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**Technical Assistance Unit of Med Culture Programme
for the promotion of culture as vector of Human,
Social and Economic Development in South
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Egypt Country Report

By

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Executive Summary

The revolution of January 25, 2011 resulted in a restructuring of Egyptian intellectual field. There has been a proliferation of street art like graffiti and the breakthrough of young names in different disciplines (music, writing and film), as well as mobilising different actors called "independent" who started to organise themselves in order to have their say about the proposed new policy and reform of the cultural sector.

Today, the cultural scene is crossed by contradictory dynamics. It continues to oscillate between two main trends: the first seeks to overturn the existing structures and norms, that is to say, to revolutionise the cultural sector. The second is to simply reform gradually. In between, some try to be more nuanced, but they are struggling to be heard. One thing is certain: the return to the virtual state monopoly on culture seems difficult, although Nasser nostalgia is still present among some men in power or their close circles.

The horizons may seem a little dark, but it may be possible with time to negotiate a larger space for culture. All the players realise this, while being aware that civil society and the public sector cannot quite reach the deeper layers of the society, only the elite has access to the cultural life and people always search for flaws.

In recent years, many events have helped boost public discussion on culture. Rejected records or ignored for a long time were given brought back to discussion. The economic situation does not allow increasing the budget allocated to culture immediately, but that does not prevent civil society to try to negotiate an increase going along with standards set by UNESCO. Topping the list of their claim, figures thus increasing the national budget to 1%, provided that this rate is shared equally between the public and the "independent" in the sector. It is also an opportunity to raise the question of; that the Ministry should re-evaluate its marketing strategies and the civil society needs to understand why the model of charities works best in some ways but not in their cultural associations.

1 Context and introduction

The January 25, 2011 revolution resulted in the restructuring of the Egyptian intellectual sphere, with the proliferation of street arts such as graffiti and the emergence of young artists' names in different fields (music, writing, and films), as well as a mobilisation of different so-called "independent" actors who began to organise themselves in order to make their voices heard in new cultural policies. On March 19, 2012, the "national group" of cultural policies submitted to the parliament a report summarising its alternative ideas on the reform of the cultural



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sector. However, the parliament was dissolved on the day these proposals were adopted by the Committee on Culture, Media, and Tourism. Therefore, they were not ratified by the parliament or discussed on a larger scale. To this day all parties involved, including the Ministry of Culture, are waiting for the formation of a new parliament, in order to continue their efforts.

After June 30, 2013 and the fall of the Muslim Brotherhood regime, the political changes had a significant impact on the Egyptian society. Bias is in full swing, society is divided more than ever, and rupture is at the heart of the intellectual institution. A part of the regime and the society is running after the activists of the revolution who in various fields and this is driving some of these activities to enter into a stagnation state, especially following the amendment of the Penal Code and the NGO law, which made the foreign funding issue an even more disputable one. On the one hand, we're witnessing an escalation of police repression and Islamist terrorism, and on the other, we're seeing a desire to reform everything in order to take the country out of the rut it has been in.

The Ministry of Culture as well as the Ministry of Planning are currently studying the steps that could lead to the restructuring. Some observers affirm that there will not be a return to the State monopoly on culture, even if the mind of some of those in power or of their close circles is flirting with nostalgia for Egypt's Nasser. Times have changed and the private sector has gradually confirmed its presence on the art scene since the 90s. Further, the budget allocated to culture (between 0.35% and 0.20 of the national budget) hardly allows for the State to regain control over the field. The State is on the contrary trying to take the pretty heavy burden off of its back all the while keeping its hold on the sector.

And even if the picture seems a bit dark, it will maybe be possible with time to negotiate a bigger share for the cultural sector. All actors are aware of that and are fully conscious that civil society and the official sector are unable to quite reach the deeper layers of the society: only selected elites have access to cultural life. Only the private-commercial sector is managing to generate revenues and to follow the laws of supply and demand, although providing only a slight variety of services. The independent sector or the non-profit private sector mainly living off of foreign aid is trying to profit from the post-revolution gains, or what's left of them at least.

Starting from the 19th century, Mohamad Ali Pacha laid the foundations for a modern Egyptian State and established cultural institutions among



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others. In 1821, he decided to create the Bulaq movable type printing press: more than 10,000 titles were published and distributed and more than 7 million copies were made. Then, in 1829, he built a library and national archives, followed some years later by a first Antiquities Museum. Then it was not until the reign of Khedive Ismail that Cairo acquired an opera and a larger national library. Several culture-related governmental bodies were created progressively, such as the antiquities body or the one for arts. The country was also able to develop a cultural industry, especially with the emergence of several private theatre and music troupes and the rise of cinema. This 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. One of the most important aspects in this regard was the creation, at the time of the Arab Renaissance (Nahda), of real "cultural policies" to which the State assigned representatives from what was to become an intelligentsia. The members of the intelligentsia were essentially the product of the new cultural order established with the modernisation and colonisation of Egypt.

This "authoritarian modernisation" continued with the republican State, following the 1952 revolution, because the republican State largely fell within the continuity of the Khedivial and then the monarchical State. To varying extents, most Egyptian princes were sponsors supporting poets and offering them sinecure offices, financing theatre troupes as well as the training of comedians and filmmakers and even many artists abroad through the Egyptian Academy in Rome (founded in 1929). 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. In short, the State of Free Officers prolonged the long tradition of protection and control of artists and intellectuals, which it ended up systematising.

Generally speaking, the arrival in power of a new political team did not change the link between the cultural and political sectors. The State became the proprietary of an entire production unit whose task was to participate in national guidance and raise the level of people culturally, socially, and politically. In short, it placed everything at the service of a national project, strongly built around a defined ideology, namely Arab socialism. With this in mind, the Ministry of Culture was established in 1958, succeeding the former Ministry of "National Orientation," thereby being the first of its kind in the Arab world and Africa. The weight of ideological imperatives could be easily sensed. The State wanted to set acceptable cultural models and to impose



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them "from above", hence the gap which still exists to this day between the intellectual elites and the public. This gap remained under the reign of Sadat, in light of the economic openness and liberalisation of the 80s. It also remained unchanged during the era of Mubarak who had opted for the instrumentation of intellectuals and for the re-investment in culture at the time of privatisation and neoliberalism. These contradictions have further widened the gap between the public and intellectuals, which seriously hampered the efforts of civil society actors. The constant presence of power and the agents thereof weakened the autonomy of the intellectual elite, a phenomenon which still exists today. That is why we find the public sceptical towards one another.

2 General objectives and governance

Objectives and Strategies

The cultural scene is divided today by contradictory dynamics. Since the revolution of January 25, 2011, the country continues to sway between two main trends: the first aiming to overturn the existing structures and norms and thus is revolutionising the cultural domain; and the second simply intending to reform the domain gradually. And in between, there are those who are trying to show the nuances more accurately but are struggling to be heard.

This state of affairs usually appears when the cultural strategy of the country is evoked. Proponents of the first group argue that there is no real strategy neither at the level of the official sector, private organisations, or the civil society. They lament the absence of a database providing essential information on the cultural field and the lack of specialised studies on the subject. The second group argues that there has always been a clear cultural strategy, advancing several historical supporting examples, including strategies developed by the ministers Sarwat Okasha, Abdel-Qader Hatem, Abdel Moneim El-Sawi, Badr Eddine Abu Ghazi, or Farouk Hosni. Supporters of a more nuanced position confirm that the strategy is fine and well, but that given the lack of qualified staff to implement it, it remains ink on paper.

The latter are not entirely wrong: for every period, we can identify general ideas, or rather an outline for a policy in a given context. For instance, in the 70s, the general atmosphere leaned more towards communication rather than towards culture, leftist intellectuals were left out, and the State was working to cancel the Ministry of Culture and to replace it with the High Council for Culture, to be managed by the Minister of State for Culture and Media. Then, starting 1982, i.e. after the assassination of President Sadat and the arrival of Mubarak in



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power, culture became perceived as an efficient means that could help in the rehabilitation of Egypt, among Arab countries, following the signing of the Camp David Accords with Israel. Most of the time, we cannot though speak of a set of well-defined objectives with decisions and programs designed to achieve these long-term goals. Things were so much more random and key ideas depended mostly on the personality of the Minister and the profiles of those involved.

Revolutionary unrest in recent years, however, led to significant changes, especially in public services. Consequently, the Minister of Culture function was reassigned four times in a year. Each of the designated ministers was trying to deal with the situation on day-to-day basis with the little money he had. It is worth noting the exception of Emad Abu Ghazi who was in charge for 8 months between March and November 2011. This left academician knew the workings of the Ministry, having worked for a long time at the High Council for Culture, first as head of committees, then as general secretary since 2009. He elaborated a whole cultural strategy, closely collaborating with representatives of the civil society and cultural activists, summarising the role of the democratic State in the cultural field with three points:

- To preserve the country's cultural heritage.
- To respect intellectual property rights and promote cultural industries.
- 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 of the democratisation of culture, complementarity between the various State institutions, interaction between the different sectors and actors in the cultural field, magnitude of the regional role of Egypt, amendment of the legislation in question, education and training of cadres as well as improvement of their income, and finally the gradual restructuring of the Ministry. This view is not far from that of 'independent' artists. On the other hand, it is not entirely consistent with the view of the current Minister of Culture, Gaber Asfour, in office since June 2014. The difference may be due to a "generational" explanation: Abu Ghazi is 59 years old, while Asfour is over 70 years. The latter was fed with nationalist ideas, while the former was part of the student movement of the 70s who stood up against the Nasserism experience. However, on a personal level, the two are quite close, have long worked together, and still communicate. According to observers, Asfour is a fierce defender of the role of the State; he refuses categorically to talk of its retreat or of the dissolution of the Ministry of Culture, but rather is committed to dialogue with civil society and to allocating to it more space. He is thus looking for a certain balance



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that no one has yet been able to reach at the State level; we can identify this same dilemma in all other areas, with officials who no longer know what to think and a series of conflicting or rather schizophrenic measures. The current Minister of Culture is leading a fight against corruption, backed by a new legal counsel. He receives a daily report on the cases raised on the "Ministry of Ultras" page which is a Facebook group for ministry officials and other interested people, aiming at reforming the official cultural sector. Instead of speaking of restructuring the Ministry, Asfour is giving priority to the redistribution of work and the reform of tasks, i.e. to investing differently the already existing workforce, without cutting jobs. Subsequently, he has appointed three new publication directors: Najet Ali, Samir Mandi, and Abdel-Rahman Hegazi, holders of PhDs in contemporary literature. They are in charge of developing a new editorial policy.

The same selection principle is currently being applied to choose a new president for the Palaces of Culture body from among unsung Ministry officials. This was affirmed by journalist Sayed Mahmud who was recently appointed editor in chief in the weekly magazine Al-Qahira, one of the Ministry publications launched during the Mubarak era. Mahmud was never an official at the Ministry, though he always had a good relationship with the current Minister and is renowned for his contacts in the Arab world. This was actually one of the criteria for choosing him for this position. It seems in fact that Asfour wants to strengthen the regional aspect, to appeal again to the calm strength of the country, as reported by the President of the Republic in his most recent speech. He appointed the same week another editor in chief, writer Al-Mansi Qandil, to head another cultural monthly magazine of the Ministry, namely the Ibdaa (creativity) magazine. Having lived for years in the Gulf, Al-Mansi Qandil also has good contacts in the Arab world and is beyond internal literary conflicts. Along the same lines falls the designation of Said Al-Masri, sociology professor, in charge of coordination with civil society and with other ministries and public institutions. In fact, the latter represents the Ministry in the Committee of Five that the Ministry of Planning is currently hosting in order to develop a new cultural strategy which goes until 2030. The committee gathers Emad Abu Ghazi (former Minister of Culture), Marwa Helmi (from Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafi foundation, or Cultural Resource), Mohamed Al-Sawi (founder of the cultural space Saquiet Al-Sawi), and Sayed Mahmud (journalist). The Ministry of Planning has convened similar committees in all sectors in order to develop within a year public policies and strategies from now till the year 2030, with the participation of experts from all fields.



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Governance

If good governance aims to make public action more effective and close to the public good and interest, it is difficult to talk about good governance in Egypt. Rules, processes, and behaviours that affect the exercise of power are often random and vague, and sometimes even linked to the person's beliefs. Every time the methods regulating reflection, decision making, and control of the implementation of decisions should be assessed, it is in fact about assessing the work of the Minister or of a particular official. For instance, speculations on the future of culture are actually based at the moment on the role that the Minister Gaber Asfour played in the years he was heading the High Council for Culture, under the direction of Farouk Hosni (who was the Minister of Culture for the longest period of time, having occupied the post between 1987 and 2011). These two can boast that almost all intellectuals have stuck to the line. And that's what we hear today when State presence in the cultural field is promoted, under the pretext that it is absolutely necessary not to leave the field empty to Islamists or other "sworn enemies of the State". It is often the excuse used when trying to prevent an artistic event in a certain street such as Midan Al-Fan (literally, art in the square) or to continue to manage funds like in the old days.

Other voices are being raised, demanding bigger transparency in terms of the budget and the adopted policy. The exact figure allocated to culture or the exact share of the national budget is in fact hard to discern. Culture is merged with the youth and religious affairs in one section and the information relating to the breakdown of the sum dates back to 2011.

Organisational 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



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The plastic arts sector

The Cultural Development Fund

The National Centre of Translation

The National Library

The Public Library Fund

All the above departments and bodies have their own teams, paid artists, performance or exhibition halls, festivals, etc. The number of palaces of culture is as high as 293 and in certain villages; these centres constitute the sole points of cultural outreach and the only places of encounter for the intellectuals of these villages (even if some of these palaces are in a state of disrepair or closed due to their bad conditions).

The lack of transparency and information about the Egyptian cultural scene is translated into the lack of a database on culture too. There is no comprehensive list on the various cultural actors or activities organised by either side in the public sector, except a few inventories which are not generally very reliable. The private sector too (both profit and non-profit institutions) does not have a broad analysis of the cultural and artistic scene either, or studies on the cultural practices of Egyptians. When the revolution exploded, the Swiss foundation Pro Helvetia attempted to grasp what the needs of the Egyptians were through discussions with various cultural operators. One of the main demands actually concerned the decentralisation of culture. Almost 80% of events take place in Cairo, 15% in Alexandria, and the rest is spread over the whole country. The issue of independence of culture from the government was also among the main topics covered. Outside major hubs, independent potential partners do not know each other. They have failed to put in place a real networking system, although the "national group" of cultural policies has listed this issue among its priorities and such a foundation as El Mawred is trying to serve as a platform for "independents". These latter have started to prepare a specialised database, but this will need at least a year, that is if they don't face any major obstacles. In fact, following the 2011 revolution, many ambitious projects were unsuccessful, like that of a research centre working towards measuring public-cultural property relationships as well as measuring the degree of transparency within institutions. Even participatory organisations, mainly living on foreign funding, do not always succeed in defining well in advance their programs and target audiences.



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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:

1. Decisions and laws for the general staff of the ministry, its departments, and sectors, indicating their skills, organisational charts and operating modes.
2. Laws ordering the establishment of trade unions and the writers union.
3. A set of laws aimed at establishing the principles of defence of national heritage. E.g. the law on antiquities, national archives, classified documents, and safeguarding of the architectural heritage.
4. Legislation on copyrights and the protection of intellectual property.
5. Laws on the censorship of artistic works.
6. 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 Constitution of December 2012, suspended in July 2013, exhibited the same shortcomings as previous constitutions: it constantly made reference to legal texts whenever it came to freedoms and rights. Article 92 of the Constitution as amended in 2014, currently in force, 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." Similarly, article 226 on measures on the suspension of the Constitution stipulates that, "Texts pertaining to the re-election of President of the Republic or the principles of freedom or equality stipulated in this Constitution may not be amended, unless the amendment brings more guarantees."

In chapter II of the Constitution in force, titled "Basic Components of the Society", the State undertakes to "preserve the national identity, root the scientific method of thinking, develop talents 10 and promote



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innovation, establish cultural and spiritual values, and found the concepts of citizenship, tolerance and non-discrimination." The State also undertakes 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)." These foundations were unseen in other Egyptian constitutions adopted since the 50s. They force the State to support culture, in accordance with article 48, "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." Besides the articles requiring the preservation of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, in all its diversity, the Constitution stresses on the freedom of artistic and literary creation. It attempts to close the door to inquisition trials that were widespread over the last two decades, specifying, "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 honour, 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 draws the outline of a cultural policy and commits the State to adhere to it with the goal of democratising culture. However, this does not mean that in practice things cannot go differently. The country has not respected the values of the Constitution since 1923; as these have been ridiculed or violated by authorities at times. For instance, in September 2013, i.e. a few months after the promulgation of the Constitution, article 78 of the Penal Code was amended by a Presidential Decree to increase sanctions against those who receive financial aid (both natural and legal persons) from foreign organisations or States and that could bring harm to the security of the country and the national interests thereof. Accused persons may be sentenced to death, imprisoned for life, or fined with more than 500,000 EGP; this drew the ire of human rights activists and civil society actors who felt directly targeted or threatened by this amendment which the state justified as part of its fight against terrorism. The Ministry of Social Solidarity which normally bears the burden of monitoring the work of civil society organisations,



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according to law 82 issued in 2002, could not provide any explanation as to the methods of implementation of this article. The State is thus putting the intentions of civil society to the test and vice versa.

Funding

The budget allocated to the Ministry of Culture in 2011 amounted to almost 147 million dollars, or 5.6% of the 9,2162 million dollars reserved for youth, culture, and religious affairs (according to a study published in the cultural policy books, published by Al-Mawred foundation). More than half of this amount is used to pay the salaries of the Ministry's employees whose number ranges between 33,000 and 39,000 (58% of the budget of 2011, i.e. 93.7 million dollars, while the Palaces of Culture body received 23.7% and the central administration of the cultural development fund received 13.9%). The rest of the budget is distributed between equipment goods, activities, and support for creativity (scholarships, prizes, and allocations to trade unions, associations, unions, and networks). The capital and large cities receive the lion's share, while the budget share allocated to the provinces and remote areas is extremely small. To address the financial shortcomings, particularly during the Mubarak era, a fund for cultural development was established to support certain projects. It used to receive 10% of the revenue of historical sites (entrance fees, etc.) to fund these projects. However, starting 2011, antiquities no longer fell under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture, and so this fund lost a significant part of its revenue (an estimated 14 million dollars).

As mentioned above, the exact amount dedicated to culture by the State, or the exact share of the national budget, is often difficult to discern; culture being merged with religious affairs and the youth under the same section. Apart from these government funds, funding from civil society actors is not easy to assess either. Cultural entrepreneurs are increasing in numbers. They are spread across the country but do not appear on an exhaustive list. Their initiatives are largely funded by international donors such as the Ford Foundation, Sida, the Open Society Institute, the European Union, and foreign cultural centres, and benefit from limited support from public institutions.

Recently, the regime has proven particularly reserved about the use of foreign aid, justifying its stance within the context of its fight against terrorism and its attempts to drain the main sources of funding of Islamist groups. 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:



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those who were registered as non-profit businesses had to “modify” their status to be declared as non-governmental organisations (NGOs). “This is the sword of Damocles,” we heard in relevant circles, without however seeing any real mobilisation. Some were content to lay low and wait for better days, while others sought to move to Lebanon or even Tunisia, in order to benefit from greater financial freedom. This was the case of Al-Mawred foundation which announced that it would suspend all of its activities in Cairo and move its operations to Beirut. Its regional actions however would continue normally, given that the foundation was not forbidden by Egyptian authorities. The people in charge simply preferred to avoid any potential problems, since several members of the foundation's administrative board are not Egyptians. Al-Mawred is so far a special case because other cultural actors continue to work albeit with caution.

4 Institutions, civil society actors, and infrastructure

Institutions and 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 contemporary art disciplines. These entities are often registered as non-profit organisations or associations, and sometimes as commercial enterprises, to 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 little cities and villages. And even if they work a bit incognito, they try to make themselves useful to their communities and mainly depend on self-funding such as the Baladna QoS (QoS our city) group which has been working for the past 3 years in Upper Egypt or other artist collectives seduced by the temptation of investing public spaces. It is difficult to assess their number, in the absence of official figures or a solid database; however, certain observers estimate that there must be somewhere between 150 and 200 of these actors, spread across the country, varying between associations, foundations, corporations, collectives, groups, etc. Below are some of the most important civil society actors:

- El Sawy Culture Wheel or Saquiet El-Sawy space, created in 2003 by cultural entrepreneur and engineer, Mohamed El-



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Sawi. It comes to fill an important gap in alternative shows. Located under the May 15 Bridge in the residential district of Zamalek, it continues to increase its activities and attract diverse audiences.

- El-Mawred El-Thaqafi foundation, launched in 2004, is a regional non-profit organisation that promotes artistic creation in the Arab world. Its headquarters is in Brussels. These last few years, it has been managed from Cairo by Basma El-Husseiny who previously worked at the British Council and the Ford Foundation and who became an important figure in the independent cultural scene. The foundation serves as a regional platform, hosting and coordinating meetups for the "national group for cultural policies" (which consists of 20 members approximately). It has launched initiatives aimed at reforming the cultural field and restructuring the Ministry of Culture. As of February 20, 2011, B. El-Husseiny has presented a detailed plan aimed at restructuring the Ministry of Culture and at transforming its departments into public institutions and limited companies, changing its relation to civil society and the private sector. The foundation recently launched a media campaign titled "Cultural Policy for all Egyptians."
- Studio Emad Eddine, established in downtown Cairo in 2005 by Ahmed Al-Attar, playwright and cultural management specialist. It aims at providing rehearsal rooms for independent artists and serving as a training venue. The studio organises several art events, including the multidisciplinary Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival, DCAF.
- The Makan centre for ethnomusicology, founded in 2002 by Ahmed El-Maghrabi. In addition to concerts reviving disappearing Egyptian musical traditions, the Cairo centre offers archives on folklore with videos, documents and rare supporting recordings.
- Mustaba centre, whose beginnings date back to the year 2000. Managed by Zakareya Ibrahim, specialist in the music of Suez Canal cities, aims at safeguarding and rehabilitating certain local rather disregarded genres of music.
- The CIC or Centre for Contemporary Image has been working since 2004 to develop visual art and the culture of images by organising exhibitions, seminars, and training courses.
- Semat is the first independent movie production company, launched in 2001. Managed by its founder Hala Galal with a group of filmmakers who happen to be her friends, it encourages and supports young independent artists.



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- Darb 17-18, non-profit NGO, located in Old Cairo (in Fostat). This multidisciplinary space founded by filmmaker Moutzar Nasr in 2008 hosts several cultural events and is not limited solely to exhibitions. It was not long before it open a cinema corner in the garden and started hosting live music shows on the patio.
- IACT or the International Association for Creation and Training, focused on theatre as a tool for development as well as on informal education in Alexandria. Its director, Mahmud Abu Douma, has been very active in the alternative theatre field since the nineties.
- ACAF or the Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum focuses its work since 2005 on contemporary media and arts. It was launched by a group of artists in a simple apartment downtown, but has ever since suspended its activities following events related to the revolution and the violence that ensued, as well as to allow its founders to focus on their artistic careers.

Far from constituting an exhaustive list of actors of civil society, the mentioned initiatives have contributed to the formation of a new art scene that clearly stands out from the business-private sector entrepreneurs that have always existed side by side with state institutions such as the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and others, and it is difficult to identify all of them because of their large number and their long history.

The Ministry of Culture is both in the centre and at the margins of this changing scene. Its infrastructures, organisational chart, and heavy staff numbers cause its bureaucracy, which is still however irreplaceable to this day.

Infrastructures

With a fairly centralised pyramid structure, the Ministry of Culture is everywhere in the country, including through a cultural infrastructure (theatres, palaces of culture, conference rooms, exhibition halls, museums, film studios, etc.) which belongs to State institutions. This infrastructure follows the socialist model of the 50s-60s which survived even after the adoption of neoliberalism. The Ministry's various services show the extent to which its activities extend to all areas.

As for civil society actors, only a few were able to appropriate spaces able to accommodate the public, mostly located in Cairo and Alexandria. They hold events quite regularly. Few of them include the



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Gueneina Theatre is the Al-Azhar park, the Saquiet El-Sawi (a haven for alternative artists), the Makan and Mustaba centres which were able to rearrange their premises to host weekly concerts, and the Rawabet Theatre (one of the Town House gallery spaces).

Moreover, Cairo and Alexandria have a number of private galleries which are found primarily in the capital, with fifteen showrooms mostly located between the downtown and Zamalek, including: Machrabia, Town House, Karim Francis, la Viennoise, Safar Khan, Darb 17-18, Art-ellewa, Zamalek, Massar, Picasso, Art-talk, and Masr. Coffee shops have recently opened, gaining a cultural character by hosting concerts, exhibitions, and other artistic events such as Vent and Falak.

Many movie theatres have been revamped. There are more than 300 movie theatres (as well as multiplexes that have been newly developed), all controlled by the same big production and distribution companies. There are also screening rooms offered by the 28 foreign institutes and cultural centres. The year 2014 saw the birth of a new movie theatre called Zawya in Cairo following the same format as the "Images d'Ailleurs" movie theatre in Paris. This movie theatre which is annexed to the old Odeon cinema downtown and managed by Marianne Khoury (Misr International Films, Youssef Chahine & Co) attempts to open up new horizons by showing movies that don't usually characterise as commercial choices. Khoury has achieved her goal, relying once again on a public eager to see something different, one which closely follows the latest productions worldwide. The producer and documentary filmmaker had previously relied on the same segment of the public by successfully launching a few years back Panorama of the European Film.

Private theatre companies keep decreasing in number and showing the same old decaying plays, while independent troupes perform on independently owned spaces and at the Hanaguer centre (part of the official sector). Music production companies are accumulating losses, given piracy problems and distribution on the internet. Finally, some big names have a stranglehold on the market and are contributing in one way or another to its stagnation.

In terms of private publishing, many publishing houses and bookshops saw the light these 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 to help us discover other names and other genres. The profession had new life breathed in it, despite the difficulties.



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4.1 Stakeholder analysis matrix of the cultural sector

Stakeholder and basic characteristics	Interests and how affected by the problem(s)	Capacity and motivation to bring about change	Possible actions to address stakeholder interests
Ministry of Culture : Between 33,000 and 39,000 employees. Low incomes. State employees (artists, administrators, workers and technicians).	Could be dismissed in the event of restructuring The most interesting may be promoted in these times of change.	Strong resistance and desire to maintain the status quo. Rebellious voices calling for reform from within, while others follow the Ultras of the Ministry. Some are undergoing training in management or development.	Capacity building Redistribution of tasks differently, in order to make them more useful Promotion of a social plan and early retirement
Civil society actors and independent artists : No statistics to assess their numbers, but they have been having an increasing impact since 1990. Collectives, NGOs, foundations. They haven't managed yet to exercise lobbying.	Sense of only having a little leeway. Resort to foreign funding for survival. Attempt to organise themselves for increased efficiency, but politics hinder their actions.	Very open to change. Their impact is increasing. Suggest programming sometimes far from the expectations of the public and tend to close in on a small elite circle.	Provide more administrative staff and expertise. Ongoing education and training. Need for greater freedom. Their relationship with State institutions should be rethought.
Commercial-Private Sector : Its representatives are well established in the cultural scene. They try to follow the supply and demand laws, but include a number of non-professionals who are needed for their money and value.	They are left to their fate. Have suffered during the last 3 years of political instability. Their incomes have been severely affected: curfew, violence, ... Piracy and intellectual property/copyright issues.	They follow the logic of the market and its fluctuations. Could profit from capacity building. Some do not easily let go because they monopolise the market. Lobbying	Help them organise their separate sector. For the cinema, for example, the State often intervenes to support the organisation of festivals etc. Revise laws and tax regime. Encourage co-production.
Public and	Illiteracy rates can	Open to all	Make cultural



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<p>amateurs: Are unknown. No impact studies.</p>	<p>reach up to half of the population. Some live in isolation and others only watch religious channels. Suffer from the centralisation of services. To be read, a writer should come to Cairo. The same goes for other talents.</p>	<p>options. Quite flexible and intelligent. They sometimes boycott what is forced upon them from above. Do not fail to surprise creators. The most sought-TV soap operas during the month of Ramadan indicate a change in tastes, and a more mature audience.</p>	<p>services more accessible. Take better account of the needs of people. Allow fans to practice their hobby.</p>
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4.2 SWOT analysis of the cultural sector

<p>Strengths</p> <p>Very rich and diversified cultural heritage. Tangible and intangible assets. An infrastructure that extends throughout the country, inherited from the socialist era (albeit poorly managed). Artists and intellectuals who have always been the gentle force of the country. Very vibrant popular cultural tradition, notably in the film and dance industries, but sometimes a low quality of cultural products. A rather dynamic, changing cultural scene. Human capacities to explore in a more efficient system. Geographical location, hence the cosmopolitanism of the past. The reputation of being the Hollywood of the East.</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Clientelism in both the formal and non-formal sectors. Elitist attitude widening the gap between the public and intellectuals. Weak link between the intellectual field and the political field. Centralisation 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. Financial dependence: the Ministry lives on the limited budget allocated to it and independent artists live on foreign aid.</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>A civil society that can do better. Training of new cultural managers. The Internet generation. The reception of refugees and displaced people of the region can revive the time when Egypt was beaming with his guests.</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>Political will to control the area. Amended Penal Code on NGOs and other similar laws hinder the work of civil society. Not being ready to take over and leaving the field blank, in the event that the State decides to retreat.</p>



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5 Education and Training

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).

- This year, a two-year diploma on cultural development was introduced at the Faculty of Arts, Cairo University, under the direction/monitoring of the former minister and academician, Emad Abu Ghazi. Thirty seven people have passed the written test and the number of applicants has exceeded expectations; most of them are active in the cultural field, and are from the government sector or civil society.
- El-Mawred foundation is preparing to launch a Master's in cultural management, in collaboration with Morocco's Hassan II University and that of Hildesheim, Germany. This two-year master aims at training cultural policy specialists and managers to bridge the gap in the Arab world. Morocco is one of the Arab countries where the least visa issues arise, particularly with regard to Syrians and Palestinians, making it more suitable to receive the candidates of this region-wide master's.
- El-Mawred foundation along with other civil society partners are sporadically organising training workshops on cultural management and other similar topics to develop professional capacity, but nothing is permanent.

6 Non-professional practices and general audience

In general, neither civil society actors nor employees of the Ministry of Culture are managing to reach a bigger share of the public. Events are



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targeted primarily at city dwellers and are concentrated in Cairo and Alexandria. Rare are the events that happen in other cities, and those which occur in Upper Egypt or the poorest areas are even rarer. The almost 200 palaces of culture and youth centres play an undeniable role by serving as meeting venues in remote or marginalised areas, but much remains to be done. As already explained, we do not have a comprehensive study capable of giving us some indicators on the audiences and the modes of practicing arts. Some observers say that the public sector and "independent producers" are ruling out 80% of the audiences who prefer private sector-commercial products and who emphasise the elitist attitude of these cultural producers, which drives away ordinary people. Clientelism seems to be widespread and sponsors and funders tend to seek players they already know, preventing the new generation from developing its work. Amateurs and non-professionals are not necessarily quite numerous, but we do not have statistics to confirm our hypothesis. Various talent scouting TV shows as well as local festivals reflect the taste of Egyptians in arts, but awareness work remains to be done. The post-revolution freedom also helped bring out the artistic interests as evidenced by the vivacity of creation on the internet. Social networks have also helped a lot "independent artists" and amateurs to sell their goods by providing them with a good marketing tool.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

Everyone seems to capitalise on the "time" factor in order to recover a more favourable environment in the cultural sector. Some forecast that a decade would be needed to change the situation: the current structures are outdated and cannot stand any longer, whether in the private or public sector, we constantly hear stakeholders say, emphasising the transformation of the mechanisms of production. This however does not prevent that some challenges must be addressed.

The funding issue. Recourse to foreign donors has undoubtedly helped some civil society organisations as well as "independent artists" to work - it was the only source of funding available to them. Cooperation with international foundations has also helped to develop the capacity of local actors who learned to present projects and to structure them according to the procedures adopted by international donors in order to obtain funding. However, independent cultural operators tend to be limited to foreign subsidies and do not always try to vary the sources of their funding. Consequently, they face the risk of having to comply with the agendas of funders and a kind of clientelism emerges: donors tend to allocate their funds to the same cultural operators. Thus, it is important to vary the sources of funding, to create activities capable



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of attracting public and achieving their own revenue to ensure their survival.

Networking. El Mawred has made efforts in this regard. Actors in Alexandria and Cairo for example frequent the same circles and often cooperate together to organise particular activities, but those living in the provinces remain largely anonymous. There is no network gathering all the links of the chain. The first step would be to have a database, a comprehensive list, for these actors to better come in contact and organise their work.

Apolitisation (the relationship between cultural operators and policy).

In the context of polarisation and restructuring of public life, affiliations and political trends can create conflict. Certain groups were dissolved against a backdrop of political disagreements and other groups (such as cultural policy ones) are meeting less and less. The latter has not yet decided whether it wants to turn into a lobbying group, which is important for its next steps.

Resistances. There is first and foremost a “generational” resistance dividing society. The views can be easily discerned based on the age group: intellectuals who grew up in the Nasser era refuse for the most part the withdrawal of the State or its retreat, whereas the younger and more rebellious generation protests against previous formats and demands the dismantling of the Ministry, etc. A balance should be reached, but the political will or the intentions of the governing ruling class are not very clear yet. There is another kind of resistance too, exercised by government officials who have interests in maintaining the status quo for multiple reasons.

Elaboration of a strategy. The parties involved must develop a real strategy in order to be able to continue working. This need applies to all domains, in a country that has been in a coma for more than thirty years. This is not easy in a country lacking politicians, managers, technicians... This presents a serious challenge and the actors must learn to reorganise themselves, divide roles, and reflect upon the medium and long terms.

Legislative work. This is a priority in order to end the current entangling of laws and decisions. A revision of cultural laws is needed.

Market study. A lot of empirical research and field work is needed in order to elaborate future strategies and respond to the needs of society.



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Education. Training of new managers, adoption of new methods, and improvement of the level of artists.

Politics have without a doubt a big impact on the cultural sector as a whole. However, the revolutionary spirit has confirmed the presence of civil society, drawing more attention to their activities, which flooded the streets and public spaces. They have made their voices heard as they had never done before. Those on the margins were propelled overnight to the centre stage. And for about a year, the entire intelligentsia was united by a common struggle: the fight for freedoms against the agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood. We heard "Stop the Islamisation of arts!" and saw the Zorba ballet dance in the streets to the applause of ordinary people who perhaps had never been to the opera before.

All these events opened the doors to a public debate on culture. Files that had been dismissed or ignored for a long time were put on the table. Current economic conditions do not allow for an increase of the budget allocated to culture in the immediate future, but that does not mean that civil society actors are not trying to negotiate an increase in accordance with the standards set by UNESCO. On top of their demands is thus the increase of the national budget to 1%, provided that this rate is equally shared between the public and independent sectors. This is also an opportunity for the Ministry to challenge itself: it should think about its failure in terms of marketing and civil society actors should to understand why the model of charities works better than their cultural associations...

Even if some are planning to copy the experience of the 60s, the environment is completely different in the cultural sector: market mechanisms and productivity, as well as the tastes of the new generation are radically different. It is true that so far the independent scene has not succeeded in building an environment that allows for the development of young talents, a favourable working environment, and sustainable and quality production companies. However, the emergence of new managers who want a career as cultural producers or managers is probably a good sign. These are aged between 20 and 30 and aim to develop new ways of working, allowing artists to concentrate on their work. The process of change is underway.



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8 Annexes

List of people interviewed

Name	Organisation
Heba Sherif	Director of Pro Helvetia Egypt. Holder of a PhD in Literature and author of a forthcoming book 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. In charge of the program on cultural policies, at Al-Mawred foundation. Coordinator of the national group of cultural policies.
Two members from the Ultras of the Ministry of Culture.	They requested anonymity.

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