EGYPT COUNTRY REPORT

OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION OF CULTURE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seven years have passed since the 2011 revolution, and the current president recently began his second term in office. The last few years have seen the economic situation worsen, and with the recent floatation and devaluation of the pound an additional strain has been placed upon the lives of Egyptians. In addition to this, the current government has issued and implemented a number of draconian laws, including the NGO law and Demonstration law, in favor of maintaining the current system and silencing dissident.

In light of this, the cultural scene in Egypt has changed drastically and now faces an increasing number of challenges. Intensifying censorship has made the delivery of cultural projects more difficult for cultural practitioners. Not only has freedom of creative expression come under threat, but public space has been largely restricted and street art has seemingly vanished. In addition to this, the rising cost of living has widened the gap between middle and lower income citizens, and thus the right to practice a cultural life. Despite all these challenges it must be acknowledge that a counter artistic and cultural movement, carried mainly by youth, is gaining strength day by day. Throughout the various creative disciplines, independent young cultural operators are using innovative approaches, utilizing new instruments and finding workarounds to overcome some of these issues.

Although the government is having a clear and heavy influence over the content produced by the private sector and civil society, there is no clear state monopoly on culture. In fact, the comparatively low allowance for the cultural sector in the state budget, and apparent lack of government will to implement an efficient cultural policy, has left the private sector and civil society to uphold the cultural scene. The Private Sector in this instance can be categorized into two different players. The first, being effectively neoliberal, has sought to utilize arts and culture as a marketing strategy targeting 'elites', and has thus neglected the deeper layers of society. The other, consisting largely of

mainstream Film and TV companies but reaching a much wider nexus of society, has maintained a role in the cultural scene by recreating already tested and socially accepted formulas. Civil society on the other hand, although serving an active role in the cultural scene, is presently facing its biggest challenge yet as a result of the tightened restrictions on receiving foreign funding. Despite the restraints and unequally distributed responsibility, all three sectors play a pivotal role in the shaping of the cultural scene.

In light of these remarks, the situation urges an awareness of the importance of civil society as an innovate, inclusive and key component in developing the cultural scene. It is thus necessary to amend the legal framework governing arts and culture in order to reduce the limitations placed upon civil society and independent artists, such as advocating towards more freedom of assembly and access to public space. Furthermore, in order to diversify the private sector and enable young cultural operators to participate more fully in this sector, new progressive models for cultural management are required. Most importantly, the adoption of a new cultural policy that is tailored according to the needs and aspirations of society, and is both clearly monitored and adaptable, will ensure the most effective development of the cultural scene, and in turn will enrich society in a myriad of other ways.

1- CONTEXT AND INTRODUCTION

As one of the oldest civilizations on the planet, Egypt's heterogeneous and rich cultural heritage dates back almost three thousand years. In addition to the many emerging new disciplines, historical and culturally specific practices, such as dance, music, festivals, theatre, and literature have remained not only relevant but have also adapted to the modern world. Located on the periphery of both Africa and Asia, and serving as a crossing point into Europe, Egypt geographical position has enabled exchange between various cultures and ethnic groups. Neither in spite of, nor because of this, a number of historical landslides have also shaped the cultural scene to this day. These events - of which there are too many to mention here - have affected not only state policy on culture but also the collective psyche.

Going back as far as the pharaonic period, we can see how Ancient Egypt not only offers multiple cultural heritage sites and plays a significant role in economic life, but it has also affected national sentiment and identity to this day. A dominant Muslim population alongside a variety of other belief systems, including Christians, Bahá'ís, Jews, and Atheists, indicates religion also as a key shaper and participator in contemporary cultural life. To highlight even further the diverse social fabric, it should be added that Egyptian society is an assortment of minority ethnic groups, such as Bedouins, Amazighs, Nubians, and

Armenians, each with their own rich heritage and customs. Whilst a walk around Old Cairo amidst the vast array of architectural styles, hints at the more recent events of the last century that brought arts and culture to the political agenda.

In order to provide a chronological account of the historical developments of the cultural scene and cultural policy in the country, however, one must begin with Mohamad Ali Pacha. Starting from the 19th century, Mohamad Ali Pacha laid the foundations for a modern Egyptian State and established the cultural institutions he believed necessary for developing an omnipotent nation. In 1821, he founded the Bulaq movable type printing press, of which more than ten thousand titles were published and distributed. Several years later, in 1829, Ali built a library and national archives, followed by the first Antiquities Museum. However, it was not until the reign of Khedive Ismail in 1863, that Cairo acquired an opera and a larger national library. During this period, many culture related governmental bodies were intuitively formed, arising out of convenience and relevance rather than procedure, such as the antiquities administration or the administration for arts. Under Ismail's reign, the country was also able to develop a cultural industry, especially with the emergence of several private theaters and music troupes and the rise of cinema. In fact, to varying extents, most Egyptian nobles were sponsors of the arts; supporting poets and offering them sinecure offices, financing theater troupes, sponsoring the training of comedians, filmmakers and even the education of artists abroad. That being said, the evolution of the cultural field occurred at several levels, including at the level of civil society actors, private sector entrepreneurs, and State representatives. Some of the most important aspects in this regard, arrived with the occupation of Egypt by the British from 1882 until 1956.

With the colonial encounter and subsequent anticolonial nationalist movement and modernization project, mass social and cultural transformations took place. This included the establishment of first School of Fine Arts, The Egyptian University (which later has turned into the Cultural palaces), and the Public University (which became the Music Institute). In addition to this, a new independent anticolonial wave of culture arose amongst the different art forms, such that the line between the cultural movement and the revolutionary movement began to disintegrate. Theatre in particular embraced the Anticolonial movement, leading to the issuing of a new law 'La'ehet Al-Tayarat' (The Parties Manifest), which handed the police the authority to close theaters deemed not following "the public order". The foundation of the tram was also a very important factor shaping the cultural scene, offering a new space for discussion and opinions, to the extent that a new form of literature known as Tram literature emerged. What is more, this convenient form of public transport operated until the early hours of the morning, and consequently had a dramatic effect on night life; facilitating the creation of new public hangouts and salvaging space in ways that was previously unseen. More generally however, this Period witnessed the

emergence of great names in several fields of art, including *Taha Hussain,* author of *The Future of Culture in Egypt* - one of the very first books that introduced the concept of Cultural Policies in Egypt – and sculptor, *Mahmoud Mokhtar.*

The Egyptian Revolution of 1952 led by Muhammad Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser eventually brought about an end to the British occupation, overthrew King Farouk, and established a Republic. The revolutionary government under Nasser adopted a staunchly nationalist, anti-imperialist agenda, which came to be expressed chiefly through Arab Nationalism. Institutions established in the inter-war period such as the Academy of the Arabic Language, or at another level, censorship on arts, continued to function after 1952 without any significant changes. With that in mind, in 1958 what was known as the Ministry of National Orientation, was renamed or succeeded by the Ministry of Culture, and was the first of its kind in the Arab world and Africa under this new title. Ultimately however, the state grasped a monopoly over all the cultural institutions including media channels, cultural centers, newspapers, publishing houses, cinema production companies and radio channels. The nationalization of all cultural institutions created an entire production unit at the service of a national project strongly built around a defined ideology. In this way, the State set what it deemed as acceptable cultural models and imposed them "from above", creating a gap between non-governmental cultural practitioners and the state.

Although this gap remained under the reign of Anwar Sadat, the economic openness and liberalization of the 80's enabled the spread of the private sector, including film productions companies, publishing houses and other creative industries. However, this is not to imply that the private sector was given free-range over cultural production, since this was a period of what can only be described as an oscillation of power between the Islamists and Leftists. In other words, in order to secure his position in power, Sadat sided with the Islamists, granting them an increasing influence and control over mass culture. Not only that, this was a period of high migration to Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Gulf, and the emergence of what is mockingly referred to as petro Islam. This phenomenon arose when economic migrants began returning to Egypt and bringing with them a particularly conservative interpretation of Islam and Islamic cultural practices. The increasing hold of religion over society affected culture to the extent that Islamic books became the most widely published literature and culture came to stand for little more than press and radio. This shift also resulted in the dissolution of the Ministry of Culture, which was later merged with *The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research,* and left the application of a cultural strategy to local council. This effectively took attention away from culture, and permitted a more general neglect of cultural policy.

After the assassination of Sadat in 1981, Hosni Mubarak took power. At this time culture came to be perceived as an efficient means to help in the rehabilitation

of Egypt. Cultural policy in particular, appeared that it would undergo a transformation, when in 1987, Farak Housni was to become the next Minister of Culture. Despite this, and Housni's personal investment in culture, his attempts to implement an effective cultural strategy came to have no significant effect on the ground. Furthermore, this was a time of intensifying neoliberal agenda, and attempts by the Mubarak government to attract foreign investment doubled. The 90's thus saw an unprecedented expansion of private sector art institutions, particularly within the contemporary art scene. This move was by no means unanimously celebrated, instead tensions grew between the state and the private sector as a noticeable foreign presence surrounded the cultural scene for the first time since the colonial period. Having unsettled the distribution of power, neoliberalism then also ushered in new practices of state surveillance over culture producers. At the same time, the growth and availability of post-national communication technologies began shaping the cultural scene. This intensifying global network offered a flood of independent artists with new tools, resources and perspectives. By 2006, the Egyptian blogosphere had become the largest in the region, and the internet an alternative space for political opposition and resistance. With that said, it could also be argued that the World Wide Web contributed to the outbreak of a movement that was to topple the Mubarak regime.

The January 25th 2011 revolution resulted in the restructuring of the Egyptian cultural sphere. The uprising saw an explosion of creativity in the fields of music, literature and film, and the emergence of previously unheard artists adopting novel instruments and reaching new audiences. Street art in particular, including performance, graffiti in the form of murals and political slogans, and festival of all kind such as Al-Fan Midan, spread all over the country as the people reclaimed public space. As the movement developed, independent actors began to organize in order have their voices heard and participate in the development of new cultural policies. On March 19th 2012, the National Group for Cultural Policies submitted a report to the parliament summarizing their ideas for the reform of the cultural sector. The parliament however, was dissolved on the day these proposals were accepted for consideration and were therefore neither ratified by parliament nor discussed on a larger scale.

The following years were both violent and volatile, with three regime changes in four years. By the end of June 2012, The Muslim Brotherhood had formed a political party and its candidate Mohamed Morsi won the presidential election. Considered as the Islamification of the state, this period saw many officials of the Ministry of Culture replaced by members of the Brotherhood. Issues such as belly dancing and erasing the English language from the educational system were topics of parliamentary discussion, and which even managed to stir demonstrations - including a sit-in - from key cultural actors.

Weeks later Egypt witnessed the incident of June 30th, which led to the toppling of the Muslim Brotherhood and return of military rule. The political changes that followed had a significant impact on Egyptian society and the cultural scene, and are still in effect today. In November 2013, the government issued what is known as the Demonstration Law, prohibiting all forms of demonstration unless granted with a permit from the Interior Ministry, in what could be understood as an attempt to close public space. As a result, Street art started to vanish and festivals struggled to continue until they eventually stopped altogether. To make matters worse, a wide-spread security campaign that prosecuted activists, many of whom were active in the artistic and cultural scene, led to a stagnation of activity. More recently, a new law restricting the operations of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Egypt has forced many cultural organizations to suspend their activities in Egypt or even close completely.

The current cultural scene can thus be summarized into two main themes. The first is the state's increasing control over cultural activities and artistic work, which includes fining and banning cultural organizations, independent artist and journalists. Furthermore, it became clear that this strict censorship policy was intensifying when, in March 2018, the Ministry of Culture made the decision to turn the cultural palaces of 7 different governorates into Art censorship offices. The second theme, is a developing 'alternative' scene of civil society organizations, independent cultural actors, and entrepreneurs who, despite of the hardship, are having a remarkable impact on the cultural scene. Filling in the holes left by the state's cultural policies, these young actors are creating new models of cultural management to accommodate the current political and economic circumstances.

2- GENERAL OBJECTIVES AND GOVERNANCE

Throughout its the history, the ministry of culture has failed to enrich society with cultural policies that are neither imposed from above nor carry the weight of the regimes own ideological imperatives or political agenda. It would also be fair to say that there has never been - except for very short periods - a cultural policy with defined long-term and short-term goals and a clear vision to provide the right environment for culture to prosper in Egypt. That said, it is possible to identify a vague direction of past policies in their given context, such as those outlined above. Most of the time however, we cannot speak of a set of well-defined objectives, rather, the development of cultural policy has been far more random, depending mostly on the personality of the Minister and the profiles of those involved.

Counting the current first female Minister of Culture Inas Abd-Aldayem, seven different ministers of culture have come into power since the revolution. The

constant flux of ministers can be argued as one of many reasons that have not allowed for any efficient strategies to be implemented. The repeated dismissal of ministers came not only from internal disputes, but from external pressure also. In 2014, a group of cultural operators and activists published a statement by the name, *For a Culture Suitable to Egypt*, condemning the cultural policies and requesting the dismissal of Mohamed Saber Arab, the Minister of Culture at that time. The demands of activists and cultural operators remained and in July 2015 the prime minister gathered with a number of cultural practitioners to hear their aspirations. Two Ministers of Culture then followed but without achieving any recognizable change. The previous minister, Helmy Al-Namnam, was no exception to this and was dismissed in January 2018, after being blamed for the stagnation of the ministry just like his former peers. The efforts of the Ministry of Culture throughout the past 7 years have been directed towards what they call "The National Culture". This was the main direction of the cultural policies in the past years, and translates as applying - or enforcing - the values and ideologies of the state onto the public.

It is worth noting the exception of cultural policy in 2011 by the former Minister of Culture Emad Abu-Ghazi who was in charge for 8 months between March and November 2011. Abu-Ghazy elaborated a whole cultural strategy, closely collaborating with representatives of the civil society and cultural activists, summarizing the role of the democratic State in the cultural field with four points:
- To preserve the country's cultural heritage.
- To respect intellectual property rights and promote cultural industries.
- To protect freedom of expression and creativity.
- To provide cultural services to citizens fairly, respecting the pluralism of the country, away from propagandistic use or any hint of nationalist orientation.

Abu-Ghazi spoke about of the democratization of culture, cooperation between the various State institutions, interaction between the different sectors and actors in the cultural field, and the gradual restructuring of the Ministry. These opinions were not far from that of the independent cultural operators, however being the exception, Abu-Ghazy's views were not adopted by any of the Ministers of Culture that followed.

It was thought that the current Minister of Culture, Inas Abd-Aldayem would shadow Abu-Ghazys by being more publically in-tune than had previously been seen from other ministers. Abd-Aldayem was heavily involved in the cultural field prior to taking her current position and even participated in the Ministry of Culture sit-in during Morsi, making her appear as a hopeful candidate ready to make much needed improvements. However, expectation was met with disappointment when the current Minister decided to transform the Cultural Palaces into censorship offices. This was seen as an act to strengthen the already

restrictive censorship on art, and not as an innovative move to fix the problem of centralization as claimed by the Ministry. To this day and after 6 months of being in power, the cultural policy of the current Minister remains unpublished. The Ministry has issued a statement that they are working according to a cultural policy, however, the statement is both vague and badly written to the point of illegibility. Although there appears to be a focus on cultural heritage, it is hard to say whether there is any difference between the current attitudes of the Ministry today and that of the past years. In sum, despite the hopes of many cultural actors for the new Minister, there is a complete lack of cultural policies and the current budget allocated to culture remains startlingly low.

In October 2015, as a part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nation, the Egyptian Ministry of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform published a long-term strategy to go in accordance with Sustainable Development Goals(SDG's). The cultural pillar of the strategy is a well thought out plan with specific goals, measurable indicators, and a suitable vision. The vision reads:

"A system of positive cultural values respecting diversity and differences. Enabling citizens to access knowledge, building their capacity to interact with modern developments, while recognizing their history and cultural heritage. Giving them the wisdom of freedom of choice and of cultural creativity. Adding value to the national economy, representing Egypt's soft power at regional and international levels."
The long-term goals of the strategy included:
- Supporting creative industries as an important element of the economy.
- Developing the efficiency of cultural institutions and cultural officials.
- Strengthening and protecting the Egyptian cultural heritage.

This strategy was published in 2015, and was meant to be adopted by the whole government. However, it doesn't appear to have been done so since not only did it take one year and half for the Ministry of Culture to hold a meeting to discuss the strategy, the meeting was then postponed until November 2017. Since that time, the Ministry of Culture didn't show any will to apply this strategy, except for a few more conferences and the announcement of three workshops.

Organizational Chart of the Ministry of Culture:

The Minister's office, under which the Academy of Rome falls directly
The Cultural Production Department
The High Council for Culture
The Palaces of Culture body
The Opera
The Academy of Arts
The Book organisation
Dar el-Kotb or the Centre for Documentation and Archives
Civil Coordination
The Theatre House
The folkloric arts sector
The National Theatre
The National Centre of Cinema
The plastic arts sector
The Cultural Development Fund
The National Centre of Translation
The National Library
The Public Library Fund

The above departments and bodies each have their own teams, paid artists, performance or exhibition halls, festivals, etc. There are 213 cultural palaces spread all over the country, however most of them are in a state of disrepair or have been closed due to their bad conditions. Despite the cultural infrastructure which covers the whole country, there is a fair share of centralization in cultural activities. Almost 80% of cultural events take place in Cairo, 15% in Alexandria, and the rest is spread over the whole country.

There is also a lack of transparency and information from the current government. This means that - minus a few inventories which are generally not very reliable - there is no comprehensive list on the various cultural actors or activities organized by public sector. In addition to this, the government has no broad analysis of the cultural and artistic scene, let alone a database providing essential information on the cultural field. Ministerial inadequacy is partly down to a complete absence of documentation, as well as a total lack of specialized training on cultural management at the governmental level. Mistaking activities for goals, and the absence of appropriate bodies, timeframes and feedback methods, such inefficiencies have turned the past cultural policies in Egypt into ink on paper.

3- LEGISLATION AND FUNDING

LEGISLATION

The cultural scene is governed by a set of laws, regulations, presidential decrees, and ministerial decrees promulgated in recent decades and amended several times.

Legislation includes:

- Decisions and laws for the general staff of the ministry, its departments, and sectors, indicating their skills, organizational charts and operating modes.
- Laws ordering the establishment of Artistic Syndicates and the Publishers' Union.
- A set of laws aimed at establishing the principles of defense of national heritage e.g. the law on antiquities, national archives, classified documents, and safeguarding of the architectural heritage.
- Legislation on copyrights and the protection of intellectual property.
- Laws on the censorship of artistic works.
- General laws in relation to the cultural field: the code on customs and taxes, laws on NGOs and civil society, some articles of the Penal Code, particularly with regard to the freedom of expression.

The new constitution of 2014 which is currently in force, has amended many shortcomings exhibited in The Constitution of December 2012. The overall impression of the constitution can be summed up as tolerant, inclusive and arguably, liberal. For example, in Chapter II of the Constitution in force, titled *Basic Components of the Society,* it declares that the State shall "Preserve the national identity, root the scientific method of thinking, develop talents and promote innovation, establish cultural and spiritual values, and found the concepts of citizenship, tolerance and non-discrimination." It also shoulders responsibility to "provide free education in the various stages in the state's educational institutions... and to allocate a percentage of government spending to education equivalent to at least 4% of the Gross National Product (GNP)." Whilst at the same time, Article 92 of the Constitution also stipulates, "Inalienable rights and freedoms of citizens may not be suspended or reduced. No law regulating the exercise of rights and freedoms may restrict such rights and freedoms in a manner prejudicing the substance and the essence thereof."

This mention of the constitution at large, is intended to make the reader familiar with the framework that underscores and sets the tone for cultural policy. In other words, it is the foundation for which to guarantee the States support in cultural development in accordance with article 48, which reads:

"Culture is a right to every citizen. The State shall secure and support this right and make available all types of cultural materials to all strata of the people, without any discrimination based on financial capability, geographic location or

others. The State shall give special attention to remote areas and the neediest groups. The State shall encourage translation from and into Arabic".

It then goes on to specify freedom of creative expression, stating:
"No lawsuit may be initiated or filed to stop or confiscate any artistic, literary, or intellectual works, or against their creators except by the Public Prosecutor. No freedom restricting sanction may be inflicted for crimes committed because of the publicity of artistic, literary or intellectual product. As for crimes related to the incitement of violence, discrimination between citizens, or impingement of individual honor, the Law shall specify the penalties therefore."

Apart from this last point attributing to the Public Prosecutor the right to prosecute the creators, the Constitution in all appears to draw the outline of a cultural policy with the goal of democratizing culture, and committing the State to adhere to it.

Despite what appears as advancement for the constitution, in practice things could not be more different. To the extent that the current President even described the constitution as "The constitution of good intentions"[1], implying that these are just intentions and are not expected to have real life effects. This goes on to highlight how the values of the Constitution have been both ridiculed and violated by authorities at times. The repeated and gross dismissal of the laws and legal framework governing (not only) the arts, is down to the exploitation of legal loopholes and bureaucratic mechanisms to adjust laws when desired. In addition to this, a lack of clarity in some state-enforced laws makes it possible for contradictions to occur, and thus to counter and nullify one another when convenient. In fact, there are many laws of the legal framework governing arts and cultural that should be considered unconstitutional.

This can be illustrated by taking article 67 of the Constitution on the protection of freedom of creativity as an example. The article states that "No penalty that hinders freedom shall be imposed for crimes regarding the publicly of artistic products". Despite this, there are a number of other laws, that directly serve to contradict and limit that freedom, and are regularly deployed to do so. These counter laws include the Demonstration law, which does not distinguish between demonstrations and art concerts if held in public places; the Censorship of Artistic work law, which established a regulatory body to review works of art before they are made public; the Artistic Syndicates law, which transforms syndicates from bodies that organize the profession to those which decide which art is permissible; and the Penal Code, which has fabricated the notion of "public decency," a loose term that puts every artist accused of "scratching the modesty" behind bars.

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1   Mohamed Al-galy, September the 13th, 2015, Youm7 newspapers

The government's latest legislative assault has been considered one of the most restrictive NGO laws in the world. Not only does this new law force non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to work in line with the government's agenda, controlling each and every detail of their work (their funds, their programs, activities and even employees), but it also does not give space for cultural organizations to work freely on their chosen fields. As the law indirectly criminalizes many sorts of activities, considering it to pose a threat to national security, public order, public morality, and public health, which are all ambiguous accusations that can be applied to any activity, and are left to the judgment of security bodies as well as the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

Thus, despite a seemingly liberal constitution on the surface, this package of laws and other practices by the executive and security authorities constrain the work of creative artists and may even lead to their imprisonment.

FUNDING

There is a serious lack of transparency regarding the national budget, which has persisted for years, and possibly even decades. Since it is the case that the budget is intentionally hard to decipher, when information can be found, the budget tends to differ from one source to another. To make matters worse, knowledge of the budget for culture has been furthered hindered since allocations for culture were merged under the same band as Youth and Religious Affairs, thus making the exact percentage going towards arts and culture generally unspecified[2].

A recent and official breakdown of the budget allocated to culture has not been published, however a phone call with CBC television channel and the former minister of culture in January 2017, points to the allocated budget for culture being at 118.5 million dollars. According to this source, 92.5% of that is used to pay the salaries of Ministry employees whose number is around 34 thousand employees. This leaves 8.8 million dollars for cultural activities which is distributed between equipment, activities, and support for creativity (scholarships, prizes, and allocations to trade unions, Cultural Palaces, associations, unions, and networks). The capital and large cities receive the lion's share of the budget, while the share allocated to the provinces and remote areas is extremely small[3].

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2   A Guide to the Egyptian Budget, International Budget Partnership, 2015, page 15
https://www.internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Guide-to-the-Egypt-Budget.pdf

3   https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/1068934

Funding for civil society actors is not easy to assess either. Cultural entrepreneurs are increasing in number, but do not appear on any exhaustive list. Their initiatives are largely funded by international donors such as Ford Foundation, Sida, Open Society Organization, the European Union, and foreign cultural centers. Justifying its stance within the context of its fight against terrorism, the regime is proving to be particularly reserved about the use of foreign aid, and is thus creating more obstacles regarding funding for civil society and young cultural operators.

In September 2013, article 78 of the Penal Code was amended by a Presidential Decree in order to increase sanctions against those who receive financial aid. The Ministry of Social Solidarity subsequently asked the various civil society actors to revise their files: those who were registered as non-profit businesses had to "modify" their status to be declared as NGOs. In this way they fall under the previously mentioned NGO law and the control of National Security and the Ministry of Social Solidarity. This is still having an effect today, and while some organizations have decided to lay and wait for better days, others sought to move to Lebanon or even Tunisia, in order to benefit from greater financial freedom.

4- INSTITUTIONS, CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS AND INFRASTRUCTURES

INSTITUTIONS, CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Since 1990, the cultural environment has changed immensely. In a context of distorted economic liberalism, political authoritarianism, and administrative decomposition, State ownership of cultural property looks more and more like an ineffective monster even if it is trying to take part in the global market. In this context, the private sector and civil society actors have established themselves gradually developing their initiatives in various creative fields. Despite the difficulties of obtaining information on the different sectors of the cultural scene, one attempt to understand the needs of civil society was undertaken by the Swiss Foundation, *Pro Helvetia*, in 2011[4]. Through discussions with various cultural operators, some of the main issues identified included firstly a great need of an efficient networking system. This is due to a number of Independent potential partners working separately on similar topics but away from each other. Secondly, the independence of culture from the political agenda of the state. Additionally, many of the entities referenced in the study and other civil society actors more generally, are often registered as non-profit organizations or associations, and sometimes as commercial enterprises, rather than NGOs to

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[4] Culture in Transition Periods, Egypt Post 25th of Janyary, Edited by Magdy Sobhy, published by Pro Helvetia Egypt, 2011

escape the legislative barriers that resurface from time to time. Most of them are active in the big cities, notably in Cairo and Alexandria, but following the revolution of 2011, several actors started to operate in small cities and villages. Even if they work a bit incognito, they try to benefit their communities and mainly depend on self-funding such as the Qous Baladna (Qous our town), a group which has been working for the past 7 years in Upper Egypt.

According to statistics by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics[5] – an official government authority - it is estimated that there is a number of 143 cultural organizations across the country. In the absence of official figures or a solid database, it is difficult to assess the number of cultural actors who vary between associations, foundations, corporations, collectives, etc. However, certain observers estimate that there must be somewhere between 150 and 200 of these actors. Below are some of the most important civil society actors:

- *Al Sawy Culture Wheel or Saquiet Al-Sawy space*. Created in 2003 by cultural entrepreneur and engineer, Mohamed El-Sawi, Sawy cultural Wheel fills an important gap in alternative performance and attracts a diverse audience.

- *Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafi foundation*. Launched in 2004, Al Mawred is a regional non-profit organization that promotes artistic creation in the Arab world. Although Al-Mawred has suspended their activities in Egypt due to the political obstacles following the recent NGO law, the foundation serves as a regional platform supporting independent young cultural operators and artists. The foundation offers many programs including scholarships, residencies and other cultural exchange programs. One of their most important programs is their Cultural Policies program, which started in 2009 and played a vital role in the Egyptian cultural scene.

- *Studio Emad Eddine*. Established in downtown Cairo in 2005 by Ahmed Al-Attar, Studio Emad provides rehearsal rooms for independent artists and serves as a training venue. Additionally, the studio organizes several art events, including the multidisciplinary Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival (DCAF).

- *Egyptian Center for Culture and Arts (Makan)*. Founded in 2002 by Ahmed El-Maghrabi Makan holds performances which aim at reviving disappearing traditional Egyptian music. The Centre also keeps archives on folklore in the form of videos, documents and recordings.

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[5] http://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/StaticPages.aspx?page_id=5035

- *El Mastaba Center for Egyptian Folk Music*. Founded by Zakareya Ibrahim in 2000, El Mastaba aims at safeguarding and rehabilitating local genres of music. With music schools aimed at children in Portsaid, Suez and El-Arish, the center teaches the musical heritage of Sinai and cities around the Suez Canal. The center has managed to archive over 700 hours of audio-visual material, including recorded interviews, performances and films on traditional music.

- *The Centre for Contemporary Image*, (CIC). CIC has been working since 2004 to develop visual art and the culture of images by organizing exhibitions, seminars, and training courses. CIC maintains one of the very few publicly accessible and fully quipped darkrooms in Egypt.

- *Semat*. Established in 2001, Semat is the first independent movie production company. It encourages and supports young independent film makers who work on the development of art, culture and education, and exchange between Egypt and the rest of the world. Since it started Semat has produced more than a 100 films and won over 45 award at different festivals.

- *Darb 1718*. Located in Old Cairo, Batn Al-Bakara, Darb was founded by artist Moatzar Nasr in 2008. This multidisciplinary space brings peace to the area by offering cultural events including exhibitions, open mics, workshops, live performances, and film screenings.

- *Eka3 platform*. Eka3 platform is a music label founded by Tamer Abu-Ghazala in 2007. With several entities such as Mostakell, Awyaf, Ma3azef magazine, it supports independent musicians in production, labeling, live performances and intellectual property rights.

- *Mahatat for Contemporary Art*. Mahatat is a social and cultural enterprise founded in 2011 by five young female cultural operators, Heba El-Cheikh, Astrid Thews, Maryam Makhoul, Marie Girod, and Mayada Said. Through public art and interventionist practices, Mahatat seeks to transform public spaces, create opportunities for exposure to the arts and offer needs-based learning experiences to artists, practitioners and entrepreneurs.

- *El-Madina*. Founded in 2000 by Mohab Saber and Ahmed Saleh in Alexandria, El-Madina works in supports artists and youth intiatives by offering training, production, and cultural management workshops. El-Madina focuses its activities on Alexandria, and seeks to transform public spaces and marginalized areas to spaces where people can practice free expression and create a cohesive social environment characterized by diversity and pluralism.

The mentioned associations, organizations and initiatives have contributed to the formation of a new and strong independent cultural scene that is working under tough circumstances. These civil society actors are filling in the gaps left by a lack of efficient cultural policies and fighting the obstacle imposed by the current legal framework. Many of these institutions focus on alternative education and transferring experiences to younger generation, along with utilizing public spaces and reviving the marginalized cultures.

INFRASTRUCTURES

Private theatre companies keep decreasing in number and showing the same old decaying plays, while independent troupes perform in independently owned spaces and some theatres that belong to the government such as the Hanaguer centre and with that young performing art groups have considerable difficulty accessing state theaters and performance space. Only a very few Private organisations have managed to appropriate spaces able to accommodate the public, mostly located in Cairo and Alexandria. Institutions such as Gueneina Theatre, Saquiet El-Sawi, Makan and Mustaba were able to rearrange their premises to host regular events and concerts.

Visual art galleries are found primarily in the capital.More than 30 galleries are located between Downtown and Zamalek, such as: Mashrabia, Townhouse, Karim Francis, Medrar, la Viennoise, Gypsum, Safar Khan, Darb 17-18, Zamalek Art Gallery, Al Masar, Picasso, Art-Talk, and Gallery Misr.

Recently a new model of artistically inclined coffeehouses have started to surface. These coffee shops serve as a combination between galleries, libraries, theaters, cafes and co-working spaces. They host concerts, exhibitions, and other artistic events, some of these include Falak, Room, Garden City Flat and 3elbt Alwan.

According to statistics by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics in 2018[6], there are 82 movie theaters across Egypt and 35 of those in Cairo. These cinemas are all controlled by a handful of big production and distribution companies that are monopolizing the film industry. There are also screening rooms offered by numerous foreign institutes and cultural centers. Additionally, 2014 witnessed the birth of a new movie theatre called Zawya in Cairo. Founded by Marianne Khoury, Zawya shows movies that don't usually characterize as commercial choices, but relies on the public urge to see something different. A few years back, Khoury previously targeted the same segment of the public when she successfully launched the Panorama of European Film.

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[6] http://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/StaticPages.aspx?page_id=5035

Music production companies are accumulating losses, given the commercial behaviors of most Egyptians, which depends heavily on unauthorized sources from the Internet, along with the failure in adapting with the new technologies. There is also a monopoly on the music and film industry by some big names who have a stranglehold on the market and are contributing in one way or another to its stagnation by reproducing the same tested formulas.

In terms of private publishing, the legal framework governing the written published work is far better than any other form of art. This has eased the way for many publishing houses and bookshops to see the light in the last few years, renewing the written art landscape and rekindling the flame of books. The tradition of authors publishing at their own expense continues; however, some young publishers and medium sized entrepreneurs have launched in the market in recent years and are working on supporting young and independent writers such as Dawen, Kayan and Rewaq.

4.1 STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS MATRIX OF THE CULTURAL SECTOR

Stakeholder and basic characteristics	Interests and how affected by problem(s)	Capacity and motivation to bring about change	Possible actions to address stakeholder interests
Ministry of Culture: Between 33,000 and 39,000 employees. State employees (artists, administrators, workers and technicians).	• Could be dismissed as a result of restructuring. • Some officials may be promoted as a part of restructuring.	• Strong resistance to change and desire to remain the same. • There is no concept of efficient cultural policies. • Some are undergoing training in management or development.	• Capacity building. • Devise new cultural policy and advocate for it. • Provide updated technologies and resources such as a database. • Promotion of a new social plan for early retirement.

Civil society actors and independent artists: • Collectives, NGOs, and foundations. 143 cultural institutions. Since 1990, they have been having an increasing impact. • Problems with networking and lobbying	• Sense of only having a little leeway. • Resort to foreign funding for survival. • Attempt to organize themselves for increased efficiency, but politics hinder their actions.	• Very open to change. • Their impact is increasing. • Many initiatives to work on the main problems in the Egyptian cultural scene. • Strong focus on education and social work.	• Provide more administrative staff and expertise. • Ongoing education and training. • Need for greater freedom. • Their relationship with State institutions should be rethought. Access to spaces.
Commercial / Private Sector: • New enterprises and well-established companies in the cultural scene. • They recreate already tested and socially accepted formulas. • Utilize arts and culture as a marketing strategy.	• They are left to their fate. • Have suffered during the last 7 years of political and economic instability. • Their incomes have been severely affected from violence, flotation, and commercial behavior.	• They follow the logic of the market and its fluctuations. • They need to adapt with the changing taste of the public. • Some refuse the change as they run a monopoly on the market.	• Provide new cultural management models. • Revise the legal. framework governing censorship and the syndicates. • Encourage co-production

| Public and amateurs:
• Lack of studies on the consumers. | • Bad education system.
• Worn out from the political and economic problems. Suffer from the centralization of services. | • Open to all options, flexible and Intelligent.
• They sometimes boycott what is forced upon them from above.
• Developing and rapid change of taste - the most sought TV soap operas and films indicate change in tastes, and a more mature audience. | • Make cultural services more accessible.
• Take better account of the needs of people.
• Develop the sense of ownership of the public space.
• Enriching the local cultural heritages and the development of new cultures. |

4.2 SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL SECTOR

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Very rich and diverse cultural heritage. • Tangible and intangible assets. • An infrastructure that extends throughout the country. • A very strong, well-structured and innovative civil society. • The continuous rise of artists and cultural operators who have always been the gentle force of the country. • A very vibrant popular cultural, with a particular interest in culture, notably in film-making and dance. • A rather dynamic, changing cultural scene. • Vast amount of young talent. • Immense film and music industry. ▪ Continuously growing writing and publishing scene.	• Certain industries have been monopolized by specific companies. • A private sector that survives by recreating the same formulas. • A war on civil society waged by the political system. • Lack of transparency and information. • Very low allocations of the national budget to the cultural sector. • Centralization and concentration of activities in large cities. • Obsolescence of State structures. • Concentration of cultural infrastructure in the hands of the Ministry. ▪ Lack of market studies and general databases giving an updated overview of the sector.

Opportunities	Threats

• A civil society capable of developing its structure and impact. • Training of new cultural managers. • Many young talents. • The new technological applications of creative industries. • A wide spread infrastructure ready to be used.	• A threatening legal framework governing arts and culture. • A dangerous environment for civil society and independent actors. • A failing economic system. • Elitist Private sector that is widen the gap between the middle and lower income groups and their right to a cultural life.

5- EDUCATION AND TRAINING

STATE EDUCATION

The Academy of Arts was founded in accordance with a presidential decision issued in 1969. It includes the following institutes:

- Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts
- Higher Institute of Arabic Music
- Higher Institute of Artistic Criticism
- Higher Institute of Ballet
- High Institute of Folk Arts
- Higher Institute of Music
- Cairo Conservatoire
- Higher Institute of Cinema

All provide a four-year curriculum after the high school baccalaureate degree and lead to the Bachelor degree that may be followed by graduate studies (Master and PhD). These institutes are very hard to attend as they follow a very restrict selection method that depends heavily on cronyism.

- Faculty of Fine Arts, at five universities allover Egypt, Helwan, Alexandria, Menya, South Valley And Mansoura
- Faculty of Applied Arts, at three universities, Helwan, Dumiat and Banha
- Faculty of art education, in two universities, Helwan and Menya
- Faculty of Music education, in Helwan university

These also provide a four-year curriculum. Although joining these faculties requires passing talents examinations, they also require very high degrees in high school (Thanaweya Amma).

- In 2015, a two-year diploma on cultural development was introduced at the Faculty of Arts, Cairo University, under the direction of the former minister and academician, Emad Abu Ghazi. This diploma aims to provide progressive studies on the cultural policies and the cultural management in Egypt.

There around 10 art schools in private universities, most of them are located in Cairo and hard to afford by middle and lower class students.

In recent years, several initiatives and civil society organization have emerged focusing on alternate arts education and cultural management. These include:

- MASS Alexandria: an independent contemporary art school based in Alexandria. Founded in 2011 by Wael Shawky, MASS offers monthly workshops, seminars and lectures, led by artists, art educators and curators. Through the exploration of contemporary artistic practices, the school encourages students to take an inter-disciplinary and research based approach to their work.

- The Cairo Contemporary Dance Center (CCDC): is an independent space for Contemporary Dance founded in 2012 by Karima Mansour in Cairo. The center hosts a 3 years full-time dance school and offers artistic residencies, open classes, and workshops in various dance and movement disciplines.

- Cairo Institute of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CILA): invites students from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to engage with the liberal arts through a yearlong study program, which focuses mainly on arts & culture along with humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.

- Med culture: is a regional program that focuses on the South Mediterranean countries and aims to support the development of cultural policies. Over the course of the past 5 years the program has contributed to building capacities by supporting several initiatives and opening space for networking

6- NON-PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND GENERAL AUDIENCE

The population of Egypt is rising rapidly; with a growth rate of 1.8 percent the population has reached around 100 million. Administrative and economic centralization has led to the migration of millions of people to the Capital. Figures indicate that around 20 percent of the population are now living in Cairo. To an even greater extent this centralization has been reflected in the cultural field; with almost 80 percent of all organized cultural events taking place in Cairo. Although there are rich and diverse cultural heritages allover Egypt, such as

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Bedwins, Nubians and Amazighs, young artists and cultural practitioners are forced to move to Cairo in order to participate in a more socio-dynamic cultural life. In spite of a lack of audience analysis and comprehensive studies on their tastes, needs and attitude, the same study with Pro Helvetica, correspondingly identified one of the main cultural needs of the Egyptian people as the decentralization of culture.

Although it seems there is a public preference for private sector commercial products, this popularity seems to be threatened. Private sector commercial companies are mostly producing repetitive formulas that proved successful throughout the years. However, a notable change in taste has become evident in the music, film and TV industry. The public urge to explore new waves of culture has translated into the success of new independent music, and alternative films and soap operas. This has led to financial losses by many mainstream production companies, and pushing them to bring in new talents such as social media celebrities. However, in general clientelism is still wide-spreading, as sponsors and funders tend to seek players they already know, preventing the new generations from further developing their work.

Despite an unwelcoming mainstream private sector that is generally inaccessible for emerging talents, these young artists are causing a stir amongst their peers. Pushed into opting for smaller independent spaces to showcase their works, they are building up a small community – albeit rather diasporic – of alternative tastes and culture. Aided by increasing digital communication and the availability of information, these young artists are self-taught and utilizing new technologies to produce their work. The youth of the country has always been at the forefront of innovation, creativity and resistance, but it is fair to say that the extent to which this is happening today is of a greater magnitude.

7- CHALLENGES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Being both extensive and diverse, the cultural scene in Egypt is full of potential. Prominent cultural actors are making a significant change, and are easy to perceive as having a genuine passion and investment in developing the cultural scene. Despite its promise, the cultural scene is currently facing serious challenges as a result of ministerial shortfalls and a restrictive legal framework.

The Ministry of Culture is not in the dark about the methods and procedures it could take to improve the cultural scene in Egypt. However, the lack of will by the state sector, and general inefficiency of the Ministry; including a lack of investment in training and resources etc. is serving to hinder the cultural scene. To make matters worse, the Ministry of Culture holds a great and manifold

cultural infrastructure, but its outdated management policies make it obsolete and impede its outreach to the public. Additionally, the very low allocates of the national budget to the culture sector make it clear that cultural development is not one of the governments priorities. Despite many attempts to devise an effective and relevant cultural policy, the ministry of culture has repeatedly failed at the implementation stage; therefore, not only failing to meet the cultural needs of Egyptians, but also to enrich the plethora of cultural heritage buried in marginalized societies and support the emerging new cultures of younger generations.

Civil society is working hard to fill the gaps left by a negligent state framework, and is one of the most developed in the region. Unfortunately, the current legal framework, in its attempt to fight terrorism, is fighting arts and culture as well. The current strictly applied laws, such as: the NGO law, Demonstration law, and the Penal Code, not only limit the right to assemble and restrict public space, it put the lives of independent actors and civil society in danger. In addition to this, censorship laws are hindering the creativity of artists and enforcing the production of only one formula of art. These laws are not in accordance with international conventions, nor the Egyptian constitution itself, which protects freedom of artistic expression in its all forms. Since culture is - at the very least - a key player in economic development and empowerment, the current situation in Egypt calls for a rethinking of the current legislation and practices governing arts and culture.

Following, are some detailed remarks and recommendations to address the aforementioned issues:

STATE SECTOR FUNDING: The allocates of the national budget to culture is particularly low, and 92.5% of it is used to pay the salaries of Ministry's employees[7].
Recommendation: Continuous lobbying and collaborative pressure groups of all sectors that advocate towards the equal importance of cultural policies as other economic and political policies.

CIVIL SOCIETY FUNDING: Civil society tend to be limited to foreign donors and do not always try to vary the sources of their funding.
Recommendation: Along with advocating for the amendment of the current NGO law, civil society and independent operators need to restructure themselves and adopt new models which diversify resources.

NETWORKING: Actors in Alexandria and Cairo often frequent the same circles and cooperate together on particular activities, but those living in the provinces

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[7] See funding section

remain largely anonymous. There is a need for a network of civil society organizations working on social change in Egypt.
Recommendation: The first step would be to begin mapping cultural actors in the country in order to compile a database that is accessible for these cultural operators.

POLICY MAKING: There have been attempts by the government to involve civil society and independent cultural operators in policy making. These attempts never reached the implementation phase.
Recommendation: Civil society and independent cultural groups should strengthen their presence and create pressure groups that advocate for a bridge between civil society and the ministry.
The ministry should demonstrate a serious will to engage civil society by adopting a cultural policy that gives more space and power to civil society and independent cultural groups to participate in culture.

INFRASTRUCTURE: A large but obsolete state infrastructure, including cultural palaces, theaters, offices etc.
Recommendation: Make use of and invest in the already existing infrastructure. One way this can be done is by allocating it to young cultural operators with defined missions and clear goals, who will be capable of effectively utilizing and renovating this infrastructure.

LEGISLATIVE WORK: The current legal framework represents a threat to cultural life in Egypt.
Recommendation: A cultural policy that gives more space and power to civil society, independent cultural groups to participate in culture. A revision and amendment of the current legal framework governing arts and culture in accordance with international conventions and the Egyptian constitutions. Specifically:
- The Egyptian Penal code.
- Law 70/2017 on the regulation of NGO's and institutions.
- Law 107/2013 on demonstration.
- Law 430/1955 on the censorship of artistic works.
- Law 35/1976 on the Federation of Artistic Syndicates.

MARKET STUDY: There is a general lack of research and studies on the Egyptian cultural scene.
Recommendation: Conduct empirical research and field work in order to elaborate future strategies and respond to the needs of society.

EDUCATION: The state education systems depends heavily on nepotism and cronyism, while the other institutions follow inefficient selection methods that overlook talent. Outdated curricula.

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Recommendation: The government must renew and restructure arts education. More attention should be paid to emerging independent cultural groups that works on alternative education and teaching methods.

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LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Name	Organisation/ Title
Heba Sherif	Director of Pro Helvetia Egypt. Holder of a PhD in Literature and writer on the Egyptian cultural scene.
Emad Abu Ghazi	Former Minister of Culture and academician (member of the Ministry of Planning committee on cultural policies)
Sayed Mahmud	Editor in Chief of Al-Qahira magazine (member of the Ministry of Planning committee on cultural policies)
Fairouz Karawya	Singer and cultural animator. Holder of a Master's in Cultural Anthropology from the AUC. Ex-member of the national group of cultural policies of the collective of independent artists.
Ayman Helmi	Musical composer. Manager of Al-Mawred cultural policies program and coordinator of the national group of cultural policies.
Katie Mcdougall	Researcher and writer at Mashrabia Gallery. Author of the forthcoming book Contemporary Egyptian Art.
Mahmoud Othman	Lawyer at the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression, specializing in Freedom of artistic creation.
Ehab Monir Tawfiq	Cultural manager and founder of Route 3, an enterprise for teaching art management to younger generations.
Ahmed Fathy (Al-Nakkash)	Graffiti artist

About the Author
Hossam Fazulla is a researcher and writer from Cairo. He has spent the last 7 years bridging the gap between art and human rights. Director of Freedom of Artistic Creation at the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) and former trainer a Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studied, Fazulla's work focuses on cultural policies and the contemporary Egyptian cultural scene. Fazulla has authored several publications including Why You Can't be Creative

in Egypt (2017), Cultural Policies: Foundation, Evolution and Problems (2015), and co-authored of Censor of Creativity (2013).