An ambitious Cinematheque project was launched by Metropolis while a youth association “Media Booth”, funded by Adeed Farhat registers all Lebanese films and finally,

FLC initiated the restoration of Tele Liban, the Lebanese public television. The purpose of this project is to preserve the national political, cultural, social and sports memory between 1960 and 1980, a time when Télé Liban had monopoly on this audiovisual memory. The general objective is to contribute to the preservation and promotion of the Lebanese television heritage. This operation will provide researchers and filmmakers with archives, create a potential source of income for Télé Liban, make Lebanon a reference for the preservation of films in the Middle East, raise awareness on the importance of preserving the audiovisual heritage.

Gabriel Chamoun, through his company Talkies, restored all 16mm archives from the Ministry of Tourism. With Tele Liban, they have already achieved the restoration of 800 hours of 16mm archives, on a total of 2500 hours.

USEK and NDU, the two universities working on archives restoration respectively focus on the gathering, stocking and digitalization of archives while NDU was commissioned by the Ministry of Culture to restore the archives of its national cinema library.

3) CENSORSHIP

The Law

As Ayman Mehanna explains, censorship laws in Lebanon operate in a gray area, which explains its paradoxes. *“There is a law that puts cinema and theatre under the General Security’s responsibility, but no criteria exists when it comes to forbidding a script or not.”* When it comes to decision-making, there’s law and then there’s practice: while the former mandates going through Security to obtain a film’s broadcasting, while ministry representative can ask for the non-broadcasting of a film, but ultimately, only the Ministry of the Interior has the right to forbid a film. However, in practice, the Security imposes two kinds of censorship, as it must first accept the script, and then diffusion. They have control over the later by postponing its broadcasting visa indefinitely. It is by taking advantage of this ambiguity in the law that most cases of censorship take place: no official decision is taken, whether to forbid or authorise a film. In some cases, they use intimidation techniques, claiming that they would not be able to defend artists from extremists that would attack them if the film was to be broadcasted. And in the end of the day, the film simply does not pass.

Sensitive Subjects

We have already touched upon the complex relation between censorship and cinema in Lebanon, when it comes to portraying memory on the screen. In addition to that, we can say that no discipline, **no domain in Lebanon can help us understanding the complexity of the country, more than cinema, through the deconstruction of the mechanism of censorship.** While it has penalized and discouraged some producers and/or directors such as Michele Tyan (a last minute prohibition of shooting in Lebanon cause a team of Irish producers to instead turn towards Tunisia for their scenes) other consider that censorship succeeds under no circumstances in penalizing their features. While the struggles of Tyan and others that have had to deal with censorship is real and valid, **it is important to note that filmmakers continue each year to produce movies that do touch upon taboos, and try when possible, to go around censorship.**

It is difficult to gauge what is and isn’t forbidden in Lebanon: Ayman Mhanna, executive director of the Samir Kassir foundation considers **memory to be one of the four most sensitive topics when it comes to censorship, alongside religion, homosexuality, and the portrayal of security forces.** To explain the paradox between the undeniable presence of memory as a key theme in Lebanese cinema, and the strictness of

ensorship over it, it is important to look at the portrayal of Lebanese people on screen: the civil war is often perceived as “the war of others” on Lebanese territory, with an emphasis on the role of foreign nations, framing the conflict as a proxy war of which Lebanese citizens were the victims. As a result, films that offer depictions of the war where a part of the responsibility falls on the shoulders of the Lebanese are very unlikely to get through censorship. All of Hady Zaccak’s work deal with collective memory and social questions - his last film, for example, films his great grand-mother and evokes older people’s loneliness. He encountered issues with censorship at first, and asserts that it still is hard to gauge what will pass and what will not. Still, he lauds progress achieved since 2005, asserting that many films that avoided talking about the war beforehand were now less afraid of taboos.

Similarly, films by Simon Habr and Reine Mitri (*The One Man Village*, and *In This Land Lay Graves of Mine* respectively) that dealt with the displacement of Christians were not able to escape censorship. De Gaulle Eid’s film, for example, was forbidden for dealing with the topic of political prisoners. The list of directors that ran into problems with censorship is extensive: Rana Eid; Hady Zaccak, Christophe Karabache, Lucien Bourjeily, Ghassan Salhab...

More recently, Rana Eid’s *Panoptic*, that delves into the story of a nightclub built in the Quarantine neighborhood and above the mass graves of hundreds of people, hastily buried by militias following wartime massacres. A topic that is still taboo, despite the futile and multiple protests from the families of the disappeared. Indeed, the fate of the 17 000 war disappeared is yet to be tackled by the self-amnestied ex-warlords that constitute the political power of today.

Sexuality and censorship

Sexuality, another notable sensitive topic also subject to a seemingly unpredictable decision-making process when it comes to censorship. Short films by Roy Dib and Darine Hoteit (*I Say Dust* respectively) will not escape it, while *Bad Trip* by Georges Hazim which tells the story of a love affair and a conflict between two women did not encounter issues. No physical contact and no discourse is enunciated in the later, that could explicitly indicate the nature of the relationship between the two characters, but the subtext is evident. As for Hoteit’s, a kiss exchanged between two women was enough for her movie to get the chop. In Mounia Akl’s short feature, *Christine*, which tells the love story of two nuns censorship targeted both the presence of homosexuality and of the religious order.

Taboo topics and gray areas

The Insult, which deals with the theme of wartime hatred and forced displacement has bypassed censorship. The key difference between this film and others is that Doueri is careful not to name a single Lebanese party. By only evoking the Palestinians, he therefore does not threaten the “national peace” that censorship claims to stand for.

Amongst the lighter tidbits that often come up when discussing the extent of censorship’s unpredictability, the story of Philippe Aractingi’s *Listen* which had to mask the figure of a religious present in a scene’s background reoccurs, and that of the Iranian film *Minority Report* by Bani Khosnoudi, in the context of the Cultural Resistance Film Festival, because of the country it came from rather than the subject-matter it touches upon. In this sense, almost all filmmakers and other professionals in the industry have stories to share about their own experiences with censorship, which leave them somewhere between amusement, exasperation, and discouragement.

Censorship’s paradox: the case of Maher Abi Samra

A very interesting case-study that shows the extent to which censorship can be aleatory is that of Maher Abi Samra: none of his films were censored despite dealing with the usually forbidden topics: *We Were Communists* brought forward an infamous Lebanese battle that opposed the communist party to the Amal movement within the Arabic University, explicitly denouncing the corruption of a named leader. Its cinema release was met with success

and benefited from an extra two weeks in the theatres. It was broadcasted on Al Jadeed TV as was its precedent films *Women of Hezbollah* (coproduced by ARTE).

His film *Chatila Roundabout* is not shy when it comes to pointing fingers either: Phalangists, Amal, and the Lebanese Army. It bypasses censorship without an issue and is screened at the "Beirut's Cinema Days" Festival. His latest films *Our Maids* sheds lights on the State's complicity in exploiting domestic workers - and eventually obtains its broadcasting permit a few minutes before the beginning of the screening.

Actions against Censorship

"Censorship is toxic for society and its worse instance is "preventive censorship" where the script goes through the censorship office even before the shooting. The soldier decides whether a film can be made or not. It's dangerous."
Zeina Sfeir

It is always possible to bypass censorship one way or another, but not without struggles, and of course, to the detriment of the audience. From screening things at the French embassy's cinema (and therefore not on Lebanese territory) to sending the script to the General Security with the omission of a few key scenes, filmmakers and social justice actors alike have always taken actions against censorship.

Cultural actions, Festivals

Al Mawred has put together a program to protect at risk actors: the "Kon Ma' Al-Fann" initiative Arab artists and cultural actors put at risk by their activities - beyond the financial and practical support that it offers them, Mawred also guides artists through the process of censorship, and of understanding their rights when caught in bureaucratic and legal struggles with the censorship office.

Festivals are also social engaged with this issue, as spaces of freedom: Samir Kassir Foundation's festival prioritizes bolder works while the Cultural Resistance Film Festival, founded by Jocelyne Saab programmed highly politically engaged Asian films. In the same vein, the NGO March shot a documentary following the organization of a conflict mediation project which brought together people from the rival neighborhoods of Bab el Tebbane and Jabal Mohsen, as actors in the same theatre play.

Two others engaged festivals act against censorship :first the Festival of democracy and human rights that takes place at University St Joseph and is organized in collaboration with Fondation Liban Cinema includes international feature films, documentaries, as well as panels and round tables, in order to promote equality and human rights.

Second, Beirut International Women Film Festival, a gathering women filmmakers from all around the world under the theme "Women Empowerment". The festival screens films about women issues and /or done by women. It is designed specifically for filmmakers who have invested in films about women, to raise awareness about discrimination, violence, abuse, career, etc...

All of them have refused self-censorship in their film selection processes, fully aware of the risks they are taking - they confront censorship while respecting the law, and react in the media to condemn it.

Zeina Daccache in action in Lebanese prisons

Actress and director Zeina Daccache, an influential figure in Lebanon for having starred in a satirical comedy program about the socio-political situation in the country, undertook a mighty adventure in prisons. She launched her workshops firstly in a women's jail before moving to men's. With both, she worked through a long series of drama therapy workshops and has put on plays first played in the prisons and culminating in a theatre release and finally to DVDs. That was following a 6 months long bureaucratic process that finally got her the authorization to enter the prison with a camera.

Muriel Aboulrouss's *Zyara*: a humanitarian webseries

With Denise Jabbour, Muriel Aboulrouss founds "Home of Cine-Jam", an association for Humanitarian Arts, which aims to induce social and emotional healing through authentic films: its first creation is *Zyara*, an award-winning documentary webseries that reached 100 000 views on social media. Painting poetic portraits of people, *Zyara* features the enlightening stories of survivors, brought down by discrimination, war traumas, addiction, or sexual abuse ... and captures their stories, emotions and humanity in the span of 5 minutes episodes. "*There is too much love and respect in Zyara for it to be provocative*" state Aboulrouss to explain her lack of issues with censorship - this, combined with its presence online rather than on the cinema screens have allowed the webseries to reach people across and Lebanon and beyond, and to be recognized worldwide by an array of festivals.

A good relationship with the censorship office

The Samir Kassir Foundation similarly entertains a good relationship with the censorship office despite creating in 2009 a satirical webseries about it, called *Mamnou3* and based on the same mockumentary style as *The Office*. This is an interesting case study that can help us understand the paradox behind the censorship mechanism in Lebanon: the head of the foundation, which has for aim the defense of freedom of expression, is Samir Kassir's widow, the influential journalist Giselle Khoury: her emission on BBC Arabic is followed by 10 million viewers. People like Khoury constitute a form of dissidence from within political power circles.

Ayman Mhahna, its executive director explains that this privileged position has given them important leeway in tackling freedom of expression. He also sheds light on the complex and seemingly random censorship decision-making process by explaining that it is linked to the wider political ambience in the country: when political tensions are high, censorship will be more rigid, while a detente in politics will similarly lead to a more lenient censorship.

Television: more leeway than cinema

It is important to note here that the relative freedom that television enjoys in terms of display of sexuality and other sensitive topics, in comparison to the big screen: Beshara Maroun, producer at the television channel MTV asserts that all questions are touched upon: from drugs to adultery, to war memories ... but ultimately, most of the taboos addressed on screen remain in the realm of suggestion, giving them the leeway necessary to bypass censorship. There is a non-negligible potential present in television in terms of positive change of moeurs, considering the popularity of the Lebanese dramas ("*mosalsalat*") which have gone up to being screened 6 nights in a week, on most national channels. A recent example would be the TV Show, *To the last breath*, that offers a nuanced and empathetic portrayal of an adulterous woman, refreshingly stepping away from tropes that systematically end in the demise and punishment of such characters.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND APPROACHES FOR THE DWA

Following this overview of the history, economy, and current situation of the cinema industry in Lebanon, we are confident in saying that there is a number of sectors in which investors such as DW can make a significant impact, and help the production and distribution of Lebanese films of quality, both in terms of cinematographic quality, and of socio-political importance.

The role of the State?

A recurrent issue that has been raised throughout this research has been the actions, or lack thereof, of the Lebanese state, on several levels. Firstly, as an almost non-existent financial resource for the funding of Lebanese films. Sabine Sidawi points out the hypocrisy of a state that “does nothing to help the filmmaker or the production”, but then reaps the benefits of a positive impact on its image, when Lebanese movies succeed at home and abroad.

Secondly, in its failure to provide the Lebanese people with a common narrative of what happened during the traumatizing civil war, and leaving the responsibility of building images of a politically charged and controversial past on individual engaged filmmakers, despite this narrative-building work being a fundamental aspect of transnational justice. Furthermore, the State, through general security, come to undo the work done by engaged cinema through the forbidding of films that deal with commemoration ...alongside other topics, subject to the oftentimes extreme censorship of all things religion, memory, sexuality and the military. All of this leads us to think that engaged Lebanese cinema requires support at the level of international distribution and financing.

Finally, through the lack of incentive or encouragement it could offer, whether by changing the way it taxes cultural products, supporting the distribution circuits to give more Lebanese films the opportunity to be seen, or by facilitating the coming of production teams from abroad to Lebanon, as a potential shooting location and for the needs of coproduction houses.

Nonetheless, and as with all social issues in Lebanon, civil society has acted by going around the state and endorsing roles that under different circumstances, would have fallen under government jurisdiction. As a result, both the private sector and non-governmental organizations have demonstrated, through time, an inspiring level of dynamism, in order to ensure the continuous production of Lebanese films. As of today, we believe that interest has never been so high for stories coming from Lebanon, on local, regional and international levels. With the hope that the recent string of successes has brought to the country, it is crucial to build up on the skills, opportunities and avenues that can propulsate the field of cinema in Lebanon into an industry in good standing, and of important calibre.

Support and encouragement for extra-academic formations

Beyond just Lebanon, it seems that mainstream cinema worldwide is undergoing a trend that focuses on the visual, to the detriment of the scenario. This is an issue as scriptwriting constitutes the core of a film, and it is a weakness that has prevented a number of Lebanese films from achieving a certain level of quality. The importance of this issue is heightened considering the fact that Lebanese production are oftentimes small budgets, leaving little room to make up for mistakes in the initial writing process. Based on the interviews conducted, we can tell that this is a problem that has been noticed by professionals in the field, and actions have already been undertaken - we have highlighted a few workshops offered by associations and institutions which are an essential complementary formation to the generalist path offered by universities. Supporting and encouraging these formations, as well as creating new ones is an important starting point that tackles the very root of filmmaking.

Bridging the gaps : technical roles and post-production

On a smaller scale, and while the technical aspect of filmmaking has undergone an incredible amount of progress in a relatively short amount of time, there remains a few roles which could benefit greatly from support from investors, namely those cited by Ghassan Salhab and Wissam Charraf (Make-Up for Special Effects, Mixing, and Production Designers, Electronic Chiefs, Machinist Chiefs ...) all professions that, if improved upon in a way that highlights artistry as well as technicalities, can greatly improve the quality and overall coherence of a Lebanese feature. There remains a certain “homemade” aspect to Lebanese production which is caused by the lack of well-defined roles in the chain of production. Enhancing the value of specific roles and through it smoothing out the structure of the workflow is an important aspect for investors to look at, as it would allow for a strengthening of the entire industry.

In this sense, an essential way to understand how we can help Lebanese film production is in terms of “bridging the gap”: identifying lacks and weaknesses and remedying them. In terms of technical skills, and how they affect both post-production and the quality of the film overall, offering formations abroad for such technicians would mean working in collaboration with post-production companies such as Post Office: the latter offer an amazing array of services to the whole of the Lebanese cinematographic field, and never turn away from filmmakers that are short of money. Rather than impeding on their work, by sending the whole of post-production work abroad, it is crucial to empower and collaborate with them, by ensuring that what they cannot do is covered somewhere else.

Diaspora and co-production: support the coproduction platforms

Secondly, we can conclude that for the cinema market to thrive, it has to be a fundamentally transnational one, as the Lebanese market by itself, is too small to ensure that films made turn a profit. From a historical standpoint, we can say that it has in any case always been a transnational cinema, in terms of provenance of funding, audiences, and of themes. Lebanon is, after all, a land of emigration and counts one of the greatest diasporas across the world which potentially constitutes a more interesting public than the exclusive pan-Arab one, which constricted by culture, politics and economics, has not proven to be as profitable a market as it could have been. In this framework, we believe that it is in the interest of investors to turn their focus towards co-productions deals especially now, at a time when constraints over these contracts have significantly been loosened. Co-productions represent one of the most successful avenues for Lebanese filmmakers to secure the money necessary to materialize their projects, as we can see with the recent collaboration between the French Institute in Lebanon and the Fondation Liban-Cinema which organizes meetings every two years between Lebanese filmmakers and interested parties, and open new markets.

Support for professional networking platforms organized in Lebanon that create, in parallel with workshops, a synergy profitable for coproductions, and attracting shootings as well as other partnerships such as Beirut Cinema Platform

Encouraging Arab coproductions: The Arab Film Institutes Commission (AFIC) that has been established in 2018 and includes the Tunisian National Center of Cinema and Image, the Cinema Center of Morocco, the Algerian Center for the Development of Cinema, the Palestinian Film Institute, the Royal Film Commission of Jordan, and **the Fondation Liban Cinema - sole institute that is a private-sector NGO compared to other public sector players, is creating an Arab Film Platform to encourage coproduction among Arab countries.**

Support for the diversity and depth of Lebanese cinema

The role of co-productions is furthermore important in terms of their ability to broaden the distribution of films. In the context of the restrictive Lebanese censorship and the discouraging practices of distribution circuits which cannot afford to let a film of small caliber take up the space for too long of a film that will bring in more revenue.

While we recognize the encouraging numbers that some Lebanese films achieve, competing in cinemas with Hollywood blockbusters, we also want to emphasize the importance of diversity within the field of cinema in Lebanon: a significant pitfall would be to turn into a “one-note” model - that risk used to concern films about and around the war, and now seems to be the issue with the popular but oftentimes superficial comedies that attract a growing audience. It would be particularly interesting to help build up the animated film industry which suffers from a cruel lack of support: Mahmoud Koreik and Ghada Oeidat from Post Office explained that the 2006 war put a halt to animations projects in the country - “We had projects of investments, expansions ... they all had to stop.” The successes of comic book artists the likes of Zeina Abirached already demonstrates the power of this style in terms of emotion, story-telling and imagination, while animations films the likes of *Samt* by Chadi Aoun and 2018 Cannes laureate *Wave 98* by Ely Dagher have shown that animation has the potential of adding a rich chapter to the history of Lebanese cinema. In this sense, diversity (of stories and genres) is the key to a truly representative, reflective and subversive national cinema. For these reasons, it is important for investors to help open up markets for films that do not find their publics in Lebanon, whether because of censorship or distribution, especially considering the inexperience of distributors in Lebanon itself, who fail to act as middlemen between the directors and the cinemas.

Support for digital distribution projects and focus on television

Another path for distribution of Lebanese films to reach a greater public is through exploring what a presence online can offer: as of today, the ambitious idea of a popular online streaming website the likes of Netflix is still to be established. Soutenir des plateformes telles M Media qui peinent à exister et qui créent un lien avec les Libanais de la diaspora en leur offrant tous genres de contenu libanais est important.

On the other hand, a collaboration between the television channels OTV, LBC, MTV, and Future TV which plan on gathering news segments and television shows on one unique online platform, for which they would also commission new series would be an extremely interesting initiative to support.

Dimitri Khodr (PDG of Al Jadeed TV) has qualified television shows as “the main dish” of televisions, with programs running on average six days a week. Furthermore, the significantly looser hold of censorship over television shows grant them an important potential for the promotion of social issues and for changing mores, as long as their core entertaining aspect, which is the key to drawing in audiences and the general public is preserved. It is important to note that while television does have more facility both to commission, buy and sometimes produces series, there still exist a financial vacuum for the production of series of higher quality, that are over the budget of television, such as *Hayba* which has been bought by Netflix. Funding these sort of series, and associating to them names of reputable actors in cinema and theatre, such as *Hayba*'s main actor Fadi Abou Samra, can lead to the creation of a corpus of high quality Lebanon TV series, that retain their core audiences while being attractive to a wider public, as well as becoming a potential product to be bought by the giants of online streaming such as Netflix, Amazon, Hulu etc

Support for at risks artists

While finding ways to go around or make the best out of the censorship situation is essential to the well-being of Lebanese productions, there are also important steps to take in order to tackle it in a more frontal way. To be commanded here is the association Mawred's “Kon Ma' Al-Fann” initiative. Furthermore, the Samir Kassir Foundation, emphasizes the importance to set up “strategic litigation” in a way that could push filmmakers to “systematically bring censorship cases to court”, both as a way to protest the censorship of specific films but also in a way that questions the very foundations of censorship laws in Lebanon, based, as Zeina Sfeir tells us, on an outdated law from 1947, which gives the military the responsibility of deciding what should and shouldn't get censored in an artistic domain like cinema.

In this sense, supporting and publicizing the cultural and legal struggles of artists over censorship of their films can only boost freedom of expression in Lebanon.

Salvaging our heritage through digitalization

Finally, the issue of cultural heritage which can be understood as a crucial and sensitive point in Lebanese politics, can benefit greatly from the organization and digitalization of national archives. Hady Zaccak believes that the role of TeleLiban should be limited to that of a platform for archives. Gabriel Chamoun, who works on the digitization of TeleLiban's archives shares the same opinion: *"I always suggested to TeleLiban that they title all the archives we're doing for them – they can't develop their own platform online and sell these images but through the INA they could get a percentage of sales ... it would give them more exposure"*. In the same vein, Myriam Sassine stresses the fact that, while implicit, there does exist an interest within Lebanese spectatorship, to discover stories from their country's past: taking the examples of two documentaries made around the figures of Georges Nasser and Mounir Abou Debs, both pioneers in the domains of cinema and theatre, she explains that once these films are made, the public does come to meet them ... *"but they're not going to ask for them!"*

"A national plan of localizing and stocking archives on the Lebanese territory would be ideal" concludes Maya de Freige.

Other Key Points

- Multiplying independent cinemas in Beirut and supporting regional festivals in other regions to allow broadcasting for a wider public.
- Help with the data collection of real statistics on production and distribution, very hard to gather because of lack of transparency in order to encourage the elaboration of rationalized budgets, and especially of a strategy.
- Need for a major festival that would federate the existing festivals in order to put Lebanon on the map of important cinema gathering and ultimately turning it into a market.
- Empowering young producers in order to meet a growing demand from filmmakers for good producers.

To conclude, cinema is an entertaining media that can reach a public wider than that of journalism and is therefore a powerful tool that can carry messages with a great impact. We believe that Lebanese cinema, in particular, presents the potential of becoming a catalyst for social awareness, national reconciliation, and artistic and entertaining projects, both nationally and internationally. By bridging the gaps still present in terms of technique, funding, creativity and distribution, it could be shaped into a powerful and inspiring industry, whose strength resides in the complexity of its stories, and a diversity of genres that reflect, at their best, the societies they originated from, and reflects and represents its transnational audiences. Supporting and empowering cinema in Lebanon can grant it the freedom to achieve these ambitious projects.

Furthermore, FLC today engages, connects and interacts with key stakeholders in the Lebanese film market to ensure that the vast majority of the points mentioned in the study above are being tackled to have an optimal Lebanese filmmaking industry in the future

SUMMARY

Thanks to its enthusiasts and rich cultural past, unfortunately marked by foreign occupation and the Lebanese civil war which ravaged the country for more than 15 years, Lebanon can look back on a very eventful, rich, diverse and creative film history.

Despite numerous obstacles, first and foremost being the small size of the market coupled with the lack of a proper infrastructure to support the ecosystem and numerous censorship challenges, Lebanon is proving today to be a phenomenal and global filmmaking success. With films like "The Insult" (Oscar Nominee 2017) and "Capharnaum" (Oscar 2018) Nominee), Lebanon has experienced a new upswing in its film industry.

It is now necessary to improve the conditions in order to motivate and empower a new generation of up and coming filmmakers to believe in their vision and commercialize their stories. Undoubtedly, no discipline, and no other medium can help to understand the country's intricate complexities and its resilient people who seek to unify their identities through the deconstruction of censorship.

Leading universities are already on the right path with new film degrees to introduce and promote educated, smart filmmaking skillsets to the country's young generation of future filmmakers. Furthermore, in terms of private initiatives, there has also been a very positive trend as numerous workshops have been developed, as well as a rising trend of film festivals which provide a medium for discussion and cultural exchange

We firmly believe that if the commercial film industry can continue to develop, and if Lebanon can be perceived as a globally unique 'producing' country with limitless creative and technical resources, the political platforms and content-related issues will witness immense benefits as well.

Organizations such as FLC have identified opportunities early on and are promoting creativity and diversity through numerous initiatives.

Going forward, it will be necessary for Lebanon to network beyond borders, and to promote training and exchange opportunities to enlighten its talented citizens across the filmmaking value chain.