



The Joseph and Alma Gildenhorn  
Institute for Israel Studies  
University of Maryland

# A Morphology of Cultural Transformation

The Campaign to Save Israel's Wildflower  
and its Spatial Impacts

Benny Furst  
Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
September 2017

Research Paper 17  
September 2017





The Gildenhorn Institute for Israel Studies (GIIS) is proud to publish Benny Furst's analysis on saving Israel's wildflowers. By making it available to English scholars of agriculture, sociological relations, and public opinion, we hope that its analysis and research will contribute to the awareness about Israeli culture.

The GIIS is one of the largest and most active centers for the study of Israel in the United States today. Headed by Professor Yoram Peri, the Abraham S. and Jack Kay Chair in Israel Studies, the GIIS offers 15 courses each year to 500 students, which focuses on five different aspects of Israel: Israeli History, Society, Politics, Culture, and the Middle East Conflict. The GIIS also sponsors conferences, lectures, cultural events, and community forums.

One of the important aspects of the GIIS is sponsoring, conducting, and publishing research on various aspects of Israel Studies. Our signature research project is **Israel 2023**, a series of three monographs that construct different possible scenarios for Israel as it approaches its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in three broad areas of major concern: Relations between Arab and Jewish Israelis, Israel's Geo-strategic position, and Religion and State in Israel. The Institute also regularly publishes on its website both original research and translations of important articles that have already appeared in Hebrew.

More information about the GIIS is available at:

THE GILDENHORN INSTITUTE FOR ISRAEL STUDIES

4123 H.J. Patterson Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742 U.S.A.

[www.israelstudies.umd.edu](http://www.israelstudies.umd.edu)

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Benny Furst is a geographer and environmental planner. His PhD dissertation from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2013) is about the effectiveness of environmental campaigns in Israel, and his current post-doctoral research at the Technion (2017) is about the NIMBY syndrome regarding energy infrastructures. Dr. Furst works at the planning division of the Israeli Ministry of Environmental Protection, and is a teaching fellow at the Hebrew University and the Technion.

---

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PRE-EXISTING SOCIAL STRUCTURE (T<sub>1</sub>): WILDFLOWER PICKING AS A CULTURAL NORM.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>ACTION/INTERACTION (T<sub>2</sub> – T<sub>3</sub>): THE EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Legislation .....	12
Education.....	13
Enforcement .....	17
<b>STRUCTURAL CHANGE (T<sub>4</sub>): ABSTENTION FROM WILDFLOWER PICKING AS A NEW NORM.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>22</b>

---

## ABSTRACT

In September 1998 the Standards Institute of Israel awarded its National Quality and Excellence Prize to the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) and the Israel Nature Reserves Authority (INRA) in acknowledgement of their wildflower protection project, which began in the 1960s. This was official public recognition of the joint campaign led by the two organizations to save Israel's wildflowers, which was one of the most significant educational successes since the establishment of the State. One of the campaign's major rubrics, "Go out into the nature but don't pick the flowers", is regarded to this day in Israel as one of the most effective and influential marketing slogans in terms of its impact on public behavior. To understand the power of this transformation and its significance, one must first understand the social conditions that preceded it, that is, wildflower picking as a long-standing cultural norm. Hence, the aim of this article is to present a documentary ontology of this social change, based on the three phases in Archer's morphogenetic model, which explains actions taken by agents of change in a social structure chronologically.

*Keywords:* Structure, agency, morphogenetic cycle model, environmental campaigns, wildflowers, cultural transformation.

---

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most fascinating questions in the social sciences concerns human beings' capacity to shape the space in which they live, particularly in a social, economic and political context. To these one can add another type of space, the physical; that is, the urban fabrics, wildernesses and infrastructures that are a central part of the environment of human action. Theoretically speaking, one can point to three factors that constitute this environment: agents, their agency and the social structure in which they act. The latter two factors can be seen as variables regarding which a fundamental question arises: what impacts what? Is human action influenced and determined by the social structure, or is it rather the structure that shapes and gives rise to such action? In other words, what is the direction of influence between these factors, and what can one conclude from such regarding people's capacity to impact and construct the physical space in which they operate?

The campaign to stop wildflower picking in Israel began in the mid-1960s, and serves as a quintessential example of a cultural transformation brought about through the efforts a few actors who proactively created a change in the existing social structure. The major argument advanced in the present article is that action taken by Israeli nature preservation organizations in the course of the campaign in question precipitated a significant structural change, as it succeeded in perceptibly modifying patterns of thinking, values and collective behavior amongst a large segment of Israeli society. The significance of this transformation swells when one considers it in light of the pre-existing situation in which wildflower picking was an accepted norm, far from being considered an offense. On the contrary, for decades it was regarded a legitimate and appropriate means of educating towards consensus cultural values, such as patriotism, Zionism, a physical relationship with the country and nature conservation, alongside the economic benefits stemming from souvenir and wildflower sales.

Surprisingly, notwithstanding the far-reaching resonance of the wildflower case in environmental and public discourse in Israel, there has yet to be a detailed, in-depth study of the processes and interactions between the actors involved.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the present article offers an ethnography of the campaign utilizing thick description<sup>2</sup> of the course of events and their construction within a conceptual framework that explains the relationship between structure and agency over time (Archer's morphogenetic model): phase 1 – existing situation (wildflower picking as a norm); phase 2 – initiative and action (legislation, education, enforcement); phase 3 – creation of a new situation (wildflower picking is regarded as unethical). To highlight the essence of the action and interaction between actors, the study assumes a descriptive character, and is thus qualitative in nature. Description is based largely on primary sources and archival documents, many unpublished to date, as well as newspaper articles and in-depth interviews with key protagonists.

---

<sup>1</sup> The existing surveys on the subject to date include Uzi Paz (2008), Alon Tal (2006), as well as a number of press articles by Azaria Alon, some the most prominent of which include: "Wildflower Conservation" ("Shmirat pirchei ha-bar"), *Teva VeAretz* 30 February 1988; "Speak to Me with Flowers not Flower-Picking" ("Daber elai bifrachim lo kitufim"), *Yedioth Aharonoth* (12 January 1973); "In Defense of Wildflowers" ("Le-haganat pirchei ha-bar"), *Teva VeAretz* (January 1967).

<sup>2</sup> "Thick description" is an anthropological method that seeks to provide an in-depth account of actors and their actions in as broad a context as possible. The term is specifically associated with the work of Clifford Geertz. See Geertz (1973).

---

## ***Theoretical Background: Cultural Transformation***

Underlying any analysis of social structure-human agency interactions is a tension between determinism and free choice, between fatalism and the capacity to effect change. With respect to this, a number of approaches can be cited. The first, the structuralist approach, views the social structure as a readymade entity in which people operate, and which normally remains imperceptible or unconscious to them. In other words, the social structure (made up of financial, political and other institutions) is what dictates human action while individuals are devoid of any real power, meaning their ability to effect change is limited.<sup>3</sup> The second approach, which stresses human action, centralizes the person as subject and argues the opposite of structuralism; that is, that the structure is a product of human action, and that people have the capacity for autonomous choice, and hence the potential to have an authentic impact on the social structure within which they act.<sup>4</sup>

A third approach, represented perhaps most typically by Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, relates to the two variables dialectically; that is, as impacting each other, such that structure and agency are conceived as separate, mutually-dependent entities; that is, as virtually two sides of the same coin (duality).<sup>5</sup> This conception has been the subject of multiple critiques, many of which argue that structure and agency are a single inextricable entity, and that any attempt to draw a distinction between the two is doomed to failure, among other reasons because it is not subject to empirical observation, and is thereby meaningless.

One of Giddens' critics is Archer, who views agency and structure as two separate but intertwined strands (duality), and argues that only an analysis of the structure-agency relationship over time can yield a solid understanding of cultural transformations. To this end she proposes the morphogenetic model (1982).<sup>6</sup>

Archer's (1995) morphogenetic model presents a three-phase cycle, where each phase develops out of the previous one over time:

Phase 1: Pre-existing social structure/structural conditioning (T<sub>1</sub>): an assortment of pre-existing conditions that influence actors, i.e., the interests, attitudes and behaviors they have that are shaped by the extant cultural context (values, norms, laws).

Phase 2: Action/Socio-cultural interaction (T<sub>2</sub>-T<sub>3</sub>): interactions between various actors who seek to advance their interests and develop their abilities so as to impact and transform the pre-existing social structure by challenging it, thinking for themselves, taking initiative and creating a persuasion system.

---

<sup>3</sup> Prominent representatives of the structuralist approach include Saussure, Levi-Strauss and Althusser. Stuart McAnulla (2002).

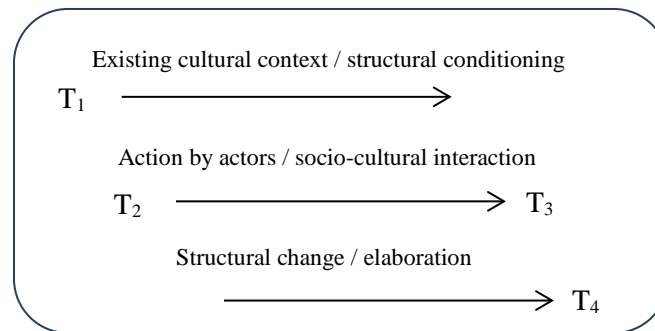
<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Archer's sources of inspiration include Lockwood's theory on the dualism between social system and institutional system; Buckley's systems theory, according to which the social system generates diversity, tension, exchange, negotiation, bargaining; Bhaskar's theory of emergence, which asserts that new phenomena are created in the process of contradiction; and Popper's definition of culture as a world of ideas mediated between the physical and spiritual world (Zeuner 1999).

Phase 3: Structural elaboration (morphogenesis/morphostasis) (T<sub>4</sub>): transformation of the pre-existing structure by virtue of the action undertaken in the previous phase, which could either result in a new form (morphogenesis) or reproduce the pre-existing one (morphostasis). This phase concludes essentially as a new starting point (T<sub>1</sub>) from which the process continues in a cyclical fashion.

The uniqueness of the morphogenetic models lies in the fact that it posits culture as an additional independent factor with a dual function: influencing (the social structure) on the one hand, and being influenced (by agency) on the other hand. The result is a cyclicity spiraling along the axis of time, in which new structural and cultural forms emerge that impact the activity of actors, which in turn produce new forms, and so on (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1:** Phases of Cultural Transformation According to Archer (1995).

## ***Pre-existing Social Structure (T<sub>1</sub>): Wildflower Picking as a Cultural Norm***

Evidence of the social practice of picking wildflowers in pre-State Israel can be found as early as the advent of Zionism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1892, writer and linguist Ze'ev Yavetz published an elegant album that wedded Hebrew poetry with actual dried Israeli wildflowers affixed to its pages.<sup>7</sup> This was effectively the first Israeli book of flowers, and it gained widespread circulation among Diaspora Jews.<sup>8</sup> Following Yavetz, scholar and editor Abraham Lunz published in 1895 an album of postcards with wildflowers procured from various locations in Israel, each accompanied by a verse from the Bible, as well as a geographical description.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Elihayu Hakohen, interview with author, 18 October 2010.

<sup>8</sup> The book's distributors even enclosed a letter with it stating: "This album is suitable as a love souvenir, wedding gift, bar mitzvah present, generally to beautify the home, to be placed on parlor tables in distinguished homes, and on the vanities of the daughters of Zion" (HaCohen 1978).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



Dried wildflowers occupied a significant place in the souvenir and ritual object industry that catered to Christian pilgrims and tourists, whose influx into the Holy land and the Old City of Jerusalem in particular increased dramatically during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> The wide popularity of these wildflower albums, along with the rapid development of the tourist economy in the land of Israel,<sup>11</sup> resulted in a pronounced decline in the local flower population, primarily in the area of Jerusalem and its environs. The burgeoning commerce in wildflowers led eventually to a counter-reaction in the form of calls to stop the phenomenon, but this was largely ineffective and failed to stem the mass picking. One testament to this response is a 1903 poem by Aaron Luboshitzky, which takes aim at the phenomenon:

“Now you pick flowers, be humble my sons,

Pick nothing! This is done by the wicked.

Take but one, leave the rest where they are...”<sup>12</sup>

Wildflower picking continued unabated after the turn of the century and throughout the various waves of Jewish immigration during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A cultural manifestation of this phenomenon was the annual Flower Festival, which was held for a relatively short period of time (1912-1918), first in Jerusalem and later in Tel Aviv and Jaffa.<sup>13</sup> The festival was spearheaded by the Jerusalem Teachers Association, which sought to act against Christian missionary activity by parading and dancing in front of the missionary institutions, carrying flowers and adorning the building facades with them. The main object of the activity was to collect donations through sales of flowers picked and gathered by schoolchildren. Thus the festival forged an emotional and educational bond between the children and the flowers, while conveying a number of cultural values: rebirth of the Jewish people in their homeland, family unity, closeness to nature, and aesthetics, all of which are stressed explicitly in journalistic reports from the period:

From morning on, the city disrobed itself of its everyday form and adorned itself with flowers. Every Jewish heart started to throb at the sight of the young ones and the flowers, flowers of the Land of Israel in their arms, each a symbol of the renaissance. The festival poster that the local branch of the Teachers Association produced roused the community to join wholeheartedly in the fight against missionary to which the proceeds of the flowers are dedicated... and Flower Day is beautiful... a day of communing with nature, the only day – among the Jews – in which families, one after the other, take leave of the confines of the home once a year and go out into the fields to inhale fresh air and renew their energy... The flower and its carrier are symbols of love and

---

<sup>10</sup> Points of sale for souvenirs, dried flowers and wreaths in the Old City of Jerusalem included: Caroline Cooper’s women’s workshop at the foot of David Street, the shops under the Grand New Hotel adjacent to Jaffa Gate, as well as the Sisters of Zion Monastery on Via Dolorosa. See: Kobi Cohen-Hattab, “Pilgrimage and Tourism: Organization and Infrastructures” [“Aliyah le-regel ve-tayarut: irgun ve-tashtiyot”], in *The Book of Jerusalem: End of the Ottoman Period (1800-1917)* [Sefer Yerushalayim: be-shalhei ha-tekufa ha-otmanit] edited by Yisrael Bartel, Chayim Goren (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2010); Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, *A City Reflected in its Time – Jerusalem in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: The Old City* [Ir be-rei tekufa – Yerushalyim ba-mea ha-19: ha-ir ha-atika] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 1977).

<sup>11</sup> The phenomenon was common not only among Jews but also among the Muslim and Christian communities of Jerusalem, who earned a living from making decorated olive-wood book-bindings for the wildflower albums aimed at pilgrims. Workshops were established in the American Colony and in the Kerem Avraham neighborhood (Ibid.).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> This was an American festival in origin, imported to Israel by Jews from California (Ganhovsky 1994).

---

beauty... The Jew has always triumphed by virtue of his spirit – in this year it is also through the scent of the flowers.<sup>14</sup>

During the British Mandate period institutional efforts aimed at reducing the wildflower-picking phenomenon were initiated for the first time, in which the Mandatory government sought to protect endangered species of plants and preserve the natural landscape of the country.<sup>15</sup> The motives behind this were a recognition of a botanical and ethical need to maintain flora diversity as well as the rapid decline in the flower population resulting from their being turned into souvenirs and aesthetic objects representative of the Holy Land. Thus, the Forests Ordinance was issued, which forbade taking any forest product, and by force of which officials of the Mandatory government's Department of Forestry acted to prevent wildflower picking and bulb collection.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, wildflower picking by the general public carried on as before, while enforcement efforts during the Mandate period remained largely ineffective.<sup>17</sup>

The phenomenon went on unabated even after the establishment of the State, and it was not until 1954 that the first official expression of concern by the government appeared in a document issued by the Department of Agriculture, which criticized public behavior in this regard:

We are witnessing a lamentable phenomenon in which young and old alike are going out into the fields, hills and mountains in their leisure time, descending upon the beautiful flowers and picking them in abundance. They gather enormous bundles of fresh flowers, and in most cases the flowers have wilted even before they have reached the vase. Not infrequently piles of picked flowers are seen cast aside along the way. And one's heart grieves at the sight of the flowers discarded before anyone has gotten the chance to enjoy them... Teachers and educators have failed to instill in the hearts of children a genuine love and appreciation of the creatures of nature. And occasionally we are witnessing a depressing phenomenon, in which even nature teachers are encouraging their students to pick flowers, indiscriminately and thoughtlessly.<sup>18</sup>

However, even this call by the establishment failed to alter the practice, which had also become a means of strengthening the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora; the primary agents in this regard being children. A good illustration is the "Flower from Israel" project, which began in the mid-1950s and ended only with the implementation of nature protection legislation in 1964. The 'Flower from Israel' project was an educational initiative run by the Youth Division of Keren Hayesod (United Israel Appeal), that enjoyed significant success at the time.

The Flower from Israel project used flowers and their gathering to create an emotional bond between Israeli children and Jewish children abroad. This is evidenced in the following passage, which provides an account

---

<sup>14</sup> Excerpts from *Ha-Herut* newspaper, which also include comments by a reader who identifies himself as 'Halil' (Ganhovsky 1994).

<sup>15</sup> Biger (1994).

<sup>16</sup> The inspiration for the Forests Ordinance in Mandatory Palestine was the Ordinance for the Protection of Flora and Fauna issued in the Prussian code of laws of 1929. See Biger (1994).

<sup>17</sup> One cultural expression of this was the poetry of the time, which presented the picking of wildflowers as a positive act expressive of *ahavat ha-aretz* (love of the land): "With the wind Bat Sheva did go out for a stroll... collecting each plant, each flower on the way, her mouth all melody and song" (Levin Kipnis, "The Primroses" [Ha-rakefot] (1927)); "The proud young girl descends to the valley / And it blazes with a fire of anemones / She'll pick flowers to put in a bundle..." ["Kalaniyot"] (1935). This continued even after the establishment of the State: "...There between the mole hills / A thousand anemones each one gathered" (Naomi Shemer, "The Short Walk" ["Ha-tiyul ha-katan"] (1968).

<sup>18</sup> Elon-Sereni (1953).

---

of one of the annual assemblies organized by Keren Hayesod's Youth Division, the purpose of which was to sum up the year's activity on the subject:

The Flower from Israel project of Keren Hayesod's Youth Division liberates the child from dependency on his parents and gives him the pleasurable sensation of acting and giving on his own. The consultations, the quest for the flowers, their collection, identification, drying, and insertion into special postcards, the addressing of the envelopes, posting of the parcels, and long anticipation... The annual assembly of the Flower from Israel project held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October in Acre was a fine culmination of the activity. The invitation to another city, an organized tour and the encounter between scores of children from all over the country were enough to elicit in the children the feeling that their project was important and commendable<sup>19</sup>.

As in the pre-State period, when the norm of wildflower-picking was very much accepted and hardly subject to criticism (see Luboshitzky's poem above), the same held for the Flower from Israel project, which was regarded as a quintessentially Zionist endeavor. Only with the implementation of legislation and educational efforts aimed at preventing the phenomenon in the mid-1960s do we begin to observe an overtly critical stance against the Flower from Israel project:

We can hardly ignore the importance assigned to the relationship between our children and Diaspora children, but can we not achieve the same without destroying the beautiful wildflowers and without educating our children to decimate the flowers? ... The question is both simple and grave: how to educate our children "to gather flowers for Diaspora children" while also preserving them for the sake of Israel remaining "a beautiful and fragrant land"<sup>20</sup>.

The response to this critique was not slow in coming, and evidences the dilemma faced by the Youth Division of Keren Hayesod, which sought to carry on its educational project even if it meant a transition to leaves and thistles: "...This year we published a circular on the issue, in which we emphasized that bulbous plant species should not be picked.... We explained that considering the drought and the lack of rain we recommend gathering leaves and thistles instead of flowers. In our view, a pretty thistle can fulfill the same mission. Diaspora children should get to know Israel both times of plenty and in times of drought..."<sup>21</sup> Further on, the issue of the patriotic value of harvesting wildflowers emerges:

"We do not allow a child to pick more than four flowers... and we even inform the school and the children each and every year that any child who fills more than 4 postcards is deemed ineligible for a prize... We should not be blamed then for disregard of the Israeli landscape. ... I do not think that we can prohibit our citizens from picking flowers, but I am certain that through an organized enterprise and under the supervision of nature teachers, we are making a modest contribution to educating children to nature preservation rather than to squandering our wildflowers."<sup>22</sup>

It should be noted that in addition to the ideological-educational dimension, wildflower picking also had an economic dimension, as flower shops used to sell wildflowers alongside cultivated flowers, with newspapers even advertising wildflowers commercially: "The weather has done its bit, and the harsh season for cultivated flowers will continue. Roses will be virtually unattainable, and if you are a lover of dahlias

---

<sup>19</sup>*Hed ha-chinuch* 37 (1963: 11).

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Uriah Ben-Yisrael, Education Coordinator for the SPNI, *Hed ha-chinuch* 33 (23), 1963, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from Arie Kraus, Director, Youth Division, Keren Hayesod, *Circular of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel* 5 (June-July 1963: 15).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

and gladiolas you will pay dearly for your love. On the other hand, there will be plenty of “folk bouquets” of wildflowers and mainly red anemones.”<sup>23</sup> It should be pointed out that later, when the legislation against selling wildflowers in shops went into effect, those who spearheaded it were accused of robbing families of their livelihoods and harming them financially.<sup>24</sup>

## ***Action/Interaction (T<sub>2</sub> – T<sub>3</sub>): The Educational Campaign***

The action/interaction phase, which led to the cessation of mass wildflower picking, rested upon three foundations: legislation, education, and enforcement. Below I outline the major processes and salient characteristics of each of these elements.

### ***Legislation***

The turning point in the public’s attitude toward the issue of wildflower protection occurred only in the 1960s, when a group of activists in the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) in collaboration with the Department for Nature Preservation (of the Ministry of Agriculture) began to advance nature conservation legislation.<sup>25</sup> Their aim was to incorporate into the National Parks and Nature Reserves Law, then being drafted, a section dealing not only with protection of natural spaces but also natural assets themselves (fauna, flora, and minerals), and foremost among them wildflowers.<sup>26</sup> The legislative process reached its apex in July 1964 with the approval of the National Parks and Nature Reserves Law, which included the new section dealing with conservation of natural assets and the prohibition of their sale.<sup>27</sup>

A figure who had a significant impact on the shaping of the law and ordinances was Knesset Member and author Yizhar Smilansky, better known by his pen name S. Yizhar, whose speeches in the Knesset made a strong impression on decision-makers.<sup>28</sup> This is evidenced for example in Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion’s words during the deliberations at the first reading of the law: “I will allow myself to quote a few splendid and most inspiring lines that MK S. Yizhar spoke before you: ‘A land that has been settled but has no wildflowers is suffocating. A land without an open, uninterrupted gust of wind is a hotel rather than a

---

<sup>23</sup> This bit of ‘news’ appeared under the heading “Flowers” in the recreation and leisure section of the newspaper (*Yedioth Aharonoth* 17 February 1956: 14).

<sup>24</sup> This occurred during the deliberations on the amendment to the National Parks and Nature Reserves Law, prohibiting the sale of wildflowers: MK Yosef Kramerman opposed it because he thought it was meant to strengthen the monopoly of Tnuva and the kibbutzim, which dominated nursery flower sales (Edelist 2008).

<sup>25</sup> The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, founded in 1954, applied pressure from day one on the Ministry of Agriculture (then responsible for land, water, forestation, pastures, and hunting), insisting that nature protection efforts should be led by a government ministry. The result was the establishment of the Department for Nature Preservation of the Ministry of Agriculture in 1958 (Paz 1981).

<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that the bill submitted in August 1962 made no mention of “protected natural assets” and moreover called for the establishment of only one statutory authority – the National Parks and Nature Reserves Authority. (Records – Bills, No. 528, 19 August 1962).

<sup>27</sup> The legislative phases were as follows (with dates referring to their publication in records): 19 August 1962 – National Parks and Nature Reserves Bill, as aforementioned, without the section dealing with natural assets and without reference to the establishment of the Nature Reserves Authority; 16 August 1963 – Passage of the law, including the two elements just mentioned; 28 July 1964 – Passage of the amendment to the law, which prohibited sale of natural assets; 31 December 1964 – Publication of the “protected natural assets” ordinances.

<sup>28</sup> Paz (2006).

homeland.”<sup>29</sup> Later, during the deliberations on the amendment that would include the prohibition of wildflower sales, Minister of Agriculture Moshe Dayan expressed the deep impression Yizhar’s rhetoric made upon him, even going as far as to say that he agreed with the bill “in word, in spirit, and in scent.”<sup>30</sup>

One could say that it was Yizhar who shaped the vision and action patterns of the future campaign, while at the same time understanding that the law in and of itself was insufficient. “And hence it is incumbent upon us to limit these sales, and to limit this wanton flower-picking, and to impose controls and limitations on harvesting of certain species of flowers... However, it is understood that not merely by force of imposition of the law will this be accomplished. Much information, much education, much understanding and much encouragement and positive ministrations are needed here. In different ways, and in different voices; in schools and in the street, in newspapers and auditoriums, on cinema screens and radio waves, at the portals of railway stations and air and bus terminals.”<sup>31</sup>

## Education

Thus, by the end of 1964 the legal infrastructure was in place for conservation of natural assets in Israel.<sup>32</sup> The SPNI and the Israel Nature Reserves Authority (INRA), which had just been established, began implementing their plan to reeducate the public, with emphasis placed on information and education: “The law alone will not protect the flowers. Our program entails raising consciousness of wildflower protection among wide circles of the public: press conferences, colorful placards, film-strips for schools, explanations on the radio, etc. In addition to all of this, the need is clear to us for an augmented team of volunteer wardens, who will be willing – mainly on weekends – to go out to the flower-picking sites to prevent picking of protected flowers, as well as to prevent mass harvesting of flowers whose picking is permitted.”<sup>33</sup>

The main campaign device was posters that presented colorful illustrations of wildflowers whose picking and sale was prohibited, and for which the INRA took inspiration from the city of Haifa.<sup>34</sup> Here, it is essential to emphasize the unique and trailblazing role that the city of Haifa played in everything related to the wildflower preservation campaign.

In Haifa there was already a high level of awareness concerning the issue of nature preservation, both by virtue of the personality of the city’s popular mayor Abba Hushi, for whom nature and the natural landscape was a subject close to his heart,<sup>35</sup> and given the proximity between the city and the vast nature areas surrounding it. The following account illustrates from a 1960s perspective the dynamics of urban development in Haifa penetrating the natural environment: “Three decades ago the city of Haifa had not yet expanded beyond its limits... In those days, man had yet to encroach upon nature in the Carmel region. The slopes of the Carmel were still abounding each winter with anemones and buttercups, cyclamens and

---

<sup>29</sup> Knesset Transcripts (3 December 1962: 331).

<sup>30</sup> Knesset Transcripts (30 June 1964: 2195).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Later, it turned out that there was no legal means of preventing wildflower picking on roadsides, which are not nature reserves. Thus, wardens were instructed “to ask flower-picking hikers to keep at a distance of 50 meters from the roadside, but they remembered that this was merely a request and appeal to one’s conscience rather than a legal dictate” (Letter from Uzi Paz to Nature Reserves Authority employees, 17 March 1975, Israel State Archives (ISA), File GL 8295/5).

<sup>33</sup> *Nature Protection* flyer, SPNI, (2 December 1964-January 1965:16). This call was accompanied by an invitation to a special assembly of SPNI guides and wardens “toward the application of wildflower protection legislation,” which was held on 9 December 1964 at Tel Aviv University at its old location on Herzl Street (Ibid.: 6).

<sup>34</sup> Uzi Paz, interview with author, 8 January 2009.

<sup>35</sup> Paz (2008).

narcissus... and the more settlement in the Carmel expanded southward, the more this phenomenon – annihilation and oblivion of the flowers – advanced southward...”<sup>36</sup>

In terms of public activity in Haifa, two influential factors can be identified. First, activism by the organization Hovevei Teva (nature fans), which as early as 1958 had succeeded in persuading the mayor to submit a municipal by-law to protect plant life in the Mount Carmel area.<sup>37</sup> Second was the International Flower Show, which sought to brand Haifa as “the Flower City of Israel.” “With the onset of spring Haifa is reborn under the sign of the flower. The city took it upon itself to look after the Israeli flower and to promote it. ... The items on display are not the flowers themselves but rather photographs encompassing dozens of different types of wildflowers and plants that grow in Israel.”<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, Mayor Hushi encouraged educational activity focused on the issue of wildflowers by publishing flower guides, which later became a series covering other regions of Israel.<sup>39</sup> The tremendous importance of these books had in Hushi’s eyes is evident in the following excerpt from a preface to the illustrated portfolio *Flowers of the Coast and Carmel* addressed to “our dear children and venerable citizens.” “The publication of this album gives us great pleasure... Like its predecessor, *Carmel Flowers*, this album will make its contribution to recognition of plant life and preservation of the magnificent carpet of flowers in the Carmel and coastal plain region from the hands of destruction.”<sup>40</sup>

As mentioned, the first posters dedicated to prevention of wildflower picking in Israel were produced by the municipality of Haifa. This began in 1962 as part of a campaign initiated by the Rotary Club in Haifa as part of its efforts to raise awareness regarding nature protection in Israel. That autumn, Haifa Rotary Club chairman Dr. Reuven Hecht had visited the canton of Basel in Switzerland, and upon his return launched the “Campaign to Preserve the Natural Landscape of Our Country.”

And indeed, in response to the Rotary Club’s appeal, and with funding provided by the Hecht-owned food companies BlueBand-Telma and Dagon, Haifa’s Department of Education produced two posters that appealed emotionally to the public: “Please – Don’t Pick Us!” [*Ana – al tiktefu otanu*] and “Please – Don’t Lend a Hand to Our Destruction!” [*Ana – al titnu yad lehashmidenu*].<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Yaacov Itzkovitz, “Nature Recedes from Man” *Teva VeAretz* 7 (December 1964).

<sup>37</sup> “Nature Lovers of Israel’s proposal to enact a by-law to protect the plant life of Mount Carmel: the mayor seized the participants’ attention regarding the tremendous harm being done to Carmel plant life by the Kababirians’ goat herds and hikers, and suggests adopting the proposal of the Nature Lovers association...” Protocol of City Council meeting, 25 December 1958, Haifa Municipal Archives, File HH10028/7.

<sup>38</sup> “Flowers in Pictures” Recreation and Leisure section Musaf 7 Yamim [7 Days Supplement] (*Yedioth Aharonoth* 16 March 1956: 14).

<sup>39</sup> The full series of flower books published by the city of Haifa (the latter in partnership with Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House) included: *Carmel Flowers* [*Pirchei Ha-Carmel*] (1958), *Flowers of the Coast and Carmel* [*Pirchei ha-chof ve-ha-Carmel*] (1960), *The Carmel Grove* [*Choresh ha-Carmel*] (1962), *Galilee Flowers* [*Pirchei ha-Galil*] [in Hebrew] (1966), *Galilee Flowers* [*Pirchei ha-Galil*] [in English] (1966), *Negev Flowers* [*Pirchei ha-Negev*] (1968) [in Hebrew, as well as in English and French], *Jerusalem Flowers* [*Pirchei Yerushalayim*] [in Hebrew and Arabic]. The books were edited by Michael Berlinger of the city of Haifa’s Department of Education while the explanations were written by Dr. Ze’ev Berlinger (Michael’s brother) and Dr. Zvi Zilberstein, biology and botany teachers at the Hebrew Reali School of Haifa. The latter two were profoundly impressed with Berakhah Levi-Avigad’s flower illustrations featured in the Haifa Flower Show, and enlisted her to illustrate the flowers for the entire series of books noted above. Berakhah Levi-Avigad, interview with author, 2 March 2009. See also: Ran Edelist (2008).

<sup>40</sup> From Preface to *Flowers of the Coast and Carmel* (1960).

<sup>41</sup> The illustrations for these posters were taken from the series of books published by the Haifa Department of Education.

---

These two posters served as inspiration for the INRA, which in collaboration with the SPNI, produced a simple poster that conveyed a sweeping and unequivocal message: “Don’t Pick; Don’t Uproot; Don’t Buy; Don’t Sell.”<sup>42</sup>

Shortly after the initial poster was issued, the INRA and the SPNI decided that it was not to their liking and resolved to take a new approach, this time electing to produce two separate posters corresponding to the categories appearing in the new legislation: “restricted [*muganim*] wildflowers”, which may be picked in limited quantities, and “protected [*shmurim*] wildflowers,” the picking of which is strictly prohibited. Later, to render the message clear and comprehensible to the general public, not necessarily well-versed in distinguishing between the various species of flowers and their nuances, a poster was produced with a single category of flowers that it called on the public not to pick, whether they were ‘restricted’ or ‘protected.’ This poster is the one still being used and disseminated to this very day.

In addition to the posters, the INRA and the SPNI conducted a series of enforcement and wardenship activities, performed by INRA wardens and SPNI guides, as well as volunteers.<sup>43</sup> Particularly interesting in this context is the stance of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) [Keren Kayemeth LeYisrael (KKL)], which declined to take part in the activities, arguing that the legislation was problematic from the following perspectives:<sup>44</sup>

- A. The law was too sweeping, such that “any shepherd or cowherd effectively violates the law.”
- B. Most natural assets (wildflowers) are found outside the limits of the forests, and the overseeing of them in practice should be especially concentrated on weekends and holidays.
- C. A concern that “natural assets will be preserved but will become alienated from and taboo for the general public.”
- D. A fear that “clashes between flower-pickers and wardens will be innumerable and damage the JNF’s reputation.”
- E. Doubts regarding enforceability of the law, as it requires “thorough and difficult education to be carried out among the people of Israel.”

Only after the law was updated, and the limitation on ‘restricted’ flowers removed, while adding the clause prohibiting the sale of wildflowers, did the JNF agree affiliate itself with the endeavor, stressing that it was a voluntary activity on the part of the wardens and that it in no way entailed an agreement between the JNF and the INRA.

Towards the end of 1964, as the new law was about to be ratified by the Knesset, the INRA began preparations to promulgate the law widely among the general public. To that end the INRA hired the Nitzotz (Spark) ad agency, which suggested using two different modes of address simultaneously: positive – appealing to people’s sense of good citizenship and love of beauty, and negative – creating an inhospitable public opinion toward violators of the law, in light of the fact that “there is limited identification among

---

<sup>42</sup> The sources for this poster’s illustrations are Berakhah Levi-Avigad’s book illustrations and Azaria Alon’s photographs, which were taken from his book *Flowers of Mountain and Valley in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House 1956). It is noteworthy that this was the first book published in color in Israel. Azaria Alon, interview with author, 12 January 2009; also Paz (2008).

<sup>43</sup> Activities officially commenced with a press conference held at Beit Sokolov (which houses the Israel Journalists Association) in Tel Aviv on 11 January 1965, during which the new ordinances were presented and the fundamentals of the information campaign were outlined. The event was covered by all the major newspapers, with a particular emphasis in *LaMerhav*, 12 January 1965, which dedicated its feature article to the subject.

<sup>44</sup> Letters from the Forestation Division {Agaf Hayiur} of the JNF [KKL] to Uzi Paz, INRA, 25 August 1964; 30 August 1964; 20 September 1964, ISA, File GL 8245/4.

wide circles of individuals with the needs of society.” In this spirit, two slogans were proposed for the campaign: 1. “We’ll save the snapdragons from the whippersnappers” (*Natzil et haprachim - miyadei hapirchachim*; a play on language based on the similarity between the Hebrew words *prachim* (flowers) – and *pirchachim* (hooligans); and 2. “If we annihilate them – we’ll have to live without them” (*Im nashmid otam - nitztarech lechiyot biladeihem*).

Nitzotz also suggested distributing pamphlets with colorful illustrations of flowers at gas stations and in the evening newspapers, broadcasting a Saturday afternoon radio show (when people were out hiking) hosted by Azaria Alon, and even a special television program, the first of its kind in Hebrew, which “was sure to arouse great interest.” The collaboration between Nitzotz and the INRA was not to be, yet some of the ideas raised in this context were successfully realized later on.<sup>45</sup>

Numerous other private and public companies were also involved in the campaign and for several months the weekend newspapers featured a regular front- page column entitled “*Perach Hashavua*” (Flower of the Week), in which color photographs of wildflowers were presented accompanied by explanations regarding the flowers’ status under the new law and how the flowers should be duly treated henceforth<sup>46</sup>: “Flower of the Month – The Common Cyclamen (Rakefet): One of the most lovely, familiar and common wildflowers in Israel is the cyclamen... At this time there is no concern regarding the cyclamens’ future, as long as it continues to be picked with moderation and an awareness that excessive picking could lead to its extinction. The cyclamen has been declared a protected wildflower: selling the flower or uprooting its bulbs is prohibited, but it may be picked (mercifully!).”<sup>47</sup>

One of the salient features of the wildflower campaign is that it addressed a wide array of bodies and authorities and as well as various segments of society. However, the primary target its message was aimed at was children, the thought being that those who were the main pickers heretofore would be converted into the wildflowers’ new guardians. An interesting explanation can be found in the rationale that accompanied the wildflower painting and writing competition held by the children’s newspaper *Davar Leyeladim*, according to which one must appeal to children’s minds, both because they are “still of school age, and primarily because of the fact that the ‘sport’ of wildflower picking is common mainly among families with children, and normally occurs with their active participation.”<sup>48</sup> Simultaneously, the government addressed children as well, with the Ministry of Education assuming a central role:

Towards the spring blooming season we are republishing, on the basis of the National Parks and Natures Reserves Law of 1963, the list of protected flowers the picking of which is subject to total prohibition, and the list of restricted wildflowers the picking of which is also harmful... Principals, educators and nature teachers are asked to ensure that their students are familiar with the prohibitions. It must be assumed that children have played no small part in the picking of the flowers and the schools must lend a hand in protecting the wild plants that are perishing. We note

---

<sup>45</sup> The INRA declined Nitzotz’s proposal due to budgetary and time restraints. Letter from Uzi Paz to Uri Sela, 2 November 1964, ISAFfile GL 8295/5. It should also be emphasized that some of Nitzotz’s ideas had already been realized, specifically Azaria Alon’s Saturday morning radio program, which was first broadcast on Kol Yisrael (lit. “Voice of Israel,” Israel Radio, Israel’s public radio service) in April 1959.

<sup>46</sup> The “*Perach Hashavua*” column appeared during the winter and spring months on the front pages of the Friday (weekend) editions of the newspapers: *LaMerhav*, *Al HaMishmar*, *Davar* and *HaBoker*. In *Haaretz*, the column was called “*Perach Bar Muga*n” (“Protected Wildflower”). It should be noted that *LaMerhav* was the first newspaper to deal with the subject of nature and environmentalism, inter alia featuring Azaria Alon’s column “*Merchavei Artzenu*” (“Our Country’s Open Spaces”).

<sup>47</sup> “*Perach Hashavua*” (“Flower of the Week”), *Al HaMishmar* (12 May 1965), 3.

<sup>48</sup> Letter from Uzi Paz to Editor, *Davar Leyeladim*, 8 November 1964, File 8295/5.



---

with satisfaction that significant progress has been made in this area, but we must continue educating our students to have a fondness for the wildflowers and to defend their existence.”<sup>49</sup>

## Enforcement

As mentioned, the style of address in the wildflower picking prevention campaign was largely in the spirit of S. Yizhar, who thought that reeducating the public must be done in a pleasant manner and with a lot of persuasive information and public relations. Alongside this, the INRA and the SPNI applied a ‘soft’ enforcement mechanism, whose aim was to teach, explain and bring about a change of conscience in public behavior. To this end, the state institutions responsible for enforcement of the law, especially on the matter of wildflower sales, were enlisted: “It is unlikely that we will succeed in overcoming the most acute problem associated with the issue, which is the problem of wildflower sales, and we will ask the police for their help on this issue, at least during the first year the law is in force, before the merchants and the public have had time to get accustomed to this prohibition... My request is to call upon senior police officers to meet with us for a short lecture accompanied with slides that pleasantly illustrate the issue we are talking about.”<sup>50</sup>

Enforcement in the field against violators of the law of all types (trekkers, merchants, etc.) was carried out by hundreds of wardens and citizens who operated on a volunteer basis,<sup>51</sup> and who mainly issued simple warnings: “Warning: I \_\_\_\_\_, signed below, ID no. \_\_\_\_\_, hereby declare that I was given a warning by protected nature assets wardens \_\_\_\_\_ on the following date \_\_\_\_\_ for violating the law prohibiting sale and picking of wildflowers.”

Another method was sending a personal warning letter in the mail, which specified the violation: “Dear Mr. Yaish Haliba, Binyamina. On 26 December 1964, your son Yaakov sold wildflowers: cyclamens and narcissuses, on the main road near Beit Hananya. We are bringing to your attention the fact that your son violated the law, as the sale of wildflowers is strictly prohibited. This time we are content to let you off with this warning letter, but next time we will be forced to prosecute.”<sup>52</sup>

An empirical examination of enforcement activities over the years shows that few were given severe punishments, if any.<sup>53</sup> To illustrate, during the period 1970-1975 the INRA issued only 16 warnings and summonses for questioning in its offices, while the remainder of measures amounted to no more than 10 mail notifications, 17 warnings and 18 requests for vehicle identification. The INRA’s most common approach was sending letters to those assisting in identification of violators thanking them and encouraging their positive action (29).<sup>54</sup> This enforcement policy can be broadly defined as a personal appeal to violators’ reason and conscience, in which a precise description of the violation is provided along with an explanation of its significance:

...At our offices we received a report from one of our wardens in the area in which it is said that on 6 March 1971, while you were on a family trip in the Carmel, you picked protected and restricted flowers in violation of the law... Given that this is the first complaint submitted against you, and

---

<sup>49</sup> Circular of the Director General of the Ministry of Education, 27/6, 1 January 1967. It should be noted that in subsequent years as well the INRA took pains each spring to ensure that the Ministry of Education published a circular from the Director General reminding teachers about the prohibition on wildflower picking. Letter from Avraham Yoffe to Elad Peled, Director General, Ministry of Education, 23 October 1972.

<sup>50</sup> Letter from Avraham Yoffe to Pinhas Koppel, General Commissioner, Israel Police, 26 November 1964.

<sup>51</sup> “Volunteers Will Ticket Cyclamen and Anemone Pickers” (*Yedioth Aharonoth* 3 January 1965).

<sup>52</sup> Letter from Uzi Paz, 14 January 1965, ISA, File GL 8293/7.

<sup>53</sup> Azaria Alon, interview with author, 12 January 2009; Paz, interview with author, 8 January 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Survey of INRA letters, ISA, File GL 8293/7.

we have no intention of prosecuting you, and especially your children, this time we are settling for a warning, in the hope that you will convey the content of this letter and its meaning to your children and family. Please – think twice before picking any flower, and make an effort to abstain entirely from wildflower picking. Should you be able to conduct yourself in this manner, it would be undoubtedly a fine contribution on your part to the Israeli landscape and to your children’s education.<sup>55</sup>

## **Structural Change (T<sub>4</sub>): Abstention from Wildflower Picking as a New Norm**

The INRA and the SPNI’s intensive and far-reaching activity already yielded results in the first few years of the campaign. The phenomenon of mass wildflower picking began to decline dramatically, which was especially noticeable in the education system: “The educational action, taken since on the issue, led to satisfying results: the children now paying greater heed to protecting and preserving wildflowers.”<sup>56</sup> One might be convinced that the message was received and that the public by and large ceased picking wildflowers, not out of fear but rather persuasion and consciousness.<sup>57</sup> However, the new relationship between the public and the wildflowers that was achieved needed periodic reinforcement or renewal, as the cultural transformation could not be fully retained over time: shifting demographics on the one hand and an inability to conduct effective long-term publicity campaigns and enforcement on the other hand, made it necessary to reinforce every few years the new cultural value that had been created. Thus was the state of affairs at the beginning of the 1980s, when the INRA launched a campaign similar to that of the 1960s under the slogan “*“Tze la-nof – ach al tiktof!”* (“Go out into the landscape but don’t pick the flowers!”)<sup>58</sup>: “...The gorgeous flowering has drawn an onrush of hundreds of Israelis into the flower fields, and they pick every one of them their hands can reach. Accordingly, the Nature Reserves Authority has launched a vigorous information campaign, in the schools and the flower fields, whose goal is to prevent wildflower picking. During the campaign, this coming Saturday youth from the Scouts movement will hand out bumper stickers at gas stations and explanation sheets, in which potential pickers are asked to let the wildflowers be.”

The need for reinforcement and revitalization of the new norm came up again in the early 1990s, this time due to the wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union: “Dear Immigrant (Oleh): You go out for a walk in the Israeli landscape, and behold an abundance of flowers. They do not belong to anyone, and you feel free to pick as many of them as you like. You may not know that there is a law in Israel that prohibits picking the beautiful wildflowers, and that every citizen accepts and observes this law. The best keepers of this law are the children.”<sup>59</sup>

The effectiveness of the cultural transformation that occurred on the issue of wildflower picking has eroded in recent years as well, notwithstanding ever-growing environmental awareness in Israeli society. Evidence includes findings of a survey conducted by the SPNI in 2007, which sought to examine whether and to what extent the impact of the wildflower protection campaign had been maintained since the 1960s. The survey’s results show that although most of the interviewees indicated that they are aware of the prohibition, over 80% stated that they encountered others who picked wildflowers. Likewise, it was found that half of

---

<sup>55</sup> Letter from Uri Tzon to Moshe Luger, Afula Elit, 17 March 1971, ISA, File 8293/7.

<sup>56</sup> Circular of the Director General, Ministry of Education, No. 28, Section 78a (1 January 1967); “The Propaganda Worked – Children Are Picking Fewer Wildflowers”, (*Yedioth Aharonoth* 13 February 1968).

<sup>57</sup> “Wildflower Conservation” *Teva VeAretz* 30 (5), February 1988, 4.

<sup>58</sup> “Nature Reserves Authority: Go out into the landscape but don’t pick the flowers” (*Yedioth Aharonoth* 21 February 1980).

<sup>59</sup> SPNI appeal to new immigrants, (*Yedioth Aharonoth* 13 March 1991).

teenagers engage in wildflower picking, while among adults a statistically significant link was found between memories of the 1960s campaign and their flower-picking habits.<sup>60</sup> It should be noted that unlike the situation at the beginning of the 1990s, the survey found no differences between veteran Israelis and new immigrants on this issue. Hence, the need to resuscitate the norm arises not only due to the arrival of new immigrants, but also due to natural erosion among the public in general.

## DISCUSSION

The campaign to end wildflower picking in Israel that began in 1964 became a successful model of cultural transformation, which was effective due to a combination of several factors. Firstly, the subject, wildflowers, which are in essence aesthetic objects that are easy to relate to and love; significant in this regard was their alluring visual image, which found expression on eye-catching campaign posters.<sup>61</sup> Secondly, the organizations that led the campaign, the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel and the Israel Nature Reserves Authority, were completely free of outside interests, while the campaign was perceived among the public as having a high moral value. Accordingly, it was relatively easy to enlist mass support for the idea, mainly given the choice of agents – children and the educational system – and the idea of transforming the primary violators into the primary educators for change and stewards of wildflower protection.<sup>62</sup>

One of the main reasons for the campaign's profound resonance among the public was the unique and charismatic personalities of the dominant actors who efficaciously moved the three foundations upon which the campaign rested: *effective legislation*, achieved through a flair for political rhetoric and a high level of persuasiveness (S. Yizhar); *effective information and PR*, through an appeal to the public on an emotional and rational level simultaneously (Azaria Alon) along with far-reaching use of visual rhetoric (posters); *prudent enforcement*, through warnings exclusively, and almost total avoidance of punishment (Uzi Paz, Avraham Yoffe). From a historical perspective, the wildflower campaign became, given its success and originality, the major formative experience shaping the identities of two Israeli environmental organizations that were fundamentally different in nature: one an independent public non-profit organization (SPNI) and the other a government authority, initially a part of the Ministry of Agriculture and later part of the Ministry of the Environment (INRA). The successful campaign has subsequently been regarded and presented by both organizations, which seek to reproduce its success in other areas as a source of moral and public legitimization.<sup>63</sup> Thirdly, the campaign was held in an amenable cultural climate, which facilitated the enlistment of an already highly mobilized Israeli society. As such, the environmental organizations' activism was part of a process of reshaping collective Israeli identity in the pre-Six-Day War period, as it was a concrete expression of the cultural value of patriotism, and implemented through reeducating Israelis to the fact that they could go on loving their flowers (and the country), only in a different way.<sup>64</sup> In other

---

<sup>60</sup> "Survey: Israel's Favorite Flower: The Anemone" (*Haaretz* 11 February 2007). The survey was conducted by the Market Watch Institute for the SPNI.

<sup>61</sup> Paz (2008).

<sup>62</sup> One should qualify this by pointing out that enlisting children as agents of change is not always effective. An example is the Ministry of the Environment's "Zevel mi she-melachlech" ("Litterers are Rubbish") campaign of the 1990s, which was unsuccessful notwithstanding the overriding focus on children. By contrast, in the effective water conservation campaign of 2009 children were considered one of the factors in its success. "Mom, turn off the faucet" ["Ima, tisgeri et ha-berez"] (*The Marker* 8 May 2009).

<sup>63</sup> "We hope that this will catch on like our famous wildflower campaign." Moshe Perlmutter, Beaches and Sea Coordinator, SPNI, "Yarok" ("Green") bulletin (April 2009).

<sup>64</sup> An illustration of the 'old' values of *ahavat ha-aretz* (love of the land), expressed concretely through wildflower picking among other things, can be found in the following response to the question 'What is Israel for you?': "My

---

words, the environmental organizations succeeded in effecting a change in the manner in which the cultural value of nature and open spaces was realized (abstention from picking wildflowers) rather than in the value itself (patriotism).

Regarding the theoretical framework, the case described here is clearly one in which actors had a marked impact on the existing social and cultural order. It is sufficient to observe how entrenched and pervasive the norm of picking wildflowers was in Israel prior to the campaign to understand its powerful significance. However, one should not infer from such that actors' capacity to impact space can be taken for granted or is always reproducible. A comparison of the wildflower case to successful environmental campaigns of the last decade shows that patterns of action have changed: the recent campaigns focus their activism on achieving aims through the legal system, speak in a professional discourse of planning and development, and appeal to the public via a rhetoric of risk-management and looming disaster.

This means, from a historical perspective, that shifts have also taken place in the political culture of environmental organizations since the 1960s: from *harmony values* of rational persuasion, grassroots education, and appeals to conscience towards *mastery values* of legal-political assertiveness, appeals to emotion, and scare tactics. To a certain extent, this can be viewed also as a reflection of transformations that have occurred in the general political culture in Israeli society rather than just on environmental issues.

## CONCLUSION

The campaign to save Israel's wildflowers, which began in 1964, is a quintessential example of effective collective cultural transformation, and should not be seen merely as a marketing or PR success. Wildflower picking went from being a normative practice, accepted over the course of generations and, moreover, widely regarded as an expression of local patriotism and as an appropriate means through which children were educated about nature, to precisely the opposite: forbidden, illegal and even shameful. The power of the transformation takes on new meaning particularly when we look at the situation that preceded it. Nevertheless, one of the main conclusions emerging from the dynamic of cultural transformation described here is that effecting change is in and of itself insufficient, and that it must be maintained, reinforced and updated over time in light of external and internal transformations occurring in society, such as immigration, demographic shifts, and changing values.

The significant cultural value that emerges from the activity of environmental organizations in this case (the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel and the Israel Nature Reserves Authority) is that it is possible to alter people's mindsets and behavior, given the right combination of circumstances, actors, appropriate action, and infusion of moral-ideological content into such action. The SPNI and INRA's wildflower campaign of the 1960s reflects the spirit of the time, in which cultural values of tolerance, mutual respect, collective mobilization, law-abidingness and self-restraint predominated. A comparative examination of this campaign alongside campaigns waged by environmental organizations in Israel in recent years shows that they rely on other, very different means, including legal action, strict enforcement

---

Israel is the open spaces of the country, the landscape as I travel from north to south, the mountains, the sea, precisely as it was... I remember us picking anemones of various colors in the hills surrounding Nahalal; I am from Jerusalem and there we only had red anemones. I miss the Israel of yesteryear, when there were still ideals..." "Conversation of the Day with Ruth Dayan" ["Sichat ha-yom im Ruth Dayan"], *Haaretz* (26 February 2010). Also: "You could pick as many anemones and cyclamens as you liked. Azaria Alon was still little, but the cyclamens and anemones were not considered flowers suitable to send in honor of someone's birthday or the publication of a book" (Amos Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (Jerusalem: Keter 2002: 23).

---

and intimidating rhetoric. Hence, it is unlikely that it would be possible to reproduce the success of the wildflower campaign, whose major features are now apparently incompatible with the political culture in Israel today.

“That is the story. And its moral is that you can educate people. On the condition that you find the right person, who knows how to uproot our educators from their apathy, But if this is so, why educate only to protect wildflowers? ... Why, for instance, not educate the public not to litter in the public domain? Or to speak instead of shouting... or to finally organize how to get rid of the all construction waste so that the country will no longer look like one big garbage dump? ... Or actually educate us to social life, or quite simply and literally, to consideration of others.” Aviezer Golan, “Musings in Wake of a Campaign” [“Hirhurim be-ikvot mitvza”] (*Yedioth Aharonoth* 24 March 1967).

---

## REFERENCES

- Azaria Alon, *77 Talks on Nature [77 sichot al teva]* (Vol. 1) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1978) [in Hebrew].
- Margaret S. Archer, “Morphogenesis Versus Structuration: In Combining Structure and Action,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 33 (1982): 455-483.
- Margaret S. Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- Gideon Biger and Nili Lifschitz, *Protected Trees and Flowers in Mandatory Palestine [Etzim u-frachim muganim be-eretz yisrael ha-mandatorit]* (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House, 1994), 100-101 [in Hebrew].
- Ran Edelist and Dani Yoffe, *Who Hath Sent the Wild Ass Free: The Story of Avraham Yoffe [Mi shalach pereh chofshi: sipur chayav shel Avraham Yoffe]* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publications, 2008) [in Hebrew].
- Dvora Elon-Sereni, *Nature Protection [Ha-hagana al ha-teva]* (Agricultural Publications Department, Booklet 41, Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Plant Protection) [in Hebrew].
- Dov Gnehovsky, *A History of the Flower Festival in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv [Lekorot “chag haprachim” bi-Yerushalayim u-ve-Tel Aviv]* (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House, 1994), 100-101 [in Hebrew].
- Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
- Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
- Eliyahu HaCohen, “Love of the Flowers of Israel – In the Style of the Last Century” [Ahavat pirchei ha-aretz – be-nosach ha-mea sheavra], *Teva VeAretz* 20 (January-February 1978) [in Hebrew].
- Nurit Kliot, “Nature Conservation in Israel” (“Shmirat teva be-yisrael”) in *Landscapes of Israel – Azaria Alon’s Jubilee Volume [Nofei Eretz Yisrael – Sefer Azaria Alon]*, eds. Gavriel Barkai and Eli Schiller (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House, 2000) [in Hebrew].
- Stuart McAnulla, “Structure and Agency,” in *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, eds. David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
- Uzi Paz, *Land of the Gazelle and the Ibex [Eretz ha-tzvi ve-ha-yael]* (Jerusalem: Masada Publishing House and the Nature Reserves Authority, 1981) [in Hebrew].
- Uzi Paz, “The Green Voice” [“Ha-kol ha-yarok”], *Haaretz* (6 October 2006) [in Hebrew].
- Uzi Paz, *Work It and Keep It – Nature Conservation in Israel [Leavda ve-leshamra – Shmirat teva be-yisrael]* (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House, 1994) [in Hebrew].

---

Ofer Regev, *Forty Years of Flowering – The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel* [*Arbaim shnot pricha – Ha-chevra le-haganat ha-teva be-yisrael*] (Tel Aviv: The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, 1993) [in Hebrew].

Alon Tal, *The Environment in Israel* [*Ha-sviva be-yisrael*] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 2006) [in Hebrew].

Lilli Zeuner, “Margaret Archer on Structural and Cultural Morphogenesis,” *Acta Sociologica* 42 (1999): 79-86.

### **Archives**

Israel State Archives (ISA): Files: GL 8293/7 (Wildflowers – Complaints); GL 8295/5 (Wildflowers); RS 1195/20 (Wildflowers); RS 1195/22 (Wildflowers – Complaints); GL 8292 (“Endangered Wildflowers”).

Israeli Press Collection (The National Library of Israel, Givat Ram): *Yedioth Aharonoth* (Online); *Haaretz*; *LaMerhav*; *Al HaMishmar* (Microfiche); *Maariv* (Wildflowers Envelope).

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel Archives – Information Center, Tel Aviv.

Haifa Rotary Club Archives: Protocols of Board Meetings, Haifa.

Central Zionist Archives (CZA), Jerusalem.

Haifa Municipal Archives, Haifa.

### **Interviews**

Uria Ben Yisrael, Education, Director, The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (phone Interview, 26 March 2009).

Eliyahu Hakohen, Musicologist and scholar of Israeli Hebrew song (Ramat Gan, 18 October 2010).

Berakhah Levi-Avigad, Flower illustrator (Kiryat Tivon, 2 March 2009).

Arieh Mehulal, Attorney and President of the Haifa Rotary Club 1989-90 (Haifa, 2 March 2009).

Uzi Paz, Director General, Israel Nature Reserves Authority 1963-1964 (Ramat Efal, 8 January 2009).