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**The American University in Cairo**

**School of Global Affairs and Public Policy**

**CHALLENGES FACING INDEPENDENT CULTURAL ACTORS:  
THE CASE OF EGYPT**

**A Thesis Submitted to the**

**Public Policy and Administration Department**

**in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Master of Public Administration**

**By**

**Reem Khedr**

**Spring 21**

The American University in Cairo  
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy  
Department of Public Policy and Administration

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## **CHALLENGES FACING INDEPENDENT CULTURAL ACTORS: THE CASE OF EGYPT**

Reem Khedr

Supervised by Professor Ghada Barsoum

### **ABSTRACT**

The independent art scene in Egypt flourished following the January 25 revolution in 2011. This study examines the experiences of Egyptian artists and cultural operators through a looking glass into the evolving democratization of arts towards cultural democracy from a global perspective and using the intrinsic and instrumentalist arguments regarding the value of arts. Furthermore, it employs a qualitative analysis of case studies of 18 cultural operators in Cairo and Alexandria, who work in different artistic fields ranging from visual arts to performing arts and academia. The results demonstrate that the cultural policy framework guiding the arts sector in Egypt has restricted the independent scene financially and legally by making survival of the artistic entities difficult and sustainability unrealistic. Interviews with different artists and cultural operators reveal that there is a lack of capacity building to prepare a qualified cadre of cultural leaders and managers. They also show pitfalls in arts education and a lack of artistic excellence. These pitfalls have affected accessibility of audience to arts and accessibility of emerging artists to audience and to venues. Moreover, the interviews highlight the struggle cultural operators face in maintaining a decent standard of living while working in a volatile field. Considering the aforementioned, this study indicates the negative consequences of vague cultural policies on the Egyptian independent art scene and goes further to make recommendations.

**Keywords:** Independent art; cultural policies; governance; democratization; cultural democracy; challenges; access; artists; Egypt.

# Challenges Facing Independent Cultural Actors The Case of Egypt

## 1 Introduction

Art is highly centralized in Egypt (Al-Batrawai et al, 2014). Most opportunities for receiving art education are in the capital, with a few faculties in other cities such as Luxor and Alexandria. Likewise, most opportunities to attend artistic events are in Cairo (Fazeulaa, 2018), which is expected given that the population in the mega-city is estimated to be more than 20 million. However, even within Greater Cairo, art is largely inaccessible to the majority of the population as it is nearly exclusive to certain neighborhoods, certain social milieus and certain sectors. Such sectors refer to the popular and simplified distinction between the governmental cultural sector, the so-called independent art sector, and the commercial art sector (Fazeulaa, 2018).

Art agencies within the government operate under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and to a smaller extent under the governorates. It is represented through national institutions such as the Culture Palaces that are at least theoretically operating in each governorate. Culture Palaces and centralization are products of the Nasserist policies<sup>1</sup> from the 1950s and 1960s and have served a nationalist and enlightenment agenda with an understanding of the citizen's need for civilization and cultural taste (ARCP, 2017). Hence, democratization of culture<sup>2</sup> was evident during the Nasserist era. However, these state-owned institutions (e.g., culture palaces, public libraries, cinemas, and theatres) are becoming obsolete because they have been neglected and have not kept up with the developments and changes in the cultural field in our globalized world.

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<sup>1</sup> The political principles or policies of President Nasser of Egypt, especially those relating to Arab socialism and pan-Arabism; political principles or policies resembling these.

<sup>2</sup> A policy that aims to broaden accessibility of cultural services and products because culture is deemed as a "good" and intended for citizens (It will be discussed in detail in section 4.1.2).



The governmental cultural sector consists of the cinema apparatus, cultural production sector (e.g., theatre, cinema), the higher council of culture, the theatre art house that presents the theatrical state-affiliated performances, the Arab music orchestra and philharmonic, state owned exhibition spaces, and opera-affiliated venues such as the museum of modern art or center of the arts where visual artists can exhibit their work. However, independent actors do not have access to these venues.

The commercial scene which aims at making profits invests in production without providing training. Production without training yields a mimicking product of compromised artistic quality for the sake of maximizing profit, regardless of the product's origins (i.e., Disney). For instance, the productions of the Marquee Theatre in New Cairo represent the commercial scene that does not introduce new concepts, instead it recreates old concepts using new techniques. However, it does not add value to the audience who already know the story.

Outside the realm/jurisdiction of the governmental art sector and the commercial sectors, there have been attempts by the independent art scene to produce accessible art. The sector often described as "independent art scene" emerged in the 1990s and is largely independent from public funds and decision making by the Ministry of Culture. However, this sector is dependent on international funds, the regulations, and objectives of donors, and to a small extent the Corporate Social Responsibility grants by multinational companies operating in Egypt. The independent scene has flourished over the years with the rise of some arts and grassroots initiatives that aim at widening the access to arts and making it more public. Some of these initiatives are *El Fan Midan* (Art is a Square), *Mahatat* for Contemporary Art, *El Gneina* Theatre, *Rawabet* Theatre, and Downtown Contemporary Art Festival (DCAF) that was founded between early and late 2000s. However, due to the lack of a supporting ecosystem, these initiatives have struggled financially, legally, and politically. For instance, the 2017 law governing civil society organizations poses tight restrictions on cultural associations and

organisations and makes their chances of receiving funds more difficult (ARCP, 2017). Although different sets of skills and networks might be necessary in the governmental sector and the independent sector, both are subject to the interests and objectives of the funder – in one case the state, in the other international organizations that have specific goals and strategies, partially linked to their state.

For the sake of this research, I use “art” to refer to different kinds of contemporary arts such as performing arts, cinema, theatre, and visual arts. I employ the term “independent art scene” to refer to art produced by artists independent of the commercial mainstream art and independent of the governmental affiliated cultural and artistic institutions. I use “independent cultural operators” and “independent actors” interchangeably to refer to anyone who works in the independent art scene whether they are artists, art and cultural managers, technicians, producers, curators, directors, or volunteers, etc. In addition, I use “cadres” to refer to professional well-equipped and trained art operators. Moreover, I use “curator” to refer to an individual who manages art collections in a gallery.

## 1.1 Research Objectives and Research Question

The literature available regarding art management and cultural policies in Egypt is very limited. This research seeks to expand knowledge within the arts and culture sector particularly for those struggling to grow; non-profit organizations, independent art organizations, and cultural enterprises. Additionally, this study aims to navigate literature without being restricted by geography while simultaneously presenting insights from the field through interviewing art managers and cultural operators who are also independent actors. My research question is: what are the challenges facing the independent art scene in Egypt? Through this qualitative research, I aim at analysing the challenges facing the independent cultural actors while they are filling in the gaps left by the vague cultural policies and providing recommendations accordingly. By

highlighting the challenges and opportunities facing independent cultural actors, this research will persuade policy makers 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.

This study examines the challenges facing independent cultural actors in Egypt through an examination of the climate in which cultural policies have evolved globally in the last few decades. The study shows how the governance approach to arts influences the degree of accessibility to arts. It examines the debate of populist versus elitist approaches to art that has given rise to a top-down democratization of art which has later evolved into a bottom-up cultural democracy. The study then examines the value of arts argument and the debate between intrinsic value and instrumentalist value of arts to address the legitimation of arts' budgets and cultural policies. The study aims to explore the factors that influence the direction of cultural policies while focusing on the civil society sector known as the independent art scene. Moving to the analysis of the data collected, I identify seven main themes based on the results of an extensive conceptual analysis defined in section 4 which stand as challenges to independent cultural operators. These include quality of the artistic product, funding, legislation, infrastructure, arts education, accessibility, cultural management, and leadership.

## 1.2 Research Outline

The study will proceed as follows: In chapter 2, a background review of the infrastructure, legal framework and policy relevance underlying the functioning of the independent art scene. Chapter 3 will examine the relevant recent literature on the topic. Chapter 4 will lay out the conceptual framework which looks at the governance approaches and the arguments concerning the value of art as they influence and shape main features of cultural policy. Chapter 5 will describe a description of the qualitative methodology utilized in this study

through 18 case studies of different cultural operators and artists affiliated with different organizations, projects, and initiatives. Chapter 6 will then depict the results of the study and discuss their content extensively. Finally, chapter 7 will conclude this paper with a brief summary of the findings and limitations of this study.

## 2 Background

To provide an overview of Egypt's cultural policies post the 1952 revolution, we will discuss the relevant policies, examine the laws and budget of the ministry of culture, and investigate the art infrastructure in Egypt. After the conversion of the Ministry of National Guidance to the Ministry of Culture and National Guidance in 1959, Dr. Tharwat Okasha, the minister of Culture at the time, called different stakeholders for a public conference based on which a strategy project for cultural work has emerged (Abou Ghazi, 2017). Afterwards, a directed framework for the Ministry of Culture had been set when Dr. Tharwat Okasha took over the ministry. After two years of leading the ministry for a second term in 1968, he proposed a strategy or a cultural policy in the name of Policy of Culture and he reposed it again in 1969 to the national council for approval and funding. In 1971, Badr El Din Abou Ghazi, Minister of Culture (1970-1971), proposed a new project for the cultural policy (Abou Ghazi, 2017).

At the beginning of the 1990s, the first cultural policy to be posed again was with Farouq Hosny, who had taken over the ministry from 1987 until 2011 (ARCP, 2017). During his service at the ministry, he stretched state-run exhibition spaces and commenced several cultural programs, including the Palace of Arts, Gezira Arts Center, Alexandria Center of Arts, the Modern Dance Troupe and School, the Cairo History Rehabilitation Project, the Nubian Museum in Aswan, and the Alexandria National Museum (and the Grand Egyptian

Museum and the National Museum of Civilisation in Fustat) and the Cultural Development Fund.

In 2011, with the rise of the revolution, Dr. Emad Abou Ghazi, Minister of Culture (2011), proposed a project for a cultural policy and a cultural plan for the transitional period. Later in 2014, Dr. Gaber Asfour, minister of culture (2014-2015), proposed a strategy of a cultural work system in Egypt. Since 2016, the policies of the Egyptian Government have been based on the 2030 sustainable development strategy. Culture as a pillar of the 2030 vision is discussed in section 2.2.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.1 Infrastructure

Despite the cultural infrastructure covering the whole country, approximately 80 percent of artistic and cultural events take place in Cairo, 15 percent in Alexandria, and the few remaining are scattered over the whole country (Fazeulaa, 2018). The current infrastructure for the art and culture sector consists of private theatre companies declining in number, and display the same old-fashioned plays, while independent troupes perform at independently owned spaces and few theaters that belong to the government, such as the *Hanager* Centre which contains a theatre and an exhibition space. The *Hanager* Centre is located inside the Cairo Opera complex as a separate building that was established in 1991 to help emerging and professional artists display their work (ACRP, 2014). Within that, young performing art groups have considerable difficulty accessing state theaters and performance spaces. Only very few private organisations have managed to allocate spaces able to accommodate the public, mostly located in Cairo and Alexandria. Institutions such as *Sakiet El-Sawi* (El Sawi Cultural Wheel), *Makan* (Place) and *Mastaba* were able to rearrange their spaces to host regular events and

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<sup>3</sup> To check the 2030 vision, please visit this link: [https://www.culturalpolicies.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/egypt\\_full\\_profile\\_2014.pdf](https://www.culturalpolicies.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/egypt_full_profile_2014.pdf)

concerts. In addition to that, 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, *Darb 17-18*, Zamalek Art Gallery, Picasso, Art-Talk, and Gallery *Misr*. These galleries support contemporary arts and artists by showcasing and publicizing their work. Some of them like *Darb 1718* acts as a hub connecting Egyptian artists from several walks of life with the local and international arts and culture scene (Fazeulaa, 2018).

Within the infrastructure, a new version of artistically oriented coffeehouses has started to appear. These coffee shops operate as a combination between cafes and variations of galleries, libraries, co-working spaces, and theatres. They host exhibitions, concerts, book clubs, movie nights and other artistic events; some of these include Room Art Space, *Falak* (Orbit) and *3elbt Alwan* (Box of Colors) (Fazeulaa, 2018).

There are 82 movie theaters across Egypt and 35 of those in Cairo, according to statistics by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics in 2016. These cinemas are all controlled by a few big production and distribution companies that are monopolizing the film industry. The rest mostly comprise of numerous foreign institutes and cultural centers offer screening rooms. Additionally, a new movie theatre called *Zawya* (Corner) was founded in Cairo in 2014. Founded by Marianne Khoury, *Zawya* shows movies that are not the usual commercial choices but counts on the public need to see something different. A few years back, Khoury previously aimed at the same segment of the public when she successfully launched the Panorama of European Film (Fazeulaa, 2018).

## 2.2 Policy Implications

Around 0.23 percent of the State's annual budget is allocated to culture (ARCP, 2017). However, most of this amount (92.5 percent) is spent on the Ministry of Culture employees'

salaries. Helmi al-Namnam, former Minister of Culture, also mentioned this delegation of funds in an interview (Al Tayeb, 2017). The budget for cultural activities around Egypt in total is approximately 160 million pounds (1.85 Piastres per citizen). The ministry asked for 1.6 billion pounds for investment plans and projects in its 2017-2018 budget, but the government approved only 444 million pounds, approximately a quarter of what was requested. Article 48 in the 2014 Egyptian Constitution reads as follows:

*“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”.* Article 48-2014

In addition, Article 67 specifies 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.”* Article 67-2014

Apart from this last point giving the public prosecutor the right to indict the creators, the constitution seems to draft the outline of a cultural policy with the goal of democratizing culture and requiring the State to adhere to it (Fazeulaa, 2018).

Meanwhile, the cultural scene is regulated by a set of laws, regulations, presidential decrees, and ministerial decrees endorsed in recent decades and altered several times.

Legislation includes the laws ordering the establishment of Artistic Syndicates and the

Publishers' Union and laws on the censorship of artistic works. In addition, 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 concerned with the freedom of expression (Fazeulaa, 2018).

The previous amendments to the NGO Law (Law No. 70 of 2017) received heightened criticism and President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi made statements at the World Youth Forum in November 2018, acknowledging that the 2017 legislation had to be revised and further amended. Days later, a committee was formed by the Prime Minister to review the 2017 law, host a series of national dialogue sessions, and bring forward proposed amendments. The committee declared in April 2019 that it would now draft an entirely new law to replace the 2017 law after the dialogues, which were criticized for not welcoming the participation of human rights organisations. The text of the draft law was accepted by the cabinet in May and then approved by the members of Parliament in a final vote on 15 July; six of the members voted against the draft law. The Law regulating the civil work practice (commonly referred to as the NGO Law), Law No. 149 of 2019, came into force after the law was ratified by President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi and published in the Official Gazette edition on 19 August 2019 (TIMEP, 2019).

Moreover, Egypt's Demonstration Law, Law No. 107 of 2013, ratified by President Adly Mansour in 2013, requires organizers of protests made up of 10 or more participants to notify the police station in whose jurisdiction the protest would take place between three and 15 days in advance of the protest. If deemed as a national security threat, the law grants the Ministry of Interior to cancel or postpone the demonstration (TIMEP, 2018). This law makes it difficult for organizers of public and street art performances to hold their performances and artistic events.



In Egypt's Vision for 2030 that is based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), culture is mentioned as the ninth pillar as follows:

*“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.”*  
(Egypt's Vision 2030 website).

Among the intended programs for culture are: (i) reviewing laws and legislations related to cultural industries and heritage protection, (ii) developing and restructuring the cultural system, (iii) adopting a set of programs to raise historic and cultural awareness of the society, (iv) establishing an integrated database for cultural products and activities in Egypt, (v) increasing the efficiency of cultural services infrastructure and expanding its scope, (vi) protecting, maintaining, and developing heritage crafts, and (vii) supporting and empowering cultural industries. In addition to that, the KPIs focus mainly on tourism, visits to museums and culture centres. However, there are no structured plans available regarding how these programs will be implemented and who will be involved. The Egyptian Government has recently announced the revitalization of “*Soor magra el oyoun*” (Magra El Oyoun aqueduct). to become a gentrified cultural center through a collaboration with the private sector (Egypt's Vision 2030 website).

### 2.3 Independent Arts Post January 2011

New opportunities emerged for the independent art scene post 25 January 2011. Independent artists got access to public spaces when people took to the streets and the squares.

Artists and cultural managers found themselves face to face with audiences whom they did not interact with before that moment. Young practitioners grasped this opportunity to connect and reach out to different audiences by establishing new troupes and initiatives such as Cairo Contemporary Dance Center (CCDC), Ezzat Ezzat Dance Studio (EEDS), *Mahatat for contemporary art*, No Point Perspective Dance/Theatre Group, *El Gneina Theatre* at Azhar Park, and many others. Moreover, new festivals emerged such as Downtown Contemporary Art Festival (D-CAF), the Hakawy International Arts Festival for Children, the Bibliotheca Alexandria Contemporary Theatre Festival, and the Backstreet Festival in Alexandria (Metwaly, 2018).

In addition, some already existing festivals flourished such as Cairo Jazz Festival, 2B Continued Lab and Festival, Cairo Contemporary Music Days, and Bibliotheca Alexandria Summer Festival. These troupes, initiatives and festivals brought many international performances to the Egyptian audiences. They also provided independent Egyptian artists with exposure and artistic residence opportunities (Metwaly, 2018).

### 3 Literature Review

Concepts such as cultural policy, art governance, art and cultural management and cultural leadership have been explored by academics and practitioners in the last three decades but have not been fully exhausted especially in a field that is constantly changing, always context-bound and intersecting with sociology, management, and political science.

#### 3.1 Democratization of Culture and Cultural Democracy

Culture is a complex concept; it can be examined in anthropology as traditions, customs, totems, and symbols that constitute a way of living. During the Renaissance, up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, monarchs and elites used culture for self and national glorification, manifestation of

power and sophistication (Mulcahy, 2006). Later on, especially after the Second World War, cultural policy took on an enlightenment rhetoric led by governments with an orientation towards democratization of culture. This enlightenment rhetoric was based on a belief that art is a “good” beneficial for citizens. It focused on providing accessibility to art or “high culture” to citizens no matter their social class, educational degree, or place of residence (Mulcahy, 2006). Moreover, the enlightenment was a top-down and centralized but aiming at disseminating aesthetic culture to the peripheries, as exhibited by Egyptian Cultural Palaces across different governorates and in French “maisons de la culture” throughout its provinces.

While democratization of culture aimed at making arts and “high culture” accessible to everyone regardless of their background or location, cultural democracy was introduced to make sure no specific art form is privileged over another. In other words, cultural democracy promotes cultural relativism when it comes to taste as put by Jonathan Pacquette and Eleonora Redaelli (Paquette et al, 2015). For instance, in cultural democracy, opera and graffiti are viewed as equal expressions of art, whereas in democratization of culture, opera is viewed as a form of “high culture. In addition, cultural democracy introduced concepts such as “engagement” and participation to the objectives and narrative of its policies (Paquette et al, 2015). The dichotomy of democratization of culture and cultural democracy fails to acknowledge important components of the spectrum called “the spectrum of cultural policy’s cardinal references” (Paquette et al, 2015). For instance, the assumption of cultural democracy advocates that certain kinds of art promoted by democratization of culture is not fit for everyone is problematic in itself. It involves looking down on certain social classes and demographics assuming they cannot enjoy instances of “high art” (i.e., Gustav Flaubert).

Another argument by Pacquette and Redaelli is that cultural democracy has been shaped by a new generation of aspiring artists who are trying to find their place and gain legitimacy for their practices and productions. Hence, cultural democracy is not necessarily purely

democratic because the dynamics of the arts field in a certain time favour certain practices and prioritize them. Moreover, the values of cultural democracy are ambivalent at times. For example, in Canada, even though its cultural policy is claimed to be based on cultural democracy that regard all forms of culture and arts as equal and the artistic scene is alleged to be inclusive, aboriginal art and artists have expressed concerns towards being treated as lesser categories of “ethnic arts” that belong to the past (Paquette et al, 2015). Lastly, cultural democracy might have fallen into the trap of elitism. By claiming that all forms of artistic expression, such as graffiti, are all valuable, it might be paving the road to a new cultural elite that has to try all kinds of arts whether popular or not. As a result, an accumulation of intense cultural capital that extends beyond different tastes and social boundaries. To continue with the same example, it’s possible that cultural democracy might be imposing the idea of appreciation of graffiti on those who don’t want to (Paquette et al, 2015).

So, beyond the dichotomy of the democratization and democracy debates, Mulcahy (2006) invites researchers to understand other rationales such as “state glorification” where the government uses art for propaganda or to get more grounded.

Paquette and Redaelli (Paquette et al, 2015) refer to another policy rationale which is the “creative industries” or cultural entrepreneurship that are becoming a new type of cultural policy that is more concerned with the economic contribution of the sector that represents a labor force (i.e., technicians) with its own strengths, weaknesses, and needs transcending issues of access, taste and quality. It also treats cultural productions as symbolic goods that can be exported (Paquette et al, 2015).

The problem with the democratization of culture is assuming that the cultural needs of all society’s members are similar (Mulcahy, 2006). On the other hand, cultural democracy has risen as a more representative concept that allows for a bottom-up policy, which is more decentralized and participatory to include more popular art forms (Mulcahy, 2006).

Nonetheless, there is a continuous debate in national cultural policy in terms of goals as in excellence “elitist” versus access “populist” and in terms of government role as facilitator versus architect. More recently, starting from the 80s onwards, the conversation about creative cities has started to gain support especially with Richard Florida’s *The Rise of the Creative Class* which discussed how culturally vibrant cities attract businesses, investor, and urban homesteaders where there is street culture, live performances, bistros, cafes joined with galleries in hybrid spaces and historic buildings in a special cultural scene.

### 3.2 Access as a main feature of cultural policy

Article 27/2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights entails the right to participating in cultural life (Bamford, 2011). This right implies access to culture. According to a report produced by the working group of EU member states experts (OMC, 2012) on better access and wider participation in culture, access can have different goals or agendas. For example, redistribution of public funding can be one of the concerns of public authorities because, in this case, culture is considered a public good or service. Consequently, to tackle inequalities in the distribution of resources, the public administration or policy tries to facilitate access and participation to give everyone- no matter their background or limited resources- an equal opportunity to enjoy culture. This policy focused on access is driven by democratization of culture.

Among various reasons for promoting culture, culture can be a vehicle for social transformation and inclusion. On their agendas, cultural institutions have started to build new audiences to reach some level of institutional sustainability. These institutions need to think strategically about why they need their audience to increase in numbers, analyse their user habits, and unravel the reasons behind their interest or disinterest to design cultural programs accordingly (IRMO, 2015). Subsequently, implement a monitoring and evaluation system to

evaluate the whole process and its outcomes. Furthermore, stakeholders, prospects and audience analysis facilitate identifying barriers to participation and help set realistic goals, taking into consideration the investment of time and effort required to attract different kinds of audience. Audiences are usually divided into central, potential, occasional users, and non-users. The needs of non-users can oblige institutions to revisit and revamp their cultural programs (OMC, 2012).

The Working Group of EU Member States' experts identified several obstacles or barriers that prevent people from participating in the arts (OMC, 2012). These barriers can be financial (e.g., entrance fees, transportation cost), geographical (i.e., people who live on the periphery or in rural areas), lifestyle (e.g., interests, language, life choices), and attitudes and perception (e.g., thinking that art and cultural institutions are elitist, considering participation in arts and culture a low priority). Barriers can also be physical (i.e., disabled people). For this purpose of responding to the needs of potential audiences, partnerships are crucial as they allow room for participatory methods that involve and represent targeted audiences better (OMC, 2012). For instance, partnerships with organisations that empower women can help women access art and culture more often.

According to the OMC expert group, all access efforts in the previous years seem to be more focused on the supply side of artistic and cultural production, though the efforts on the demand side are not as clear. Part of the sustainability equation of cultural institutions is cultural education. Thus, access is not just about the supply but the demand as well. Cultural educational activities and classes such as music and painting cultivate an interest. Therefore, schools are a good place to initiate interest in art and allow students to experiment and develop their artistic taste, fostering a sense of art appreciation at a young age. This may encourage young individuals to seek more and grow up to be advocates of the arts themselves, adding to the demand for artistic production (OMC, 2012).

Pertaining to building an audience to complement the access, according to the OMC expert group, it is important that funding authorities help art organizations own their own access-enhancing initiatives or projects so that they do not perceive that an external agenda is being imposed on them. Thus, treasuring experiences of staff and investing in their capacity through trainings, in addition to providing opportunities for networking in between cultural institutions, and allowing audience development plans a reasonable timeline to reap their benefits are all measures that funding institutions and entities should take into consideration (IRMO, 2015).

### 3.3 Participation as a main feature of cultural policy

The “access” concept is interlinked with participation. It looks into inviting non-traditional audiences to make use of the available cultural resources by helping them overcome the existing barriers or obstacles. According to the OMC expert group, participation as a concept acknowledges the audience as an active stakeholder that should be involved or at least consulted during the design and planning of the cultural offers. Participation also entails taking part in decision-making, creative process, and in meaning-making. Both on the side of public authorities and institutions, efforts for access may originate from a range of societal considerations emanating from different, and often complementary, philosophical perspectives. Overall, they may be re-conducted to the notion of culture as an agent for social transformation (OMC, 2012). This notion of participation as a main feature of cultural policy is driven by cultural democracy. For instance, community art projects are becoming more important than ever. A good example is that of an opera community project that took place in Delfzijl, a small town north of the Netherlands. The implementers of the project took all stakeholders’ interests into account and so made the event relevant to all of them. For instance, there was a TV show following the updates of the preparations and starring the behind-the-

scenes staff, a festival was ongoing during the event and there was a giftshop with products related to the performance, in addition to an international business event to help boost government/corporates and small businesses relations. All these congruent efforts and co-operation with schools and community centres led to the success of the performance and a boost in the economic status of Delfzijl (Clements, 2016).

### 3.4 Relevance and Art Education as a main feature of cultural policy

According to the OMC expert group on better access and wider participation in culture, artistic expression and creativity are manifestations of culture as a competency that is as important as literacy and numeracy, thus helps with self-fulfillment and personal development. On a larger scale, it helps with social inclusion, active citizenship, and employment. As a result, the possession of creativity and culture contributes to economic and social development. However, the low access to art education in the school curriculum is one of the challenges facing arts and cultural activities, making it dependent on the willingness and effort of school principals and teachers (OMC, 2012; IRMO, 2015). Even though arts are visible in kindergarten and primary school to some extent, it's not visible in middle and high school where the focus is on the sciences and math. Moreover, arts and cultural activities are almost non-existent in some vocational education training curricula. Therefore, to increase cultural participation, cultural activities need to be a core part of all educational affiliations (IRMO, 2015).

The OMC expert group state that socio-economic factors are not the only obstacle that prevents audiences from visiting art events. Audiences consume culture in new forms and places. In other words, relevance of content, needs and interests of different age groups need to be thoroughly analysed and addressed separately. On that basis, the question of relevance to individual and community is very important. Hence, institutions need to think about it



strategically if they are to survive in the long term. This could entail bringing cultural activities out of traditional venues to public spaces or to site-specific performances where the artistic concept is designed or tailored to be performed/displayed in a specific place/site. Perhaps also changing the programming and re-positioning art services or products to address different kinds of audiences. In this sense, organizations should revisit their decision-making mechanisms and try to, enable people to express their visions and articulate their opinions (IRMO, 2015). This notion of relevance is driven by expressive cultural democracy based on a capabilities approach.

On the other hand, the OMC expert group poses a question, in an age of budget cuts, how does one acquire or collect resources to achieve this holistic relevance? Cultural organizations may feel threatened to ask audiences to get involved in programming thinking that this means compromising quality or giving away artistic curation. On the contrary, this is a call for balance between maintaining core audiences “usual suspects” and accommodating needs and interests of potential new audiences, all while keeping the upper hand on the artistic content or direction (OMC, 2012). For instance, in 2015 when Mahatat for contemporary art introduced opera performances from balconies in the streets of different cities in the North of Egypt, the performers played classic Arabic songs in addition to Italian and French opera pieces. By mixing the familiar with the foreign, it attracted people’s attention and did not alienate them at the same time (Swais, 2016).

The OMC expert group moves on to tackle internal management. To be able to reach out to diverse audiences, the internal governing structures of cultural organizations should be reflective of society’s diversity. With the fast-changing information technology networks, lines between creators and users have been blurred. The access and participation concepts are changing whether we prefer it or not, and users have a say in terms of which content gets promoted or even funded (OMC, 2012). Access to culture through the Internet is increasing

rapidly, hence cultural organizations may act as intermediaries. Additionally, art organizations can utilize social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, to maintain relevance to their audience. Finally, many organizations have a long way to go to integrate new web technologies that enable more interactions and collaborations with audiences (OMC, 2012; IRMO, 2015).

### 3.5 Cultural Governance from elitism to populism

In the art and cultural sector, cultural governance is an emerging and constantly changing concept that is not completely examined. Thus, the intricacies of arts governance are yet to be explored fully (Rentschler, 2014). Cultural governance is defined as governments' direct or indirect involvement in the promotion and administration of programs of cultural organizations (i.e., museums) existing in specific geographic boundaries with unique financial and administrative arrangements." (Moon 2002; King et al, 2019).

As previously mentioned, culture is a product that enhances the quality of life, encouraging social capital that contributes to bettering citizens and serving as one of the core reasons governments strive to make it accessible to their citizens. On that basis, what is considered "high culture" should be available to all social classes regardless of their demographic information (Mulcahy, 2006). Though the aforementioned transitions into the "democratization of culture", Mulcahy details the problems with this kind of approach as it assumes that the cultural needs of all members of society are one and the same. It also entails an elitism and superiority that favours distinct kinds of art that are representative of a certain class taste (Mulcahy, 2006).

On the other hand, the term "cultural democracy" aims at providing a more populist or participatory approach within the realm of cultural provision and accessibility to arts. Junker and colleagues develop this concept further via advocating for an "expressive cultural

democracy” that acknowledges different tastes and gives voice to the voiceless to express their tastes (Junker et al, 2016).

Jensen is considered as she presents the benefit of cultural participation as a dialogue between artists and audience negotiating meaning. Additionally, she argues that the distinction between good and bad culture is an important evaluative experience because it is a conversation about worthiness, meaning, what is human, sacred, challenging and what is not (Junker et al, 2016).

Furthermore, Conner calls for the acknowledgement of the blurring lines between professionals and amateurs or creators and users. She argues that today’s audience wants to be part of the interplay of ideas because it evokes feelings of joy and fulfilment (Junker et al, 2016). Overall, in a cultural democracy, a cultural policy is about creating spaces that are not driven by profit or commercial values (Mulcahy, 2006), organizations are interested in their audiences and are communicating with them to understand their needs. While passive participation is focused on viewers as observers, active participation involves audience in production or interaction with the artistic product (Petrova, 2019). As Knell puts it, opening the cultural sphere to a bigger number of citizens to engage and to set its agenda is a way forward to make the cultural sphere more democratized and more representative of the public (Knell et al, 2011).

In her article on Swiss regional cultural policy, Marx (2020) discusses who is included in the decision-making process even if it is through a consultation committee, who are somewhat symbolically recognized as having some kind of power. Even though their roles might be far from central, their perspectives are still considered. The decision-making here refers to the possibility of allocating public funding to certain channels even if it has to get a final approval by public authorities. The challenge is who decides upon who gets included or excluded and the effect that exclusion has on actors being marginalized from the

implementation policy and arrangements. Thus, policy change in the arts and cultural sector can be defined in light of implementation arrangements as a change in the decision-making power distribution between actors and the institutionalized links and relationships (Marx, 2020)

Empowering grassroots, private actors and local institutions can be one of the directions of policy change. Including a number of new actors or creating new institutions with the objective of achieving wider reaching policy change as it transcends the pre-included actors. This provokes the governance question on a wider level: does the cultural sector steer itself? Is it autonomous and to what extent? Who decided on that? While autonomy is applauded in literature, Menger (1987) argues that the state intervenes to restrict the market forces. On the other hand, Blomgren (2012) underscores the tension between democracy and autonomy as elected officials are expected to have a stake in cultural issues (Marx, 2020).

In their book on arts management and cultural policy research, Jonathan Pacquette and Eleonora Redaelli discuss the subject of negotiation and renegotiation and how recurrent it is when the organizational identity of cultural institutions is discussed. Collective identities, values, and purposes are continuously disassembled and rebuilt through new logics and collective ideals. An example of this would be Anne Gombault's work on the Louvre Museum by introducing commercial logics. Pacquette and Redaelli list two aspects within the policy formulation stage that are relevant to the field of cultural policy and art management are clarification of the cultural issue and selection of the right alternative. Clarification of the cultural issue entails that the issue at hand needs to be redefined considering its relation and influence on society, the state and the state's political preferences. The other aspect of policy formulation is choosing between alternatives. Decision makers need to select the most efficient approaches and tools to actualize the cultural policy. For example, if the objective of a cultural policy is to create a sense of belonging and pride, to mobilize arts and culture, what means should be used? Decision-makers might need to depend on community engagement strategies,

promoting local artists and celebrities while highlighting historical figures and stories (Paquette et al, 2015).

In general, governments lead the policy formulation process, sometimes they rely on experts, rarely is active citizen participation the main drive (Paquette et al, 2015). Cultural policy researchers have examined the configuration of cultural actors in the policy elaboration and decision-making processes and the influence of policy experts on the policy formulation process (Ahearne & Bennett, 2007, as cited in, Marx, 2020). Concurrently, other researchers have been examining the relationships between the different cultural actors who are part of the policy formulation process. For instance, how much of an artist's input is appreciated after the policy formulation process? Are the structures of relationships between different actors inclusive? Is decision-making excluded to a cultural elite? Is it a corporate-favouring structure? Is the cultural actors' configuration persistent on the long term? (Marx, 2020). In Egypt, even though there is a pillar discussing culture in Egypt's Vision 2030, there is no announced cultural policy or strategy anywhere up until now.

Lastly, Paquette and Redaelli argue that emotions and value affect the policy formulation stage especially when the issue is a cultural or artistic one. Arts and culture can appeal to certain values that influence what is agreeable, and what kinds of solutions can help address related issues (Paquette et al, 2015).

### 3.6 Challenges Facing Cultural Policy

Per Mangset (Mangset, 2020) defines cultural policy as a set of structured plans and actions outlined by public authorities assigned to work on the arts and culture sector. According to Mangset, cultural policy is a relatively recent concept that appeared after World War II. France established the first ministry of culture in 1959, the UK created the Arts Council in 1946 and the Nordic countries established specific public bodies for culture and welfare

scholarships in the 1970s. However, public support of arts and culture precedes the 20th century. For instance, royal patronages were enthusiasts for the arts during the Renaissance (Mangset, 2020).

According to Mangset, it appears that there is still no ideal regime for cultural policy. Post-war, governments were expected to take care of their citizens' lives including their cultural well-being. However, the world has undergone multiple social transformations along the way such as globalization, liberalisation, digitalisation, financial crises, terrorism, migration, and religious extremism. These transformations have made art more relevant than ever, it has globalized art and made it more of a commodity influencing cultural policies to focus on creative industries in the last two decades (Mangset, 2020). Even though most countries accumulated more than 50 years of experience of public cultural policy, it seems that many originally defined goals have not been fully achieved (Mangset, 2020). For example, cultural policy is facing a legitimization crisis in some countries, artists are still relatively poor when compared to other professions, policy instruments used by public authorities seem to be obsolete. Mangset thus poses the following: is this the end of cultural policy as we know it? Is a new age of post-cultural policy upon us? (Mangset, 2020).

Artists still earn less than their counterparts in other professions (Mangset, 2020). Many artists have to work an additional job, often in a separate field, to secure their income and make ends meet. Artistic work in this sense is still insecure and underpaid or unpaid (Mangset, 2020). Skewed income distribution is also one of the characteristics of artistic professions where very few professional artists earn a lot of money while the majority are underpaid (Mangset, 2020). While some artists are permanently employed such as those working in the public sector, others face precarious conditions such as freelance dancers and visual artists (Mangset, 2020). In Egypt, independent artists are mostly poor especially when they are starting their careers and have not accumulated enough social capital. Only those who make it to the commercial scene

are the ones who get paid well. Very few independent artists make it to the international market and remain local, they usually end up working a regular job next to their arts to be able to sustain themselves.

Within the context of nation states, modern public cultural policies developed. However, throughout the decades, the cultural production and distribution have become globalized. Most if not all cultural industries whether the film or music industry have become global. Specifically, digitization technologies have eased the globalization process. Many professional artists now pursue international careers where they tour different countries and get hired by different companies and orchestras (Mangset, 2020). For example, some visual artists showcase their work at international biennials such as Venice and Documenta. However, very few make it through the hierarchy of international prestige successfully (Mangset, 2020). Therefore, perhaps this globalization hype, the need for international regulations is as important as national cultural policies (Mangset, 2020). We have seen examples of international regulations such as copyrights laws and heritage regulations. Even though some international organizations such as UNESCO, the EU and the Council of Europe have been trying to develop international efforts and some countries are trying to complement their national policies with foreign ones, Mangset wonders if the national cultural policies are still relevant in today's globalised cultural world (Mangset, 2020).

Since most arguments made for the case of arts and culture are based on the positive effects of culture outside the art and cultural sector such as social and economic impacts, Mangset poses another question: why do we need a separate policy for the arts when it can go under the educational or industrial sectors? Mangset argues that the instrumental argument for the arts have recently caused restructuring of cultural policies in some countries on the local and regional levels. On the other hand, a separate policy and public departments for culture

specifically might have restrained and put culture in a bureaucratic iron cage, in this case a non-sectoral cultural policy could be more rewarding for the arts (Mangset, 2020).

One more challenge facing the cultural sector is the neo-liberal agenda that is pushing for a portion in the arts budget to be substituted by private investments in culture. Mangset wonders if cultural production can survive on market income alone. Altogether, Mangset claims that a separate policy for culture might not persist in the long run especially with the legitimization crisis that is facing public cultural policy in some countries due to the failure to achieve some of its objectives. He argues that public cultural policies and functions might be diffused into several sectors in some countries, abolished or revised in others (Mangset, 2020).

Upon the request of the European Parliament, a study on “Financing the arts and culture in the European Union” during the period 2000-2005 has been made by Arjo Klammer, Lyudmilla Petrova and Anna Mignosa. The study was published in 2006. During the study period, national spending on culture as a percentage of GDP varied between 0.3 percent and 1.2 percent among countries.

One of the main findings of the study is that most of the EU countries are turning administering the arts towards a decentralisation and désétatisation approach where local levels are more actively involved. Some governments such as that of the UK are assigning arms’ length bodies (foundations, arts council, etc.) to supervise the distribution of funds. National governments support cultural activities by means of direct subsidies (grants, awards, etc.) and indirect subsidies (such as tax expenditure) (Klammer et al, 2006).

Policy priorities and objectives differ from one country to the other. For instance, in the Nordic countries, Austria, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, a main objective of cultural policy is supporting artists. Meanwhile, in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, some Baltic countries, the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands, art education and social cohesion are prioritized. On the other hand, for Italy, Greece, Cyprus, and Malta, protection of heritage is a



top priority. Besides, the economic effect of culture is becoming more and more of an objective shaping cultural policies especially in countries such as the United Kingdom, Denmark, Austria, Germany, and the Netherlands. Some countries like Germany, Spain and Austria contribute highly to culture at the local level because the autonomy of regions and municipalities is high. In addition, large shares of arts councils' budgets In Sweden, Denmark and Finland are dispersed as grants to individuals, especially writers and visual artists. (Klamer et al, 2006)

During the period studied, but fluctuation within countries tended to be slight. Nordic countries have the highest percentages. Some Eastern European countries like Slovenia and Estonia tend toward the high end as well. When a broader definition is considered, the data suggest percentages between 0.4 to above 2 percent, with Luxemburg and Denmark as the leaders and Greece at the lowest end. The autonomy of regions and municipalities achieved in some countries (especially Austria, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom) has allowed them to contribute significantly to culture at the local level (Klamer et al, 2006).

Since the 1980s, the sector of the French Ministry of Culture has grown with the rising influence of cultural industries, on the one hand, and the emergence of modern, far from being legitimate, cultural practices, on the other. The idea of “cultural democratization” has therefore evolved into that of “cultural democracy”. This concept of “cultural democracy” no longer implies the propagation of a “legitimate culture” or the effort to extend its access, but the promotion of all sorts of cultural practices originating from the people themselves and, hence sustaining cultural diversity.

From a sociological perspective, Pierre Bourdieu studies highlighted long-lasting disparities in the way people access culture and the reproduction of these inequalities, generation after generation. That is why it has always been the goal of the cultural policy in

France to make culture more accessible through concepts of “cultural democratization”, “cultural democracy”, “cultural diversity”, or “culture for all”, which resulted in special measures such as pricing policies (including free admission), more widespread and equally dispersed cultural facilities across France, or art education for all in schools (Pflieger, 2013).

In addition to its expenses, the state can fund both the arts and the media with an effective tax policy. For instance, books in France benefit from a reduced VAT rate (5.5 percent) as way of promoting reading activities. The French “cultural exception” supports the cinema industry. In reality, at the end of the 2000s, total public financing for culture increased to around 14.8 billion Euros, comprising 52.6 percent (7.8 billion) from the state and 47.4 percent from local authorities (7 billion). Public funding for the arts reached Euros 230 per inhabitant, compared to 22.6 pounds in the United Kingdom in 2009-2010, including the Arts Council, the National Lottery and local funding (Pflieger, 2013).

Meanwhile, even though Berlin is considered a haven for independent art scene compared to its counterparts in other cities, 95 percent of the cultural budget goes to big institutions whereas the remaining 5 percent goes to the independent art scene to fund individual artists and projects (Landau, 2018).

### 3.7 Arts Organizations and Values as a basis for arts governance

Patrycja Kaszynska examines values in art organizations and how they affect their business models. What makes arts organizations so enjoyable and attractive is the value they hold by being spaces of contestation, negotiation, and agitation. “Orders of worth” or different values are continually played out in arts organizations (Kaszynska, 2019). Balancing different ways of valuing and kinds of value is important to society and to cultural organizations as it allows reflection on the organizational identity, sense of ownership, encourage innovation and

aid sustainability. In relevance, the “assembling” of different values is a source of creation of meaning and social relevance (Kaszynska, 2019).

The notion of value is important for arts organisations. Their artistic, social, economic, aesthetic, environmental outcomes are of value, thereby creating value. They do make a difference in the eyes of the beholder— a stakeholder, a funder, an investor, the audience, an employee, and other key players of society at large. Moreover, values underpin arts organizations and can be reflected via the vision or mission statement and its organizational culture. Within the organization, employees also carry their own value orientations, principles, and beliefs. Lastly, external value relations are shaped by arts and cultural organizations. Altogether, the organizational and individual values are collocated with larger values of the cultural sector that are articulated and interpreted at the level of cultural policy (Kaszynska, 2019).

According to Kaszynska, a highlight of working in the arts is formulating processes and narratives to deal with the complexities of different value kinds and keep them together. Arts organizations need to maintain a balance between what employees consider valuable, to what audiences consider as such, and reconcile their organizational values with those of policymakers and funders. In addition, arts organizations need to balance values of populism with those of artistic freedom, and the urge for social change challenging specific existing economic structures while managing their own financial sustainability. While working their way through many limitations imposed by policymakers, funders, and the public in general, they work to soak in and reconcile different norms and lifestyles to earn their legitimacy internally and externally. Thus, rather than being a seamless whole, the value totality in any arts organization is an assembled and multifaceted construct (Kaszynska, 2019).

## 4 Conceptual Framework

Increasing the accessibility of the arts depends on the governance approach to arts. Kevin Mulcahy (Mulcahy, 2005) explains how until the 18th century, cultural policy was based on an elitist approach. However, towards the end of the 19th century, voices advocating for a populist approach were starting to rise worldwide (Mulcahy, 2005). The debate of populist versus elitist approaches to arts has given rise to the democratization of art especially after the end of the Second World War (Mulcahy, 2005). As democracy has become more rooted and citizenship participation has become a necessity, cultural democracy has started to flourish paving the road for an expressive cultural democracy that gets its inspiration and power from a capabilities approach. These gradual levels of democratization have led some researchers to ask if cultural policy has become obsolete or if an age of post-cultural policy is upon us. Meanwhile, the question of legitimation of arts and cultural policy reoccurs especially when governmental budgets are discussed. Thus, cultural policies cannot be addressed without mentioning the value of arts argument and debate between intrinsic value and instrumentalist value of arts.

For the sake of this thesis, I am utilizing both the governance approach as a framework and reviewing literature on the value of the arts argument to explore the factors that influence the direction of cultural policies while focusing on the civil society sector known as the independent art scene. Utilizing this framework, I attempt to define all potential variables that could explain the problems facing the independent art scene in Egypt.

### 4.1 Governance Approach

This section explores how elitist versus populist approaches influence the direction of cultural policies. It moves on to explain how cultural policy globally has shifted from an elitist to a more populist approach over the years; it presents the top-down democratization of culture policy that later on evolved into a more participatory cultural democracy that paves the way to

a bottom-up expressive cultural democracy based on a capabilities approach that allows for spaces which in turn give people the chance to realize their potentials.

Cultural policy researchers coined its definitions from public policy studies and political science. Clive Gray (2010, as cited in, Paquette et al, 2015), a cultural policy researcher defined cultural policy as the span of cultural and artistic activities that governments either carry out or not. Paul DiMaggio (1983) defines cultural policy as an ideational product that must compete with other products in the marketplace of ideas to get support from the state, support being either resources or legitimacy. DiMaggio claims that his definition extends to include not just the intended actions or inactions of governments but also their unintended consequences (DiMaggio, 1983).

Some definitions of cultural policy are more comprehensive as they include all institutions that have to do with culture including heritage. The definition by Kevin Mulcahy (2006) encloses a broad assemblage of activities and interventions carried out by governments such as visual arts, museums, performing arts and historic preservation that were originally associated with arts policies. Margaret Wyszomirski (2002) defines cultural policy as a dynamic process made up of agents as a set of organizations and individuals that are concerned with creation, production, dissemination, showcase, education and sustaining artifacts, products and entertainment activities. The research community view cultural policy as interwoven activities and organizations that share an inner logic and have common goals (Wyszomirski, 2002).

Cultural policy according to J. Mark Schuster (2003) can be defined as the sum of government art-related activities whether they are unintended for-profit services or profitable cultural industries. Such a cultural policy considers whether art-related activities are focused on humanities, heritage, or contemporary arts as well (Schuster, 2003). According to Rentschler (2014), strategies of the government that aim at producing, marketing and

consuming art-related activities are also part of cultural policy. As all policies have intentional programs that have certain objectives, outcomes and activities, other objectives can be implicit (Rentschler, 2014). Altogether, what does cultural policy emphasize, based on what and how is it formulated? This leads to the following debate between the elitist and the populist positions.

#### 4.1.1 Populism versus Elitism

Proponents of the elitist position argue that cultural policy should emphasize aesthetic quality as the determining criterion for public subvention. Those who adopt this view are usually, but not limited to, traditionalist artists within the fine arts or affluent audiences. On the other hand, proponents of the populist approach think of culture as a broader concept that reaches and connects with wider audiences through a policy that caters for cultural diversity and expands cultural opportunities<sup>4</sup>, blurring the lines between professional and amateur cultural activities (Mulcahy, 2006). The debate between elitist and populist culture is what sparked the coining of “democratization of culture” and “cultural democracy” whether it’s an expansion of accessibility or enabling participation in a wider variety of cultural activities. This will be expanded on, in the following sections.

#### 4.1.2 Democratization of Culture: Top-Down Approach

Governments have adopted and promoted cultural programs to broaden accessibility of cultural services and products because culture is deemed as a “good” and intended for citizens. The Egyptian government is no exception. For instance, Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian President in the 60s has introduced the idea of cultural palaces all over the country. The enlightenment agenda and the state’s ministry of culture is attempting at making arts available

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<sup>4</sup> Cultural Opportunities refer to venues, institutions, facilities which give citizens the chance to participate in culture.

to the public; whether its strategy is correct or not is another story. In this regard, culture as a good should be readily available to everyone regardless of, social class, education, geographical location, and other factors. Furthermore, in this visualization of democratization, “high culture” and aesthetics should not be exclusive to a certain class or a particular location. However, in this policy formulation, cultural programming has been usually top-down, center-focused or vertical (Mulcahy, 2006).

Democratization of culture envisions the importance of culture as an educational tool and enlightenment tool for citizens. The idea of broadening the dissemination of culture is to provide all citizens an equal opportunity to take part in affordable or even free cultural activities funded by the government for that very aim (Dueland 2003, as cited in, Mulcahy, 2006). To serve this goal, the government is expected to finance different kinds of art exhibitions and affordable performances, making art education available to the public. The government also encourages national institutions to tour schools, retirement houses, housing complexes and even workplaces to promote equal opportunity for accessing aesthetics.

Although the democratization of culture calls for broadening access of culture to the public with aims of enrichment and inclusivity, the policy is also based on a grand assumption that all members of society have the same cultural needs as the groups of privilege whose experience the content originally corresponded to. However, expanding the access to audiences who were not part of those privileged groups doesn't necessarily mean attracting them (Langsted,1990, as cited in, Mulcahy, 2006). This is evident in Egypt as the remnants of the 1960s democratization of culture policy still hangs in the governmental sector; however, infrastructure exists but it is not as attractive as it once was because it hasn't been maintained and is not up to date with new technologies and state of the art approaches.

### 4.1.3 Cultural Democracy: Bottom-Up Approach

To address the limitation of democratization of culture, the concept of cultural democracy has arisen to draw attention to cultural opportunities (Mulcahy, 2006). Cultural democracy aims at making the provision, approach, and definition of culture more participatory or more populist. Furthermore, to respond to the disadvantages of top-down democratization policy, cultural democracy is a shift to more of a bottom-up approach where the government assures access is provided but gives citizens more freedom to be active in the cultural realm on their own terms. Considering that cultural differences exist among regions, provinces, rural and urban areas, extending among different social groups, cultural democracy views the state as a subsidy provider where participatory culture is acknowledged, accommodated, and celebrated (Duelund 2003, as cited in, Mulcahy, 2006). Cultural democracy thus embraces a pluralistic decentralization strategy as an alternative for a monocultural concept.

As established, cultural democracy as a concept aims at supporting a variety of cultural activities (Mulcahy 2010; Duelund 2003); however, individuals choose different forms of cultural and artistic activities based on their tastes. Junker and Balling (Juncker et al, 2016) argue for an expanded cultural democracy understanding that they call “expressive cultural democracy”. Expressive cultural democracy gives space for the expression of different tastes and interests (Juncker et al, 2016).

Pertaining to expressive cultural democracy, Joli Jensen (Jensen, 2003, as cited in Juncker et al, 2016) argues that the instrumental logic creates a dichotomy between elitist and pop culture. She argues that the taste of the elite (usually in charge of policy making) ends up being used as a standard against which all forms of participation in arts and culture are measured. In addition to that, Jensen argues that this is problematic because it looks down on people who have different tastes and perspectives but whom these policies usually are addressing (Juncker et al, 2016). Altogether, she proposes an expressive logic as an alternative



to the instrumental logic because the instrumental logic makes cultural policy and arts advocacy unattractive although they should advocate it (Juncker et al, 2016).

Furthermore, Jensen (Jensen, 2003, as cited in Juncker et al, 2016) stresses on the importance of acknowledging the interactivity of arts as an experience based on assimilation and convergence of ideas and values. It is also a form of communication that flows **حقيقة هف** both ways between the sender and the non-passive receiver where meaning is constantly negotiated and contested (Juncker et al, 2016). Thus, when users and their different preferences and tastes are placed in the center of cultural policy, audience development and arts advocacy, all cultural venues (e.g., theatres, cinemas, museums, libraries), no matter how traditional, become participatory democratic platforms for meaning and values exchange. This paradigm shift helps both elite and popular tastes coexist, stemming from a belief of an expressive perspective that accommodates much more than the instrumental logic set by elites (Juncker et al, 2016).

Additional advantages of participatory arts pertain to how new cultural and artistic experiences help people enjoy the moment, yielding a sense of entertainment and pleasure (Juncker et al, 2016). As online digital culture has blurred the lines between the professional and amateur, user and producer, and commercial and non-commercial art (Jenkins and Bertozzi 2008 as cited in Juncker et al, 2016), Lynn Conner (Conner, 2008, as cited in Juncker et al, 2016) argues that these late modern young participatory cultures should encourage institutions to open to the possibility for co-authorship and cooperation between what is called “high culture” and “low culture” and between users and art experts (Juncker et al, 2016).

#### 4.1.4 Cultural Capability

Jonathan Gross and Nick Wilson (Gross et al, 2020) propose “cultural capability” as a new account of cultural democracy. They build on the previous ideas of redistribution or expansion of the means of cultural production. Without discarding public or shared

responsibility for cultural opportunity and by recognizing the potential diversity of cultural activities and artistic value, the authors aim to introduce alternative, conceptual and normative frameworks for cultural policy (Gross et al, 2020). Cultural opportunities exist in the in between spaces and through interdependencies and interconnections between different cultural resources such as libraries, organizations, social centers, and schools. This is not limited to physical locations, as long as it is a space where people can come together (i.e. network of youngsters who dance). When these sets of interconnectivities are developed, a “cultural ecosystem” (Gross et al, 2020) emerges. It requires a multitude of adaptation, learning, and change to manage networks and maintain the ecosystem (Gross et al, 2020). Furthermore, within these ecosystems the participation variety, from being a volunteer or a creative individual to being a workshop participant or an audience member, is a continuum not a dichotomy (Gross et al, 2020).

Amartya Sen’s (Sen, 1999, as cited in, Gross et al, 2020) account of development as freedom is deeply interlinked to the capabilities approach of what people want to be and what kind of person they are able to be. This approach to development widens the quality of life concept instead of relying only on income to measure it, considering that quality of life is also about to what extent a person is free and able to be and act on what he or she wants to do. In addition to that, the capability approach is characterized by its interdisciplinary character and focus on plural aspects of well-being (Gross et al, 2020). Thus, by applying the capabilities approach to communication policy and to debates of cultural policy and practice, it becomes clear that access on its own does not suffice but rather distribution of resources is what makes access viable. Hence, making access viable is a prerequisite to enhancing the quality of life (Gross et al, 2020).

In Egypt, the vacuum left by the unclear cultural policy has left room for the civil sector and creative citizens to find ways to make their own capabilities approach within which they operate using limited resources and reaching relatively young audiences and participants.

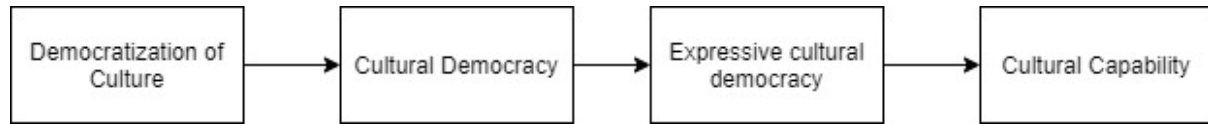


Figure 1: Compiled by the author based on Mulcahy (2006), Juncker et al. (2016), Gross et al. (2020).

## 4.2 The Value of Arts as a Prerequisite for Support

Cultural operators are continuously in a position where they need to argue for their legitimacy, especially if policy makers have other priorities on their agendas. Thus, where art is placed in terms of its value is especially important for formulating cultural policies. The next section explores the value of the arts argument.

### 4.2.1 Intrinsic Value versus Instrumental Value (Relevance versus Advocacy)

Viewing arts and culture as a tool to serve specific goals has been argued by many cultural policies to be the only way that shows why culture should be funded and what the return to taxpayers are, as necessitated by democratic systems. Thus, the instrumental value of arts and culture has always appealed to governments as a basis for support. They view art and culture as means to make life worth living and to help people fulfil their potential (Mulcahy, 2006). Therefore, cultural policy has always been based on the reasoning that arts and culture give rise to good results, and cultural operators use this as a justification for getting public support. Moreover, they believe in the stand-alone value of the arts (i.e., art is good in itself) even when it seems that it is purely aesthetics, it has deep meaning that is not easily measurable

or quantifiable (Mulcahy, 2006). Instead of a categorization of arts between “high arts” (or what is associated with art for art’s sake) and “low art”, placing economic and social outcomes of the arts hand in hand with instrumentalism, John Knell and Matthew Taylor (Knell et al, 2011) suggest considering a spectrum that stretches the intrinsic and instrumental arguments of the arts to combine artistic aesthetics and public good (Knell et al, 2011).

To build a stronger case for the arts, the logic of artistic excellence, high standards, and understanding the artistic experience value by both consumers and producers should intersect with the social and economic outcomes of the arts, which serve as a public good (Knell et al, 2011). In their cultural strategies, local authorities use a language that focuses on participation, how it creates a sense of belonging, and enhances cohesiveness. The benefit of community art is not limited to community residents because community engagement with artistic practices benefits artists on various levels as it helps them develop insights and new forms of artistic practices (Knell et al, 2011).

Furthermore, arts can help with civic renewal, strengthening social capital, celebrating, and preserving heritage, opening a safe channel for expression, and addressing complex social problems (Knell et al, 2011). Building on Amartya Sen’s capabilities-based approach, Samuel Jones (Jones, 2010, as cited in, Knell et al, 2011) argues that cultural participation widens people’s capacities to lead the lives they want. In relevance, community art focuses on participatory interventions (doing together) instead of only spectatorship (watching together) (Knell et al, 2011). Watching is a rich experience but participation enriches more as it builds social capital ties as a result of coordination, interactions, and building trust, which can encourage the aforementioned positive outcomes of the arts. For helping art organizations embrace civic engagement, Darren O’Donnell (Knell et al, 2011) redefined the criteria for successful artistic initiatives. He suggested the following:

1. Inversion of hierarchies (those who normally have the power to give it up, or participate in, service to other less powerful participants).
2. Offering agency (creating a context that provides agency to those who would not ordinarily have it).
3. Fruitful antagonisms (triggering friction, tension and examining the ensuing dynamic in a performative arena where all is easily forgiven).
4. Volunteer ownership (providing opportunities for volunteers to participate to foster a wider sense of ownership) (Knell et al, 2011).

Considering the aforementioned, art is essential because it helps individuals imagine a healthy society and life where potentials are fulfilled. Enhanced active citizenship and an improved society are not easy to attain because all idealistic goals are difficult and demanding. Hence, making an ideal case for the arts is not easy but cultural operators should be willing to walk this line to guarantee that this kind of art is funded and supported (Knell et al, 2011).

#### 4.2.2 Economic Value and Financing the Arts

Arts do have a positive impact on the economy; thus, it has always been used as an argument to advocate for the arts. To make the case for the arts quantifiable, supporters use the fact that the expenditure on art and cultural activities is reflected on a consequent spending on transportation, parking, restaurants, hotels, local vendors, staff who in turn pay taxes and create their own ripple on the local economy, and much more (Mulcahy, 2006). It is understandable why economic arguments are relevant, especially when the case for arts and culture is revisited amidst budget deficits.

Although the economic value arguments may dictate why the arts are valuable goods, they do not tell why they are good things (Mulcahy, 2006). Furthermore, the utility ideology clearly underestimates the merit value of cultural policy whose benefits and contributions to

public welfare extends way beyond the quantity of subsidies it is provided with (Mulcahy, 2006).

Thus, the qualitative effects of the arts are worth examining because they transcend their economic effects (Mulcahy, 2006). Cultural policy in a political democracy is about creating public spheres that are not governed by profit solely and are not endorsed by commercial values but rather depend on socioeconomic pluralism and civil society support (Mulcahy, 2006).

Knell and Taylor (Knell et al, 2011) argue that making a case for the arts requires thinking and articulating the values they create on the long term. It also requires that these purposes be shared by different cultural operators to exercise pressure on the political agenda setters. This needs an intended effort to tell the story of value created by arts in a new light which is rational, convincing, and understandable. The challenge facing the case for arts funding is that the debate usually directs a choice between intrinsic value argument and the instrumental value one, making it appear as if it is a choice between terms proposed by the art community and those proposed by policymakers. To address this challenge, the authors (Knell et al, 2011) propose making a vigorous instrumental argument for the arts that focuses on the importance of participation and appreciation. Circumventing and navigating our way through instrumentalism is important if arts are to be sustained and catered for moving up the political priority ladder (Knell et al, 2011). To match its ambitions and bring arts to the center of everyday lives, the reinvention of the art narrative, highlighting what they achieve and why they matter is vital for making a public attractive story that reflects the reality of arts and culture and their necessity in the day-to-day life (Knell et al, 2011).

### 4.3 Cultural Management

The arts and culture field is agile enough to be reactive and innovative when affected by global environmental changes. Additionally, such changes are implemented on audience

building strategies and creating new spaces for cultural production and discourse (Fohl et al, 2016).

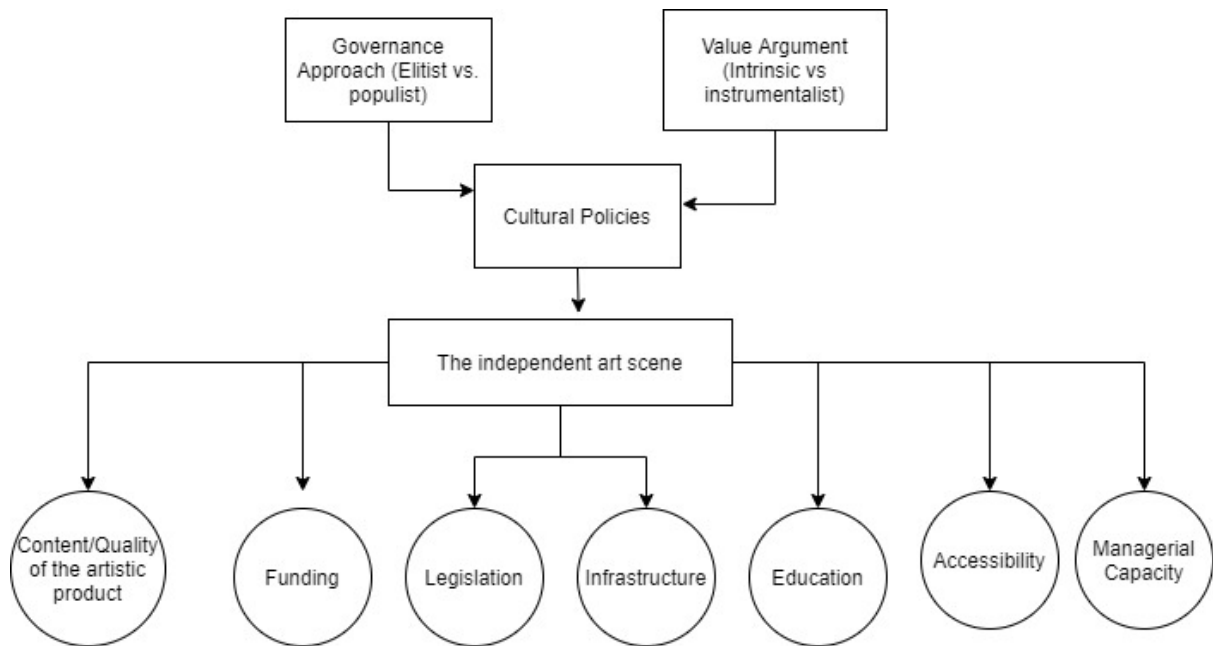
As democratization of culture is developing into a cultural democracy, traditional cultural management techniques are also shifting to new methods of art management. According to Fohl, the cultural manager can be seen as having a high degree of structural autonomy that makes him or her the ultimate broker as an external actor who only enters a new cultural field of intervention for a certain amount of time. The ambiguous boundaries between different fields of interaction require an improved 'togetherness' of increasing cross-cutting issues such as hybrid cultural production, cultural tourism and cultural education (i.e., creative alliances between museums, theatres, choirs, etc.), Especially in areas on the periphery away from the center where culture is not accessible for everyone due to a lack of resources. This togetherness can be created by the cultural manager (Fohl et al, 2016).

Moreover, tensions between traditional cultural heritage activities and contemporary arts can be observed. For instance, biases and preconceptions direct a given field of intervention, as exhibited through a lack of communication between the existing players, preventing the overall network of cultural players from being more interconnected. However, artists are usually overburdened, thus do not always have the time to capitalize on strategic networking and to establish new contacts with actors from other fields. Other variables include the lack of knowledge about the opportunities they have and about the critical resources that might be available in other networks (Fohl et al 2016).

Since art develops by experimenting, networking and challenging discourses, rigid rules could suffocate art and creativity. Föhl and Wolfram (2014) introduced five types of roles that a modern cultural manager can adapt to: translator, mediator, cooperator, networker, and facilitator. Such roles are intended to help cultural managers to bridge cultural differences and share identities to create networks in which artistic products are encouraged and valued.

Overall, according to Fohl and his colleagues, a cultural manager should diminish prejudices and bring people from different fields together, identify content overlaps and develop common narratives, manage expectations, and reduce complexity. Lastly, a cultural manager should also be able to transform gaps or “opportunity spaces” into community connections, which might turn into strong ties in the long term (Fohl et al, 2016).

#### 4.4 Variables Affecting Independent Art Scene



As discussed, the governance approach and the value argument are the two main core principles that formulate cultural policies. Upon understanding each of the underlying foundations, we can pinpoint the potential obstacles faced by the independent art scene in Egypt (see figure 2).

Given the argument of both elitist and populist, a problem of art relevance arises. The majority of modern art is based on understanding emotions and relies heavily on relating to the



circumstances of all classes. It does not strive to set itself at a high aesthetic level as advocated by the elitists, therefore, the independent art scene loses its legitimacy in the eyes of the elitist groups, therefore, art accessibility and relevance is one of the key points that will be investigated in this paper.

With respect to the democratization of culture, a wave of liberating art by making it accessible on a physical and a content level to all people was in the making globally. As such, accessibility comes up once again as a prominent issue for the independent art scene along with infrastructure. Infrastructure is the foundation for accessibility and could pose a struggle at both ends, the artist and the audience, thus, infrastructure will be another issue to be discussed in this paper. This paves the way for the concept of cultural capability which as aforementioned advocates for art to be a necessity as important as scientific knowledge. Based on this concept, art education should be discussed as a developmental link towards a society where independent art thrives.

In terms of the value of art argument, several key remarks could be made. The intrinsic value of art is derived from the content irrespective of the revenues. This is a recurrent struggle of art as observed throughout history. Therefore, artists often find themselves making a trade-off between quality and profitability. Even though the qualitative effects of the art should transcend the economic effect (Mulcahy, 2006). Hence, art quality and funding were chosen as two of the key points that map the independent art scene in Egypt. Both aspects are closely intertwined and therefore they should be closely investigated to make the distinction between their individual significance.

Regarding the disconnections within the art and culture field, the cultural manager acts as a “master of interspaces” (Fohl et al, 2016). He or she tends to explore the stories behind the various relationships and to develop strategies for the reorganization of these structures, which provide him or her an overview about the existing network structures of a given field. Hence,

the cultural manager can stimulate creative coalitions and innovation by documenting processes and creating structures. Essentially, cultural managers act as mediators who bridge the structural gaps between disconnected subnetworks (e.g., audience, artists, state or private sector, interest groups) and create synergies between them. Hence, cultural managers act as translators of cultural policy, are involved in advocating for arts and push policy makers to adopt the value system of cultural work (Fohl et al 2016). As such, cultural management should be one of the issues pertaining to the independent art scene and should be explored in this paper.

Finally, based on section 2.2, the laws and legislations are a defining factor of the art climate in Egypt and therefore they will be included as one of the issues that will be investigated in our interviews.

## 5 Methodology

### 5.1 Methods

I worked as a cultural manager for four years, experiencing the non-profit artistic and cultural scene in Egypt and in Europe. Moving forward, I wanted to complement the practical experience with some academic research on cultural policies. There is a significant research gap about the lived experience of Egyptian artists and cultural managers and the challenges they face. Cultural policy is a complex philosophical topic, which is challenging to quantify. Thus, to explore the challenges facing the independent art operators, I employed a qualitative methodology starting with online research to navigate the existing literature discussed extensively in the literature review, then conducted 18 semi-structured interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted this year over the course of June and July 2020. Participants were selected via the snowballing technique: reached through chain referrals and utilizing personal

contacts. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, interviews were conducted online via zoom to ensure the safety of participants.

## 5.2 Sampling

This study does not claim sample representativeness as common to qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Sample selection was theoretically informed as per the qualitative research tradition, (Denzin, 1989, p. 73); aiming to explain patterns through in-depth and intimate information about a smaller group of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The final sample consists of 18 participants from the key players in the arts and culture independent scene in Egypt. The sample includes an academic, nine practitioners who are currently leading active cultural programs (two of which are practitioners who have led initiatives that are no longer active), seven full time art managers and a former government employee. Considering that qualitative research seeks depth, the rationale is to vocalize the views of who are actively engaged in the field.

## 5.3 Interviews

The data gathering process was guided by a set of questions, allowing for probing during the interview process (see appendix A for interview questions). These are related to how interviewees think about the factors affecting independent artists and cultural operators and the factors influencing accessibility to the arts in Egypt. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and later transcribed.

## 5.4 Data analysis

Interview data is thematically organized based on the up-and-coming analytical themes and follows an open-coding approach. This inductive reasoning analytic approach builds on

the tradition of grounded theory (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Inductive reasoning considers data collection as a learning process and does not enforce a priori hypotheses (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Standard tools of data emersion, coding and analytic memos are used for data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Upon a thorough analysis of the independent spaces and initiatives that are still operating in Cairo and those that are no longer operating, the sample interviewed is considerably suitable, given the small size of the field of the independent art scene in Egypt and its novelty (See Appendix B).

## 5.5 Ethical considerations

Following standard ethical considerations in qualitative research, the data provided in this paper is anonymous (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). The promise of anonymity was made to participants during the interview process. This promise was crucial for enhancing the analysis and acquiring sincere views given the small size of the field and the sensitivity of some of the issues that are discussed. One of the key advantages of qualitative research is that it allows participants to voice their views and recognizes their agency (Denzin, 1989).

## 6 Results and Discussion

In Egypt, cultural managers in the independent sector are facing numerous challenges. Information collected was grouped into the following seven main themes based on the results of an extensive conceptual analysis defined in section 4:

- 1- Content and Quality of the artistic product
- 2- Funding and making ends meet
- 3- Laws and Legislation

- 4- Cultural Palaces
- 5- Arts Education
- 6- Accessibility
- 7- Cultural Management, Capacity and Leadership

## 6.1 Content and Quality of the Artistic Product

The quality of the artistic product proves to be a prominent issue upon analyzing the arts and culture scene in Egypt. A visual artist who is also a director speaks about how the independent arts and cultural scene has emerged as a response to a lack of quality art in the Egyptian market since the 80s.

*“The private sector is aiming for profit and has started to expand its investment in culture recently ...that we may or may not agree on their content and values. The private sector is reproducing the same ideas that have been done in the 90s or remaking (old plays). This is problematic because it does not offer anything new, it is not creative. Also, think of (name of a show) that is not real theatre and does not offer anything but some silly jokes that are not tied by a story or acting or a plot. Those same actors who have no real content or value have become stars in TV series and cinema. But they are leaving no legacy, in 20 years you wouldn't search for anything they took part in.”*  
(Visual Artist, June 2020)

The private sector has been reproducing the same old ideas in new forms but using better technologies and updated techniques. Additionally, it does not risk funding new ideas because it consistently aims for making the maximum profit which means experimentation is not part of its agenda. However, in the case of arts, content relies heavily on experimentation and creativity. In that regard, if the private sector is not investing enough in content creation; the artistic product will not be of a high quality. Art is about universalizing human emotions and experiences in new touching methods and forms, although the private sector has played it safe by investing in guaranteed familiar plots.

The visual artist states that the governmental sector funds a significant amount of arts and cultural production. Usually, the tickets of government produced artistic pieces are

subsidized to allow audiences from different economic classes to enjoy the arts. This is emphasized by the visual artist in the following quote:

*“If we are talking about accessibility and abundant production, the state is providing it on a wide scale, but the content and the storytelling are of low quality. The state owns many venues in all governorates ... Besides, the state offers a lot of events such as The Citadel Festival, the programming of which bring all kinds of performers, independent and the non-independent ones. Think also of XXX Theatre where people can watch three plays and pay very little for the ticket, or the modern dance theatre at which the content is bad. What was the last worthy piece produced by a private sector actor? Maybe Shady Abdelsalam’s movie plus some documentaries” (Visual Artist/Director, June 2020)*

Even though the state can be considered the largest provider of art products and owner of performance venues (e.g. galleries, museums, theatres), the quality of the artistic product it provides and the facilitates it owns are highly questionable. As mentioned by the visual artist, in most cases the state foregoes the quality of the content for the sake of providing less expensive entertainment. The programming, curation and marketing are also outdated and cannot compete on the international level. In light of drawbacks from both the governmental sector and the private sector, the “independent” scene began to emerge as a response to the need for an alternative. However, it seems that interview no.5 deems only few independent works as worthy or remembered in the past two decades. It might be an exaggerated remark, but it unfortunately holds some truth. For example, Shady Abdelsalam who is a prominent Egyptian director whose fame transcended borders and is very well known for “The Mummy” movie because of its high quality and well-written script.

*“The younger generations of the independent scene have followed suit because they see the older ones and know they need to earn a living, so they go to auditions or production companies and offer their services. And some others work for the governmental sector but still call themselves independent! But again, if you squeeze the governmental, private, and independent sectors, you will find that the content is in a bad shape. Why? Because all the cultural actors are after money and fame, content and quality are not the priority sadly.” (Visual Artist, June 2020)*

Despite the compromise in artistic quality, cultural operators who are part of the arts civil sector or what is called the “independent” scene are usually underpaid and overworked. In the

long run, they experience burnout and fatigue. To make ends meet or to become known, many independent cultural operators would take on a job opportunity for a private production even if it means compromising quality or a certain artistic idea. Evidently, according to the visual artist interviewed, despite the fascination that the workers in the art sector feel towards Shady Abdelsalam, none of them attempts to follow suit.

## 6.2 Funding and Making Ends Meet

In Egypt, the government hardly funds the independent arts and cultural scene. Thus, cultural operators have to find ways to get funds to be able to survive. To be cost effective, many artists take on two roles: the artistic director and the art manager.

*“I do not have the luxury not to do both roles. As an artist, I usually compromise the business side not the artistic. A cultural manager who carries out the business development side might want for an organization to apply for a call of funds no matter its conditions. However, if it is artistically not relevant to me, I will choose not to apply because I come from an artistic background.”* (Art Manager 1, July 2020)

Independent artists, especially emerging ones, face marketing issues, issues of funding, and issues of mobility. Many art organizations in this scene are trying to respond to that by being mediators between artists and funding entities to help artists get exposure and build their capacity. This art manager mentions that ticket sales are inadequate for sustaining workers in the non-profit independent art scene in Egypt, and grants cover projects but not the running costs needed to keep operating as an organizational legal structure. According to an art manager who was among the interviewees, even in countries such as the United Kingdom where the state gives grants to independent organizations, operators cannot survive on ticket sales either.

In addition, access to venues for independent artists is extremely challenging as the interviewed musician emphasizes. For instance, to perform in Sawy Cultural Wheel, approximately 40 percent taxes (25 percent entertainment tax and recently 15 percent value added tax) are deducted from the ticket price, Sawy Culture Wheel takes 50 percent of the remaining amount and the artist takes the rest which is about 30 percent of the original ticket price. A musician provides an example on how their revenues are drastically reduced in his quote below.

*“If you are a solo artist, 30 percent of the ticket’s price is okay. However, for me this is not the case. My band consists of 12 performers with a big production, so I can never make profit unless the ticket is at least 500-1000 EGP or I conduct my concert in a huge theatre that can take up to 1000 attendees at least. The tax issue where you pay for the Artistic Works entity and to the syndicate squeezes cultural operators compromising*



*their ability to work, so instead of offering a concert every week, they do it every few months.” (Musician, July 2020)*

Hence the general context is not enabling, there is no direct support, no funds for independent teams, the state does not even provide venues for free, nor does it offer trainings.

*“Even members of the music syndicate usually pay money to retain their membership but get nothing in return. During the COVID-19 crisis, I heard that the syndicates’ members were given 500 EGP per month, this low amount does not help anyone survive especially if they have a family to support. Moreover, if you want to perform outside Cairo, there is no facilitation or ease to get permits.” (Musician, July 2020)*

The lack of financial support is increasing the difficulty for cultural operators and artists, whether working in the governmental sector or in the independent scene, to survive. Moreover, mobility is a continuous concern given the effort it takes to get a permit to perform outside Cairo as reported by the musician interviewed. Such difficulties become agitated during times of crisis, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of focusing on production and creation, cultural operators become stuck in logistics and in finding ways to circumvent the institutional and bureaucratic obstacles.

*“On the other hand, the economic crisis makes the audience think twice before buying a ticket, so they give priority to the essentials like food, housing, and other living expenses. So, not just that the general atmosphere is not enabling, it’s actually aggressive.” (Musician, July 2020)*

In addition to funding issues facing cultural operators, the economic situation is affecting the purchase power of audiences. Even if they are ardent art enthusiasts, audience have to make financial arrangements and prioritize their needs and purchases accordingly. Instead of attending artistic events at their previous pace, the audience might limit themselves to one event every month for instance. This backfires on cultural operators and artists who are already struggling financially.

*“I was also challenged to earn a decent living as a cultural operator because the funds in the art scene are very little. Many artists have their safety net income from their families. But if you are not from a well-off family, it’s really hard to live a good life by working as a cultural actor only.” (Curator, June 2020)*

As mentioned by this curator, some artists are privileged because of the financial support provided by their families. Additionally, some high and middle high-class families assist and fund their children at a young age to gain cultural capital. If the family is doing well financially, there is a high possibility that the kids will be enrolled in extracurricular art classes and chances of them pursuing an artistic career is high since basic needs are covered. However, its more common to come across instances of inhibited talents and potential because art is not thought of as something that pays well for a living. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; artists are underpaid in many countries all over the world. Very few attain international recognition while others continue to struggle and end up juggling many jobs to be able to fund their art production.

### 6.2.1 Budget of the Ministry of Culture

Multiple news articles and reports on art and culture state that most of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture's budget is allocated to staff salaries. The narrative is engraved in many talks in the independent art scene and many statements given by officials speaking to different media outlets.

*“Access to culture in Egypt is related to the way that the cultural policy is managed in Egypt and it can be divided into three issues: The first is that the governmental sector spends 92.06 percent of its income on salaries and maintenance, so a relatively little budget remains for funding production, this consequently affects the art production. The second issue is that the training in arts sectors is very old and has not developed for decades which is reflected on the content created by artists. Thus, the quality of artistic content is not good as a result of lack of funds and lack of state of the arts trainings. The third issue is art management. Artists need art managers who are good at fundraising, marketing, and strategic planning.” (Art manager 1, July 2020)*

Hence, the lack of funds for the independent art scene and the low quality of government-funded artistic products are usually attributed to a bad distribution of resources and a neglect of updating capacity building for staff and for artists. However, an academic has attempted to correct this dominant narrative in the following quote.

*“First, it is not 90 percent, the salaries, rewards and compensations are in the first chapter of the budget, and of course the first chapter does not take 90 percent, of course the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter which is the infrastructure and investments are much more, which includes infrastructure, buildings and more which are also places for the cultural work. The second chapter of the budget is assigned to the activities, part goes to salaries, the fourth chapter, its budget is used to pay freelance artists....in the state’s budget all of it, the salaries are just one third of the of the budget, so it won’t be 90 percent in the culture ministry.” (Academic, June 2020)*

Perhaps the propagated narrative is not accurate enough and operators need to propose questions in a different way. In that case, questions curators could ask are: is the percentage of the budget allocated to each partition or item gets to be spent on that? Is the ministry overstaffed? Are the employees underpaid? Do they have to work a second job to be able to afford a decent living? Is the infrastructure being updated in an efficient way to help artists and technicians access state of the art equipment and techniques? Are trainings content revised by professionals and accredited by international standards?

*“There is another problem I can see in the ministry of culture.. the number of workers that I can call technicians that do work related to the administration and the financial management is dysfunctional, how much specialized manpower is practicing real cultural work? And how much this cultural work needs support! There must be someone responsible for finances and administrators but what is the needed size?” (Academic, June 2020)*

As this academic explains, the issue could be a wrong distribution of manpower and a wrong allocation that got accumulated over the years without revision.

*“I am not saying that we are having a bigger manpower than what the country needs, but we have a dysfunction in the distribution, and to be reconstructed, it needs political and social alignments to redistribute manpower, because you won’t be able to fire these people, and it is even easy to replace them.” (Academic, June 2020)*

Thus, there are distribution and placement issues when it comes to human resources in the governmental sector, no exception to the staff of the ministry of culture. Moreover, the ministry cannot terminate many administrators unless they have an alternative plan, though they may not be needed. In turn, the situation is causing a financial burden on the ministry as they pay a monthly salary to their employees, who may not be the best fit for their current

positions. Their situation could be assessed, as they might be needed in other ministries or other governmental institutions.

## 6.2.2 Sponsorships

Commercial sponsors or corporates prefer to invest in specific sectors such as health and economic projects that aim at eradicating poverty. On the other hand, when they do decide to invest in culture, they aim at exposure and marketing. Therefore, they invest in huge music concerts such as Red Bull concerts because they are a safe bet. Instead of investing in the independent art scene that does not yet have a wide audience, they sponsor big names that have already gone commercial and famous (i.e., the band called Cairokee).

*“Audience of the independent art scene are mostly youth with weak purchasing power which is something that puts off sponsors as they want people they can target with their products. For instance, the (name of bank) wants to set a booth at a concert’s venue to target a certain class.”* (Art manager 2, July 2020)

The private sector should play a role in funding the cultural sector and aim to make profits. However, the independent players have not found a common language so far to convince the private sector that arts and culture do have a worthy economic impact. Some private theatres have started to operate in New Cairo and Zayed City, but the expensive ticket prices pose a problem as it excludes different social classes.

*“Even the opera tickets have become very expensive, I think this is very problematic and the state should try to create a balance that allows accessibility by offering subsidized tickets to make culture available for people who cannot afford the expensive tickets.”* (Art manager 3, June 2020)

Even though the state subsidizes its institutions and events, some venues like the Opera have become too expensive for the lower middle-class (especially after the floatation of 2016 and the devaluation) and remain unapproachable to lower classes. While some countries in Europe are shifting to casual concerts to encourage young audiences to attend, most of the Egyptian classical concerts still have the formal strict code, making it inaccessible for many

who would usually stop by and stay within the open premise. Thus, the state needs to incentivize the private sector to invest in the arts to fill in the production gap. Simultaneously, the state should encourage social responsibility by requiring companies to provide a certain percentage of discounted tickets for the less fortunate whom they can reach out to through collaboration with NGOs for instance. On the other hand, cultural practitioners need to tread softly when being sponsored by the private sector because commercialization can compromise authenticity and the unique universality of some artistic projects.

*“It is good and bad; good because the economic value of investing in arts and culture becomes obvious and thus attracts investors, but bad because it changes the spontaneous form of the independent sector as it becomes subject to very commercial criteria which can affect the content and the character and style of bands or troupes.”*  
(Art manager 3, June 2020)

These commercial criteria can always be negotiated and contested by independent or civil cultural operators to ensure the identity of the art product has not been erased.

### 6.2.3 Approaches of International Organizations

Foreign funding is the main driving force for the independent or civil art sector in Egypt. Characteristics of international organizations funding the art scene are: they work with the Egyptian society, have a clear development agenda and conditions, they fund different activities and collaborate with relevant stakeholders. For instance, some of these organizations push for an agenda of working outside Cairo, working in the street or on public arts, others work on supporting women’s rights or women in cinema, and some work on refugee-related issues. Their support sometimes extends to cover structural funding such as rent and salaries but more commonly projects. Many of the calls for fund applications launched by international cultural institutes push for a social element.

*“For instance, they impose tackling a topic like “women in power” to be eligible for the grant even though arts should be free to discuss what it wants to discuss”* (Art manager 2, July 2020)

Artistic entities and individuals try to mix and match their interests with the different kinds of calls for fund applications. However, some organizations tend to broaden their strategy to fit any call for fund or grant application to make sure they will be able to support their running costs even when their main area of interest is not on the international agenda funds.

Other kinds of organizations are cultural institutions such as the British Council, the French Institute, Goethe Institute, the Swiss Development Cooperation, embassies such as Embassy of the Netherlands, and others. These aim at strengthening the cultural relations between Egypt and their home country. Thus, when a cultural operator or an artist applies for a grant offered by the French institute, it has to have a French component such as collaborating with a French artist or participating in a culture exchange program. Essentially, it has to incorporate the relations between Egypt and France because the funds come from France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

*"It is a very good kind of support, however it's a short-term project at the end of the day. It is definitely good to have foreign artists performing to Egyptian audiences. To increase the benefit and make it more sustainable, we started to encourage artistic workshops to add a learning component. For instance, while an American artist is performing in Egypt, she or he is asked to conduct some workshops with local artists, or we send Egyptian artists to Germany for instance to learn some new skills and approaches to have a long-term effect when they come back to Egypt with new acquired skills and a wider exposure." (Art manager 1, July 2020)*

Hence, while it enables many artistic projects to take place, the foreign fund has not enhanced sustainability. Instead, the civil society and independent art scene has become dependent on these funds making it volatile with long-term visions and strategies nearly non-existent.

*"There are grants and people who benefit, but in reality, how many artists are benefiting?.....The problem is that the system is very established with rigid rules that do not evolve... It is based on open calls with certain criteria that involve evaluation committees that depend on personal judgements and tastes. However, these mechanisms are problematic because they keep reproducing similar results. If we analyze the profiles of those who get XX's grants for instance, we will find that out of hundreds of applications, few percent get to implement their projects. They are usually the ones who have good foreign language skills and good writing skills, but this doesn't mean they are necessarily the best artists who have applied." (Musician, July 2020)*

Considering the insight provided by this musician, each of these funding institutions work with people who know how to fill out call for funds applications, know how to write proposals, and speak foreign languages fluently. Even when they arrange focus groups, they conduct them with the same kind of people, thus, the same results are reproduced. Currently, there are not enough studies on how to develop these funding systems and how to maximize their benefits to be more inclusive especially in the case of arts and culture where the most creative or talented might not get to realize their potential because of the uneven distribution of means of cultural production.

*“We should ask why these foreign entities are funding the artistic scene in Egypt. They are working on strengthening their cultural diplomacy or they have a certain political agenda. In this case, as an artist, I feel that I am doing sales .. without real benefit. I did not invest in my content or my artistic project. I am promoting someone else’s agenda instead of working on my own content and my own ideas..... Receiving a fund from a foreign entity is a good opportunity for some artists who need money and need a venue to practice. But for me, I have an idea that I keep developing and working on as an artist. If I work on something else, I would be fake.”* (Visual Artist, June 2020)

The intentions behind foreign funding are often questioned, whether by artists, audience members, journalists, or policy makers. Some artists think the imposed conditions come at a price of limiting artistic freedom or compromising copyrights. Policy makers intend to exercise caution and have created ways to regulate the process of receiving foreign funds to ensure its not being used for reasons beyond the arts production. However, these regulations are sometimes taken to an extreme making it difficult for civil and independent cultural actors to operate.

#### 6.2.4 Sustainability

Lack of financial stability is one of the major challenges facing independent artists in Egypt. Furthermore, the fact that only few independent venues exist, Falaki theatre and Rawabet theatre in Cairo for instance, adds to the challenges. Moreover, the American University in Cairo (AUC) now manages Falaki so it is not very affordable to rent. On the other



hand, Rawabet has had some financial struggles and Townhouse had to sell it. However, it is being renovated by Orient Production presently and will be accessible once again for independent artists to showcase their talents. The interviewees also touched upon the stress evoked by organizational running costs such as rent, salaries, utilities (i.e., electricity and water bills), equipment, and much more.

*“We have been operating for almost 16 years and every year we get anxious about the running costs. Sometimes, we save it from a grant, a specific project, or a service provided for the rich who can pay its subscription fees or tickets.”* (Art manager 1, July 2020)

Most of the grants and funds come with a condition that the bulk of the grant be used for implementing a project or a program while the remaining percentage can be allocated for salaries and organizational costs. This makes it very difficult for cultural operators to sustain their organizations or initiatives, in turn resulting in the high turnover rate in this field. Moreover, only a few organizations and venues survive the political and economic fluctuations.

*“Our field is a very difficult one. If someone is still at the beginning of his work life, she or he should choose something else if they have the luxury of choice because our field is extremely difficult, and sustainability is very hard to achieve.”* (Art manager 1, July 2020)

Many cultural operators choose to work on commercial projects and use the surplus to fund their own personal projects. Nonetheless, it is a daunting task to be a full-time cultural worker or an independent artist in times of financial stagnation as culture is the first to be assigned budget cuts. For that reason, a study led by Cluster in partnership with the British Council and Downtown Contemporary Art Festival (DCAF) has been conducted to highlight the impact of cultural events on the economy as stated by one of the art managers interviewed. The study focused on downtown Cairo and examined cinemas, cafes, and parking revenues during timings of artistic events. The study revealed that the artistic events and festivals had a considerable positive economic impact on the downtown area. Such studies can be used by



cultural operators to help with lobbying and promoting partnerships with the ministry of tourism and the ministry of culture.

### 6.3 Laws and Legislation

The third main challenge is laws and executive regulations that hinder artistic and cultural work, adding to an environment that makes a cultural worker feel threatened. Specifically, the legal structure in Egypt obligates entities to register as a company which is not the best fit for the independent scene because it is not always aiming for profit. The legislation challenge is strongly tied to productions that are project-based due to their dependency on foreign fund. This forces most independent and civil sector entities to plan on a short-term basis only. On the other hand, entities that do have long-term strategies and can sustain its operations for extensive periods of time are mostly development-oriented and not art-centered.

*“For instance, laws that have to do with receiving funds; a lawyer or a state apparatus can claim that funds are used to mobilize something against national security or anything of the sort that makes the environment very dangerous all the time even when you pay taxes. There is also another law from 1978 that criminalizes anyone who works in music or acting if they are not a member of the syndicate of artists that is punished by imprisonment for 3 months or paying a fine. Moreover, there is censorship of artistic works act number 430 of 1955. All these laws are examples of obstacles that create a very foggy environment.” (Musician, July 2020)*

Regarding the examples of law presented by the interviewed musician, it is understandable why only a few artists and cultural operators continue working in this sector and perhaps why they feel threatened. Additionally, a number of them have to handle other jobs to be able to sustain themselves financially. However, according to another interviewee, sometimes the syndicate provided temporary permits for musicians who are not members of the syndicate to give them the chance to practice their arts legally. This is aligned with chapter 2, article 5, law 35 of the year 1978. However, those permits are given depending on the judgment of the syndicate’s committee and artists who get the permit need to pay 20% of their

profits to the syndicate even though they would not get any benefits from the syndicate in return. (Al-Batrawai et al, 2014).

A majority of artists and cultural operators' motivation is incited by their passion; nonetheless, such passion needs to be harnessed by capacity building and strategic oversight to maintain motivation and prevent burnout or even quitting. Moreover, the cultural ecosystem in Egypt is not very friendly when it comes to laws and logistical measures. Players in the independent art scene have to obtain permits from the relevant governmental entities whether it's the ministry of culture, the syndicate or the security apparatus. However, these permits are not communicated clearly and the rules governing them keep changing. These changes are not immediately communicated to the public and the practitioners leaving many events to chance and risks. In addition, practicing artists and creatives who are self or independently taught are not usually welcomed by the Arts Syndicate.

*“In the fields of cinema, theatre and music, the doors are shut in front of non-academic people who could be skilled or got educated privately or on their own with the laws of the art syndicate that prevent the non-members of the syndicate from working without permits, and they aren't necessarily able to get these permits. In my opinion, it is a serious problem that impacts access to art in Egypt .and it needs to be fixed, there is nothing called the necessity of a membership in the syndicate to practice your creativity, the syndicate's job is to protect its members not to prevent the non-members from practicing their jobs.” (Academic, June 2020)*

Hence, the governmental sector through its laws and regulations tends to favor cultural operators and artists who have gone through the governmental and public formal channels only, although they are not the most qualified (i.e., not acquainted with the latest technologies), or acquired a high-quality education. Not only that it favors the formal channel operators and academics, but it also blocks others from using these channels or even from practicing on their own using their own means. This makes the ecosystem for arts and culture a toxic old-fashioned one rather than a creative innovative field.

*“You have to put up with the bureaucracy and be complacent while filling out all the papers because you have to do everything the legal way especially when you are*

*accountable for your society, partners, employees, etc. It needs a lot of patience and perseverance because the process of obtaining permits is continuously changing, and it depends on connections, flexibility, and acknowledging there is no other way especially if you need one of the governmental venues to carry out your event, festival, etc.” (Art manager 1, July 2020)*

The fact that most venues are state-owned signifies that the independent actors have to cope with bureaucracy and unclear steps within the governmental sector to be able to access these venues as stated by the art manager. Even if the performance is a street one, a permit needs to be obtained from the local municipality, the governorate, and the National Security Authorities. Coordinating between different stakeholders and making sure to integrate all the demands can be a daunting task on the shoulders of independent practitioners. These challenges have intensified after the passing of both the NGO law and the Demonstration law in 2015, which makes any kind of assembly nearly impossible and failure to obtain permits would result in a serious punishment according to the penal code.

*“Accessibility is very weak in Egypt. There is no public space for any kinds of social practice. Some laws were introduced to make it very difficult for anyone to do something in the street be it an organized sit-in or an artistic intervention because you need a permit, and it is very difficult to get. Even in public culture, it has become very sensitive to do any interventions in public space where an ordinary citizen may call the police on you if you try to do something of the sort. That’s why El Fan Midan came to a haul after operating for four years.” (Musician, July 2020)*

Overall, this places the arts in a bad situation, especially public or outdoor arts. Even community arts are becoming more and more difficult to practice. El Fan Midan or the “Art is a Square” is a festival that used to take place monthly in Abdeen Square, downtown Cairo and in some other governorates. Many concerts, performances, and exhibitions would take place attracting audiences from different walks of life. It had a partial financial support from the Ministry of Culture. However, it came to an end in 2014 (Sprengel, 2019).

Civil society is working hard to fill the gaps left by a neglectful state framework and is one of the most established in the region. The current strictly applied laws, (i.e., the NGO law, Demonstration law, and the Penal Code), not only limit the right to assemble and restrict public

space, but also it jeopardizes the lives of independent actors and civil society. In addition to this, censorship laws are impeding the creativity of artists and enforcing the reproduction of only one kind of art. These laws are not in line with international conventions, nor the Egyptian constitution itself, which safeguards freedom of artistic expression in all shapes.

*“There is a huge lack of information when it comes to logistical procedure for getting permits for a festival and financial challenges. We have to ask for the procedural process every year because the info won’t get to you otherwise. For instance, last year, we realized there are new forms (that includes all details and the program of the festival) that we have to fill out as organizers three months after they were due. In addition, we were taken off guard when we were told that one of the new regulations requires a company to have a capital of 500,000 EGP at least in the commercial record, we managed eventually after many months, but it was such a mess.” (Art manager 2, July 2020)*

This art manager illustrates how the lack of transparency and improper timing of the governmental sector to communicate procedures is causing much distress and contributing to the challenges that independent practitioners have to face every time they have to carry out an event, regardless of how much work and strategy is implemented. For instance, the delay in printing out posters and brochures due to the venue or date not finalized because the syndicate has still not granted permit. Partnered with the possibility that permit might come 24 hours before the performance, it is quite problematic as it entails a lack of respect for these cultural operators’ time and energy.

To avoid the legal and logistical hassle, some entities choose to find a way to register their legal statute in another country.

*“You have to find your way around the legal challenges (NGO law) by getting a legal status outside Egypt.” (Art manager 2, July 2020).*

However, this is not feasible to everyone in the field especially those who do not have enough capital in the first place. Such a step needs legal advice, coordination between two geographic locations and connections in both locations to make sure no one is crossing any legal lines in the process.

Despite the state trying to collaborate with civil society, in general, the problem pertains to the form of organizing the independent scene. Most of the independent scene is formed in a legal way because the state needs to deal with registered entities that have a legal statute.

*“The state actually collaborates with many civil society organizations but we as - independent actors- think these organizations don't represent civil society because we view other entities as much more active and authentic in the sector, however for the state, these entities don't exist.” (Art manager 3, July 2020).*

The state cannot deal with entities or artistic groups that do not have a legal statute. This means that some work is needed on the legislation level to enable different entities to become functional and effective. The state should consider facilitating the procedures of developing a legal status for artistic and cultural groups and easing the process of registering NGOs and companies. For this purpose, this art manager who is also a consultant suggests that the state restores the old idea of “civil companies”: companies not for profit whose income feeds back into the company’s activities. This legal form suits the nature of work in the arts and culture sector.

*“There is a collaboration with the civil society in the field of culture...I do not like to use the word “Independent” in the cultural work, I don't see that it relates to anything, I can talk about an independent cinema, independent theatre, but independent institutions! That is absurd! Whether a governmental sector or a civil sector or an economic profitable sector. I understand an independent cinema, independent theatre yes, a project with limited funding, but the idea of independent institutions is a problem for me for real, needs a discussion on its definition.” (Academic, June 2020)*

The “independent” scene is being used to refer to the civil society sector that is specialized in arts and culture but unaffiliated with the governmental sector and the private one. However, such a scene is far from unified and homogeneous, to an extent that the very definition of independent can be far from precise. While some of them are revolving around state-run cultural institutions, others are accommodating the calls of corporate elites or international funders. In most cases, they are not self-funding amateur citizen associations, but rather professional service providers and their shape and substance ranges from an enthusiastic team of few volunteers who organise local choir concerts, to influential networks with back-

door access to the international networks to professional artistic collectives who produce high-end exhibitions and performances across the globe.

Until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cultural life based in Egypt consisted of voluntary work or in other words civil work. Currently, there are talks of the civil society being included in the strategy of 2030, meaning it poses the idea of collaboration between the state's institutions and civil society. However, such a collaboration carries an uncertainty in Egypt's current cultural landscape because there is no legal form that is close enough to the nature of the independent arts and culture sector. Unlike the commercial scene that is profit-driven, the independent scene is value-driven, and its innovative business model needs a better legal fit.

*“As actors who produce a cultural product, we don't always aim to make profit, thus the civic company form may be the closest fit for our sector.”* (Art manager 3, June 2020)

Many cultural actors choose not to register their entities as an NGO because there are many restrictions imposed by the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

*“Besides registration challenges, the state worries about ideological affiliations and what kind of content independent groups do present.”* (Art manager 3, June 2020)

On a final note, there are some trials to make the independent and civil sectors more included in the State's strategies but not enough to materialize strong collaborations so far.

### 6.3.1 2030 Vision

The state is currently revisiting its structures and revising the laws regulating the cultural sector while stressing the Egyptian identity. This is based on recommendations given by committees in different ministries to follow the new strategies and make them effective. It is worth highlighting that an important part of it is the creative industries. To serve this purpose, a holding company for cultural industries has been established to work on two levels: the policy level and the documentation and archiving level.

*“They started off with the cinema sector, where the State authorities are revising its origins in Egypt to create a cinema archive and use its resources as a source of income or an economic value for the country. Next, they will work on handicrafts and design. Later, they will work on theatre then publishing and distribution. That’s the plan.”* (Art manager 3, June 2020)

Thus, the state is working on integrating culture and arts in its strategies for 2030 to better fit all the history and potential that the country has accumulated over the years. Since the state is concerned with the economic and instrumental value of the arts, the independent scene actors should step in to advocate a strong case for their activities and practice to make sure there is a room for their work and efforts in this new age.

## 6.4 Infrastructure

A cultural palace is a state-owned venue where citizens can enjoy different cultural activities such as performing arts, theatre, handicrafts, literature clubs, etc. There are 213 cultural palaces spread all over the country (Fazeulaa, 2018), however most of them are in a bad shape.

*“In 2011, we were revising the change needed and I remember that about 40 percent of cultural palaces were closed because there are no employees in a periphery governorate or because they are under renovation. However, over the last four years, there is a focus on cultural palaces and many of them re-opened and have running activities even in distant places like Matrouh, Halayeb and Shalateen. Now, we can question the quality of the presented content and how independent groups should be part of the activities... and how these palaces should be open venues for whoever has an activity that can be beneficial for the public. The programming of all these cultural palaces need revision. I highly doubt that it’s as good as it should be.”* (Art manager 3, June 2020)

There is also a lack of transparency and information from the current government (Fazeulaa, 2018). Except for a few inventories (that are not very reliable), there is no comprehensive list on the various cultural actors or activities organized by the public sector (Fazeulaa, 2018). In addition to this, the government has no broad analysis of the cultural and artistic scene, let alone a database providing important information on the cultural field (Fazeulaa, 2018). Cabinet incompetence is partly due to a complete absence of documentation,



as well as a total shortage of specialized training on cultural management at the governmental level. Inefficiencies such as mistaking activities for goals, and the absence of appropriate bodies, time frames and feedback methods, have turned the past cultural policies in Egypt into ink on paper. However, there seems to be good intentions for fixing the current state of cultural affairs through revamping the staffing and programming of some cultural palaces throughout the country (Fazeulaa, 2018).

*"I know they are conducting studies for the sake of revisiting the programming depending on the nature of the palace's region, the needs of its community and the age strata, who goes there (children, youth, women, etc.) and the frequency of the visits."*  
(Art manager 3, June 2020)

This shows that some actions have been taken to move the governmental cultural sector forward and to make it more accommodating and inclusive while consulting audiences and stakeholders.

*"The problem in my opinion is finding the administrative cadres who can operate these palaces efficiently. I know a 29-year-old cultural palace manager who is considered the youngest person to manage a culture palace in Egypt. She was based in Assiut, and she was very enthusiastic and smart. So, the state is trying to include youth who have different visions."* (Art manager 3, June 2020)

One of the drawbacks of the governmental sector and culture is that administrators are not recruited or promoted based on transparent criteria that favors merit or qualifications but usually promotions based on seniority, ignoring the skills needed for the position. Hence why the case of the 29-year-old female manager, mentioned by the art manager who is a consultant, is considered a positive sign, reflecting that change within the governmental structure is possible and perhaps has already started.

## 6.5 Arts Education

Even though arts are part of different stages of basic education starting from kindergarten up until high school, all the interviewees agreed that art education has been dwindling over the years. One contributing factor has been the neglect by administrators,



teachers and parents. The problem started when music teachers would not let students touch the musical instruments because they were regarded as custody. As students progress in their education, the sciences and language classes are prioritized over the arts ones. Even though the arts are necessary for deep authentic self-expression, teachers and parents often disregard them.

*“I had to wait a long time to be able to study music properly because there is almost no music education at school even though I was passionate about it since I was a kid. Furthermore, there is a gap between education and the job market. I have studied music in a public institute, but it hasn't prepared me for the music industry at all.”* (Musician, July 2020)

Such an environment leaves students to realize their potential talents and passions later in life or delay pursuing it wholeheartedly. Moreover, as the interviewed musician highlighted, the formal arts education provided at public institutions, such as the music institute and fine arts colleges, are slightly detached from the job market for music and creative industries. This cost public art institution graduates extra time to work on their market skills and put them into use to be able to earn money out of their artistic products. The deterioration and absence of art from school curricula is eventually costly, to the human psyche and well-being and consequently to the social well-being and quality of life.

*“The problem of art education is a part of the education problem in general...There used to be a very large space for art education.... When I am a student in an elementary school and I go out of my home at night and go see a play that is performed by my friends, here a relationship is created between me and the theatre... It has started falling back gradually by the end of the 60s because investing in education had started to decrease, but the real problem in my point of view is that it's affecting the formation of the new generations, all of them on their relationship with art and culture.”* (Academic, June 2020)

As mentioned, part of the lack of quality art these days is the lack of investment in arts education at an early age. The consequences of being detached from the arts linger and manifest itself later in different forms. When individuals are not in touch with their most inner selves because they lack the means to do so, they start to look for other ways to make up for this lack of self-discovery. That is why investing in arts education is not a luxury but a necessity “so mind and soul may become one but vaster” (a poem by Alfred Tennyson). According to the

academic interviewed, there has been a good representation of art education in schools until the late 60s due to better funding for education. However, other factors should be considered as well such as the exponential increase of the population. Such increase calls for higher number of students per class since the number of public schools does not match up (Mohamed et al, 2019). This has led to the decrease or the disappearance of art classes since art is not easily taught in large groups.

In contrast, the number of fine arts colleges has increased from having only one in Cairo and later on in Alexandria as well during the 50s. Presently, there are five or six Fine Arts colleges in Egypt besides the applied arts, which are colleges of at least 70 years old according to the academic interviewed in this paper.

*“Regarding cinema, theatre, music, and ballet, I think the academy of arts is playing an important role. Its alumni are contributing to the art movement.”* (Academic, June 2020)

Nevertheless, the legacy of graduates of different art institutions is clear over the decades. Some of the older artists have led art advocacy campaigns and pushed for a continuation of the tradition of catering for the arts. Younger ones are also pushing the art agenda their own way these days to fill in the gap left by the state.

*“I was challenged to gain knowledge in the curation field. I had to live abroad for a year to acquire academic knowledge. It’s shameful that Egypt, with all its history and civilization, doesn’t have a degree for artistic curation.”* (Curator, July 2020)

Art is a continuously changing field; therefore, art curricula worldwide need to be constantly updated. However, curricula of public art institutions are a bit behind on many fronts. For instance, a whole new branch that serves visual arts is called “curation” but there is not a single degree in an Egyptian public institution that teaches it.

### 6.5.1 Lack of Cadres

A cadre is a group of people trained to lead in a certain profession. In the case of arts, there is the lack of well-educated and well-trained cadres who can manage artistic content and production, that's why many artists choose to wear the two hats including that of manager. Moreover, the lack of funds makes it quite difficult to hire a caliber and pay them a stable salary.

*“El Warsha troupe tried to follow a model of two directors; administrative director and artistic one where the artistic director had an upper hand like 51 percent of the decision-making capacity to help the artistic director focus on orienting the actors and developing the artistic content. As an artist, I would love to save the energy and effort I put into managing my band, to invest it in ideation and production instead. But it is not easy to find a good cadre, and to trust that this person would execute what I as an artist have in mind, and if I did find this person, I wouldn't afford giving him or her a monthly salary.” (Musician, July 2020)*

El Warsha Troupe was founded in 1987. It revives classic gems from folk heritage by representing them in a contemporary form. Art organizations are a fertile ground for experimenting with different management models because creative creation requires creative workspaces and creative management techniques. However, with the stagnant funding situation and the lack of educational degrees in cultural management tracks, artists find themselves forced to perform dual roles where they are managing and creating art simultaneously. This is problematic because not all artists have the needed managerial skills that can strategize, fundraise, market, and build an audience while producing art and coordinating between artists at the same time. On the other hand, even when the artist does have the required skills, it can be a case of conflict of interest.

*“To avoid the conflict-of-interest dilemma, there should be some transparent rules that the artist who is also a manager has to follow and to be supervised consistently.” (Musician, July 2020)*

As mentioned, it is important to set clear and transparent ground rules when the artist or cultural operator is performing a dual role. For instance, a theatre manager who is also an

artistic director should not be allowed to show his own artistic plays on the theatre he manages. Specific to the independent sector, a board of trustees should oversee and monitor them and in the governmental sector, the chain of hierarchy should always ensure the person carrying out a dual role is constantly supervised.

Regarding managerial cadres or facilitators who should be moderators between artists and audiences, another challenge is fear; fear of the unfamiliar or the unknown, fear of what is different or new. These cadres who are often gatekeepers might not help even when they are capable of extending a helping hand.

*“The main challenge is the person who should be facilitating my work, especially when I want to present something new, or in an unusual venue such as a street, a balcony, a café, etc. People usually get scared when it is something unfamiliar that they do not understand, they would not facilitate it even when they have resources or capacity to do so. Sometimes they can even get aggressive, they might think that since I am an independent, I must be against the government or that I am an illegal son of art or because I have worked with state affiliated entities, I cannot be part of the independent scene, thus they will not help me. By the way, I experienced all of these situations. The gatekeepers won't help me for one reason or another.”* (Visual Artist, June 2020)

Sometimes cadres exclude people who do not belong to a certain group or niche, who have a different background or who are proposing a change or a new concept. Such resistance could stem from human beings' tendency to resist change and rely on categorization to help themselves remember people or events. When a cultural operator is self-taught or is not a core member of one sector or another, he or she might be excluded by the other sector's gatekeeper. This makes the cultural scene a difficult one to get into especially for emerging artists or cultural operators who were born outside the capital and Alexandria.

*“The second challenge is the cultural manager or administrator who I need to run a workshop or an art space or a play, etc. It's a difficult task to find someone who is competent with enough knowledge and up to date with what's new in the field.”* (Visual Artist, June 2020)

Since there are no specialized degrees in art management in Egypt, most of the calibers who come from different backgrounds learn on the job. Besides, some organizations such as

Tamasi and foreign cultural institutions such as Goethe Institute organize workshops on different topics like art management, production, and fundraising to help build capacity for the field. However, the fact remains that these are scattered efforts, and most calibers have to travel lengths to get the knowledge and the skills they need. What adds to the challenge is that the salaries that the independent sector offers are very low compared to what the private sector offers for instance.

## 6.6 Accessibility

Making art available for people of different backgrounds is part of the 2014 Egyptian constitution's article 48 as mentioned before. However, for artists and cultural operators, making art available is only one part of the equation. The other side of the equation is having an audience witness this availability— an audience that would attend only if the content or the product is attractive enough for them.

*“The third challenge is the receiver or the audience. Accessibility does not necessarily mean audience attending, and it does not necessarily mean success. For example, Youssef Chahin’s “Hadouta Masreya” lost after being shown in cinema for two weeks. At the same time, “Khally balak mn zozo” was showing in parallel and kept going because of the high demand. The idea is when I have access, will I be ready with something the audience would want to watch? Because at the end of the day, they have Netflix, they have games with very sophisticated visuals. Am I able to offer attractive content to compete with the digital updates? And if I am reproducing an old story, is my treatment well done??” (Visual Artist, June 2020)*

Youssef Chahine, an Egyptian Director, has been credited with introducing Egyptian cinema to the world. The interviewed visual artist who is also a director speaks of the availability of how high-quality movies does not necessarily mean audience will choose them. To expand on the aforementioned, the three reasons attributed to why the audience of contemporary art events lack diversity: First, a lack of awareness regarding what contemporary arts (i.e., dance) is. Second, even though the ticket is already subsidized through sponsors, it is still not affordable for everyone, especially those who live away from the venue and have to

pay for transportation. Third, a social dimension is evident because some individuals do not like to attend events alone, so if nobody from their community can accompany them, they most probably would refrain from attending despite their interest in the event

*“We are trying to address this recently by reaching out to NGOs that work with different communities. For example, we collaborated with an NGO that works with women in marginalized areas, we supported them by providing free entrance while the NGO provided a bus to transport them to the event’s venue. So, those women got to attend an event as a group, and we got very good feedback as they were interactive in the Q&A session with the artist after the event.” (Art manager 2, July 2020)*

Building an audience and attracting new audience members is not an easy task. Some obstacles to engaging the audience in the independent scene consist of the lack of resources, whether human or financial, to mobilize community leaders and volunteers. Nevertheless, a stakeholder engagement plan is crucial for any art organization to survive and to be able to keep receiving funds. There are multiple methods that cultural operators can use to reach out to potential art users. One method consists of independent art organizations engaging with established NGOs to create partnerships of mutual benefits. For example, the NGO team can help with the reach out plan while the NGO’s beneficiaries get to enjoy an artistic experience for free or at a discounted price compared to other audiences.

### 6.6.1 Influence of Access and Artists on each other

As discussed earlier, access to arts education in Egypt has its difficulties and access to artistic events varies widely according to divisions of social class, cultural capital, geographical location, financial status and time affordability. Due to unequal opportunities and distribution of the means of cultural production, some artists are less privileged than others. As a result, some artists attain better education or better exposure than others. This means there is a variance across the arts and culture independent sector.

*“Many artists use sophisticated speeches, arrogant sometimes and selective other times... there are well educated artists and others who need to work on themselves because they didn’t get good education at schools even though they are skilled or*

*talented. This is visible in differences in artists' lifestyles. Another problem is that each group of artists is living in its own bubble and they have their own audience...So, these circles or bubbles know each other but they can't mix together or cooperate in times of crisis or in times of need. They don't try to have a common speech or sit down together to talk about their vision for the arts sector in Egypt or to form some type of policy or anything of the sort.” (Art manager 4, June 2020)*

Considering the characteristics illustrated by the art manager, one can infer that different access factors from an early age can actually influence artists and the kind of audiences they connect with during their professional career. More importantly, the lack of cooperation between these personalities has weakened the independent art scene and has let many opportunities to achieve gains pass by.

### 6.6.2 Relevance Instead of Advocacy

Another constituent in building an audience revolves around cultural operators building channels to reach out to audiences and volunteers who can become ambassadors for the art agenda and the cultural torch. Advocacy for the arts has been on the rise since 2011 due to public interactions with artists who displayed or performed their work in the streets. Examples include underground musicians played their music in public squares, visual artists used the public walls and fences to paint and express the collective spirit, and many art pieces were made using organic participatory efforts. The current COVID-19 crisis seems to have ignited a similar spirit but via online channels where people are able to social distance together and engage with the arts thanks to online live concerts, online dance workshops, online visual arts creations sponsored by museums, virtual tours through paintings, and much more.

*“Maybe in the current crisis, people started to feel the importance of culture, they see people sitting in their homes in cultural seminars online, watching movies or reading books. The important thing is that we who work in cultural work be aware of the importance of it and that we contribute to provide examples for it and see how we can let the society feel it! The problem is not that you will only pressure a project in a legislature or on who distributes the budget! No, you need that society itself to feel the importance of what you do, if this feeling doesn't exist in society, the society itself will oppose your budget increase and will tell you I want to eat, I don't want to read!” (Academic, June 2020)*



To support advocacy efforts, cultural operators need to make a strong case for the arts using new narratives that non-artists can relate to. The beauty of the artistic product is that when done well, it speaks for itself, dissolving barriers that language and affiliations normally create. Art can stand-alone for its own intrinsic value; however, sometimes this intrinsic value can only be highlighted using an instrumentalist argument. The job of cultural operators is to make audiences and stakeholders experience how enriching and transcending art is; that is how they become advocates for the arts themselves.

## 6.7 Cultural Management, Capacity and Leadership

The word “independent” is quite controversial and perhaps “interdependent” is more accurate considering the independent scene is dependent on funds from the governmental sector, the private sector, and donors. It is also dependent on support and advocacy of the audience and stakeholders. Moreover, it is the result of the assemblage of actors and operators who received their education from public institutions, whether Egyptian or foreign ones. Overall, no matter how independent, they still need to collaborate with different sectors and key players to be able to get funds, make production and sustain themselves.

*“The independent scene started in the 80s when YY and others from university theatres like faculty of fine arts theatre, faculty of law theatre at Cairo University and Ain Shams faculty of commerce theatre got together and said they were independent. The state incubated their initiative at Hanager Theatre inside the Opera premises. Once these people started to stand up to themselves and say they are independent, they got kicked out of the state-owned premises. Afterwards, they tried to be kind of a collective group that gives statements, holds meetings, speaks with the minister of culture, gives recommendations, but up until now, I can say they are still talking to themselves. I go attend these meetings by the way.” (Visual Artist, June 2020)*

The interviewed visual artist gives a perfect example of the lack organization and leadership when explaining the struggle of YY, a theatre director who creates contemporary theatrical performances inspired by daily Egyptian life. Upon declaring his independence along



with his colleagues, YY and his group failed to band together to produce a memorable piece of art that could be considered a statement.

Independent art organizations are usually understaffed, yet their small teams carry out numerous projects and activities. People who choose to work as cultural operators are usually driven by passion and belief in the arts, embarking on a career that is teeming with learning opportunities at the beginning but can easily develop into burnout and disillusionment. However, the narrative differs slightly for organization founders, who have access to more opportunities of professional growth (i.e., traveling to Europe for networking). However, the staff who work under the supervision of the founders do not always get the same opportunities.

*“I also realized it’s not feasible to grow professionally if you are working in an art organization. If you want to get the opportunities to travel and get trainings, you need to start your own thing. Because everyone in the scene wants to be the head chief of the organization to take all the opportunities, those working in the hierarchical structure under the supervision of the founder don’t get access to professional development opportunities which results in a high turnover and founders sometimes end up doing everything.” (Curator, June 2020)*

However, this reluctance to pass on the leadership or ownership mantle is toxic and hurts those founders who complain about the staff high turnover. Yet, it is obvious that the staff being overworked, underpaid, and need more incentives than just getting experience. They need to be able to make connections, get professional capacity building trainings and they need to feel empowered to be motivated to carry on working under these difficult, usually unstable work conditions.

### 6.7.1 Resilience

The challenges discussed, the lack of quality of content, funding, legislation, infrastructure, education, or accessibility, have made the independent cultural operators flexible, adaptable, and resilient. These challenges also pushed artists and practitioners to be innovative and creative to find resourceful ways around obstacles. Moreover, it made these

civil society actors realize that they have to gain support of the public to be able to persist and survive especially when legal issues are always at stake.

*“In my opinion, all these challenges instilled resilience in us, cultural operators. The world now realized that resilience is very relevant not only to the region. Therefore, working in this sector, we should be resilient and build different shapes of cooperation and partnership, position ourselves in different ways, think of how to involve people more often, what we offer to them, how to talk to them, where the money comes from and how. This leads us back to the accessibility idea if we say that the speech is different. I mean, my family doesn’t understand what I do till now and I can’t explain the information about what I do, I can’t explain the idea, or they can’t understand because there are not many examples for this job in Egypt, but I realized it’s a global issue.” (Art manager 4, June 2020)*

These challenges are not unique to Egypt but perhaps they are more hindering than they are elsewhere where the state actually supports the independent cultural sector by all means – financially and legally. However, these challenges are common in today’s world as the budget of arts and culture is usually the least of all other budget items all over the world. That is why it is always important to exchange experiences and look at the arts and culture sectors in other parts of the world to get inspired on how to tackle challenges and how to organize as civil society actors in such a versatile field.

Another issue facing cultural operators in Egypt is censorship. However, like other challenges, it has fostered a sense of resilience and creativity.

*“It’s sad not to have the same freedom of expression as Europe for instance, however it made us much smarter and more implicit or let’s say friendly art talking about politics. For example, I think the contemporary dance field has grown a lot in Egypt over the last few years compared to the theatre scene. In my opinion, this can be attributed to the fact that dance is a way to express using your body without verbal language, thus nothing can be taken against you even if it is a political piece. So, there is always a way around it as we have to live with it, but we try not to give in. We try to apply some pressure every now and then with the censorship to bring certain pieces that we think are worth having.” (Art manager 2, July 2020)*

Some performances and installations are non-verbal; they depend on movements, drama, and sometimes non-verbal exaggeration, encompassing the various interpretations from the audience. Artists usually play around with this concept of interpretation and relatability through various forms of expression that are difficult to be put into words and difficult to be

taken against them even when it's a political statement or a critique. Thus, by allowing different orders of worth to coexist and interact, arts organizations and cultural operators help reimagine society by creating opportunities. (Kaszynska, 2019). Unexpectedly, while foregrounding the realities of the current situation, it might be that arts and cultural organisations are delivering on the romantic promise to make society better through 'envisioning real utopias' (Wright, 2010, as cited in, Kaszynska, 2019) and by 'living' with the array of values and orders of worth (Kaszynska, 2019).

## 7 Conclusion

The independent art and cultural scene in Egypt has been filling in the gaps left by the vague cultural policy since the 1990s and has flourished post the 2011 uprising. The public realm post 2011 allowed people from different walks of life to interact with each other in the streets and squares, which helped independent artists to meet new audiences. The democratization of culture is still the main drive of the cultural policy, concurrently, the independent art scene has pushed an agenda of cultural democracy based on a populist approach, which advocates different kinds of contemporary arts and aims at integrating participatory practices when possible.

However, actors and operators of the independent art scene have been struggling since 2016 because of constant legal changes that complicated the legal status of many art initiatives and spaces. It leaves no choice for art entities but to register as an NGO and be under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Solidarity or to register as a for-profit company and be affiliated with the Ministry of Investment. Not to mention that the fact that the state doesn't fund or support the independent art scene makes it contributes to the difficulty for independent artists and organizations to survive, let alone thrive. Moreover, the private sector rarely invests in the independent art scene because it's after the maximization of profits. Thus, corporate

sponsors end up investing in established bands or troupes that have already established a wide audience and have gone commercial. This leaves little chance for creative emerging artists to thrive in the industry; hence, many talents go to waste.

On the other hand, foreign institutions, and cultural organizations such as embassies, foreign cultural centers, prominent funding organizations intervene through offering fund opportunities for different art projects through open calls for fund applications. However, usually highly educated artists who have the required language and writing skills are selected for these funds.

In addition, art education has become neglected at schools delaying the interest in the arts and limiting options of self-expression within the youth. Public institutions such as the syndicate of music still favor the formally educated art graduates, marginalizing those who are self-taught or privately taught. This leads to almost zero chance of public-independent partnerships. Furthermore, this means that artists do not have equal opportunities when it comes to securing funds or obtaining a good education, jeopardizing their outreach to audiences. At the same time, audiences do not get access to a variety of choices because the state art production, even though available, is not attractive because of its compromised quality, and some of its productions like those at the Opera House are not affordable to everyone.

Finally, the independent cultural organizations have internal problems as well, such as the lack of knowledge transfer when it comes to leadership, capacity building for the second generation in addition to the low salaries compared to those of the counterpart staff in the private sector. However, the state is using an instrumental approach to promote art and culture in its 2030 vision. It is a promising time for the independent cultural actors to make a strong case for their activities and practice to make sure there is a room for their work and their efforts in this new age.

**Limitations:**

The main challenge was the availability of literature on the independent arts and cultural scene in Egypt and even worldwide. Cultural policy research is relatively a young field. Data available in Arabic is very limited and even data in English is relatively limited and context specific. Moreover, official statistics about the independent arts and cultural sector is very difficult to find. Furthermore, access to officials working at the ministry of culture and the arts' syndicate was not feasible at the time of research. Alternatively, the researcher had to dig into qualitative pieces describing the policy orientations guiding arts and cultural sector in Europe and infer the commonalities that are relevant to the Egyptian context such as the democratization of culture concept and the arguments on the value of the arts.

### **Recommendations:**

To address the issue of depending mainly on foreign donors, the independent art operators should diversify their sources of funding. Along with advocating for the reviving a civic company legal model, civil society and independent operators need to reorganize themselves and adopt new models which diversify resources. In addition, the state should incentivize the private sector to invest in the arts to fill in the production gap while encouraging social responsibility. The state could examine the French Model to appropriate its own best practices in that regard.

Besides, independent art operators should boost their presence and create advocacy groups that advocate for their inclusion in the plans of the ministry of culture. They should also form networks and coalitions to bring them together, reconcile the differences and focus on commonalities. In addition, the ministry of culture should make use of the independent cultural groups by embracing a cultural policy that gives space and empower the independent cultural groups to help move the cultural sector forward. Moreover, the ministry of culture should utilize and capitalize on the already existing infrastructure. This can be best done through involving young independent cultural operators who can put their clear goals and defined

missions into renovating this structure. The Egyptian independent operators and the Egyptian ministry of culture could study what their German counterparts are doing in Berlin to get inspired by their best practices.

It is essential that the current legal framework governing arts and culture such as 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 and the Egyptian Penal code should be revised and amended to be in accordance with international conventions and the Egyptian constitution (Fazeulaa, 2018).

It is vital that empirical research and field work are conducted to shape future strategies based on the needs of society. It is also important that surveys are conducted to assess how audiences view the independent cultural sector. Moreover, the government should review and restructure art education to address the issue of outdated curricula. It can make use of the alternative education methods that emerging independent cultural operators have worked on. It can also look at the Nordic countries' efforts in this regard.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. What do you think of the art scene in Egypt? Is it accessible or not? whether it's to artists/cultural operators or accessibility to the audience. What are the factors affecting accessibility? And how do these factors affect non state cultural actors?  
*\*Accessibility can be broken down into availability of places or venues to practice and to showcase, investment/funding, legislation, and leadership in the art management scene.*
3. Do you think the package of being an artist along with being a cultural manager is a conflict of interest?
4. What do you think of Egypt's cultural policy? How does it affect the non-state cultural actors?
5. What's your stance on art education in Egypt? How does it affect accessibility?
6. What do you think of the approaches and choices of the international cultural organizations? (Regarding both these organizations' own activities and the projects they fund) Do you think they are trying to connect with the audience? Are they using the right techniques? What's your take on that?
7. Do you think the governmental cultural scene can collaborate with the independent one?
8. Do you think the business sector should try to invest in art more? Or should the independent scene reach out to the business sector and shed light on its benefits?
9. How would you describe the impact evaluation of the arts in Egypt in both the independent cultural scene and the governmental or commercial scene?

## Appendix B

The following table has been prepared by the researcher as an attempt to map the most active independent art organizations and initiatives that are currently operating in Cairo:

Name of Organization/Space	Art Genre
3elbet alwan	Performing Arts
100 copies music space	Performing Arts
AFCA for Arts and Culture	Performing Arts
CCDC	Dance
Cimatheque	Alternative Cinema
CIC	Visual Arts
DCAF	Contemporary Art Festival
Darb 1718	Visual Arts and Performing Arts
Dawar for Arts and Development	Performing Arts
El-Warsha Theatre Troupe	Theatre and Performing Arts
El-Sawy Culture Wheel	Performing Arts
Ezzat Ezzat Dance Studio	Dance
Gypsum Gallery	Visual Arts
Luke Lehner Studios	Performing Arts
Makan- Egyptian Center for Culture and Art	Performing Arts
Mashrabia Gallery	Visual Arts
Medrar for contemporary art	Visual Arts

Noon Creative Enterprise	Performing Arts
Picasso Art Gallery	Visual Arts
Room Art Space, Café	Performing Arts
Studio Emad Eddin Foundation	Performing Arts
Townhouse Gallery	Visual Arts
Zawya	Movie Theatre

The following table was prepared by the researcher as an attempt to mapping the most significant independent art organizations and initiatives that are no longer operating:

<b>Name of Organization/Space</b>	<b>Art Genre</b>
Mahatat for contemporary art	Art in Public Space and Community Art
Gneina Theatre	Performing Arts
Al Darb Alahmar School for Circus Arts	Performing Arts
Rawabet Theatre	Performing Arts
Teatro El Maadi	Performing Arts
Balcon Heliopolis	Alternative Cinema
Artellewa	Community Art
Al Mawred Al Thaqafy	Funding Institution
Beirut	Visual Arts
Osiris	Performing Arts