NEW VOICES IN CULTURAL POLICIES

ARAB REGION
2019 - 2022

Culture Resource
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Dedication

To the memory of Cheikh El Hassene El Bembary, the Mauritanian cultural actor and researcher who contributed to this publication but left us early due to a painful accident before it was completed and published. His articles remain drafts preserved with us, as we also preserve his good memory.

> A flowing faith was the first thing to emanate from Hassene... An unwavering faith in justice, in the right to exist and to co-exist for all of the Mauritanian society's components, and with a quest to win over those who marginalized him.
>
> That was his cause, the core cause that animated his life until his last heartbeats.
>
> He was modest in character, but assertive in his footsteps.
>
> We lost him the moment we knew him.
>
> We were lucky to see the value that he sows wherever he goes... Hard work to uncover the truth against the haze of reality and the hardships of the road ahead.
>
> **– Habiba Laloui**

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Introduction

This project is the result of an open research workshop launched by Culture Resource (Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafy) in January 2020 with the main objective to attract and support new research voices in the field of cultural policies in the Arab region. It was not an easy task, given the lack of subject-matter experts, and the sensitivity of such a topic in a politically, economically, and socially unstable region.

Therefore, a group of experts and actors, who were active in writing, proposing, or advocating for the development of cultural policies in the Arab region on scientific bases in line with world standards and with ratified international agreements adopted by most Arab countries, combined their efforts to organize and complete this project.

The project was carried out in three phases; the first phase aimed to attract young researchers by launching a call to apply for a training workshop focusing on cultural policies. Twelve male and female researchers were selected from 278 applicants, eleven of whom participated in a workshop that took place in Tunisia between 21 and 25 January 2020. The workshop provided an opportunity to familiarize the participants with different Arab experiences in the field of writing, research, and advocacy to develop cultural policies in the region. The workshop constituted the second phase of the project and was characterized by a kind of fluidity and openness to different academic and activist approaches. It also succeeded in accommodating sometimes conflicting and divergent views, some of which were so intense and confrontational with official authorities, while others adopted more diplomatic and flexible approaches with government agencies.

Based on the principle of making the most of the various forms of struggle, aimed primarily at consolidating the culture of establishing cultural policies in the Arab region driven by the demands or needs of civil society, and the concessions or interpretations of official parties, the experienced participants were keen to share their experience, including their successes, failures, and difficulties which we will use as stepping stones to continue our work in a field marred by many constraints, related first to the suspicion of a term that blends two uncomfortable terms in the Arabic context: "policy" and "culture". Thus, it seems that the first task these researchers will have to fulfill is to unravel this confusing situation and resume efforts aimed at bringing this term and this vital research field closer to those who seek to conduct research in it as well as those who are bound to be involved in it.

The dialogue was a dominant feature of this workshop; indeed, it did not adopt an indoctrination approach, but rather a horizontal approach that explores the major focuses of interest of younger generations of actors in this field, and links them with experts aware of its shortcomings. For this reason, the focus was on building bridges between the two so that the workshop would be an opportunity to draw attention and avoid fragmentation, and why not, creating shortcuts and learning from previous missteps.

Here came the third phase, which relied on the outcomes of the workshop, i.e. to identify the priorities for action on cultural policies in the Arab region from the trainees' perspective, which were summarized as follows:

- Ways to promote cultural diversity and linking these ways to civil peacebuilding plans.

- Funding problems of the cultural sector, in light of the right to public funding, the need for diversity, and the demand for transparency.

- Networking between independent cultural institutions to build a strong independent cultural sector that supports the demands of civil society.

- Establishing a digital cultural economy that keeps pace with and meets the cultural needs of the new generations associated with digital spaces.

- Actualising legislations and laws related to cultural affairs, in accordance with ratified international conventions, and public demands.

The following four thematic axes were adopted for the articles writing project:

- Problems related to cultural diversity and its relationship to civil peace.

- Funding problems of the cultural sector.

- Problems related to cultural legislations and how to update them in line with international conventions.

- Digital infrastructure's contribution to the Arab cultural field and ways to promote it.

This was the third phase of the project, where a group of top trainees in the workshop wrote specialized articles on cultural policies in light of the cultural concerns of each researcher[1]...

The project working team included five researchers who participated in the training workshop: Amira Elsebaai from Egypt, Cheikh El Hassene El Bembary from Mauritania, Hosam Athani from Libya, Meriem Mehadji from Algeria, Nelly Abboud from Lebanon, in addition to an external researcher[2] , Firas Farrah from Palestine; they started their work on November 16, 2020.

And because the beginning of this project coincided with the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, it bumped into several obstacles and challenges mainly related to the pandemic. The team patiently overcame these difficulties by adopting a primarily remote digital communication method, and a horizontal work method that always depended on a dialogue between researchers and the main researcher with qualitative consultations by the team's experts.

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[1] As for the priority and the entire issue of networking between independent cultural institutions, it will be adopted within the strategy of Culture Resource (Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafy) that was approved in 2022, as a culmination of Culture Resource's experience in promoting networking through coalitions and support programs, such as the "Lebanon Solidarity Fund" which was launched in cooperation with the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture – AFAC in 2020, in an effort to meet some of the urgent needs of the cultural sector in Lebanon in the midst of the social and political turmoil that has exacerbated since the 2019 uprising in light of an unprecedented economic collapse.

[2] He is a first-batch graduate of the Masters Program in Cultural Policy and Cultural Management launched by Culture Resource in Morocco.

The researchers were given a margin of freedom in choosing the form of the article suggested for each topic. The articles ranged from case studies to investigative articles. We were also keen to show the researcher's personality supported by an objective discourse. The first purpose of this project is to highlight the views of the new generations of researchers and practitioners in this field on the situation of the cultural sector in the Arab region and the most important challenges during the period it covered (2019-2021[3]). Thus, the outcome of this project, which combines solid experiences and promising voices, would be a research document that governmental or civil parties can rely on to launch new projects or develop new legislation, and even cultural policies that address and meet the identified gaps and needs. This is the ambition of this project, which relied on field monitoring of the cultural situation in the region, where existing numbers and statistics were questioned, and field actors kindly cooperated with researchers expressing their opinions, observations, or testimonies. The project also consulted official parties, some of which cooperated and answered the researchers' questions and queries.

We must also note that working on these articles was a goal in itself; one of the main objectives of the project was to train participants on writing articles on cultural policies targeting specialized parties. That is why the articles varied according to the differences in the experiences and qualifications of researchers, as well as their professional backgrounds.

On the other hand, the project was keen to cover the Arab region, but problems related to the lack of qualified researchers to take on this adventure prevented the fulfillment of this aspiration. Thus, we settled on the idea of representation rather than induction. We also tried to do justice to some areas that were neglected for one reason or another and were overlooked particularly by civil and independent institutions, so that the project would be a reference that can synthesize and intertwine the efforts and experiences that have been recorded in recent years, whether civil, governmental or private.

Cultural diversity was one of the most critical issues that researchers could work on in a region raging with political conflicts in sectarian, tribal, and religious contexts. Therefore, the researchers' audacity to raise certain relevant problems despite the topic's great sensitivity, especially by those residing in the region, should be applauded. The funding part of the cultural sector was also difficult to monitor, given the scarcity of published data and the "reservation" tradition usually adopted by official institutions. Researchers also found it difficult to study the legislation in view of the stability of cultural legislation in the region and the lack of updates during the period under review. Regarding digital technology, it was a gateway to anticipating the challenges facing the region in this vital field by monitoring some shy experiences that knew how to rely on this space that lacked, as exposed by the pandemic period, supporting infrastructure and sufficient skills to facilitate and enhance opportunities for its optimal exploitation in the cultural sector. As this sector lies in a geographically extended and politically fragmented region lacking opportunities for cooperation and joint action, for which the digital space may be a vital path, with the absence of major political initiatives that facilitate means of cooperation, or at least allow them to exist and experiment, succeed or fail.

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[3] The researchers did some changes and updates on their articles in 2022.

That is why it seemed necessary for this project to address the digital issue to highlight the necessity of introducing cultural policies that remedy our digital lagging behind and try to link it with major cultural and human goals away from the consumerism logic that still connects us to the digitally available contents, most of which are not produced in the Arab world.

Addressing the impact of political division and the rise in the control of Salafi groups on the remaining Libyan cultural resources and structures was also necessary to assess cultural diversity in a war-torn country with all the resulting complexities and difficulties in an already fragile and targeted field. It was also necessary to examine the difficulty of managing cultural funding in a space governed by political rivalry and security, economic, and health crises.

Not far from Libya, attention had to be drawn once again to the nature of the classifications that still constrained cultural activity in Egypt, and which often limit freedom of expression and creativity, a necessary condition for the vitality and diversity of any cultural scene.

On the other hand, the project was concurrent with the explosion of racial discrimination based on color in the United States, or what is known as: "Black lives matter". It tried not to overlook it by addressing the issue of the cultural presence of the black component in the Maghreb region which is characterized by a particular historical and cultural nature that made the cultural status of this component subject to silencing, overlooking, manipulation or "folklorization".

In the same context and within the same vision aiming to examine the most important event that culturally characterized and marked the region during the period under review, it was necessary to explore how the Beirut explosion in 2020 exacerbated the funding crises of the cultural sector in Lebanon, which was already constrained by the pandemic-related lockdown, and earlier by economic corruption that was jeopardizing the whole state.

The coronavirus pandemic placed the whole region face to face with an economic, educational, social, political, and moral challenge that was bound to have cultural repercussions that may at least bring about a change at the level of cultural practices. These practices suddenly found themselves to be much needed and, at the same time, required change, whether at the level of form, content, or tools. Therefore, the project sought to explore some of the cultural experiences that ventured towards and tried to exploit the digital space as a supportive tool for more freedom of creativity and boldness with all the technical, financial, human, and, mainly, technical obstacles it poses. These ventures included "Studio Laban" in Lebanon and attempts to launch a cartoon film industry in the Gulf and Maghreb regions.

Addressing the legislative demands of the film industry professionals in Algeria was an occasion to examine the ability of the sectoral coalitions to lobby, advocate, and maneuver, to ensure legislative gains that take into account the specificity and urgent and obvious needs of the sector.

In the end, it was not possible to turn a blind eye to the chronic and ongoing violations against the Palestinians living in Al-Quds (Jerusalemites). That is why we complemented the project with a testimony on the status of cultural diversity in the Old City of Al-Quds while making sure not to miss the opportunity to refer to the

legislative amendments adopted by "Israel" and the threat these amendments pose to the diversity of the cultural identity of Al-Quds. The successive events confirmed the legitimacy of such discourse, which seeks at least to acknowledge the urgency and priority of this crisis at the Arab level, despite all efforts to bring it down with the passage of time, and all the challenges it poses to every actor in the Arab cultural sector.

This project represents a serious and humble attempt to mobilize the Arab population in a sensitive field related to the cultural realm first, and that affects and is affected by the political, social, and economic realms since the field of cultural policies is closely connected to most of the fields related to the development and to the promotion of what is purely human in our lives and our reality. Thus, it is designed to be a preamble and an occasion to launch other civil, governmental, and private cultural, political, economic, and social initiatives that seek to restore our crumbling Arab situation in the light of a comprehensive and diverse, pragmatic, and selective, urgent and insightful vision; initiatives that rely on experience and do not avoid being adventurous.

We encountered many obstacles while working on this project. The biggest of which was the loss of our dear fellow researcher, Cheikh El Hassene El Bembary, whom we were looking forward to being one of the most prominent cultural voices to shed light on the most critical cultural issues in his country. Unfortunately, his death was a severe blow to us, the project, and the cultural scene that lost a promising researcher who could have made a difference in the coming years. May Mauritania give birth to someone who would continue his path, projects, and dreams.

Before concluding, I would like to thank and express my gratitude to all the experts who contributed to this project with their advice, assessments, and evaluations, and shared their experience with generosity and enthusiasm, Professors: Bilel Aboudi, Mourad Sakli, Mourad El Kadiri, Marwa Helmy, Ammar Kassab, Ammar Al Najjar, Fatin Farhat, Sabreen Abdel Rahman. I would like to mention in particular my two colleagues, Fatin Farhat and Mourad Sakli, who helped me review all the articles, as well as the entire administrative team of Culture Resource who facilitated communication between researchers and experts and followed up tirelessly on the specific details of the work, headed by Areej Abou Harb. I would also like to express my great appreciation to Culture Resource's director, Helena Nassif, who believed in this project from the beginning and supported it until its final stages.

I hope that this project would benefit our Arab cultural scene in particular and our development situation in general. May it be the beginning of new adventures that place the voices, demands, needs, way of thinking, capacities, weaknesses, and strengths of the younger generations at the heart of their interest and vision.

I cannot fail to express my happiness and pride in the collaboration with all the young researchers who participated in this project and my gratitude for their patience and understanding of the pace and gravitational nature of this research, and especially my trust in them and my best wishes for success in their future activism and academic paths towards a different Arab cultural scene.

Habiba Laloui
20 June 2022

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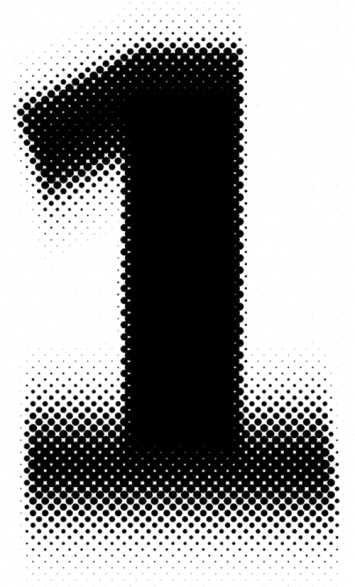
Chapter 1

On Fundamental Rights and Cultural Diversity

The Salafi Influence in Society and Official Departments and the Threats to Civil Society Supporting Cultural Diversity in Libya (2019-2021)

Hosam Athani

Since the fall of the Gaddafi regime in 2011, Libya was engulfed in a transitional period that resulted in a prolonged civil war, political divisions, and tensions. As a result, Libyan society witnessed shifts in the balance of power, influence, and wealth among different ideological currents represented by different provisional, military and religious ideologies. These groups tried to mainstream their visions in society and intervene in the formulation of societal values in a way that reflects their understandings and desires regarding the characteristics of the Libyan personality. Among these ideologies is the Salafi movement, which has established its presence due to its great popularity and wealth, the support of certain armed fundamentalist groups, and its infiltration into the circles of power until gaining full control over the General Authority of Awqaf (Endowments) and Islamic Affairs[1] in both the interim government and the Government of the National Accord.

This presence manifests itself in many major events, including the fatwa[2] of the Supreme Committee of the General Authority of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of the Interim Libyan Government prohibiting the Ibadi sect[3], and the statement issued by the Authority announcing the withdrawal of what it described as "all books that are deviant in terms of beliefs and methods[4]", including the book "Ruh al-Ma'ani for the Interpretation (Tafsir) of the Qur'an" by Shihab ad-Din Mahmud al-Alusi[5], on the grounds that the book "was transmitted from the imams of misguidance, union and immanentism, such as Ibn Arabi, Ibn al-Farid and al-Hallaj". In addition, there are the sermons that pitted against the writers who co-authored the book "Sun on Closed Windows"[6]. This was also evident through the exclusion of non-Salafi mosque preachers, and the warnings by Awqaf preachers against the manifestations of "heresies" such as the folk celebration of the birth of the Prophet (al-mawlid al-nabawī) by preparing a "porridge" and lighting special "lanterns"[7], as well as the special dishes for Ashura and the Islamic Hijri New Year or Amazigh New Year, and other forms of diversity and expression of popular culture and beliefs. In addition, there are the restrictions imposed on civil society organizations that support cultural diversity, the suppression of different forms of artistic expression such as concerts, music and plastic arts courses, the condemnation of New Year Eve's celebrations, and the restrictions imposed on women in the public space, under the pretext of combating "religiously forbidden social mixing of men and

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[1] The General Authority of Awqaf (Endowments) and Islamic Affairs of the Government of National Accord presents itself on its official page as a governmental institution concerned with the affairs of the Qurʼan, endowments, mosques, and Islamic affairs.

[2] The fatwa was published on the official page of the General Authority of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of the interim Libyan government in response to a question raised by a citizen; it was then deleted when reactions escalated, the most notably a statement by Supreme Council for the Amazigh of Libya (SCAL) issued on 11 July 2017, which considered this fatwa as "explicit incitement", considering that the Ibadi sect is the common sect of Libyan Amazigh.

[3] Ibadism is a juristic doctrine that stands side by side with the Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanafi, Hanbali, and other schools of Islam. It is slightly spread in North Africa, with concentration among the Amazigh, and is widespread in Oman and Zanzibar.

[4] Statement No. 2, of 2015, issued by the General Authority of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of the interim Libyan government in the city of Bayda on 6 May 2015, with reference no. 216-1/45.

[5] Correspondence addressed to the heads of the departments of cultural and preaching affairs in the regional offices, on 25 December 2017 (Ref. No. 2834-1/53).

[6] The sermon of Sheikh Fares Al Futaisi, in August 2017, and the sermon of Sheikh Majdi Hafala, the imam of the Aisha Umm Al Mu'mineen mosque in Al Akwakh district, Tripoli, same month.

[7] See the publications of the Department of Cultural and Preaching Affairs on the official page of the General Authority of Awqaf (Endowments) and Islamic Affairs of the Government of National Accord, under the hashtag "Sayings of the Malikis on the heresy of celebrating the birth of the Prophet".

women[8]" . The irony is that the General Authority of Awqaf turns a blind eye to the destruction of shrines, Sufi centers, and graves under the pretext of combating witchcraft and heresy, including the destruction of the tombs of Sidi al-Masry and Sidi al-Shaab, parts of the Othman Pasha mosque in Tripoli, and the mausoleum of Sidi Obeid in Benghazi, the attack on the Sahaba Cemetery in Derna, the repeated attacks on the tomb of Sidi Abd al-Salam al-Asmar in Zliten, and other violations in which accusations were leveled against Salafi groups based on eyewitnesses or videos that circulated on social media[9].

This article mainly tackles the attempts to violate individual and collective freedoms, and indirect attempts to impose a single intellectual and behavioral pattern in Libyan society after the recent developments, specifically during 2019 and 2020. Thus, it does not delve into the problematic specificities of cultural diversity as much as it intends to draw attention to the risks threatening such diversity that actually fall under the restriction of freedoms, including freedom of cultural expression, cultural consumption, and cultural behavior. The article recounts, in some detail, a violation committed by the General Authority of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of the Interim Libyan Government (in Benghazi, eastern Libya) against a civil society organization. It also refers to a second case (in Tripoli, western Libya) that illustrates the authority and control exercised by the heads of the General Authority of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of the Government of National Accord, and the behavior of this Authority as if it were an entity beyond State control. The report relies on the official audio-visual and print statements of some of the concerned parties, as well as Friday sermons and accompanying religious lessons while monitoring some unofficial reactions that can help convey a clearer picture of the reality.

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[8] Thursday, 27 December 2018, evening, under the slogan "Break down the dens of corruption, promiscuity, and vice in Benghazi", the official security forces units, as part of the security plan, raided a meet & greet event for "Twitter Girls" in Casa Café, and the girls were reprimanded and were considered as morally degenerate.

[9] Dated 6 January 2021 (Ref. No.: 017/2), addressed to the President of the General Authority of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, regarding "the issue of overdue rents to the General Authority of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs for the Libyan Center for Archives and Historical Studies' use of the property leased thereby".

On Fundamental Rights and Cultural Diversity

First Case: The Interim Government's Authority of Awqaf's Crackdown on the "Tanarout Organization for Libyan Creativity"

1 Reports to Security Agencies and Various Accusations

Between early November 2020 and early December 2020, official security services made repeated visits to the premises of the Tanarout Organization for Libyan Creativity[10] , including two visits by the Internal Security Agency, one visit by the External Security Agency, three visits by the Moral Police, and one visit by the Alhadaik Police Department, in addition to repeated summonses of some of Tanarout's officials, including the Public Prosecution's summonses of members of its Board of Directors and Executive Director[11].

These services informed the organizers of the Tanarout organization that they had received reports from the Benghazi Awqaf Office, which is affiliated with the General Authority of Awqaf of the Libyan Interim Government. The reports indicated that the Tanarout organization is carrying out "suspicious activities that are not in line with the public morals of the conservative Libyan society", and these reports singled out specific events and involved accusations, including:

- Organizing the Badron concert at Tanarout premises on 18 January 2020, which the Benghazi Awqaf Office report described as "a promiscuous concert involving social mingling and mixing of men and women and satanism rituals". The report used photos of the event published on the official page of the Tanarout organization to prove the mixing of men and women.

- Discussing the book "Saint Mark" by David Hallaq on 27 November 2019, which, according to the report of the Benghazi Awqaf Office, "promotes the spread of Christianity". The Awqaf office later abandoned this accusation and did not mention it in its statement or visual declarations.

- Discussing the book "Homo sapiens / A Brief History of the Human Race", by Yuval Noah Harari, on 16 October 2019, on the grounds that it "contains atheistic ideas and other pro-paganism ideas, and that the author is Israeli, and the book is issued by a Hebrew institution", according to a report by the office. The report was based on paragraphs from the book.

- Discussing the novel "Al-Yater" by Hanna Mina on 4 September 2019, on the grounds that it "contains sexual scenes" and "incites marital infidelity". The office relied on photographs of excerpts from the novel.

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[10] Tanarout Organization for Libyan Creativity: A cultural association established on 11 November 2015, in Benghazi; it obtained permission to practice cultural work from the Civil Society Commission in Libya under registration number (1227-01-20160731).

[11] Based on the testimonies of three members of the Tanarout organization who witnessed these repeated visits.

On Fundamental Rights and Cultural Diversity

2   Escalation and Closure of the Tanarout Organization Premises

The organization responded on 25 November 2020, in a statement posted on its official Facebook page[12] , clarifying the rationale of the Awqaf reports, and refuting the accusations of moral decay that were addressed to them under the pretext that the organization premises are mixed-sex and noting that Libyan laws do not criminalize the social mixing of men and women. The organization considered that the Awqaf Office based their accusations on "personal religious interpretations without mentioning any legal violation committed by the organization and members thereof", and that the conclusions made by the Awqaf Authority are "suspicions that only exist in their perception of morals and what the values of society should be according to their own understanding that clearly manifested itself through systematic efforts to block all kinds of outlets of life, repress society, and tailor community values according to the standards of one specific group".

The Office of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in Benghazi responded with an official statement[13] on 29 November 2020, stating that "in light of the duties of the Office of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in Benghazi, including the preservation of religion and morals from destructive ideas, offending methods, and westernization calls... such as calls for polytheism, blasphemy and insulting the religion of monotheism (Islam), praising Buddhism and Christianity, organizing parties with Satanists' rituals, the publication of books by Jewish writers sponsored by the Hebrew University, and calls for sexual intercourse in the most accurate details and for marital infidelity, as well as other things that offend public decency. The Office addressed official correspondences to several security services affiliated with the Ministry of Interior". The statement indicated that "the General Authority of Awqaf did not address, nor prosecuted this organization, but was rather involved in a topic circulating in the Public Prosecution".

On 2 December 2020, Sheikh Ali Al-Qammoudi – a religious program's host and presenter – hosted on Al-Hadath channel, Sheikh Abdul Rahman Al-Juwaili, a preacher at the Authority, and Sheikh Atef Al-Obaidi, director of the Benghazi Awqaf Office, in a special episode on the Tanarout organization case with the Office of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in Benghazi, and the refutation of the accusations of incitement and defamation addressed to the General Authority of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. The following day, a Facebook page called Ard Lamlom Al Karama posted a statement bearing the signatures of the residents of the Ard Lamlom neighborhood – where the premises of the Tanarout organization are located – calling for the closure of the organization. Information about calls to arms for the purpose of storming the premises also circulated as confirmed by witnesses among members of the organization. The persons in charge of Tanarout had to immediately announce the suspension of the organization's activity until further notice. The premises were closed on the same day, and are still closed as of the date of writing this article.[14]

Weeks later, the organization's premises were evacuated, while the chairperson and executive director were referred – after three investigation sessions with the Public Prosecution – to court (the first hearing was scheduled for Friday 29 January 2021). They face charges of "showing indecent content in a public space".

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[12] Official Facebook page of the Tanarout Organization

[13] Under the title "Statement of the Office of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in Benghazi regarding the smear campaign waged by (Tanarout organization) and its supporters against the General Authority of Awqaf (Endowments) and Islamic Affairs – may God guard it – from evil plots".

[14] On 4 December 2020, a recording of an excerpt from a Friday sermon by Sheikh Farhat Ali al-Amami, a member of the Supreme Fatwa Committee in the State of Libya, entitled "A Letter to the Advocates of Religious Freedom, the Advocates of Secularism and Liberalism, Followers of Jews and Christians" stated that "this freedom that they advocate for calls for the worship of Satan, the worship of vain desires and passions, insulting God, His prophets and His messengers, and offending religious constants, rules, and laws, as was the case in the Tanarout organization, which was held in the center of Benghazi.

         On Fundamental Rights and Cultural Diversity

3   The Implications of the Case

This incident constitutes a clear shift in the Salafi movement adherents' tactics in confronting manifestations of emancipation expression. It shifted from the use of statements, raids, and mosque pulpits to fuel the public in service of their vision, to the submission of reports to official security services, thus avoiding direct confrontation with civil society organizations. They rely in this on the official mandate of the Authority regarding "Islamic Affairs", which – despite its uncertainty as described by its opponents – gives the General Authority of Awqaf a function similar to that of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue (haya al-amr bil-marūf wan-nahī an al-munkar), as it has the right to submit reports, including certain instructions and directives, to official authorities.

At a time when the back-and-forth statements later escalated between the Authority and the Tanarout organization, in the media and in security departments, concerns have grown among activists who showed solidarity with the Tanarout organization regarding the possibility of having members of the Salafi movement infiltrating the judiciary, and the judiciary's bias towards the Salafi pressure in the state and society.

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Second Case: The General Authority of Endowment – al-Awqaf's Crackdown on the Libyan Center for Archives and Historical Studies

1 Threat of Eviction

On 4 January 2021, the Libyan Center for Archives and Historical Studies[15] , located in the Abu Mashmasha area in the Libyan capital, Tripoli, received a notice from the General Authority of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of the Government of National Accord, demanding the center to choose between paying the rent of the land on which it is built, or vacating the premises within three days.

The center's spokesman, Dr. Ali Al-Hazel, in an intervention on the Libya Panorama Channel LPC on 9 January 2021, said that four years ago, "A court decided that the center should remain in its headquarters in return for paying 2,000 Libyan dinars per month, but the opposite party refused, and told us literally: I do not yield to the verdict of a court… (..)". Al-Hazel pointed out that members of the authority "came to us and broke into our premises, (...) and asked (the head of the center) Dr. Mohamed al-Taher al-Jarrari signed a document stating that the land on which the center is built belongs to the Awqaf, and he signed it at gunpoint".

Al-Hazel said that public prosecutor Al-Siddiq Al-Sour suspended the eviction procedure "until the case is legally resolved" and took urgent measures to protect the center's headquarters. The Press Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Government of National Accord announced that the ministry had assigned patrols to protect the center's headquarters.

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[15] The Libyan Center for Archives and Historical Studies, previously known as the Libyan Jihad Center, was established in Tripoli on 17/8/1977. Its mandate consists of collecting, preserving, indexing, and protecting documents and manuscripts of historical importance that constitute the state's public archive. UNESCO has recognized it among the institutions of human heritage that must be preserved and not compromised.

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2   Details of the Dispute and the Land Ownership Problem

On 8 January 2021, the General Authority for Culture of the Government of National Accord published a statement[16] on its official website, under the title "Preserving the Libyan Center for Archives and Historical Studies is a sacred national duty", in which it expressed its regret over what it described as the "winds of narrow personal interests". It attributed the root cause of the problem to "an administrative error resulting from the failure to expropriate the land on which it was built for the public benefit when it was established … and due to the repeated demands of the branch of the General Authority of Awqaf for monthly rents approaching one hundred thousand dinars, which is the highest rent value requested by a public authority from another public institution, as both are government agencies. The Authority of Awqaf relied its claims on the fact that the center was built on the ruins of an old cemetery, which is the cemetery of Sidi Al-Ardawi. While the historical cemeteries belong to the Antiquities Authority, not to the Awqaf Authority, no one knows how the latter was able to take advantage of this administrative error and put the fate of 27 million rare documents in jeopardy".

In a statement by Dr. Al-Hazel[17], he confirmed that he had documents in Italian proving that this land is owned by the municipality of Tripoli since the Italian colonization, in November 1942, when the Italian government allocated it to the Tripoli municipality after paying compensation to the original owner; and that the Ministry of Health turned this land in 1970 into the municipality cemetery for the burial of people who had no family, as the municipality of Tripoli assumed the function of burial.

A statement issued by the General Authority of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs of the Government of National Accord[18] stressed that "disputes between public authorities should not appear on the media and not be posted on social media platforms, nor be circulated." The statement referred to the circumstances that the Awqaf Authority has experienced, such as the frequent assignment of its mandate to the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Housing and Utilities, or the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the consequent loss of many endowments due to greed. The authority will not hesitate to take all administrative and legal procedures that would help return the lost endowments, invest in the neglected ones, evacuate tenants who refuse to pay, and impose rent on everyone. This is God's right, first and foremost, and our ancestors endowed it permanently until the day of resurrection, as in the prophetic hadith "hold on to the origin of the wealth and flow its benefits".

In a move that reflected the complications hidden from the public, and increased the questions about the true amount due and about the size of the Awqaf Authority's revenues in general and its spending patterns; an official correspondence issued by the Presidential Council of the Government of National Accord was posted on social media , indicating a previous adjustment to the rent value of the property from 40,000 Libyan dinars per month to 150,000 Libyan dinars per month, and where the council requests from the General Authority of Awqaf "not to take any action towards the center", and that the instructions of the Head of the Presidential Council require that the Ministry of Finance put in place the appropriate mechanism for the payment of the aforementioned overdues.

On 7 January 2021, the Tanweer Movement published on its official page a statement calling for the government and its ministries to end what it described as authoritarianism "practiced by the Ministry of Awqaf which has ambiguous intentions" and demanded an audit of all its resources and properties and the way it disposed of them, as well as a review of the Awqaf laws in general.

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[16] Statement of the General Authority for Culture of the Government of National Accord

[17] In a press release published on the website of Channel 218 on 9 January 2021.

[18] Issued on 10 January 2021, under the title "The meeting of the President of the General Authority of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs with the competent departments, regarding what was raised about the waqf property of mosques occupied by the Center for Archives and Historical Studies".

3   Criticisms Addressed to the Authority: it Acts as an Entity Separate from the State

While the General Authority of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs insists on its entitlement to the land ownership, some activists respond that the case is not about the Awqaf's entitlement or not, but about the Authority's insistence on acting as a body that is separate from the state, and the fact that it does not take into account the public interest of society in preserving this non-profit public institution.

Ahmed Mahmoud, a human rights researcher at Tadamon (Solidarity) organization, believes that the insistence of the Awqaf Authority to vacate the center, which contains approximately 27 million documents, within three days, without arranging alternative headquarters, reflects its indifference to the fate of such documents, and its lack of appreciation for this material and moral wealth.

The writer Jalal Othman stresses the fact that the center is a "house of expertise for the institutions of the Libyan state, including universities and research centers, where students and researchers would find quite what they are looking for". These documents are also a kind of a safety valve for national security, as they contain historical documents related to the state borders, urban planning, agreements, and others.

While the General Authority of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs insists on its entitlement to the land ownership, some activists respond that the case is not about the Awqaf's entitlement or not, but about the Authority's insistence on acting as a body that is separate from the state.

Conclusion

It goes without saying that the intransigent position of the Salafi movement, which rejects forms of ideological, cultural, and intellectual differences, threatens cultural diversity in Libya since it does not attach value to the importance of cultural diversity or the material and intangible wealth of the society. In addition, it limits the freedom of cultural expression and practices, thus entrenching a monochromatic future founded on dominance and generalization of vision without any regard to the reality of diversity and the right to be different. Its influence in official circles, and its dominance over the General Authority of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in Libya, in both sectors, as well as its possession of wealth, popularity, human and financial resources, and its infiltration into the main joints of the state and decision-making positions, pose a challenge to the state institutions and civil society organizations that support diversity, and to all initiatives that promote the diversity of cultural expression in Libyan society.

The intransigent position of the Salafi movement, which rejects forms of ideological, cultural, and intellectual differences, threatens cultural diversity in Libya since it does not attach value to the importance of cultural diversity or the material and intangible wealth of the society. It also limits the freedom of cultural expression and practices, thus entrenching a monochromatic future founded on dominance and generalization of vision without any regard to the reality of diversity and the right to be different.

The Old City of Al-Quds: a Cultural Heritage in a Divided City

Firas Farrah

If we are to measure the extent to which cultural diversity is respected in a region, we must consider the extent to which it is integrated into public spaces. One of the most important features of public spaces that support cultural diversity is that they are accessible to all and safe, generate equality, and promote economic, social, and environmental development. Moreover, they all promote culture.[1]

UNESCO defines public space[2] as "an area or place that is open and accessible to all peoples, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age or socio-economic level. These are public gathering spaces such as plazas, squares and parks. Connecting spaces, such as sidewalks and streets, are also public spaces".

In public spaces, interactions associated with meeting various social needs take place in accordance with a particular society's existing value system. Such interactions may take the form of conflicts (different types of strife, confrontation, and clashes), or also of partnerships and cooperation; the public space, understood in this way, i.e. of partnership and cooperation, always takes into account the influence and participation of individuals and society in its evolution. Elements of cultural heritage and links with cultural memory that are rooted in the public space are either a source of enhancing development, or a source of conflicts between the city's inhabitants.[3]

Researchers study public spaces from several perspectives, most notably: the economic, the political and the social perspectives.[4] From the political perspective, leading researchers coined several terms. The researcher Jürgen Habermas[5] adopted the term "public sphere" to express an abstract and rhetorical form of a public space full of ideas, opinions, and discussions on issues of public interest. Thus, the public space offers an opportunity for individuals to engage in politics through discussion, opinion-shaping, and consensus-making. The "right to the city" is a term coined by the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre[6] that refers to the basic rights of individuals to access not only the physical public spaces that allow for gathering and interaction but also the speaking in public spheres that allow for political participation. The researcher Hannah Arendt also introduced the term public realm[7] to explain that the public space is a space that facilitates speech and action, as individuals not only build consensus in the public sphere but also engage in collective political action to achieve common goals.

The authorities' practices can be an obstacle to the exercise of democracy in public spaces, leading thus to the exclusion and marginalization of certain groups or individuals. They can also use intimidation strategies to shape the general environment, such as monitoring the spaces that are considered places of expression for the opposition, placing commercial centers and some other places under close police scrutiny, and taking into account the ease and speed of taking full control of them if necessary. In this context, we can refer to many strategies enforced by the Israeli occupation forces in the Old City of Al-Quds.

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[1] See (UNESCO, 2015) Public spaces as a key to urban regeneration.

[2] ibid.

[3] Hołuj, D. (2017) Public Space and Cultural heritage in community projects - the example of Warsaw, European Spatial Research and Policy, Volume 24, Number 2.

[4] Neal, Z. (2010). Seeking common ground: three perspectives on public space. Urban Design and Planning, 1–8.

[5] قياتي عاشور، "يورغن هابرماس: المجال العام – مقال موسوعي"، إضاءات، 04 تشرين الثاني/نوفمبر 2019.

[6] Public Space Policy Framework, United Cities and governments UCLG, 2016.

[7] Canovan, Margaret. Politics as Culture: Hannah Arendt and the Public Realm, History of Political Thought, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Winter 1985), pp. 617–642 (26 pages), Imprint Academic Ltd.

PUBLIC SPACE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN AL-QUDS

The Old City is located in the eastern part of Al-Quds and is considered its center. Many researchers have referred to Al-Quds as a divided city. Gizem Caner and Fulin Bölen used this description in 2012 referring to Jerusalem as a city whose cultural diversity reflected through religion, language, and cultural identity is exploited to satisfy certain political interests. In this context, the concept of a divided city is opposite to the concept of a multicultural city.[8] As for the Old City, it can be considered a convergence point for different cultural groups interacting with each other, often in conflict.

In 2015, three military barracks were built in front of the entrance to Bab al-Amoud in Al-Quds

"The Old City of Jerusalem and its walls" was included in the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage[9] in the List of World Heritage in Danger, after the majority of the states parties to the convention approved the request submitted in 1981 by Jordan being the custodian of the Old City. In one of its central policies[10] , the convention provides for encouraging the involvement and participation of indigenous peoples and various stakeholders in preserving their cultural and natural heritage and enhancing the role of communities in implementing the convention. In addition, the convention states that each state party shall endeavor "to adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community".

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[8] Caner & Bölen, Multicultural' cities or 'divided' cities: what makes the difference? 6th International Multiculturalism, Conflict, and Belonging Conference, 2012.

[9] UNESCO, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, November 1972.

[10] UNESCO World Heritage Convention, Policies Regarding Communities

On Fundamental Rights and Cultural Diversity

Many researchers have referred to Al-Quds as a divided city, a concept that is opposite to that of a multicultural city.

The Old City: An Imbalance in Cultural Diversity in Favor of the Occupation

There are many government offices responsible for the administration and revitalization of the cultural life in the Old City. In this context, when we talk about government agencies, i.e. the "state" agencies that are officially and explicitly active in the city's space, we mean the bodies affiliated with the Israeli occupation government, including, but not limited to, the Jerusalem municipality, the Jerusalem Development Authority (JDA), and the Israeli Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage. This is because, unfortunately, the Palestinian government cannot officially and publicly set foot in the Old City even if under a cultural pretext and goal, and any activity associated with the Palestinian government is immediately canceled. The Israeli authorities responsible for the administration of the city of Jerusalem, post on their official websites reports and plans related to the general policies implemented in Jerusalem, and the allocated budgets, through which the spaces of the Old City of Jerusalem are regulated. They also focus, through their plans, on supporting touristic and cultural projects and programs in Jerusalem in general and the Old City in particular.

In my master's thesis, I studied in the context of the Cultural Policy and Cultural Management Program (2018-2020), the public art presented in the public spaces of the Old City, and the problem of participation. In recent years, a decline in the participation of Palestinians living in Al-Quds (Jerusalemites) in public arts and social/participatory public arts has been observed in the vicinity of the Old City, as well as a decline in events and festivals organized by Palestinian cultural entities. On the other hand, huge events planned and organized by the Jerusalem municipality and Israeli government offices that deal with cultural revitalization of the surroundings of the Old City have emerged. This caused an imbalance in an equitable diversity of cultural expressions, which made the public spaces of Al-Quds the stage to one single narrative crushing the collective memory: which is the Israeli narrative.

In recent years, a decline in the participation of Palestinians living in Al-Quds (Jerusalemites) in public arts and social/participatory public arts has been observed in the vicinity of the Old City.

A Survey on the Characteristics of Public Spaces in Al-Quds

Since the study targets the public space of Al-Quds, it was necessary to examine the public spaces of the Old City, and check whether they were – in their current condition, and under their current administration – spaces with characteristics that make them welcoming and encouraging for the public Palestinian cultural expressions and activities. To this end, qualitative interviews, quantitative monitoring, and documentary research were conducted. A questionnaire was distributed in Arabic via an electronic platform between 15 August 2020 and 25 August2020 and was directed mainly to Palestinian cultural activists, art practitioners, and curators, residing in Al-Quds

The respondents were asked about the characteristics of public spaces that were mainly derived from the theoretical framework of the thesis, i.e.:

- They should be accessible (accessibility).

- They should generate a sense of equality (equality).

- They should be safe (safety).

- They should be a source of and a protector of freedom of expression (freedom of expression).

The respondents were given multiple-choice questions that offer five possible answers, and they had to select one statement they agree with. Thus, the median is (3), and the closer an indicator is to (1), the more positive its value is; whereas, the closer it is to (5), the more negative it would be: (<1.5) would be very positive, and (>4.5) very negative.

Indicator	Accessibility	Equality	Safety	Freedom of Expression
Value	2.26	3.22	2.96	3.78

Table 1: Values of indicators used to assess the characteristics of the public spaces of the Old City of Al-Quds

The number of questionnaires was 120, and the targeted age group was above 18 years old. Parameters were divided according to gender and religion. The sample consisted of 53.3% females and 46.7% males, and included 87.5% Muslims, 9.2% Christians, and 3.3% others. The percentage of art practitioners in the sample exceeded 86.7%, 35% of whom practiced one form of art frequently.

1 Accessibility: Low as a Result of Police Practices

Ease of access is one of the critical indicators when we talk about public culture. As mentioned earlier, access to and effective and creative participation in culture and cultural life are among the most important articles mentioned in laws, human rights instruments, and cultural rights. In the case of art in public spaces, the cultural content is presented in public places, and if access to such public spaces fails, this will of course directly affect the opportunity to participate in discussions and activities, as well as in public art projects presented in these places.

In the survey, the accessibility value was close to the median; the low value of the accessibility indicator may be due to some of the practices of the Israeli police, such as obstacles and closures in certain cases and times in the face of those wishing to reach the city (such as closures on Fridays at prayer time), as well as to some personal bad experiences encountered by certain respondents when trying to reach the city. The Israeli occupation imposes a state of emergency, by applying the State of Emergency Law, which mainly consists of granting extraordinary powers to the administrative authorities, especially the police, authorizing them to infringe on some fundamental individual and collective freedoms and rights, such as the right to movement, freedom of the press, and freedom of demonstration and assembly. Thus, decisions to deny access to the city become arbitrary.

The low value of the accessibility indicator may be due to some of the practices of the Israeli police, such as obstacles and closures in certain cases and times in the face of those wishing to reach the city.

At the same time, the public space policies of the Jerusalem municipality provides for the promotion of access

(facilitating the access of older people and people with special needs to public spaces in the city center). Indeed, the Jerusalem municipality has equipped the town gates with ramps to facilitate the entry of electric vehicles for people with special needs and older people, pursuant to its policy.

2 Sense of Equality: Negative Value due to the Occupation's Practices and Laws

As for the sense of equality indicator, it was negative, which means that the respondents do not feel equal with the rest of the population. Based on this negative value, we can conclude that there is some sort of exclusion practiced against the Palestinian population within Al-Quds. In addition to the field practices of the occupation forces in the city, the decline in this indicator in recent years may be due to the legislation that gives Jews the right to the place as a majority, especially the "Jewish Nation-State Law" (Basic Law: Israel the Nation-State of the Jewish People), which was enacted as a basic law[11] functioning in lieu of a constitution.

There is some sort of exclusion practiced against the Palestinian population within Al-Quds.

The Palestinians had strongly objected[12] to the Jewish Nation-State Law, and in addition to the petition[13] filed by Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in "Israel" against the law, Arab MKs submitted several objections; they also expressed their rejection by tearing[14] up a copy of the law in the parliament. MK Ahmad Tibi described the adoption of the law as "the death of democracy". Concerns have been raised that the law could be used as a pretext to discriminate against non-Jewish Israelis, specially through its general premise and its specific provisions.

According to researcher Tamar Brandes[15], eight petitions have been filed against the law as of 1 October 2018[16], and the claim in the first petition is that the law enshrines Jewish supremacy and that the general claims regarding the "exclusivity of the right to self-determination" to the Jewish people will provide a base for future laws allowing preferential treatment of Jews. The law considers the members of ethnic minorities in "Israel" as second-class citizens. It does not contain any reference to equality and does not, in any way, recognize or acknowledge the existence of minorities in "Israel". The policies and practices implemented by the "State of Israel" in East Jerusalem are discriminative and racist against Palestinians in this part of Al-Quds. The unequal occupancy of space, or even the exclusion, that Jerusalemites are exposed to in the Old City negatively affects the possibilities of active participation in public art projects in the city. This results in depriving them of the opportunity to effectively organize and present public art and other cultural activities within the city, such as organizing huge public art events in which they celebrate their culture, similar to the Festival of ANWAR (Lights).

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[11] "Israel" does not have a constitution, but it does have a set of "Basic Laws" which function in lieu of a constitution.

[12] هكذا رد الفلسطينيون على قانون يهودية الدولة، 19 تمّوز/يوليو 2018.

[13] Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights, Jewish Nation State Law Petition.

[14] الكنيست الإسرائيلي يصادق على قانون الدولة القومية اليهودية، 19 يوليو/ تموز 2018.

[15] Tamar Hostovsky Brandes is a senior lecturer at Ono Academic College Faculty of Law in Tel Aviv.

[16] As quoted from T. Brandes, 2018, Israel's Nation-State Law - What Now for Equality, Self-Determination, and Social Solidarity? 09 November2018.

The low value of the indicator related to equality in the public space leads cultural organizations and cultural mediators to search for alternatives focusing on organizing and presenting artistic activities within the walls of their cultural organizations, instead of focusing on artistic projects taking place in public spaces. The quantitative questionnaire included a question on the respondents' agreement with the following statement: "In the public spaces of the Old City of Al-Quds, everyone is equal, and I personally feel equal to anyone there". 10.8% strongly agreed, 26.7% agreed, 10.8% said they had no opinion, 32.5% disagreed, and 19.2% strongly disagreed.
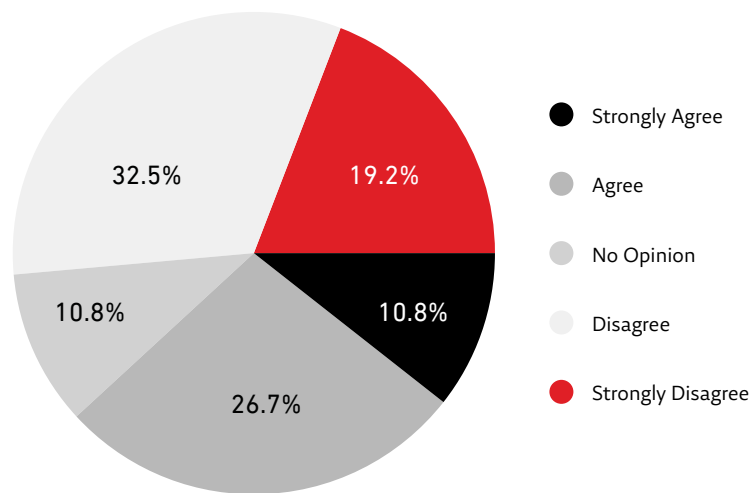

Figure 1: Disparity in the indicator of the sense of equality within the city.

3   Feeling of Safety Compromised by Security Measures

Much of the literature indicates that the presence of public art in an area is an implicit indication of safety within this area. As expected, the indicator value of the level of safety in Al-Quds, was medium (2.9), which is considered very logical. There were many indications of a decline in the level of safety, and if we analyze the correlation between the level of safety in public spaces inside the city, and the level of the contribution of public art to the feeling of safety within the city, which recorded the lowest value among all the indicators of the impact of public art on the urban environment within the city, we can observe a causal relationship between both levels since the level of safety within the city's space affects the role that public art plays in enhancing the sense of safety.[17] Thus, the low level of safety within the city will not leave any significant impact on the contribution of public art to increasing the feeling of safety therein.

[17] In the results chapter in the thesis, the value related to the impact of the art presented in the City on increasing the feeling of safety therein was 1.44. The value of respondents represented 60% of those who found that public arts in the public spaces of the City play a positive role in increasing the feeling of safety therein. Therefore, the value was positive and close to the median.

The Israeli authorities often impose strict security measures in the Old City, citing as excuses, the Palestinian intifadas such as the "knife intifada", the run-over or car intifada, among others. These measures include installing surveillance cameras in every corner of the city, building military barracks, most notably in front of Bab al-Amoud, which deformed the beauty of the entrance of this landmark, and deploying army and police officers inside the city. As a result, Palestinians felt that they were surrounded by weapons and surveillance cameras inside the city. And if we were to carefully examine the situation of the public spaces of the Old City and look at it from a political perspective, the security measures enforced in the city seem exclusionary measures, since manipulating safety standards is one of the intimidation tactics used to exclude undesired people, i.e. the Palestinians, from the public spaces.

The security measures enforced in the city seem exclusionary measures, since manipulating safety standards is one of the intimidation tactics used to exclude undesired people, i.e. the Palestinians, from the public spaces.

4   Freedom of Expression: Minimal, Most Recent Obstacle... the "Nation-State Law"

The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of 2005, to which "Israel" is not a signatory yet, is one of the most important global instruments to protect freedom of cultural expression[18]. The convention states that: "cultural diversity can be protected and promoted only if human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, information, and communication, as well as the ability of individuals to choose cultural expressions, are guaranteed".

Freedom of expression is most important when it comes to effective and active participation in cultural life, and given the fact that public arts take place in public and open spaces; thus, we cannot expect cultural diversity in public art projects and activities without a set of laws supporting freedom of expression.

In the questionnaire, the freedom of expression indicator was the lowest among all the indicators of the characteristics of the public space of the Old City of Al-Quds. The indicator value was 3.78. The quantitative questionnaire included a question about the respondents' agreement with the following statement: "I can participate in a protest in the public space of the Old City of Al-Quds, and freely express my opinion". 7.5% strongly agreed, while 11.7% agreed, 10.8% said they had no opinion, 36.7% disagreed, and 33.3% strongly disagreed.
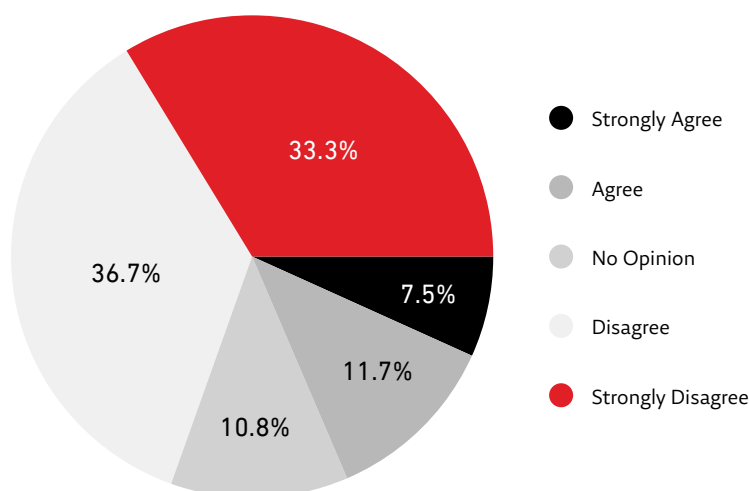

Figure 2: Respondents' answers regarding the extent of freedom of expression in the City.

The low value of this indicator is due to many reasons, including the fact that "Israel" does not consider Jerusalemites to be citizens of the state, as they are – according to the definition of the Israeli Ministry of the Interior – "permanent residents", and therefore do not enjoy the rights of citizens, including the right to vote or influence the laws. And if "Israel" was "kind enough" to grant Jerusalemites some rights, as is the case with the Palestinian minority, the laws that are totally biased towards the Jews remain an obstacle to the right to freedom of expression.

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[18] UNESCO Diversity of Cultural Expressions Entity, Artistic Freedom.

     On Fundamental Rights and Cultural Diversity

The freedom of expression indicator was the lowest among all the indicators of the characteristics of the public space of the Old City of Al-Quds.

For example, Article 2 of the Nation-State Law stipulates that "the State of Israel is the national state of the Jewish people, in which it exercises its natural, cultural, and historic right to self-determination". The law also removed the Arabic language as an official language, downgrading it to a "special status", which created a state of uncertainty regarding the status and future of the Arabic language in the state. And if "Israel" was to adhere to the strict implementation of the Nation State of the Jewish People Law[19] , no expressions of Palestinian culture would be tolerated in Al-Quds. The Palestinians' culture, according to many Israelis, is a counterculture, especially when it comes to cultural expression and cultural interpretation of the public spaces in Al-Quds.

The Palestinians' culture, according to many Israelis, is a counterculture, especially when it comes to cultural expression and cultural interpretation of the public spaces in Al-Quds.

"Israel" claims that its laws addressed freedom of expression and assembly since they provided for the right of expression in public places, and given the fact that Al-Quds is included within the area under the jurisdiction of Israeli legislation. However, the State of Emergency Law made the public space in Al-Quds subject to field estimates and the whims of the police.

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[19] Basic Law: Israel - The Nation State of the Jewish People - Unofficial Translation, 25 July 2018

5 Analysis of the Findings: the Public Spaces in Al-Quds are not Supportive of Cultural Expression

The UNESCO Recommendation on Participation by the People at Large in Cultural Life and their Contribution to It (1976) states that participation in cultural life is meant the concrete opportunities guaranteed for all - groups or individuals - to express themselves freely, to communicate, act, and engage in creative activities with a view to the full development of their personalities, harmonious life and the cultural progress of society, as recognized in Article 5 of the 2001 UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which is defined as the right to access, participate in and enjoy the culture. This includes the right of individuals and communities to know, understand, visit, benefit from, preserve, exchange, and develop cultural heritage and expressions. The article also mentions the possibility of benefiting from cultural heritage and forms of cultural expression by others[20].

In the case of Al-Quds, the findings of the questionnaire showed that the respondents do not consider the public spaces of Al-Quds as characterized by features that make them supportive of Palestinian cultural expressions and activities. The answers reflected a negative response and disagreement with the three most important features when it comes to performing art activities in a public space. From their point of view, the city's space does not provide a sense of equality, not even a feeling of security, and strongly impedes freedom of expression.

Israeli on-the-ground practices in the Old City contradict the provisions of the World Heritage Convention the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1969), to which "Israel" is a signatory.

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[20] Laaksonen, A. Measuring Cultural Exclusion through Participation in Cultural Life, Interarts Foundation, (2005).

Conclusion

Director and actor Kamel El Basha says in an interview conducted within the framework of the research thesis on 6 August 2020 that "the practices applied by the Israeli occupation authority go beyond exclusion, as they fight Palestinian culture, and any cultural activity that is not in line with the Israeli ideology is banned. For example, Al-Midan Theater in Haifa was closed because of a play about prisoners; the poet Dareen Tatour was arrested at Al-Saraya Theater in Jaffa for publishing a poem; the "Whale" statue by Palestinian artist Waleed Kashash was demolished in Akka; and Khaled Al-Ghoul, former director of artistic activities and projects at the Yabous Cultural Center in Al-Quds, was arrested on charges of unauthorized organization of artistic activities in August 2020; not to mention the surveillance of cultural content of the activities implemented in many cultural centers, especially those in schools. Thus, what we are facing right now is the systematic Israelization of Palestinian society, and our main struggle is to preserve our identity and our Palestinian cultural heritage. This struggle is not limited to Al-Quds, but is rather the struggle of the entire Palestinian community in Israel".

The practices applied by the Israeli occupation authority go beyond exclusion, as they fight Palestinian culture
– Kamel El Basha

In a study entitled "The Occupation of the Senses", researcher Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian[21] discusses the new types developed by criminology and its techniques inspired by aesthetics. She sheds light on cultural events, festivals, and artistic performances held in Al-Quds in general and in the public space of her town in particular. She proclaims that in the Israeli-Palestinian case, it is well established that the state's images represent the Jewish population and exclude Palestinian citizens, focus on the Jewish-Israeli memory and reinforce the dominant Zionist ideology. In her view, the cultural events of the Israeli occupation are not intended to accommodate the colonized Palestinian population but are harnessed to express visual control over public spaces.

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[21] Shalhoub-Kevorkian, N. (2017). The Occupation of the Senses: the Prosthetic and Aesthetic of State Terror. BRIT. J. CRIMINOL.

The Black and the Colors of Cultural Diversity in the Maghreb

Meriem Mehadji

The year 2020 was marked by events that had a significant impact on the global level; among them was the killing of George Floyd, an African American, by the American police. This event sparked a wave of anger in the biggest cities worldwide accompanied by protests calling for the respect of blacks' rights. Some Arab intellectuals and artists joined this movement expressing their support for the black and calling for the respect of all forms of diversity. At the same time, some international and local newspapers wondered whether Maghrebis feel concerned with the movement of Black Lives Matter[1] .

In fact, the situation of the black in Maghreb communities goes back to the history of the region and the relationship of its inhabitants with the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa. Since it is located in the African continent, The Maghreb region includes black communities, especially in the southern regions. Racial discrimination is attributed to the history of the region and the role of its inhabitants in slave trading. Besides, colonialism also reinforced racial segregation between blacks and whites by resorting to forced recruitment of the blacks, especially the Senegalese, in military campaigns to subjugate and terrorize the people.

This article raises the issue of the blacks' place in North Africa in light of the endorsement of Maghreb countries of UNESCO's International Agreements on cultural diversity[2] as well as on cultural rights[3] .

This article does not aim to study the history or origins of the black population in the Maghreb to authenticate the legitimacy of their citizenship, but rather examines how to integrate them in the manifestations of the cultural diversity of their country whether by the authorities or their communities.

Finally, we limit this study to the countries of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, justifying this by the fact that it is possible (unlike Mauritania and Libya) to avoid purely political issues and concentrate instead on aspects of cultural diversity. These countries also share many similarities in terms of identity claims. The terms used in this article such as racial segregation, racial discrimination, and racism refer to the black Maghrebis, not the African immigrants.

This article does not aim to study the history or origins of the black population in the Maghreb to authenticate the legitimacy of their citizenship, but rather examines how to integrate them in the manifestations of the cultural diversity of their country whether by the authorities or their communities.

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[1] Afriveille, Black Lives Matter: le Maghreb se sent-il concerné?, Afriveille (blog), 21 July 2020

[2] UNESCO, "The 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions", Paris: UNESCO, 2005.

[3] Fribourg Declaration, 2007.

Maghreb Cultural Policies: the Illusion of Identity and the Social and Political Realities

1 The Culture of Maghreb Blacks: a Victim of the Unity Rhetoric

The different conquests, occupations, and waves of displacements in the region led to the mixing of the indigenous Maghreb population (Amazigh) with other populations such as Arabs, Turks, and Europeans, without any of them losing their previous tribal and ethnic classifications. That is why contemporary Maghreb societies are built on the basis of identity and inherited tribal or racial discrimination. Thus, illusionary identities were deeply embedded in the minds of the Maghrebis, a fact that was based on certain classifications: a-the Arabs (of noble origin due to their connection to Islam.) b- the Amazighs (indigenous people whose name means" free men") c- the blacks (foreigners who came from the Sub-Sahara and were subjected to slavery in the past)[4].

It is clear, today, that this hierarchical order has become outdated and unreasonable due to the history of the region, which was marked by the settlement of several peoples in it and by the continuous movement of its population. This led to mixing and a noticeable ethnic diversity that makes it difficult to trace the lineage of a certain group to a particular race.

However, the popular language is still full of discriminatory expressions against the blacks that use pejorative labeling that refer to skin colors such as "kahloush" or words that refer to slavery-like "wasseef" or even doubting their Islam by linking them to the traditions of witchcraft and magic.

The integrative approach of the Maghreb leaders after the independence that was embodied, for example, in the-African Unity Festival that was held by Algeria in 1969 (and reorganized 40 years later) did not succeed in alleviating this discrimination since it did not incorporate fundamental issues such as slavery, racism, discrimination, and exclusion in the legislative and social structures.

It is worth mentioning that each country had its own political, cultural, or ideological goals to achieve through the African unity project. The project of the late Tunisian president, Habib Bourguiba, for example, was based on continuity after independence to preserve Tunisia's belonging to Africa, but he restricted the connection to the francophone world[5]

On his part, the first Algerian president, Ahmad Ben Bella, wanted to eliminate any kind of discrimination between blacks and Arabs blaming colonialism that employed racial segregation. After that, President, Houari Boumedian, refused the principle of "negritude", which represents a set of cultural and spiritual values that unite black peoples and drive them to feel that they belong to this culture, preferring to rely on the common destiny of Arab and African populations[6] .

Despite this, African unity as a sense of belonging to the Maghreb countries remains unobtainable, even though the Maghreb countries actually contributed to the establishment of their institutions and organizations during the sixties of the last century.

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[4] Salim Khiat, " De la négrophobie en Algérie. Autopsie des mots qui disent le Mal en couleurs ", in Noirs au Maghreb: Enjeux identitaires (Paris: IRMC-Karthala, 2012), 64.

[5] Stéphanie Pouessel, Noirs au Maghreb: Enjeux identitaires (Paris: IRMC-Karthala, 2012), p13

[6] Louis Blin, " Les Noirs dans l'Algérie contemporaine ", Politique Africaine, Karthala, no 30 (30 mai 2013):

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2 The Problem of Identity and its Impact on Respecting the Principles of Cultural Diversity.

Paragraph 3 of Article 2 of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions stipulates on "the recognition of equal dignity of and respect for all cultures, including the cultures of persons belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples"[7] . The issue of minorities and indigenous peoples represents an intricate axis for decision-makers in the Maghreb as it is associated with the issue of national identity, which still constitutes a fundamental problematic point in its definition as well as modifications to its concepts.

After independence, the Maghreb identity and culture were placed in a defined framework that is associated with pan-Arabism and Islam as all the demands calling for the recognition of the diversity of cultures were excluded by the official rhetoric for fear of violating the national unity even though equality among all citizens is a principle stipulated in the constitution of Algeria[8] , Morocco[9] , and Tunisia[10] and consequently the equality among the various components of the Maghreb identity.

After the outbreak of massive protests demanding recognition of Amazigh culture, the official rhetoric focused on the element of multilingualism. This paved the way for the Amazigh culture and language[11] to stand alongside the Arab-Islamic heritage[12] . Today, many intellectuals and officials defend the Arab/Amazigh duality and the difference in the cultural space between the black and the white[13] . This led, in addition to the suppression of the intermingling and multiplicity of Maghreb identity and culture, to the marginalization and underestimation of Maghreb blacks' issues. This is due to the intertwining of concepts and definitions of minorities (especially ethnicities)[14] . It is worth noting here that although they are considered a homogeneous mass, Maghreb blacks are distinguished by the diversity of their heritages, cultures, and languages.

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[7] UNESCO, The 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, Paris: UNESCO, 2005.

[8] Article 12 of the Algerian Constitution 10 September 1963.

[9] Articles 09 and 13 from the Moroccan Constitution 07 December 1962

[10] Article 6 of the French Constitution 01 June 1959.

[11] This movement, called the Berber Spring, started during the seventies of the last century and witnessed violent suppressions in both Algeria and Morocco in particular. The Amazigh cause has only recently stirred some waves in Tunisia.

[12] The Amazigh cause presented its case in African space to distance itself from Arabism, which it believed to be imposed upon, without transcending the traditional boundaries between North and South and between whites and blacks.

[13] Ridha Tlili, "Le crépuscule de l'africanité en Tunisie", in Noirs au Maghreb: Enjeux identitaires (Paris: IRMC-Karthala, 2012), p30.

[14] Quite often. Amazigh are referred to as an ethnic minority in the region. But in reality, especially for Algeria and Morocco, the amalgamation that has occurred during successive historical periods between indigenous people and settlers has made it difficult to distinguish between races, especially in urban areas.

On Fundamental Rights and Cultural Diversity

In the domain of cultural policies, despite the governments' adoption of the Convention on Cultural Diversity[15] , which urges respect for fundamental rights and thus fights against all kinds of discrimination, the measures taken by the authorities of the three Maghreb countries to implement the convention lack real initiatives concerning minorities, or the elimination of discrimination or marginalization of certain groups.

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3   The Role of Civil Society in Advocating the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and in Fighting Discrimination.

The exclusion of black people is not only an ongoing practice in the post-slavery society in the Arab Maghreb, but it has also become an element rooted in the culture and history of the region. Immigrant flows from black Africa led to the spread of racist behavior and stances that were underestimated for centuries. The region witnessed some incidents such as the mistreatment of African immigrants[16] and the marginalization of citizens based on their color[17] . Besides, there were racist behaviors and expressions spread in stadiums as well as waves of insults on social media after the election of Miss Algeria in 2019[18] in addition to many other incidents.

Nevertheless, in some cases, officials refuse to admit the existence of racism and consider the term foreign to the local culture, claiming that laws incriminate discrimination based on color and stipulate that the black Maghrebis are fully integrated into the national identity. This approach further marginalizes and underestimates issues of racial discrimination. In Morocco, for example, the authorities banned an anti-racism association under the pretext of the absence of the race concept from the social perspective[19].

At the same time, this phenomenon gave a public and civil dimension to the issue of human rights of African immigrants; it also opened the discussion on the issue of economic and social rights of black Maghrebis and drove civil society to confront these racist phenomena[20] . NGOs, associations, media outlets, arts, and social media networks

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[15]   Algeria ratified the convention on the Protection of the diversity of Cultural Expressions of 2005 on 26 February 2015, Morocco on 4 June 2013, and Tunisia on 17 February 2007.

[16] In the city of Djerba, for instance, blacks are not buried in the same cemeteries as whites.

[17]   AFP, "Face au racisme profondément ancré, les Tunisiens noirs espèrent plus d'égalité", Le Point, 13 février 2018, sect. International.

[18] Zahra Chenaoui, " Miss Algérie 2019 face au racisme et au sexisme", 11 janvier 2019, sect. Afrique.

[19] Stéphanie Pouessel, Noirs au Maghreb: Enjeux identitaires (Paris: IRMC-Karthala, 2012), p14.

[20] It is worth mentioning that some officials of organizations that are supposed to defend human rights and others in media organizations, use certain language and take some stands that can be described as racist. As in Algeria when the former head of the National Consultative Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights stated in 2015 that Algerians are exposed to AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases due to the presence of migrants", Look at Middle East Eye, " La lutte contre le racisme anti-noirs, un combat dans tout le Maghreb ", Middle East Eye (blog), 28 December 2016.

have become important and effective alternative spaces for spreading and publicizing the demands of the blacks in the region.

Tunisian civil society is considered the most active concerning the issue of fighting discrimination and exclusion of blacks through associations, media, unions, and arts. Several voices were raised denouncing the situation of blacks in Tunisia. Accordingly, many notable women such as Saadia Mesbah, Maha Abdel Hamid, and Hoda Mazidat struggled for years to legitimize societal and legal principles of human rights in general and for black Tunisians in particular. These activists also consider that the Tunisian constitution of 2014 is still ambiguous when it comes to the rights of minorities and the definition of discrimination. This contributed to the adoption of the first anti-racism and discrimination law in Tunisia on 9 October 9 2018. Moreover, a group of Tunisian associations and organizations participated with other regional organizations in the completion of the second quadripartite report[21] in 2016, which considered the measures to implement and execute the UNESCO Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions that includes several reports one of them is the report on the Stambeli tradition today[22] . This report[23] reveals the Tunisian society's view towards the black population and the marginalization and stigmatization of their cultural expressions as well.

NGOs, associations, media outlets, arts, and social media networks have become important and effective alternative spaces for spreading and publicizing the demands of the blacks in the region.

In this context, Zied Rouine, head of the Organization Department of the Mnemty Association[24] , which works on fighting all forms of racism and discrimination through education, awareness, and alertness, believes that, despite the law No. 50 that incriminates racism, "Tunisia still lacks a clear legislative framework related to the rights of the black Tunisian citizens and sub-Saharan Africans". Therefore, Rouine, a black Tunisian citizen who participates in activities and leads personal projects to promote the black culture in Tunisia, believes that "Tunisian cultural policies must work on the reinforcement of all cultural components, especially that the Tunisian culture is endowed with a rich African folk heritage[25] .

Despite the many challenges that organizations, associations, and unions face in this field, it should be noted that social networks have become an effective means to open discussion at the societal level as well as to organize initiatives and activities that aim to consolidate the rights of the blacks in the Arab Maghreb. In 2014, in Morocco, the

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[21] UNESCO, Tunisia 2016 Report.

[22] Stambeli is an African-spiritual musical style that spread in Tunisia hundreds of years ago. It is like the Diwan in Algeria and the Gnawa in Morocco, which usually tells about the sufferings of black Africans who were taken from the Southern Sahara to be traded in the slave market.

[23] Valeria Meneghelli, Report on Stambeli Tradition Today. Tunis, April 2016

[24] Mnemty Association for Justice and Equality in Tunisia is a human rights association of 150 volunteer lawyers that attempts to restore the rights of victims of discrimination in all its forms and give them a voice. It also seeks as a continuation of the 2018 law, to pressure the Tunisian authorities to establish a national committee to fight racial discrimination through training and educational and cultural programs that re-visit the culture and heritage of the blacks in Tunisia in partnership with Tunisian cultural and student organizations and associations.

[25] Phone call conducted on 5 January 2021

late photographer, Leila Alaoui[26] , filmed a video called "Bladi Bladek "[27] (my country is your country) that denounces racism in Morocco. This was followed by a Facebook campaign under the title Masmiytich Azzi [28](My name is not Azzi). It aimed to fight racism in Morocco according to the testimony of Younes Fadil, a coordinator of the Papiers Pour Tous platform (Documents for All[29]) that organized the campaign. Fadil says, "the choice of the term 'Azzi' as a slogan for the campaign against racism in Morocco in 2014 was intentional because it is the synonym of the word 'zinj' (Negro) in the Moroccan dialect. The following year, we, with other Tunisian and Algerian activists, launched a similar Maghreb campaign under the title "La Wasseef La Azzi Barca Wezzi" which are terms that refer to the blacks and were common in Maghreb countries and are of a negative denotation".

He continues, "In September 2020, we organized our ninth webinar about the issue of 'being black in Morocco'. During this webinar, we gave the floor to black Moroccans to talk about their personal experiences. The aim behind this was to prove that there is actual racism in Morocco in different forms[30] . Fadil believes that this campaign provided an opportunity for the first time in Morocco to take part in a discussion on racism. Within weeks, it caused a stir and benefited from the support of many intellectuals, media, civil society organizations, as well as many citizens. On the other hand, there have been few opponents to this initiative, who refuse the principle of Maghreb racism and who ask for the deportation of African immigrants to their native countries. That is why, today, the Papiers Pour Tous platform is trying to execute several initiatives and projects to call on the authorities to adopt a law that forbids all forms of racial discrimination in Morocco. It also seeks to launch awareness campaigns targeting local and regional authorities as well as the media, academic circles, and civil society. However, the execution of these projects and tens of other initiatives faced obstacles related to financial resources and restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, on the occasion of International Immigrants Day, on 18 December, the platform, and the Moroccan Association for Creative and Cultural Industries (MadNess) launched a campaign entitled 'learn the colloquial language' to encourage African immigrants who do not speak Arabic to learn the Moroccan dialect to facilitate their integration in the Moroccan society. In Algeria, the ASMAR Fair Play Relizane League has been organizing awareness campaigns against racism in stadiums and football[31] in general for several years.

Civil society initiatives are receiving wide attention in the context of monitoring the implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. However, the role of these organizations and associations varies according to UNESCO's periodic report[32] specified[33] for these countries[34].

Therefore, despite all these efforts, it is difficult to notice changes on the ground because the adoption of anti-racism laws or the recognition of the rights of black citizens, as is the case of Tunisia, does not mean their actual

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[26] Photographer Leila Alaoui was murdered in January 2016 in an assault in the Burkina Faso capital while filming a project for Amnesty International. The young photographer has made a significant contribution in the preservation of cultural identity in Africa through her photographs and projects, including "The Moroccans" project, which consist of portraits of different Moroccan citizens dressed in traditional costumes.

[27] Leila Alaoui, Bladi Bladek, Youtube Video, 2016.

[28] Official Facebook page for the campaign Masmiytich Azzi

[29] Papiers Pour Tous is a platform completed in December 2013, after the execution of a unique operation that settled the status of illegal immigrants in Morocco. It gathered organizations and associations that are concerned with the cause of immigrants in Morocco and Europe, as well as individuals (academics, researchers, activists, and specialists) with the aim of follow-up, reporting, and accompanying immigrants in settling their status, according to the founding charter of the platform. This activity was supposed to be finalized after the immigrants receive their documents, but due to the vital role the platform has played in monitoring data and disseminating dialogues, Papiers pour tous is still active against all kinds of discrimination.

[30] Interview conducted by e-mail on 5 January 2021.

[31] Sportanddev, " Galerie : En Algérie, l'ASMR Fair Play Relizane lutte contre la violence et le racisme dans le football ", Sportanddev.org (blog), 6 August 2019.

[32] UNESCO, Morocco 2017 Report, 2017.

[33] UNESCO, Quadrennial Periodic Report Algeria, 2020.

[34] UNESCO, Tunisia 2016 Report, 2016.

implementation, on the one hand. On the other hand, civil society represents the most important means of making a radical and effective change concerning Negrophobia in Maghreb societies and urging the cultural policymakers to integrate and protect the minorities' cultures including the blacks.

Blacks and Art in the Maghreb Region

1 Black Maghreb Art: Between Stereotyping and Heritage

The arts of the Saharan population are often limited to the spiritual and folklore fields for several reasons. First, most forms of cultural expressions are oral and most often depend on singing and music, especially the so-called 'black ways' such as Diwan or Gnawa music in Algeria and Morocco, and Stambeli or Bori in Tunisia whose artistic content is not sufficiently appreciated. They are also seen as practices that blend African traditions with Islamic religious rituals.

In this context, Zied Rouine of Mnemty believes that "cultural policies must raise awareness and promote the black cultural heritage, especially that the Tunisian culture is characterized by the presence of tribes. These tribes represent well-established schools of black Tunisian art such as A'bid Ghbonten which struggled for centuries to maintain its cultural expressions that are inspired by the history of the freed slaves and that are dedicated to artistic rebellion against corruption as well as to criticize social conditions.

Instead of highlighting and protecting this diversity in their cultural policies, the Maghreb authorities are exploiting its traditional forms to develop a profitable touristic sector. Tunisia and Morocco, where foreign tourism is considered a central component of the national economy, are hosting shows and performances by the Gnawa and Stambeli bands in the streets and touristic squares or restaurants and hotels.

The situation in Algeria is somehow different since the tourism sector, particularly the foreign one, has been suffering from a significant recession for many years. As an alternative, the authorities resort to domestic tourism, especially with the recent development of desert tourism where inhabitants of the north arrive in some cities in the south mostly during religious seasons to attend festivals and processions for the Birth of the Prophet (Mawlid), for example. Algeria seeks to effectively integrate this sector in its future development programs after the policymakers have realized the capabilities and cultures of the Sahara, despite Algeria's reluctance to classify the desert as either a touristic region or a security one due to the political turmoil in the region.

The association between social and economic development and culture through the tourism sector represents one of the concepts that UNESCO advocates for and that aims to preserve and promote cultural diversity. However, such kind of projects, despite their appeal, can lead to completely different repercussions in a discriminatory social and political environment. It emphasizes the folkloric character of these people and their cultures, and thus may further marginalize and isolate them from the rest of Maghreb society[35] .

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[35] Philippe Acrand, " La conservation du patrimoine des sociétés touarègues du Sahara algérien et le tourisme éco culturel : critique des politiques culturelles de l'UNESCO " (Mémoire de maîtrise en sciences politiques, Montréal, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2008), 58.

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2 Art as an Anti-Discrimination Tool

In recent decades, some forms of traditional musical expression, such as the Diwan, Gnawa, and Stambeli, have become internationally known through the flourishing of world music. Many Maghreb bands were formed and signed contracts with major international record companies in addition to giving concerts in famous western halls.

Thus, promoting these kinds of music at the global level enables the artists not only to come out of the folklore and heritage circle but also allows, on the one hand, the Maghreb public to become aware of cultural diversity and discrimination issues. On the other hand, the globalization of culture and the penetration of Western culture into the Maghreb space contributed to the dissemination of black art, and thus reduced the complex of black skin, especially in large cities and universities.

Accordingly, we can observe the spread of the black culture among some young Moroccan men and women through their clothing style as well as their musical and cinematic tastes. Besides, the spread of black western music allowed for the development of certain genres among black or white Moroccan artists such as rap, reggae, or jazz, and the dissemination of its messages and controversial topics such as racial segregation and discrimination[36] .

The cinematic field in all its forms, the theater, and the audio-visual field played a pivotal role in shedding light on the situation of the black Maghrebis. Tunisia was a pioneer in this domain since there are several films, for example, that dealt with the issues of marginalization and racism among blacks such as Homelessness (2009) by Nouri Bouzid and Prestige (2009) by Walid Tayaa, a comedy that discusses two sensitive topics: the Tunisian racism towards African immigrants and the society's view concerning the issue of mixed marriage. The Tunisian anti-racism researcher and activist Maha Abdulhamid also presented a documentary in 2009 about the reality of a black family, in which two different generations had contradictory views towards racial discrimination against blacks. It is called De Arram a Gabes Memoire d'Une Famille Noire (from Aram to Gabes. Memory of a black family).

Unfortunately, this momentum did not last long despite the emergence of a new generation of activists and

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[36] Stéphanie Pouessel, " De la méconnaissance à la cohabitation: Expériences tunisiennes d'une migration subsaharienne en mutation ", in Le Maghreb et son sud : vers des liens renouvelés (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2012), 136.

internationally acclaimed Moroccan filmmakers as the issues of minorities and discrimination have been marginalized in recent years[37] . Furthermore, young Algerian filmmakers did show any interest in such topics during the last edition of the African Unity festival in 2009 despite the intensive African program[38] .

According to Karim Ait Oumeziane[39] , the former head of the Film Department of the African Unity Festival (in 2009), "Algeria at that time founded a South-South fund to support these types of movie projects. The goal behind this was to produce four long films and four short ones. These films aim to promote African culture for an extendable period of four years. However, this offer was not met with much interest from the Moroccan directors[40] ".

Many activists and workers in this field share Ait Oumeziane's opinion. They believe that the Maghreb filmmakers often seek foreign financial support (especially from Europe) that most often gives priority to topics that are still far away from black issues and racial discrimination in the Maghreb region. According to Zied Rouine, there are certain foreign cultural institutions that support the minority projects in Tunisia but they still exclude black issues, which inevitably affects the topics of cinematic and artistic projects. Moreover, Ait Oumeziane believes that there has been a significant change among the youth in recent years due, in his opinion, to their awareness of the historical and social presence of racism in their societies, a fact that does not conform to their age that calls for an exchange and mixing with the other. Here, it must be noted that the topics of racism, discrimination, and marginalization are often raised by white filmmakers. But what is the role of black Maghreb artists?

Fouad Trevi, assistant director, founder, and director of the casting agency "Wojooh"(faces)[41] says, "Social racism exists in Algeria, but it does not target the black population only; it is a provincial and regional problem. In the field of cinema, all these problems are embodied in the issue of identity representation". Despite the recognition of their citizenship, the blacks are still seen as a minority that is different from the majority of Algerians. For this reason, according to Trevi, it is rare that we see, for example, a director who asks a black actor to play the role of a doctor or a businessman.

On the other hand, and as a different example, Trevi says that during the last month of Ramadan and for filming Timousha series, a black actor played one of the roles, and the director had chosen him not for his skin but rather because he is a good actor. This black actor was met with appreciation from the audience. After that, he had many other projects in the field of advertising because of his acting skills[42] . Trevi points out another problem that both actors and workers in this sector face, which is the sharp centralization of the cultural and industrial institutions. This limits the opportunities that are available for rural people as well as other states in the country.

Younes Fadil confirms that such a situation exists in Morocco. He believes that "there are many regions in Morocco that do not enjoy the development programs led by the state despite the efforts of the latter. Although it is difficult to ignore the actual marginalization that the black Maghrebis live in, this issue, in fact, affects many classes of the society, regardless of skin, dialect, or provincial belonging".

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[37] Joseph Fahim, " Cinéma: les douze meilleurs films de 2019 au Moyen-Orient et en Afrique du Nord ", Middle East Eye (blog), 29 December 2019.

[38] AFRICINE .org, " Festival culturel panafricain d'Alger (PANAF) 2009 ", 20 July 2009.

[39] Mr. Ait Oumeziane served as Director General of the Cinema and Audiovisual National Center in Algeria, a member of the Organizing Committee of the Wahran Arab Film Festival, a member of the Organizing Committee of Amazigh Film and a Commissioner of the Maghreb Film Festival in the capital Algiers.

[40] Phone interview conducted on 15 January 2021

[41] Fouad Trevi has worked for many years as a technician in the field of movie auditions. In 2010 he had the idea of registering Algerian actresses and actors for different projects (cinema, commercials, multimedia...). Then he developed his idea through Facebook in 2018, by establishing with Sara Trevi the first Algerian casting agency that connects Algerian actors and actresses (known and Unknown) with Algerian and foreign directors and producers.

[42] Phone interview conducted on 6 December 2020.

Fadil notices that "the lack of adequate and appropriate representation of blacks in artistic products and expressions, especially visual ones such as state television and cinema in the Maghreb region in general and in Morocco in particular is due to the collective mentality since the black citizens are present in most economic and social activities and at all levels of professional responsibilities, but their discernible marginalization goes back to some of the ideas and social norms that prevails in Morocco centuries ago. At the same time, it is impossible to force a producer or director to equally choose his actors between the blacks and the whites, for example, as this may change the nature of the artistic work as well as the creative ideas. All we can do is to denounce every work of art that disrespects dignity or deforms the image of the black people".

With the spread of social networks, the new generation of black Maghrebis has become more visible and has begun to be more expressive, without any embarrassment or complexity about issues of concern such as racism or racial discrimination. But in some artistic fields (plastic arts or literature), it is still difficult for black Maghrebi artists to raise their voices as black Maghrebi artists. This is confirmed by the testimony of the Moroccan plastic artist, Mubarak Bouhachichi, in a series of interviews with the newspaper "Marayana". He discussed the process of "whitening" the Maghreb in general and Morocco in particular which created a generalized identity crisis. He takes a critical look at the racist behavior towards the black Maghrebis, an issue that he suffered from as a citizen and as an artist as well[43].

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[43] أمينة العلوي السليماني، " المغاربة السود، أين هم؟ في حديث مع مبارك بوحشيشي حول الفن والعرق وأهمية التفكيك الإيديولوجي 3/1"، مارايانا، 2020.

Conclusion

The national identity, as perceived by the Maghreb decision-makers today, is not compatible with the cultural reality of the region in terms of its geographical location, history, traditions of its inhabitants, and multiplicity of its cultures and identities.

The Arab/Amazigh dual culture and bilingualism, in which the three countries stumbled since independence and that led to the marginalization of other groups and their exclusion from the ongoing debate about the respect for cultural diversity and cultural rights remains until now in a state of social and cultural isolation[44] . Moreover, it seems that the African identity has been incorporated into public discourse without being incorporated into social and cultural programs, academic curricula, and research. In most cases, cultural rights and the diversity of cultural expressions are misinterpreted as they are welcomed only when folkloric events are organized. As a result, ignoring and discriminating against the black Maghrebis continues, despite the efforts made by some associations, NGOs, and individuals in recent years.

The issue of black Maghrebis transcends that of racial or ethnic segregation, and is added to other issues related to the inequality between the urban and rural areas, and respect for human, political, economic, and social rights. On the other hand, the rights of black Maghrebis will not be appreciated unless a comprehensive awareness through educational, cultural, and social programs that aim to integrate the black race as an essential element of cultural diversity in the Maghreb region is conducted.

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[44] Souria Saad-Zoy, Johanne Bouchard, et Unesco, Les droits culturels au Maghreb et au Égypte (Rabat: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2010), 167.

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Questions in Cultural Funding

Funding Challenges in the Cultural Sector in Libya (2019 – 2021)

Hosam Athani

The civil war in Libya resulted in severe repercussions on the financial sector, which was reflected in the culture sector, among others. The damage was exacerbated by the political divide that emerged in 2014, when the Libyan authority was split administratively in two governments, followed by the split of the Central Bank: the Central Bank of Libya in Tripoli (western Libya), under the control of the Government of National Accord, while the bank branch in Al-Bayda (eastern Libya) was under the control of the Libyan interim government. This split in the central bank – according to a report prepared by the World Bank Mission 2020[1] – has impaired normal central bank functioning, including the control over monetary and fiscal policy with the eastern branch of the central bank printing money and issuing bonds, and even borrowing independently without a central authority to finance the spending of the eastern Libyan authorities, while in the west, the bank continued to partially finance the Eastern Libyan Authorities' spending on salaries, goods, and services. As a result of this split – and overlap – a dual payment system has been created: banks in the west process payments via the real-time gross settlement system (RTGS), while banks in the east perform transactions manually, a procedure – according to the World Bank report – not recognized by the central bank in Tripoli.

This chaotic situation led to new technical complications and legal problems that affected the financing of the public cultural sector, especially with the disruption of the oil industry, on which the Libyan economy depends heavily. It also led to the impairment of the non-governmental cultural sector, which is already fragile and inexperienced as a result of the dominance of the public sector and the neglect of Libyan cultural policymakers of cultural development, sustainability, democratization of culture, and de-centralization over the past decades. Besides the funding problems, spending-related problems emerged due to the depreciation of the Libyan dinar, the tight liquidity following large withdrawals, panic, the lack of customers' trust in banks, and the difficulty to obtain foreign currencies at official rate.

This article consists of presenting specific case studies, based on direct inquiries from the original sources, in light of the lack of transparency, and the absence of periodic reports in the Libyan cultural scene as well as the availability of information to the public.

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[1] World Bank, Libya Financial Sector Review, February 2020

In light of these circumstances, coupled with the severe repercussions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the consequent lockdown constraints, as well as infrastructure problems such as power outages and poor internet, work or funding alternatives stumbled, except in very rare cases where the staff of relatively successful organizations had received extensive training in cultural management. And since in most of the non-governmental cultural institutions, the staff did not receive similar training, most employees did not know how to develop alternative sources of funding, in addition to the lack of basics of financial literacy such as financial management and strategic planning, as well as the absence of practical tools needed to quickly adapt and find realistic solutions to urgent problems.

This article tackles some of the funding problems in the governmental and non-governmental cultural sector, in the period of 2019-2020, until early 2021. It consists of presenting specific case studies, based on direct inquiries from the original sources, in light of the lack of transparency, and the absence of periodic reports in the Libyan cultural scene as well as the availability of information to the public. It must be noted that the reason this article focuses on specific organizations is due to the exceptional circumstances in Libya, where it was not easy for the researcher to find diverse sources of data. In addition, the information sources that could be reached regarding the public cultural sector are testimonies of staff members of the financial department at the General Council of Culture, in addition to the testimony of the chairperson of the Board of Directors of the General Council of Culture. As for the sources of information regarding the non-governmental sector, they consist of testimonies made by the staff of the non-governmental cultural organizations mentioned in this article, including artists, CEOs, and chairpersons of boards of directors.

The Main Funding Challenges in the Cultural Sector in Libya

The funding challenges in the cultural sector in Libya between 2019 and early 2021 can be summarized under five main headings:

- **The civil war** and its consequent material losses incurred by the cultural sector facilities and the infrastructure of other sectors, including the heavy losses incurred by the oil industry, the main source of the Libyan state's resources, and the resulting difficulty in implementing administrative procedures, the obstruction of funding and spending plans, and diverting the attention of the state and society to other priorities, mainly to security and food. The damage caused by the destruction of the electricity and internet infrastructure has impeded moving part of the activities online during the Covid-19 pandemic, which would have allowed some sort of compensation for the incomes of such activities.

- **The political divide** and the consequent split in the central bank of Libya, which resulted in technical complications in monetizing the budget allocated to public sector activities and the damage to the financial system, which negatively affected the overall economic condition due to the depreciation of the Libyan dinar and tight liquidity.

- **The Covid-19 pandemic** and consequent lockdown constraints, as they primarily led to the suspension of non-governmental organizations' activities, knowing that their funding depends on revenues generated from such activities. The lockdown also impeded access to sources of funding from bank accounts in Tunisian banks, as well as access to government departments to complete administrative procedures related to financial transactions.

- **The limited know-how among the cultural managers** of most non-governmental cultural institutions of the cultural management tools, as well as of ways to attract supporters, create funding alternatives and seize opportunities – carefully designed for these circumstances – that were within the reach of such institutions (such as exceptional grants provided by Culture Resource and their Stand for Art program and Productive Awards, Action for Hope grants, Arab Fund for Arts and Culture - AFAC, Goethe-Institut grants, United Nations, European Union, and others). In addition, most of these organizations are emerging organizations and are in fact small or medium projects at best. Some are little more than individual initiatives, and most do not have clear general goals, vision, or mission, and lack clear stated values, a visible institutional culture, clear job descriptions, and specific, stated, measurable goals that are consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which weakens their access to international funding. As for the few organizations that were able to seize the opportunities available for alternative sources of funding, they rely in their program planning and management on cultural managers who are graduates of training programs in cultural management. They are familiar with the modalities of raising financial support. Among them, we cite the directors behind Scene Culture & Heritage, Fonoon Institute for Media & Culture, and Tanarout Organization for Libyan Creativity. The situation is different in organizations run by artists and intellectuals instead of cultural managers and suffering from a funding and management crisis in light of the lack of training programs, weak legislation, the state monopoly of funding and regulating the cultural sector, the random government support opportunities that are based on volatile standards, and the lack of seriousness among the Libyan cultural policymakers to nurture the creative industries market and bring it into the state's economic cycle through long-term plans that create consumer needs and habits among citizens, and the development of the infrastructure and superstructure of creative industries in a way that contributes to building a solid and self-reliant creative economy.

- **The weak governance within the public sector**, which is quite evident in the failure to solve old or recurring problems, such as overstaffing that constitutes a burden on the first section of the budget, without any plans to redirect this surplus to other understaffed entities, or re-train and benefit from them in the cultural sector. This is coupled with the inability to solve the debt problem that recurs annually, without adopting strategic planning mechanisms to solve the root cause.

5 main funding challenges in the Libyan cultural sector between 2019 and 2021: the civil war, political divide, the Covid-19 pandemic, the limited know-how among cultural managers, and the weak governance in the public sector.

1 The Governmental Sector

Challenges of the Disbursement of the Allocations of Section Two of the Budget of the General Council of Culture

The General Council of Culture[2] located in Benghazi (eastern Libya) is funded by the state budget. Its annual budget is divided into five sections, as is the case for most Libyan state institutions. The first section covers salaries, wages, and their equivalent (broken down into 10 items) per Law No. 15 of 1981. The second section includes the operational budget for spending on activities, programs, and projects, and it is broken down into over 21 items allocated for all activities falling under the General Council of Culture's mandate, such as events, festivals, book printing projects[3], periodical publications funding, and participation in international and local forums. In 2019 and 2020, the allocations of the General Council of Culture were reduced to amounts covering the wages-related item (item 1/1) under Section One, i.e. around 2,200,000 Libyan dinars annually (approximately 1,641,791.045 US dollars[4]), disbursed in monthly installments from two sources, namely the Central Bank of Libya in Tripoli and the bank's branch in Al-Bayda, in coordination between the employees of both branches, based on what is known as the "dual employment control system". Except for this mechanism, which controls the non-duplication of funding of the council from both branches in the first item of Section One, it was observed that the same thing – technically – does not apply to other sections; there are no other mechanisms to control duplication in the presence of two ministries of finance and a dual payment system. Despite this, Section Two of the council of culture's budget has not been monetized since 2014. While the allocations for Section Two in 2019 were reduced from around 4,000,000 Libyan dinars per year to 375,000 Libyan dinars, no amounts thereof have been monetized. In 2020, the amount was reduced to 198,000 Libyan dinars, of which 149,000 dinars were transferred from the Central Bank of Libya in Tripoli. This led to almost complete paralysis of the activity of the General Council of Culture and its inability to operate its projects.

Below is a set of the General Council of Culture's activities directly affected by the funding problem:

- Shutdown of the Arab Culture Magazine, a monthly magazine that was founded in 1973, and is considered one of the leading Libyan cultural publications in terms of content, in addition to its moral value linked to its cultural history.

- Shutdown of the council of culture's newspaper, a weekly publication founded in 2010, which was distinguished by the quality of its critical content.

- Hindered resumption of the publication of Afanine Magazine, an emerging publication that was shut down in 2014 following its first issues, and the attempts at its republication.

- Absence of the General Council of Culture from international forums during 2019 and 2020. This came as a continuation of a gradual withdrawal from the international arena since 2014, when the council declined to take

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[2] The General Council of Culture was first established under the name "Fund for the Promotion of Cultural Creativity"; in 2002, it was re-named "Council of the Promotion of Cultural Creativity" by a decision of the Secretary of the General People's Committee for Media, Culture and Public Mobilization. It was re-established in 2006 by Resolution No. 16 of 2006, issued by the General People's Congress (the official name of the Libyan parliament between 1977 and 2011), under the name "General Council of Culture" as an institution affiliated with the legislative body, fully funded by the state budget.

[3] The General Council of Culture is one of the most important and prolific publishing houses in Libya.

[4] Based on the official exchange rate (1 Libyan dinar = 0.746269 US dollars); it was adjusted on 3 January 2021, to (1 Libyan dinar = 0.223214 US dollars). In view of the change in the exchange rate, as well as the overlap of black market exchange rates, and thus the discrepancy in the value of the Libyan dinar over the past years, in the subsequent parts, we will only refer to the value in Libyan dinars without converting it to its equivalent in US dollars.

part in international book fairs in Cairo, Casablanca, Sharjah, Frankfurt, Beirut, Tunis, and Abu Dhabi; except for limited participation in the Cairo International Book Fair in 2015 and 2018.

- Limited participation in the Cairo Radio and Television Festival in 2018.

- Stalled funding of the annual book printing projects; indeed, the council of culture did not print any books during 2019 and 2020.

- Stalled funding of a translation project that was due to be launched by the council of culture in recent years.

- Stalled renovation and re-equipment of the "Silphium Gallery", a hall dedicated to hosting visual arts exhibitions.

- The council of culture's inability to pay electricity bills during the years when allocations for Section Two were not monetized.

2   The Non-Governmental Sector

Sources of Funding for Non-Governmental Organizations

Most of the Libyan non-governmental cultural organizations rely on unstable sources of funding, and this funding is often directed to specific activities run by these institutions or comes from revenues generated by the organizations' artistic production: courses, training workshops, selling collections and artworks, and providing artistic and technical services.

This part seeks to highlight a group of non-governmental organizations that rely on one or more of the following five sources of funding:

- Revenues generated from the activities (artistic courses, technical courses, sale of collections and artworks, provision of artistic and technical services).

- Members' subscriptions and periodic fees, and donations from certain members.

- Grants, and financial and in-kind donations made by individual and institutional supporters.

- Local or international grants to finance specific projects as part of special funding programs.

- Sponsorships, whether by the public sector or by commercial establishments for advertisement purposes.

Most of the Libyan non-governmental cultural organizations rely on unstable sources of funding.

Funding problems and their repercussions

Below are some examples of the repercussions of cultural funding problems on non-governmental cultural institutions in Libya, and the main measures taken by some of these institutions to address the problem:

- **Postponing the honoring ceremony of the fourth edition of Cyclamen Competition Award winners, and the failure to launch the fifth edition**

  As a result of funding problems, the lockdown, and the social distancing requirement due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Cyclamen for Culture and Arts foundation[5] , a civil society cultural organization in the city of Misurata, had to postpone the honoring ceremony of the fourth edition of Cyclamen Poetry and Story Competition Award winners, which was scheduled in 2020. The launch of the fifth edition, which was supposed to be announced at the end of 2020, was also stalled. And because the foundation's funding relies on resources obtained from gifts and donations, as well as sponsorships by private or public entities that allocate this support to specific activities, not to cover the foundation's expenses, the foundation's activities stopped throughout 2020 and early 2021, except for side awareness-raising activities that relied on volunteers.

- **Stalled funding schemes of the Libyan Center for Cultural Studies**

  Due to funding problems resulting from the civil war and political divide, the Libyan Center for Cultural Studies[6], which was established in Benghazi, was forced to suspend its activities in terms of research, seminars, and cultural programs one year after its inauguration in 2018. The center closed throughout 2019 even before the lockdown and quarantine were imposed. Administrative procedures ceased in the following year, which prevented the implementation of all the funding plans for 2020, and extension for the year 2021. At the end of last year, the foundation's license was renewed, and it moved its activity to Tripoli. The center started with a limited activity that is funded by members' subscription fees and some limited aid. However, the regularity of members' payment of subscription fees was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

- **Scene Culture & Heritage, Fonoon Institute for Media & Culture, and the complexity of accessing available funding**

  At a time when most of the Libyan cultural foundations were facing funding problems due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some opportunities for alternative funding sources emerged. Such opportunities were designed by international institutions specifically for the circumstances that prevailed then. One only needed to know the application procedures and the methods of writing project proposals. The Scene Culture & Heritage[7] in Tripoli seized the opportunities available from the German Goethe-Institut, and obtained a grant that was among the opportunities designed specifically for cultural activity in times of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it was not a completely hassle-free process due to reasons related to the complex financial situation resulting from the war, as it was necessary to avoid Libyan banks and rely on Tunisian banks, which is common among some of the freelance workers in Libya, including artists and technicians, who rely on Tunisian banks for their financial transactions. In

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[5] Cyclamen for Culture and Arts was established in Misurata, in November 2015. It is a non-profit civil society organization registered with the Civil Society Commission.

[6] The Libyan Center for Cultural Studies was established in Benghazi in 2015, under the registration number 1077 - 01 - 20150625, and due to the war, it only became operational in 2018.

[7] "Scene Culture & Heritage" was founded in Tripoli in 2011 and restructured in 2015.

addition to the lockdown and war, there was the problem of electricity and frequent power outages. It affected the organization's spending in terms of the fact that Scene's team had to hire specific technicians who do not rely on public electricity sources, and who often have private equipment or reside outside Libya. Electricity and the internet are also intertwined, and a weak and slow internet connection, in turn, affected funding, as the transfer of some activities online was hindered, and the organization had difficulty accessing funding-related platforms. There is also the psychological factor and its consequent impact on the production of activities or services that can cover part of the expenses of organizations that do not have any fixed source of funding that cannot be overlooked. Finally, some of Scene's staff were directly affected by the war, and their financial condition worsened after their homes were destroyed and they were displaced, which added financial complications to the entire team. Despite these problems, the organization was able to manage its activity and even attract a number of cultural and technical actors whose work stumbled due to the situation or who were unable to access their bank accounts in Tunisia and found in the organization a work opportunity.

Fonoon Institute for Media & Culture[8] was also able to obtain some funding sources, including Goethe-Institut, UNFPA, UNDP, and UN Women. However, it was affected by the shutdown of the Libyan financial system, the failure of bank transfers, and the inability to access its account in Tunisia, in addition to cash liquidity. Attempts to transfer some activities online in 2020 were also hindered by power outages, Internet problems, and the nature of the cultural market in Libyan society, which is more linked to the non-digital space. All of these obstacles made it hard to benefit from the available funding opportunities. War conditions and insecurity also negatively affected the way of thinking and priorities among the organization's customers. The political divide prevented the institute's events from reaching its audience in the eastern parts of Libya.

- **Cessation of activities and suspension of funding: Awad Abida Club for Fine Arts, Barah Culture & Art, Motoon Cultural Establishment, Tanarout Organization**

In addition to the reliance of most cultural non-governmental self-funded institutions on the revenues generated from their activities, some also rely on members' subscription fees, a source that has become scarce due to cash problems, as well as membership fee waivers for some subscribers due to special circumstances related to displacement or other financial conditions. The Awad Abida Club for Fine Arts[9], which is the most prolific institution in Benghazi in terms of training fine artists, had to rely on the artworks of some members as an alternative to their subscription fees.

The suspension of activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic – and other reasons related to the security situation – made it difficult for the organizations to continue their activity, as most of them were unable to meet their obligations such as rent, internet subscriptions, or other organization-specific expenses. Motoon Cultural Establishment[10], for example, was shut down completely. Other organizations stumbled and had to go through repeated suspensions due to the need to evacuate their premises, such as the Awad Abida Club . The problems related to power outages and poor internet quality prevented the transfer of training activities online, thus losing any possibility to compensate for the resources generated from activities. The same applies to the Barah Culture

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[8] "Fonoon Institute for Media & Culture" was founded in Tripoli in 2016. It is an institute concerned with artistic mediation, and it is registered with the Civil Society Commission under registration number 81-2-20200707.

[9] Awad Abida Club was founded in Benghazi in 2016. It is a club for teaching fine arts. It is registered with the Civil Society Commission under registration number 1295-01-20170302.

[10] Motoon Cultural Establishment was founded in Benghazi, in January 2019. It is registered with the Civil Society Commission under registration number 1405-01-20190121

& Art[11] , a cultural complex in Benghazi that hosts various organizations, including Arkenu, an active artistic foundation that had to downsize its activities due to the same problems. Although Barah did not have to pay rent, as it was hosted by the Benghazi Al Amal Foundation by a three-year contract, it was affected due to activities suspension and it was unable to spend. The Tanarout Organization for Libyan Creativity[12] in Benghazi faced the same problems, as it mainly depends on self-funding through revenues generated from its activities and various funding sources, including the Goethe-Institut. However, it had to freeze its activities for security reasons and a direct clash with the General Authority of Awqaf (Endowments) and Islamic Affairs of the Libyan Interim Government[13] .

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[11] Barah" space was established in Benghazi in July 2019. It hosts various civil society organizations of different specializations, including Barah Foundation

[12] The "Tanarout Organization for Libyan Creativity" was founded in Benghazi, in November 2015. It is registered with the Civil Society Commission under registration number 1227-01-20160731.

[13] See Hosam Athani's article, The Salafi Influence in Society and Official Circles and the Threats to Civil Society Supporting Cultural Diversity in Libya (2019 - 2020), published on the Culture Resource (Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafy) website.

Lebanese Museums during Crises and Ways of Funding

Nelly Abboud

The museum sector in Lebanon consists of public museums administratively affiliated with the Lebanese state and private museums owned by individuals or private universities. All public museums primarily rely on funding from the Lebanese Ministry of Culture whose budget does not exceed 1% of the total Lebanese state budget[1] , in addition to local aid from some associations and foreign aid from donors, investors, and banks. As for the private museums, their funding relies mainly on the private sector and foreign aid from donors, grants, and friends of museum associations.

The role of the Ministry of Culture in spending on its sector is limited. Sometimes it is confined to a mediatory role of facilitating the funding of public projects, and most of the times to moral sponsorship[2] of cultural events. An example of this is the funding of "The Night of the Museums" launched in 2013 and organized by the French embassy in Beirut. This activity is almost, totally funded by the embassy. Each year, banks, restaurants, private companies, and individuals are selected as sponsors. In this case, the role of the Ministry of Culture is limited to coordination, and logistic and administrative organization.

The public museums receive only some government funding from the Ministry of Culture budget and other funding from some municipalities, such as the Sursock museum in Beirut. In general, the self-financing through entrance tickets and activities fexes, renting galleries for various activities, or selling products in the museums' shops do not cover operational expenses and salaries.

As such, the principal burden in securing funding falls upon individuals among members and friends of the museums, including businessmen, bankers, and immigrants, or through Arab and international donors, whether they are private or public institutions.

As a result, this sector relies on intermittent or incoherent funding that depends primarily on donations resulting in irregularities in its work and progress.

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[1] القانون النافذ حكماً رقم 6 الصادر بتاريخ 5 آذار/مارس 2020؛ الموازنة العامة والموازنات الملحقة للعام 2020.

[2] أريج أبو حرب، كيف يعمل القطاع الثقافي في لبنان؟، 20 آذار/مارس 2020.

Lebanon's Museums and the Security, Economic and Social Challenges

The museums in Lebanon were and are still struggling financially as they seek to fund their activities and pay their employees' salaries. More than two years ago, the economic and social crisis in Lebanon aggravated and affected the museum sector with the Lira depreciation, the decline in purchasing power, and the deficit in the Lebanese government treasury.

In March 2020, the whole country was shut down due to the coronavirus outbreak. The work of cultural and artistic institutions stopped. Furthermore, all their projects and activities that were "the economic lung" for a large part of male and female employees in this field were canceled.

As a result, the museums ceased to generate revenues because of the suspension of all their activities, and the absence of visitors, mainly students whose schools shut down for an extended period as a precaution to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Irrespective of size, position, or situation, Lebanese museums faced multiple difficulties in protecting their collections, securing the safety and well-being of their employees, dealing with financial issues and keeping in touch with their audience.

On the fourth of August, 2020, the capital was shaken by an explosion in the Beirut port claiming hundreds of lives and leaving thousands of displaced people as well as causing gross damage to houses, offices, and an immense number of cultural institutes such as museums and theaters, cultural institutes centers, and galleries, and showrooms.

The damages to Beirut museums ranged from broken glass of doors and windows, and damages to showrooms and displayed pieces. For instance, the AUB Archaeological Museum lost an entire display showcase containing archeologist glassworks. The Sursock Museum for modern and contemporary art was also subjected to gross damage due to its proximity to the explosion's location, as the newly renovated building was almost completely damaged, and several displayed artifacts were destroyed. Consequently, the explosion increased the financial burden of the museum. The latter relies since its foundation on 5% of the fees of building permits in Beirut. But this income has declined in the last two years due to the economic recession, forcing the museum to close its doors two days a week to reduce expenditures starting 18 February 2019[3] . Zeina Arida, then director of the museum, stated that this arrangement was temporary until the museum raised sufficient aid that would enable it to reopen all week long, calling upon friends and art lovers to donate to the museum to contribute to its continuity[4] .

In the period that preceded the October uprising (October 2019) and the crisis that followed, there were many initiatives to build new museums, particularly in Beirut, Jbeil, and Saida. Most of these initiatives relied primarily on internal or external funding from different supporting bodies, but with the aggravation of the crisis and the economic deterioration locally and worldwide, these projects were suspended and their fate became unclear.

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[3] حسن الساحلي، نموذج متحف سرسق: كيف تتعاطى المؤسسات الثقافية مع الأزمة؟، المدن، 06 نيسان/أبريل 2020.

[4] Rea Haddad, "Sursock Museum Seeks Funding After Announcing Additional Closing Day"

The damages to Beirut museums ranged from broken glass of doors and windows, and damages to showrooms and displayed pieces.

Crisis Repercussions

This lively cultural scene is at risk of shrinkage as a result of the successive crises coupled with the absence of support from the public sector to the cultural institutions, in addition to the weaknesses of the cultural policies and the loss of incentives through the years. All these factors combined are weakening the sector. In addition to the aggravation of the economic crisis and the consequence of the coronavirus, these institutions face multiple challenges that threaten their existence and continuity. Culture Resource has determined, based on a series of discussions and deliberations with some of these institutions, three basic challenges that the cultural institutions working in Lebanon are facing[5] :

- The danger of shutting down due to the inability of the institutions to continue with their programs and general activities.

- The impediments to receiving new funding.

- Their need to rethink their roles and rearrange their operations in a way that allows them to continue and preserve their existence.

In 2019, in the midst of a series of crises in the cultural sector and the local and foreign private initiatives aiming to support it and prevent its total collapse, the ministerial statement of the Government whose slogan was "to work", declared rationalizing expenditures in many ministries and public administrations, as well as reducing the deficit in the state's budget by undertaking financial reforms and adopting an austerity policy[6] .

Support mechanisms for the museum sector and strategic policies organizing its work cannot be developed in the utter absence of any dialogue between the decision-makers in the Lebanese government, and the public and private museum sector.

In August 2019, and in compliance with this policy, the former Minister of Culture, Dr. Mohammed Dawood Dawood, rationalized expenditures of his ministry by terminating the contracts of several companies specialized in cleaning archeology sites and museums managed by the Directorate General of Antiquities, and assigning their tasks

[5] "Lebanon Solidarity Fund", Culture Resource (blog), 2020.

[6] البيان الوزاري لحكومة الرئيس حسان دياب، رئاسة الجمهورية اللبنانية، 2021.

to permanent employees of the directorate. Furthermore, he replaced the works performed by the Ministry itself by forming specialized teams of permanent employees that provide routine maintenance and rehabilitation of archeology sites and historical buildings. As per this plan, around 500 million Lebanese Lira would be saved from the budget of the Ministry of Culture - Directorate General of Antiquities, and this saving would increase in the following years.[7] Furthermore, the Ministries of Culture and Agriculture were merged under the government of Dr. Hassan Diab in January 2020. On one hand, the government considered these austerity measures as "reforms" ignoring the fact that these two ministries were not coherent whether in form or management and administrative procedures. Such measures can only be listed as a systematic plan to damage the sector and slow its movement. On another hand, in the utter absence of any dialogue between the decision-makers in the Lebanese government and the public and private museum sector, support mechanisms for the museum sector cannot be developed, nor can strategic policies organizing the work of this sector be coordinated. Such dialogue should aim at understanding the specifics of this sector as well as its challenges and needs, knowing that the same ministerial statement invited the civil society to participate in decision-making. Ultimately, we would have to wait and see if these promises are going to be accomplished.

Rescue Initiatives

In an attempt to counter the consequences of the crisis on the cultural institutions in Lebanon, Culture Resource and AFAC - Arab Fund for Arts and Culture launched in May 2020 a solidarity fund to support arts and culture institutions in Lebanon[8] , as an attempt to satisfy some of the urgent needs of the sector. The amount of a single grant through this fund reached a maximum of 65 thousand dollars.

After the fourth of August explosion, this fund was transformed into a rescue fund to support the arts and culture damaged institutions and spaces based on crucial needs. At the top of these needs was the urgent reconstruction to secure the safety of the buildings and properties, pay rent for temporary locations in the case of total destruction, preserve, shelter, and transport precious collections, rehabilitate the sites, or repair and/ or replace necessary equipment.

UNESCO launched on 27 August 2020 the For Beirut campaign to collect donations for the recovery fund related to the culture, heritage, and education sectors.

In the context of providing support to the cultural sector in general and the museums in particular, UNESCO aptly took procedures to provide the necessary support. It organized a meeting on the 10 August 2020, with the Directorate

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وزير الثقافة فسخ عقود شركات معنية بتنظيف المواقع الأثرية والمتاحف، الوكالة الوطنية للإعلام، الأربعاء 28 آب 2019 [7].

[8] ibid.

General of Antiquities and a number of its partners[9], among them, International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas ALIPH, The Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage ARC-WH, Blue Shield International Committee, International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property ICCROM, International Council of Museums ICOM, and International Council of Monuments and Sites ICOMOS. One of the meeting's objectives was to assess the situation and define the role of the international community in supporting Lebanon in its efforts to preserve Beirut's cultural heritage[10]. Additionally, UNESCO launched on 27 August 2020, the For Beirut campaign to collect donations for the recovery fund related to the culture, heritage, and education sectors.

As a gesture of support to Sursock museum, Christie's auction house dedicated a part of its proceeds to the charity auction held at the end of October and mid-November 2020, under the title "We are all Beirut, Art for Beirut: A charity auction", to support the art community in Lebanon. The initiative exhibited about 50 pieces that included artworks, jewelry, watches, and regional and international designs. The auction proceeds went to support the rebuilding and reviving of the arts and culture scene in Beirut, including the renovation of the Sursock Museum[11] .

Funding Problems and the Sector's Independence

According to a preliminary report published by UNESCO days after the explosion, the initial estimates indicated a need for 500 million dollars for the year 2021 to support and elevate the heritage sector and creative economy[12] . Suzie Hakimian[13] , director of Minerals Museum (MIM) at Saint Joseph University, said, directly after the August explosion in September 2020, in a virtual seminar organized by UNESCO, titled ResiliArt Lebanon, "Lebanese Museums are rich in collections but poor in resources. The economic crisis has affected the number of our visitors, especially school students, and the virus forced us to shut down our doors, {...} and then came the fourth of August explosion {....}. We need first to reconstruct that cultural bridge that allows societies to express and continue to exist. I expect UNESCO to project a cultural policy and to handle the issue seriously to restore Beirut, the maker of our fortunes[14] ". Although such a declaration is regarded to be shocking as it violates the independence of the sector, it clearly expresses the lack of trust in the government and its institutions. It also implicitly admits the incompetence and the total absence of the will to work on the part of state officials to save this sector.

Moreover, the demands of the October uprising protesters acutely contrasted with what Mrs Hakimian posited. During the protests, actors in the cultural sector raised slogans of cultural independence. They demanded a diverse culture that is free from the hegemony and dominance of the capital. Such demands held a direct and clear rejection of the reliance of the culture sector on funding from domestic or foreign capitals and explicit demand for total independence.

Between these two opposite extremes, the problem of the independence of the sector persists between activating

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[9] Websites of the mentioned partners:
    International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas, ALIPH, The Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage, ARC-WH, Blue Shield International Committee, International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, ICCROM, International Council of Museums, ICOM, and International Council of Monuments and Sites, ICOMOS.

[10] اليونسكو وشركاؤها ينظمون اجتماعاً تنسيقياً لدعم التراث الثقافي في بيروت عقب الانفجار المدوّي الذي ضرب المدينة، الموقع الإلكتروني لليونسكو، 7 آب/أغسطس 2020

[11] كريستيز: مزاد خيري دعماً للبنان وترميم متحف سرسق"، موقع "أوّلا- الاقتصاد والأعمال" الإلكتروني، 16 آب/أغسطس 2020.

[12] "The Director-General Launches from Beirut the 'Li Beirut' Initiative, Putting Education, Culture, and Heritage at the Heart of Reconstruction Efforts". UNESCO, 27 August 2020.

[13] President of the national committee of the International Council of Museums, ICOM, and the previous governor of Beirut National Museum.

[14] Dany Mallat, "Les Musées Du Liban Sont Riches Par Leurs Collections, Mais Petits Par Leurs Moyens" - L'Orient-Le Jour, 22 septembre 2020.

the role of the Ministry without imposing supervision and the freedom from the dominance of foreign capitals. Amid all these crises and in the absence of any other available alternatives, the sector cannot rise and thrive without the assistance of international organizations and capital.

Most workers in the sector consider the absence of the state, a guarantee for freedom of work without any conditions or restrictions, thus providing a wide margin for expression and creativity. The majority fears that the activation of the role of the Ministry is equal to imposing conditions on workers in the sector and opening an additional venue for censorship on art work and productions, and consequently, narrowing the margin of freedom and creativity[15] .

It is worth mentioning that this independence is a consequence of the Lebanese war that gave the private sector a wide margin of freedom to revive the cultural sector in the aftermath of the extreme devastation as a result of the long years of war. On one hand, this course allowed for an independent cultural sector, but on the other hand, it weakened the role of the Ministry, as a public sector, restricting and shrinking its role[16] .

Aside from the role of the Ministry, we can propose the concept of 'cultural policies' that many official bodies, such as the Ministry of Culture and the municipalities, share the responsibility of establishing, and supervising its execution and development, with the participation of relevant institutions in the independent sector, as well as unions and syndicates and legislative bodies through their role in enacting new laws that govern the work of this sector and develop existing ones. In this regard, we feel that the absence of the effective role of the ministry is the absence of the initiator whose duty is to plan and secure logistic and financial funding for developing a sector that could be a vital contributor to the economy.

The most important question in all the domains of the cultural sector is how to administer public money. Consequently, who is the authorized body to set priorities, run the spending mechanism, monitor the spending of the aid and grants, and halt squandering and corruption, while taking into consideration the fact that these museums are privately owned by either individuals or private universities? The aid granted to reconstruct the damaged museums by the fourth of August explosion is an example.

Suggestions and Alternatives

These issues are not circumstantial but have aggravated as a result of the emerging consecutive security and economic crises. And this emphasizes the importance of structural reform of the sector (starting with the separation of the Ministries of Culture and Agriculture). In addition, the function and stature of the museums and their place in the cultural, educational, and social life in Lebanon should be taken into consideration.

Since the current international course of action is dedicating a percentage, not more than 1% of the total budget, to the ministries of culture, a rise in the funding of the Ministry of Culture should be demanded for its vital significance in developing tomorrow's societies.

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[15] أريج حرب، "كيف يعمل القطاع الثقافيّ في لبنان؟"، أوان ميديا، آذار/مارس 2020.

[16] ibid.

In parallel, the official management of the sector should be improved through the reactivation of the Public Commission for Museums. Its task, which was defined by a ministerial decree[17] issued in the year 2016, is establishing and supporting public and private museums whose destiny is still unknown and enhancing national competencies in their fields of expertise. Additionally, the parliament should work on enacting special laws related to museums regulating and protecting their workers. Equally important and just as urgent, is the activating of the civil society role to draw a culture strategy that organizes the sector without any restrictions and lobby among decision-makers to adopt it with implementation mechanisms. Meanwhile, providing sufficient support to a collaboration strategy between the civil society, October uprising groups, and various concerned governmental, municipal and private bodies is crucial. As for the museums, they are responsible for varying their funding sources so as not to be reliant on external funding to preserve their independence and sustainability. It is more efficient to focus more on self-funding methods and means such as initiating Lebanese Museum stores, selling products online, organizing profitable activities, and creating small funds to contribute to paying the employee's salaries and funding some logistic simple matters. To find new prospects, collaboration opportunities could be discussed with similar institutions to benefit from multidisciplinary programs, changing the location of some events, and establishing regional partnerships that allow the museums to continue their work or reproduce it.

Most of the international donating parties head in the next few years to support funding creative economies. Such change in the donor strategies constitutes a new challenge to the museum sector in Lebanon that lies in how to provide its services as a fundamental contributor in pushing the wheels of growth and culture and social development.

On the other hand, it is quite beneficial to establish popular councils with the collaboration of the museums to provide the opportunity for the local communities to actively contribute to decision-making from within the museums. The local communities and their activists can help in shedding light on the importance of museums and help find ways of funding and guarantee their sustainability. In addition, voluntary programs with incentives can be created to secure new experiences and benefit from the skills of the new millennium generation to enrich and vary the activities of the museums to reach a wider audience.

The biggest concern was and will remain to secure the sustainability of these cultural spaces and provide them with a measure of independence, enabling them to perform their role and mission adequately away from the pressure and conditions of capitals.

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17 تنظيم كيفية تأليف مجلس إدارة الهيئة العامة للمتاحف وتحديد مهامه وصلاحياته وقواعد تسيير أعماله وكيفية ممارسة سلطة الوصاية لرقابتها عليه، مرسوم رقم 3050 تاريخ : 12 آذار/مارس 2016، عدد الجريدة الرسمية : 13، الصفحة : 1148 1139-، موقع الجامعة اللبنانية.

Cultural Funding in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and UAE: Deploying Culture for Developmental Visions and Soft Power Politics

Meriem Mehadji

Until the end of the twentieth century, the world was dominated by western models[1] of cultural funding. But, with the emergence of new actors, the repercussions of the New World Order dominated by globalization, the prevalence of the liberal economic system and political realism, cultural policies and funding models diversified. At present, the following tendencies can be identified[2] :

- Liberal cultural policies that aim to cut government expenditures and open the door to the private sector, represented by huge corporations and businessmen who established non-profit charitable organizations to support and fund several activities and cultural projects in exchange for tax cuts or exemptions.

- Populist cultural policies which serve a nationalist rhetoric that rewrites national history in a unified manner at the expense of other identities and cultures, focusing particularly on total government funding of the cultural sector, with an increased budget dedicated to cultural projects and activities.

- Liberal policies with a populist rhetoric that blend the two previous models, such as the policies of the United States under the administration of Donald Trump or Brazil under the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro.

- Some countries use the cultural sector as one of the means to overcome internal and external crises, using governmental and economic mechanisms to reflect their desire for change, thus, building a new society in which all forms of cultural diversity are integrated, while other nations view the cultural sector as an opportunity to be freed from its consecutive economic and social crises and view its funding as a profitable investment, in the long run, whether financially, socially, or culturally.

It is obvious that cultural funding is not limited to the strategies of the states' internal policies, but it has become the fundamental axis for activating their geo-political power. After around 30 years of the publication of Joseph Nye's theory of "soft power[3] ", intellectuals and experts are deliberating the idea of "geo-culture" based on the use of culture in all its components to spread influence and leverage in the international and regional arenas. Amid these fluctuations, international relations witness fierce competition among governments seeking to develop and energize their cultural diplomacy as extensively as possible.

This has led to the emergence of new problems for rich and developing countries alike, which revolve mainly around achieving the balance between adopting this new model by developing cultural and creative industries, lining cultural projects with development operations, and conserving the local identity and culture.

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[1] One example of western cultural financing models is the paternalistic French model, which depends on comprehensive government funding while incentivizing private companies to finance some projects through tax deductions. In the mixed model, as in Britain and Northern European countries, the state funds part of cultural projects and opens the door for the private sector to finance other projects or parts of them. The U.S. model favors private funding, whether by companies or individuals and can be afforded by a government agency called National Endowment for the Arts provided that it obtains private financing.

[2] Antoine Pecqueur, Atlas de la culture: du soft power au hard power: comment la culture prend le pouvoir, Collection Atlas (Paris: Autrement, 2020).

[3] The soft power according to Joseph Nye is the moral and symbolic power that the state has through the ideas, morals, and principles it represents, by supporting many areas including culture to drive other countries to admire and take it as a model. See Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power", Foreign Policy, no 80 (1990): 153-71.

The Arab region on its part has witnessed many political changes and crises since 2011 that have profoundly affected the cultural sector and its funding mechanisms. Contrary to most Arab nations, the Gulf nations have taken a completely different path to the extent that it has been branded as the "Arab Exception" because of all the development and investment in the art sector. Accordingly, they built huge cultural facilities with renowned international recognition, supported various artistic projects whether locally, regionally, or even internationally on the one hand, and focused on advertising their heritage and identity and attracting the world's most famous artists using their enormous financial wealth on the other hand.

Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia represent a unique model regarding the funding and management of the cultural sector, which raises at the same time question marks, issues, and criticisms on the actual objectives of these projects and their sustainability and consequences on the political and economic scales.

The officially declared goal of these efforts is integrating the cultural sector into the sustainable development process that most Gulf States have adopted as an alternative to their rentier economies. At the same time, this transformation declares the entry of Gulf nations, particularly Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, into the international and regional arenas as influential and effective states. These three countries represent a unique model regarding the funding and management of the cultural sector, which raises at the same time question marks, issues, and criticisms on the actual objectives of these projects and their sustainability and consequences on the political and economic scales.

This article aims to analyze the political and development directions of the three mentioned nations by reviewing the recent accomplishments of cultural public funding and its mechanisms and studying the most significant projects during the period 2019 to 2021.

Heritage and Identity as the Foundation of Gulf Cultural Policies

The economic and social indicators of the Gulf nations are an essential measure to understand the specificities of each of Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia, and their impact on decision-making in the domain of cultural policies.

These nations are characterized by the concentration of their populations in urban areas where are usually located the main economic and social facilities and utilities. Moreover, citizens of these nations enjoy high incomes compared to many other countries. This indicates that the centralization of the cultural facilities and the individual's income have a very weak impact on the citizen's consumption of cultural works and products on the one hand. While, on the other hand, the high number of foreign residents (especially in the UAE and Qatar) constitutes an important indicator in the analysis of the rate of compatibility of cultural policies with the cultural diversity of the population.

Annual GDP per capita (Gross Domestic Product) (Current US$[1])	62088,06
Urban population (% of the total population[2])	99,19
Percentage of foreign population 2018[3]	87%

Table 1: Some economic and social indicators of the state of Qatar

Annual GDP per capita (Gross Domestic Product) (Current US$)	43103,32
Urban population (% of the total population)	86,79
Percentage of foreign population 2018	87%

Table 2: Some of the economic and social indicators of the UAE

Annual GDP per capita (Gross Domestic Product) (Current US$)	23139,8
Urban population (% of the total population)	84,06
Percentage of foreign population 2018	38%

Table 3: Some of the economic and social indicators of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

[1] The World Bank, "GDP per capita (current US dollar)", Data, 2019.

[2] The World Bank, "Urban population (% of the total population)", Data, 2019

[3] GLMM Programme, "GCC: Total population and percentage of nationals and non-nationals in GCC countries", Data, 2018.

Questions in Cultural Funding

One of the most important sectors that the Gulf officials cared about has been the local heritage and identity sector. All three nations have focused on supporting cultural narration, acting, and similar activities as well as cultural artisanal works to accentuate their heritage.

Many observers and interested followers believe that this approach contributes to consolidating the legitimacy of the state and maintaining its political interests, by using the heritage to create "a unified national identity", without resorting to rational decisions[4] . Such analysis is simplistic, for it does not take into consideration the rapid changes that the Gulf countries have gone through since the seventies of the last century. These changes include urban expansion, the consequences of globalization, and the change in the citizens' patterns of life and living levels. These fast ongoing changes constitute an actual threat to the intangible heritage in the region. The demise of some economic activities that represented a living heritage, such as pearl diving, farming, and grazing, led to the disappearance of cultural and popular practices that used to accompany these activities like singing and reciting poetry. These nations seek to strike a balance between modernization and originality, taking into consideration modern challenges such as massive urbanization, demographic changes, as well as the presence of foreign labor that exceeds the number of citizens, especially in Qatar and the UAE.

The growing interest in heritage and culture in the Gulf countries is explained by addressing the repercussions of globalization and opposing its negative effects [5] on members of their societies. Nevertheless, in the practical sense, these types of projects aspire to integrate local heritage into the urban areas by resorting to experts and specialized foreigners. These foreigners either do not know the peculiarities of the region or have an orientalist view that denies the presence of a culture or civilization in these countries[6] . Such a view is attributed to the concept of a culture or civilization categorical distinction among them between the prestigious "supreme" western culture and other cultures that are dubbed as "primitive"[7] . In this case, the urban scene may become a kind of folkloric decoration aimed at attracting tourists without any concern for the revival of the original heritage. This contradicts the goals of culture for sustainable development that seek to motivate the social participation of special cultural activities in the building of identity on one hand and the sustainability of heritage on the other[8]

The funding policy that focuses on heritage raises many questions and issues about the extent of respect and inclusion of cultural diversity forms and their different representations, especially concerning minorities and resident foreigners as well as those without citizenship (Bidun).

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[4] Alexandre Kazerouni, "Musées et soft power dans le Golfe persique", Pouvoirs 152, no 1 (2015): 87-97.

[5] Sarina Wakefield, "Contemporary Art and Migrant Identity "Construction" in the UAE and Qatar", Journal of Arabian Studies 7, no sup1 (7 August 2017): 99-111.

[6] The term Primitive Arts is used in western art schools to refer to the artistic products of traditional or primitive communities. As an extension, this term generally refers in the west to artistic productions that are "inferior" to western ones.

[7] Before adopting The United Nations General Assembly at its regular session in September 2015 the "Sustainable Development Agenda 2030", UNESCO called for recognizing the role of culture as an element of empowerment and a driver of sustainable development. And to mobilize support for this resolution, thematic indicators of the role of culture in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda have been developed for the year 2030. See UNESCO, "Culture Indicators 2030: Thematic indicators of the role of culture in the implementation of the 2- year sustainable development agenda 2030" (Paris: UNESCO, 2020), 10.

[8] Indicateurs UNESCO de la Culture pour le Dévelopment (IUCD)

Focusing on heritage in Gulf politics is not a novelty, as these countries have adopted the principle of "Arab-Islamic cultural exception" to embark on trade negotiations with the World Trade Organization as well as the European Union in the nineties of the last century. The sought objective was to defend their societies against flooding their markets with foreign cultural products, especially western ones, along with market liberalization and globalization[9] , which all represent a risk to local culture. Today, by focusing on heritage in their cultural policies, the Gulf states seek shining their identity locally, regionally, and even internationally.

Despite the positive effects that may result from this funding policy that focuses on heritage, many questions and issues are raised about the extent of respect and inclusion of cultural diversity forms and their different representations, especially concerning minorities and resident foreigners as well as those without citizenship (Bidun). In addition, the integration of the culture and heritage with the objectives of the state's general policy and the rulers' decisions may directly affect the cultural policies because of the political changes, setbacks, and crises that the region is witnessing.

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[9] Qian Xuewen et Wu Yihong, "The "Islamic Cultural Exception" of GCC Countries", Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia) 9, no 1 (March 2015): 54-77.

Funding Culture within the Framework of Development Visions

The rapid changes in the world, after September 11 and its consequences on the Gulf nations, led to the adoption of deep internal social, economic, and political transformations that aimed at altering the negative view they suffered from because of these fluctuations.

At the economic level, eliminating total dependence on the oil sector through economic diversification and alternatives has become substantial to their internal policies. This change was listed under what was labeled the strategic visions (Qatar 2030[10] , Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2030[11] , and United Arab Emirates 2021[12]), aiming first to link the cultural sector with its development projects and second to cement their political positions regionally and internationally by using culture and art as an effective soft power. Afterwards, Qatar and UAE showed unprecedented interest in the culture sector by supporting it and restructuring its institutions through implementing new funding and management mechanisms. Saudi Arabia, as well, followed suit starting in 2015.

Nation	Name of sector or ministry	Allocated budget in billions of Dollars			Percentage of the general budget		
		2019	2020	2021	2019	2020	2021
Qatar	Culture and sports sector	...	...	3,57	...	...	6.7%
U.A.E	Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development	0,49	0,54	...	0,32%	0.29%	...

Table 4: General government expenditures in the culture sector in Qatar[13] and the UAE[14].

Table 4 represents the general government expenditures of the cultural sector in Qatar and UAE, and it shows a clear difference between the expenditures in the two nations' general budgets (6.7% for Qatar in 2021 and 0.29% for the UAE in 2020). However, it should be noted that these ministries do not have full competence.

Thus, the public budgets, their distributions, and priorities differ from one government to another. What Qatar, for instance, calls the cultural and sports sector covers allocations and other dispensations that include ministerial expenditures, as well as budgets for the country's most important grand projects, as demonstrated in the table below (table 5). While on the other hand, the sector's budget in the UAE is limited to the Ministry of Culture and Knowledge Development.

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[10] General Secretariat for Development Planning, Qatar National Vision 2030, July 2008.

[11] Official website for Saudi Vision 2030

[12] UAE Vision 2021

[13] الموقع الإلكتروني لوزارة المالية القطرية، 2021 "بيان الموازنة العامة 2021".

[14] الموقع الإلكتروني لوزارة المالية الإماراتية، 2020 "إجمالي مشروع الميزانية العامة للاتحاد عن السنة المالية 2020-2019 - مصروفات".

Saudi Arabia includes the budget of culture in the health and social development sector[15] without providing any data on the specific cultural sector.

General budget (billion Riyals)	Culture and sport sector (billion Riyals)	Cost of sector projects (billion Riyals)	The distribution of the most important projects (billion Riyals)			
			The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC)	Qatar Museums Authority	Cultural Village Foundation	Ministry of Culture and Sport
194.9	13.0	4.5	0.2	0.1	0.1	3.5
The ratio of the allocations for the sector and projects of the general budget	6.7%	2,05%	1,80%	0,050%	0,050%	0,10%

Table 5: Details of the expenditures of the culture sector in Qatar for 2021

It is worth mentioning that the general budgets of these nations and their expenditures percentages on the cultural sector or their allocations are insufficient to understand or analyze the funding of the various cultural sectors and projects, because the bulk of these budgets is spent on the management or administration expenses of the authority or ministry. In addition, the nature of the governmental and administrative system plays a significant role in distributing the general budgets. Consequently, the UAE nation is decentralized in terms of its federal structure as each emirate has its autonomy in funding and managing its cultural projects, and the central government allocates exceptional amounts to big projects and facilities such as international museums.

The general budgets of these nations and their expenditure percentages on the cultural sector or their allocations are insufficient to understand or analyze the funding of the various cultural sectors and projects, because the bulk of these budgets is spent on the management or administration expenses of the authority or ministry.

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[15] "بيان الميزانية العامة للدولة للعام المالي 1443-1442هـ/ 2021م:"، الموقع الإلكتروني لوزارة المالية السعودية، 2021.

It is worth noting that the cultural sector has been included in the Qatar Vision 2030 and the UAE 2021 as part of social development. This is achieved by the preservation of national cultural heritage and the enhancement of Arab and Islamic values, without mentioning the mechanisms of activating this item or the financial, institutional, and human resources available for it. Furthermore, the ministries of culture and the governmental bodies that supervise the major cultural projects, such as museums or heritage of both nations do not provide additional information or data regarding the funding of the various cultural sectors concerning these visions.

1 New Strategies and Mechanisms of Culture Public Funding

Despite the lack of clarity regarding actual funding mechanisms of the cultural sector in all three nations, or the decision-making process that led to the support of some sectors, these nations are pursuing a new strategy to fund the cultural sector. Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia have established specialized bodies that report to the Ministry of Culture but simultaneously enjoy financial and administrative autonomy to complete projects. One of the most important examples is the restructuring of the Saudi Ministry of Culture in 2018, and the establishment in 2019 of eleven bodies specializing in many cultural fields to grant them some degree of autonomy in managing various projects[16] .

Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia have established specialized bodies that report to the Ministry of Culture but simultaneously enjoy financial and administrative autonomy to complete projects.

Saudi Arabia restructured the cultural sector and its funding mechanisms to implement an economic and financial plan that greatly resembles the mechanisms of action adopted in the private sector to relieve itself from the weight of bureaucracy and centralization that the Ministry of Culture previously suffered from. The kingdom is also attempting to link the activities of its bodies with other government sectors, such as education and higher education, as well as labor and tourism. This is considered one of the most important objectives in the sustainability of the sector.

To enhance this new system, Saudi Arabia, following the example of the UAE (February 2018), founded a culture development fund at the beginning of 2021[17] with a capital of 500 million Saudi Riyals[18] (the equivalent of 133 million Dollars approximately).

16 "التقرير السنوي 2019"، الموقع الإلكتروني لوزارة الثقافة السعودية، آذار/مارس 2019.

17 "مشروع نظام صندوق التنمية الثقافي"، الموقع الإلكتروني لوزارة الثقافة السعودية، 2019.

18 "صندوق التنمية الثقافي ... حلم الـ 500 مليون ريال يتحقق"، جريدة العرب الاقتصادية، ثقافة وفنون، 2021.

In addition, the fund was responsible for financing and lending non-governmental institutions, cultural bodies, and societies, as well as developing and strengthening the infrastructure and providing consultancy services to workers, entities, and investors in the cultural sectors.

As per vision 2030, the fund will contribute around 4.6 billion Riyals to increase the GDP and will create more than 70,000 jobs by the beginning of 2030.

Lastly, the Cultural Development Fund relies on so-called flexible funding that requires the collaboration of each of the governmental, private, and non-profit sectors through diverse companies. In this regard, the oil company "Aramco" is considered one of the founding elements of the fund through the Saudi Center for Entrepreneurship[19] .

Moreover, Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia have recently invested in cultural industries by establishing small, fast-growing art markets and regional cultural centers that are funded by both the state and individuals[20] .

Therefore, we have to examine and study the objectives of these policies and their dimensions. To achieve that, it is necessary to go back to their (the states') specificities and the changes they have witnessed in recent times.

Cultural Financing and Soft Politics

The cultural sector is being linked to development in the Gulf nations within a neoliberal framework directed towards the competitiveness of the global market. Accordingly, these nations seek to gain significance and influence on the regional and international scopes. Therefore, it is safe to say that their soft power lies in attracting, assimilating, and funding cultural institutions of all forms. Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia are deploying their financial wealth strategically to fill the cultural void that most Arab countries have been suffering from, as a result of the political instability they have witnessed since 2011, so as to become regional cultural powers.

These countries are attempting, in addition to reviving Arab Islamic products, expressions, and practices, to build cultural bridges with other countries and regions by using cultural diplomacy to attract local branches of international cultural facilities, universities, and centers, as well as organizing international festivals and awards, and holding international art exhibitions[21] .

Thus, in the framework of diversifying their economies, these nations aim to attract the audience and perform the role of a new and alternative investor by acquiring famous international brands to benefit from their reputation, upgrade their institutions and provide them with ample validation. The most important projects that have received tremendous support in this context include cultural clusters (such as Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi and Katara in Doha).

These projects have led to the emergence of the term "the mirrors for rules or princes", which some analysts and specialists use to describe these nations' soft power.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Mazhar Al-Zo'by, "Culture and the Politics of Sustainable Development in the GCC: Identity between Heritage and Globalisation", Development in Practice 29, no 5 (4 July 2019): 559–69.

[21] Suzi Mirgani, "Introduction: Art and Cultural Production in the GCC", Journal of Arabian Studies 7, no sup1 (7 August 2017): 1–119.

These projects have led to the emergence of the term "the mirrors for rulers or princes", which some analysts and specialists use to describe these nations' soft power. This phrase is meant to draw an idealist image of the rulers' or responsibles' decisions on the one hand and establish strong cultural ties with the rich and influential nations, to acquire prestige and support at the international relations level on the other hand.[22]

1 Partnerships and Cultural Diplomacy

This kind of policies has induced high competition among rich nations that aspire to develop their cultural relations and diplomacy with the Gulf nations. France is considered one of the most important nations seeking to invest culturally in the region. It sold, for example, the Louvre brand to the UAE for approximately 525 million dollars[23] . Despite the harsh criticism of the wWestern press for the deal, it should be noted that the first beneficiary is the parent institution, the Louvre Museum in France, which was able to cover a large part of its annual expenses[24] .

In addition, such partnerships lead to enormous investments that combine various expenses and serve the interests of the investor and the partner simultaneously.

This kind of policies has induced high competition among rich nations that aspire to develop their cultural relations and diplomacy with the Gulf nations.

Currently, one of the best examples is the Al-Ula project[25] in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which aims to develop the Saudi Al-Ula region and turn it into a living museum that includes preserved tombs carved in the rock, sandstone outcrops, monuments, and landmarks of historic developments.

The project was announced in 2017 in partnership with the French government, which established a specialized body to manage the project called "The French Agency for Al-Ula Development".

In conclusion, despite the stinging criticism directed at such projects by western public opinion, which usually describes such projects as reckless, they represent an economic and political opportunity for all parties. The Gulf states have an opportunity to develop cultural sectors and eventually stimulate internal and external tourism establishing new sources of income. As for the foreign partners, they will obtain an opportunity to spread their economic, cultural, and political influence in developing countries, especially those with massive financial potential such as the Gulf states.

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[22] Kazerouni, "Musées et soft power dans le Golfe persique".

[23] large part of its annual expenses Btihaj Ajana, "Branding, legitimation and the power of museums: The case of the Louvre Abu Dhabi", Museum and Society 13, no 3 (1 July 2015): 316-35.

[24] Starting from the nineties, The French government decided to fully cancel its support for museums. These establishments now must find funding in independent ways to cover the equivalent %30 of their operating expenses to get government funding.

[25] Al-Ula Project, Vision 2030 Official Website

Project sector	Number of projects	Funding value ((million Saudi Riyal	French benefits of the partnership
Culture	9	14,4	Employment of 50 scientists and archaeologists in the project.
Urbanization and development	7	53,8	● 96 Saudi students were granted scholarships to France as part of the Saudi Ministry of Culture›s scholarship program.
Tourism and (hotel (hostelry	7	3,4	● 24 youths from Al-Ula received training in gastronomy and received diplomas from the French School of Culinary Arts and Hotel Management FERRANDI Paris.
Security and safety	4	4,6	
Human capital	6	7,2	● Recruited 50 French companies and activists in the field of health within the setting of the 2W@T Festival.
Water and environment	2	3,5	
Fragrances and plants	10	13,2	● Struck partnership with 5 French government institutes specialized in research and studies.
Agriculture	6	3,4	● Employed by 6 small and medium-sized French enterprises.
Total	51	103,5	● Signed 150 partnership contracts, including 30 with small and medium-sized French companies.

Table 6: The most important projects in progress and the most important beneficiaries of the Saudi French partnership in the Al-Ula project[26] .

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[26] Agence Française pour le Dévelopment d'Alula, "Rapport d'Activité 2019/2020" (999 France, 2020).

2 Attracting the Products' Market and Cultural Events

Both the UAE (Dubai) and Qatar have directed their attention to the contemporary art market to achieve their soft power objectives. They were able to attract the largest and most famous international companies specializing in the sale and purchase of contemporary art artifacts, such as Christie's in 2006, Bonhams in Dubai in 2008, and Sotheby's in Doha in 2009. Despite the decline in revenues in the local contemporary art market, Dubai, in particular, has been able to establish a solid Arab market in this domain.

This market did, on the one hand, introduce and promote new artists from the region and developing countries by integrating them into the traditional tracks of the contemporary art market to sell their works, and on the other hand, this new market has encouraged attracting local and international individual investments in contemporary arts[27] .
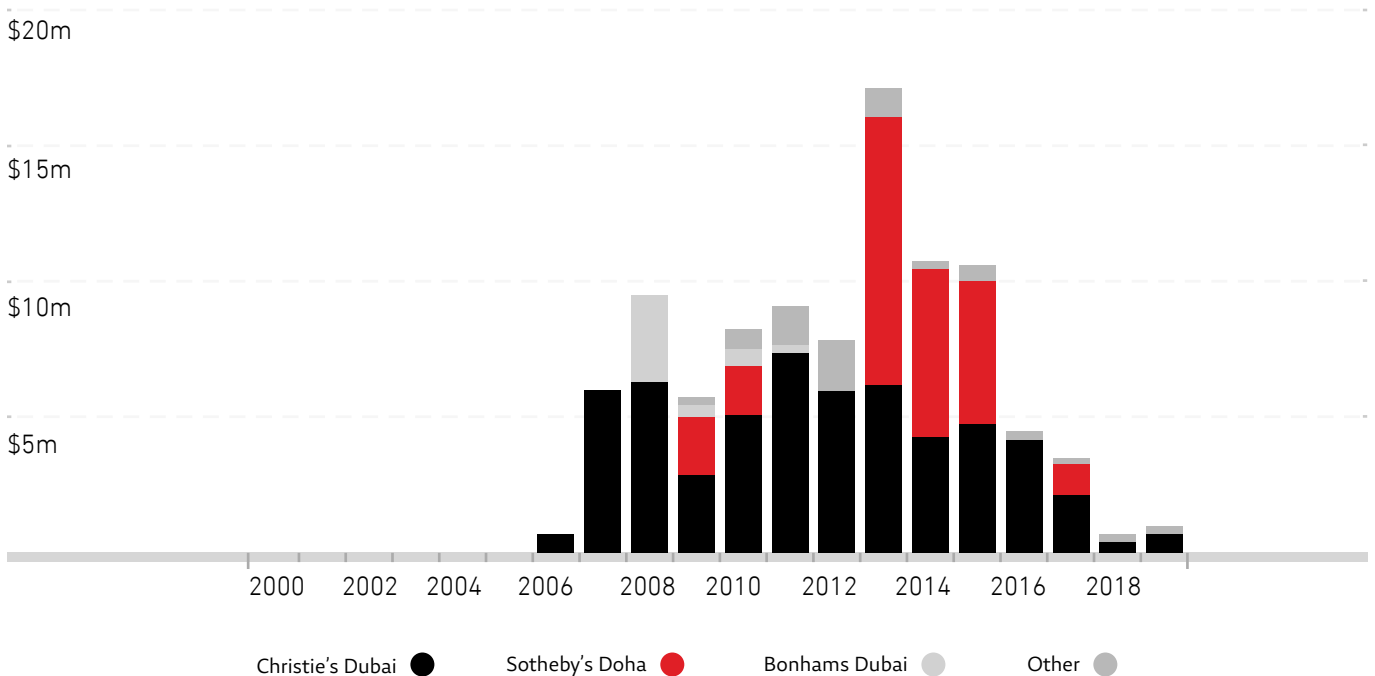
Chart 1: Contemporary art auctions in Qatar and the UAE[28]

According to the British Council's 2019 report[29] , the UAE enjoys the best expertise in this field among other Gulf countries as it possesses a strong network of specialized companies in the management of cultural and artistic events, as well as a mature supply chain.

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[27] Annick Colonna-Césari, "Dubaï et les enjeux de l'art", La gazette Drouot, 11 Octobre 2018.

[28]   Art Price Report, "The contemporary art market report 2020" (Art Price, 2020).

[29] GULF FESTIVALS, SKILLS RESEARCH, BOP Consulting, (British Council, 2019)

	Government Bodies	Private Sector	Main Festivals
UAE	● Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority ● Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi ● Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing - Dubai	● Flash Entertainment for the development of the music sector and live entertainment ● Sharjah Art Institute Foundation for the Development of Visual Arts and Cultural Exchange	● Emirates Airline Festival for Literature ● Sharjah Biennial ● Mother of the Nation Festival MOTN ● Dubai Film Festival ● The Sharjah Light Festival ● Abu Dhabi National Day ● Darb Al Saai
Qatar	● Qatar Cultural and Heritage Events Center ● National Tourism Council ● Doha Film Institute		● Doha International Book Fair ● Al Baraha Programme ● Doha Film Festival ● Ajyal Film Festival ● Qamra Event

Table 7: Governmental and private bodies, and main festivals active in the UAE and Qatar

As for the objectives, both the UAE and Qatar seek to attract foreign tourists from the region and elsewhere as well as leading international artists, professionals, and critics in many fields such as cinema, music, and entertainment. With the nonexistence of data and statistics on the extent of the correlation between these projects and labor market requirements, private companies, and nonprofit sectors, it is extremely hard to link these projects with the development objectives of both countries and their effectiveness in letting citizens and residents participate.

For its part, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, having founded the Festivals and Entertainment Authorities, started to focus on supporting local festivals to stimulate internal tourism and create jobs locally, as well as encouraging participation and attendance in this kind of initiative. To develop this sector, the Public Investment Fund (PIF) founded in 2018 the Saudi Entertainment Ventures with a capital of 10 billion SAR[30] .

Some analysts attribute the widespread use of this type of funding to the theory of the "Mirror for the Gulf Ruler", where they aim to transmit a positive or an ideal image. Nevertheless, investments in these projects constitute a part of a realistic strategy that seeks to acquire power and achieve benefit and influence in accordance with the rules of contemporary international relations.

[30] "تقرير الحالة الثقافية في المملكة العربية السعودية ٢٠١٩م: ملامح وإحصائيات"، وزارة الثقافة السعودية، 2019.

Like the major powers, these nations have invested in the cultural sector to serve their own political, economic, and social interests and to use it both internally and externally. And the enormous financial resources spent for development goals and foreign policy objectives cannot be attributed to the individual desire of the ruler and therefore deemed irrational. Such analyses concentrate on western prototypes, their environment, and their economic, political, and social specifications as the optimal method. In addition, what the Gulf states are attempting to achieve is to overcome the economic hurdles domestically and find sustainable alternatives to oil dependency, as well as support their hard power with the regional and international dimensions of soft power.

The Gulf states are attempting to overcome the economic hurdles domestically and find suitable alternatives to oil dependency, as well as support their hard power with the regional and international dimensions of soft power.

Results and Effects of the Cultural Funding Strategies

The analysis of the strategic objectives set by the three nations indicates that the financial support for culture is subject in the first place to government funding and the interest of the decision-makers in the cultural and artistic sectors. Usually, the names attributed to the concerned ministries in the sector reflect this interest. For instance, integrating sports with culture in Qatar indicates the attempt to add major sports activities to cultural activities in the hope of attracting a larger number of tourists and visitors. Simultaneously, Qatar is attempting to link sports with heritage by reinitiating activities and sports traditional practices such as horse and camel races and shows, hunting and falcon breeding, etc.[31]

The analysis of the strategic objectives set by the three nations indicates that the financial support for culture is subject in the first place to government funding and the interest of the decision-makers in the cultural and artistic sectors.

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[31] Alanoud Alsharekh et al., éd., Popular Culture and Political Identity in the Arab Gulf States, SOAS Middle East Issues (London: Saqi [u. a.], 2008).

Regarding Saudi Arabia, after the restructuring of the Ministry of Culture in the year 2019, culture was separated from entertainment. This decision seems to align with the political and cultural objectives of the state: on the one side, Saudi Arabia aspires to advocate its heritage and original culture, and on the other side, it responds to its citizen's aspirations, specifically the youth, related to cultural and entertainment participation. The best example is giving licenses to open cinemas since 2018 (12 halls)[32] , and supporting Saudi directors in film production. These actions indicate a strong wish in the kingdom to create a profound societal cultural change. In addition, the government also seeks to contain practices, especially performed by the youth, and to establish a local consumption of cultural industry products, after part of Saudi youth used to visit neighboring countries, especially Bahrain and the UAE, for this purpose.

1 Escalation of Competition and its Repercussions

The three nations seek, through their plans, strategies, and cultural projects, to stand out and influence locally, regionally, and internationally; as a result, this has generated a climate of internal and regional competition at various levels.

After the openness and fame that Dubai has enjoyed in terms of economic and cultural radiance, other neighboring cities, especially Abu Dhabi and Doha have tried to follow the same model and method to be more appealing. They were also seeking liberation from Saudi cultural domination and spreading alternative cultural models that are more open to the world. However, this soon led to the emergence of particularly fierce competition, specifically between Qatar and the UAE that transcended the cultural domain and initiated tensions and numerous political crises in the region.

On the Arab level, these Gulf countries are attempting to become a center or model for the region›s culture, and such a task is considered hard to achieve. Even with their backing for many Arab cultural projects through grants and awards and their organization of enormous events and activities, most Arab intellectuals and activists still consider Arab cities such as Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus, Beirut, and others as capitals of Arab culture and civilization. And sometimes they share the same negative western view of the Gulf countries. This indicates a lack of cultural integration in the Arab region, which leads to multiplying competition among these states rather than solidarity.

On the international scale, linking the funding and the cultural policies with the external strategies of these nations might backfire, for attracting government and international companies did not alter the negative view of western and international public opinion. For instance, the French government hesitated for a long time before announcing its cultural partnership with Saudi Arabia after the French public opinion had harshly criticized the military deals between the two nations[33] and demanded imposing a ban on arms sales to the Kingdom.

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[32] Same reference as in 31.

[33] Antoine Pecqueur, Atlas de la culture: du soft power au hard power: comment la culture prend le pouvoir, Collection Atlas (Paris : Autrement, 2020).

2 Creativity and Freedom of Cultural Expression

From the cultural funding mechanisms of the mentioned countries, we can detect the absence of an independent artistic cultural platform. Despite the attempt to recruit individuals and the private sector for various projects, it should be mentioned that the funding in each of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE is subject to the laws and decisions of the decision-makers.

This type of influence is described as universal management that leads to a certain limitation in cultural and artistic expressions as well as setting limits to cultural diversity. Even if the total government's financial support of culture at all production and consumption stages secures the development of local cultural products, it also imposes full censorship over their connotations and content.

With such restrictions introduced on artistic expressions, artists and creators tend to practice self-censorship to acquire opportunities and financial support from donor authorities. Taking into consideration that censorship or control of creativity may take a variety of forms, many Arab artists are choosing foreign funding, especially western ones, to support their projects, which confine them to perceptions, values, concepts, and preferences that do not necessarily match the artistic and cultural reality of their societies or their perceptions and creative motivations.

At the same time, many Gulf artists view the cultural policies and material support that their countries provide, as a unique opportunity to display their work and develop their skills. Like other countries, the rapid technological change and the propagation of social media sites and digital platforms have cut short many stages of the creative chain and facilitated direct support from individuals, clusters, and companies, and created new types of cultural products. This change enabled young Gulf artists to manipulate the adopted norms and metaphorically present their concepts bypassing constraints and censorship[34] .

Lastly, concerning the audience, the three nations are seeking through their strong support for the cultural sector, to strike a balance between heritage and indigenous culture, and to promote and preserve them under the slogan of "Arab and Islamic specificity" on the one hand, and attracting a new audience on the other. However, this may cause the isolation of an important fraction of the public, as most cultural activities and events are directed toward the middle class of citizens and foreign expatriates that enjoy a high education and society level.

We can detect from the cultural funding mechanisms of the mentioned countries the absence of an independent artistic cultural platform.

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[34] Nancy Demerdash, "Of "Gray Lists" and Whitewash: An Aesthetics of (Self-) Censorship and Circumvention in the GCC Countries", Journal of Arabian Studies 7, no sup1 (7 August 2017): 28-48.

Conclusion

Governments and states have always used the slogan: "Supporting Culture for Love of Art" to justify their cultural policies. However, given the recent and rapid changes the world is witnessing, cultural policies have switched into strategies deployed by nations on the internal and external levels to cement and affirm their political orientations and spread their power and influence regionally or globally.

Experts consider cultural funding based on its nature and objectives as one of the strongest indicators that reflect the internal and external objectives of cultural policies. Consequently, Qatar, UAE, and Saudi Arabia have grasped the rules of geo-culture and their effect on their hard and soft powers.

Locally, due to the crises the world is facing today, it is hard to determine the future of the cultural policies for these nations and their consequences in the medium and long term. Compounding the issue is the link with the tourism sector, which is facing an acute decline due to the global pandemic. Contrasting what is happening in the rich states, the Gulf nations have not yet announced any reduction in their cultural funding. Furthermore, in this regard, the UAE has launched "the National Creative Relief Program" funded by 4.6 million Dirham[35] to support actors and activists in the cultural and creative industries sectors, including individuals and private companies.

Focusing more on the consumption of their citizens and residents of the cultural, artistic, and touristic products and activities, the crisis could be converted into an opportunity to develop and spread a sense of culture by educating and encouraging participation on a local scale. In this way, securing its visions and plans becomes a sustainable goal.

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35 "اتجاهات المستقبل"، مؤسسة دبي للمستقبل ودبي للثقافة، 2021.
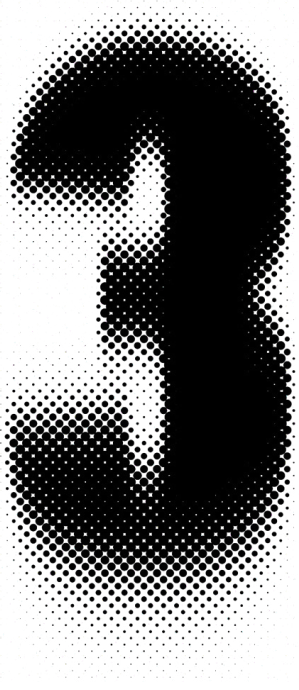
3

On Cultural Legislations and Attempts of Change

Creative Freedom in Egyptian Legislation (2018-2021)

Amira Elsebaai

Most successive Egyptian constitutions have guaranteed freedom of expression[1] , the latest being the 2014 constitution which also guarantees creative freedom and commits the state to promote art and literature, sponsor creators and protect their creations, and provide the necessary means of encouragement.[2] However, the Egyptian laws contain a number of provisions restricting creative freedom, in an explicit contradiction with the constitution. And when it comes to implementation, the Egyptian state and its institutions often do not abide by the creative freedom guaranteed by the constitution. Some of these laws were drafted before the 2014 constitution-making process, and the parliament was supposed to abolish the texts that contradict the rights recognized by the constitution. However, the latter refused to abolish some of these provisions[3] and agreed to introduce more strict punishment for others[4] . The parliament also approved a number of new legislations restricting creative freedom in the years following the drafting of the 2014 constitution. During the last decade, the authority in Egypt has been trying hard to tighten its control and grip on all kinds of artistic and creative expression whether by censoring or restricting creativity and expression, on the one hand, through a set of laws using broad and non-quantifiable terms that are open for interpretation and give a large space for the law-enforcement authorities to interpret the legal texts and terminology according to their beliefs and personal values, such as "Egyptian family values", "social safety" and "indecent behavior"; and on the other hand, by owning a large number of media outlets and platforms through which they pass their artistic or moral values.

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[1] Article 14 of the 1923 constitution stipulates that "Freedom of opinion shall be ensured. Every person may express their thoughts in saying, writing, depiction, or otherwise in consistency with the law". This coincides with the articles on freedom of expression in the 1930, 1958 and 1964 constitutions. The 1971 constitution acknowledged the creative freedom and innovation without any restrictions, unlike the previous constitutions, since Article 49 stipulates that "the state shall guarantee the freedom of scientific research and literary, artistic and cultural innovation and provide the necessary means for its realization".

[2] Article 65 of the current Egyptian constitution stipulates that "freedom of thought and opinion is guaranteed. All individuals have the right to express their opinion through speech, writing, imagery, or any other means of expression and publication". Article 67 of the constitution states that "freedom of artistic and literary creation is guaranteed. The state shall undertake to promote art and literature, sponsor creators and protect their creations, and provide the necessary means of encouragement to achieve this end. No lawsuits may be initiated or filed to suspend or confiscate any artistic, literary, or intellectual work, or against their creators except through the public prosecution. No punishments of custodial sanction may be imposed for crimes committed because of the public nature of the artistic, literal or intellectual product. The law shall specify the penalties for crimes related to the incitement of violence, discrimination between citizens, or impugning the honor of individuals. In such cases, the court may force the sentenced to pay punitive compensation to the party aggrieved by the crime, in addition to the original compensations due to him for the damages it caused him. All the foregoing takes place in accordance with the law".

[3] تشريعية البرلمان ترفض إلغاء الحبس في "خدش الحياء"، 28 تشرين الثاني/نوفمبر 2016

[4] شكاوى النواب" توافق على مقترح تغليظ عقوبة "ازدراء الأديان" ، 11 كانون الثاني 2018"

Laws Restricting Creative Freedom

Among the law articles restricting creative freedom in Egypt is Article 178 of the criminal code, which punishes with detention and a fine, or either penalty, whoever publishes, does or holds something or makes a symbolic sign that is against public morals.[5] It is the article under which the novelist Ahmed Naji was sentenced to two years in prison for violating public morals[6] in his novel The Use of Life[7] . In 2016, the legislative committee in the parliament rejected two bills submitted to amend the criminal code by abolishing the prison sentence for crimes of dissemination of material violating public morals.

Article 98 F also represents an obstacle to creative freedom, as it stipulates that detention or a fine shall be the penalty inflicted on whoever propagates extremist thoughts with the aim of instigating sedition, contempting any of the religions or prejudicing national unity.[8] It is under this article that the scholar Islam Al-Buhairi was sentenced to five years in prison, which were reduced to one year[9] , for criticizing Islamic legacy on his television program. The parliament later approved a bill to raise the penalty[10] for contempt of religion after some MPs rejected the proposal to amend Article 98 F for violating the articles of the constitution.

Among the law articles restricting creative freedom in Egypt is Article 178 of the criminal code, which punishes with detention and a fine, or either penalty, whoever publishes, does or holds something or makes a symbolic sign that is against public morals.

In 2020, with the lockdown imposed to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of most artistic and cultural institutions and spaces, the state's attention was largely turned to social media applications and platforms. Prosecution and detention were inflicted on a number of their users under Law No. 175 of 2018 regarding Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes[11] , under the pretext of protecting the Egyptian family values, preserving morals and protecting social peace[12] . The state imposes its moral conception on its citizens and punishes anyone

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[5] Article 178 of the criminal code states that "whoever makes or holds, for the purpose of trade, distribution, leasing, pasting or displaying printed matter, manuscripts, drawings, advertisements, carved or engraved pictures, manual or photographic drawings, symbolic signs, or other objects or pictures in general, if they are against public morals, shall be punished with detention for a period not exceeding two years and a fine of not less than 5,000 pounds and not exceeding 10,000 pounds or either penalty".

[6] إلغاء حكم بحبس روائي مصري متهم بـ"خدش الحياء"، 21 أيار/مايو 2017

[7] The Cairo Criminal Court overturned the sentence and accepted an appeal filed by Naji, who spent nearly one year in prison, before being released last December. The court fined Naji with 20,000 Egyptian pounds.

[8] Article 98 F of the criminal code stipulates that "detention for a period of not less than six months and exceeding five years, or paying a fine of not less than 500 pounds and not exceeding 1,000 pounds shall be the penalty inflicted on whoever exploits and uses the religion in advocating and propagating by talk or in writing, or by any other method, extremist thoughts with the aim of instigating sedition and division or disdaining and contempting any of the heavenly religions or the sects belonging thereto, or prejudicing national unity or social peace".

[9] النقض تؤيد حبس الباحث إسلام بحيري بتهمة ازدراء الأديان، 31 تمّوز/يوليو 2016

[10] "شكاوى النواب" توافق على مقترح تغليظ عقوبة "ازدراء الأديان"، 11 كانون الثاني/يناير 2018

[11] Law No. 175 of 2008 Regarding Anti-Cyber and Information Technology Crimes.

[12] Dancer Sama Al-Masry was sentenced to two years in prison and a fine of 200,000 pounds in September 2020, on the grounds of her accusation of publishing videos that are against public morals and violate Egyptian

who deviates from its moral framework under the pretext of protecting the Egyptian family values and morals[13] . In some cases, this went beyond the claim of morals protection to even sanction comedy sarcasm. The National Media Authority – Maspero filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor against Mohamed Ashraf[14] who took part in a stand-up comedy event, after a video of him mocking the performance techniques of some broadcasters of the Holy Quran Radio station went viral. Ashraf was accused of ridiculing media figures and insulting the Holy Quran Radio station. He was detained for four days pending investigation. The head of the National Media Authority, Hussein Zain, stated that the Authority "will not tolerate any leniency in its complaint against Ashraf until the latter is punished for his mockery of media figures of whom we are proud".

Restrictions on Cultural Spaces

In terms of independent artistic and cultural spaces, the state imposes the same restrictions; in fact, the Law of 2017 governing non-governmental organizations laid significant obstacles in the way of civil society in Egypt in general, and artistic and human rights institutions in particular. This has caused the closure of many cultural and artistic institutions in Egypt to avoid harassment by security agents and legal prosecutions that may involve detention under this law[15] . These restrictions extended to the organization of artistic events, concerts and festivals, as the prime minister Mostafa Madbouly issued Decree No. 1238 of 2018 creating the Permanent Supreme Committee for the Organization of Festivals and Celebration that is presided by the minister of culture and includes representatives of 8 ministries: Foreign Affairs, Interior, Finance, Tourism and Antiquities, Civil Aviation, Youth and Sports and Local Development.

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The decree commits the organizers of concerts and festivals to obtain an advance license to organize public events from this committee, which convenes once annually. This constitutes a breach of the Law on the Censorship of Works of Art, which considers the Central Authority for the Censorship of Works of Art (CACWA) as the only body that has the right to issue licenses for public artistic shows. Although this decree has not been implemented yet, it poses a major threat to creative freedom and making artworks available to the public, and remains like the sword of Damocles

societal values. This comes in addition to the detention of a number of other users of social network platforms on the grounds of violating societal values, including Manar Sami, Sharifa Refaat, known as "Sherry Hanim", her daughter and Renad Emad.

[13] "Egyptian family values" besiege freedom of expression.. Quarterly Report on the State of Freedom of Expression in Egypt, (July – September 2020), Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE).

عاجل.. حبس صاحب فيديو السخرية من مذيعي إذاعة القرآن الكريم، 12 تشرين الثاني/نوفمبر 2020 [14]

[15] Law No. (70) of 2017, The Law of Association and Other Foundations Working in the Field of Civil Work.

for the state to use whenever it so desires. The decree made it mandatory for event organizers, in case of a company, to have a capital of no less than 500,000 Egyptian pounds, to apply for permission to hold a concert or festival. This represents a major obstacle for companies with limited funding or newly established companies, as well as for independent and low cost productions in general. It also gives the Ministry of Culture the right to withdraw the license if it believes that the concert compromises Egypt's reputation, which brings us back again to the broad terminology used in the law drafting process without clarifying their exact meaning or giving examples that clarify it.[16]

The Censorship Exercised by Non-Relevant Bodies

In addition to the state's censorship of creative freedom and the establishment of new censorship bodies of various types of creation, non-relevant and non-specialized institutions are also exercising censorship of creativity. The Egyptian National Library and Archives, which is the official institution for books registration in Egypt, has created new regulations for registering books that include an acknowledgement by the writer that he is responsible for the whole content included in his book and bears the consequences of everything stated therein. The same applies to the institutions concerned with distribution and supporting creative expressions in Egypt; in fact, the director of the National Center for Translation announced a new mechanism for submitting requests of book translation, including the requirement of consistency with religions and customs. This provoked angry reactions from creators and translators on social media, which prompted the center to issue an explanatory statement[17] where it explained in the fourth item that the requirement of consistency with religion and customs was introduced after the center received proposals to translate books that insult religious symbols and institutions, without suggesting any real ideology, as well as works that promote homosexuality, perversion and atheism, which cannot be accepted by the center..." This somehow imposes a kind of moral custody on both the translator and the reader, with the aim of gaining the approval of the state by increasing self-censorship.

The same happened with the Syndicate of Musical Professions. The syndicate did not allow the so-called Mahraganat singers (Mahraganat literally translates to festivals) to join the syndicate, but rather gave them annual permits to sing. The syndicate has the right to withdraw these permits should it feel that the artwork or the artist himself/herself violates public morals.[18] Thus, the syndicate has become a censorship authority that assesses the artistic works and determines which ones constitute "good" art and those considered as "bad" art, based on criteria that are not related to art, such as the impact of the artwork on society, the behavior of its authors, or the nature of the content and lyrics. The environment in which the Mahraganat art emerged allows a greater level of freedom compared to that of the middle class, which is for the most part conservative. This makes the content of Mahraganat songs much bolder and more explicit. The rejection of these Mahraganat songs by the head of the Syndicate of Musical Professions comes on the grounds that many of them "contain allusive phrases that embed bad habits, as well as immoral insinuations". The head of the Syndicate of Musical Professions explained in an interview[19] that "the conditions of the syndicate

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[16] Mahmoud Othman, "Decree on the organization of concerts and festivals in Egypt: tight control over the remaining space in the public domain", Legal Agenda, 5 August 2018.

[17] المركز القومي للترجمة يصدر بيانا توضيحيا بخصوص ردود الأفعال على الآلية الجديدة للترجمة، 16 آب/أغسطس 2020

[18] Article 5 of 1978 on the Federation of Artistic Syndicates criminalizes the practice of any work related to music without membership or permission from the syndicate.

[19] نقابة الموسيقيين تصدر قرارا بمنع مطربي المهرجانات من الغناء نهائيا.. ولجنة العمل وشرطة السياحة تمنع أول الحفلات وتؤكد القرار يسري على محمد رمضان.. ومطرب بنت الجيران: بيتى اتخرب.. وحلمي بكر: أعمال تنشر السفالة، 17 شباط/فبراير 2020

membership or permissions to sing are not only based on the vocal competences, but also include a commitment to higher societal values, moral customs and the choice of lyrics".

A decision was issued by the Syndicate of Musical Professions to ban dealing with Mahraganat singers, but it later revoked it by announcing the creation of the "Folk Performance" division. The head of the syndicate also issued a decision banning all festival singers from singing in tourist facilities and nightclubs[20] , despite the fact that Law No. 35 of 1978, which regulates the work of artistic syndicates, does not confer any punitive authority on individuals or establishments outside the scope of the syndicate's control.[21] The head of the syndicate went even further and contacted YouTube and SoundCloud in an attempt to have them take down Mahraganat music from their platforms.

The head of the Musicians Syndicate, Hany Shaker, has sought more than once to be granted judicial powers in order to stand up against Mahraganat singers and ban their songs, after the administrative court suspended the decision of the Minister of Justice to grant judicial powers to certain members of artistic unions in April 2016. The Egyptian parliament recently rejected a draft law[22] submitted by the government to amend the Law of the three syndicates of artistic professions, and a large number of MPs refused to reinstate the right of syndicate members to judicial powers.

The Egyptian constitution and legislation put artists and creators in trouble with the arbitrary eligibility criteria for membership set by the syndicates of artistic professions, especially the Syndicate of Musical Professions. The constitution provides for the establishment of one syndicate for each profession,[23] and the law regulating the work of these syndicates confirms in Article 5 thereof that artists who are not active members in their relevant professional syndicate or obtain from them a temporary work permit, cannot work in any of the relevant artistic fields. Thus, the singer or artist remains at the mercy of the syndicate, either by seeking a temporary permit to practice his/her work or being subjected to prosecution and liability.

Although the initial goal of the establishment of artistic syndicates was to promote arts and preserve the rights and interests of their members, they have acquired with time a censorship role over artists and artworks. They have also become a tool for the state to restrict creative freedom in coordination with the regulatory and security authorities in Egypt, and at times, a tool of repression as a result of their members' political views and stances.

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[20] مصر.. قرار بمنع مطربي المهرجانات من الغناء, 17 شباط/فبراير 2020

[21] "Legalizing Mahraganat: Recognition vs. Identity Erasure", Association for Freedom of Thought and Expressions, 2020.

[22] "النواب" يرفض تعديلات "النقابات الفنية" بسبب "الضبطية القضائية", 27 كانون الأول/ديسمبر 2021

[23] Article 77: The law shall regulate the establishment and administration of professional syndicates on a democratic basis, guarantee their independence, and specify their resources and the way members are recorded and held accountable for their behavior while performing their professional activities, according to ethical codes of moral and professional conduct. No profession may establish more than one syndicate..."

On Cultural Legislations and Attempts of Change

Although the initial goal of the establishment of artistic syndicates was to promote arts and preserve the rights and interests of their members, they have acquired with time a censorship role over artists and artworks. They have also become a tool for the state to restrict creative freedom in coordination with the regulatory and security authorities in Egypt, and at times, a tool of repression as a result of their members' political views and stances. For example, in 2019, the head of the Syndicate of Acting Professions, Ashraf Zaki, canceled the membership of two artists against the backdrop of their stances against the current ruling regime.

Conclusion

In light of the restrictions on freedoms in Egypt in general, the room for opposition to the restriction of creative freedom has shrunk, and intellectuals and artists have no longer other choice than to write statements expressing their dissatisfaction and condemning the persecution and crack down on artists and creators in Egypt. For example, the arrest of Ahmed Naji sparked a protest movement among intellectuals and creators who issued a statement[24] condemning the arrest and calling upon the security services to open the public sphere to creators. This was repeated in similar cases. The crackdown on civil society organizations in Egypt, especially human rights organizations, prevented the existence of institutions that support creators and are capable of claiming their rights. Only a few institutions concerned with creative freedom survived, including the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE), which works on monitoring cases of violations of creative freedom in Egypt.

It is clear from the above that there are restrictions imposed on artistic creation through laws that hinder the process of creativity or the circulation of cultural products by legislators. Egyptian laws related to creative freedom need to be reviewed and reformulated, and the broad terminology used should be replaced with explicit, specific and quantifiable ones. The state also plays the role of the guardian of morality and punishes anyone who violates the ethical boundaries and limits it sets, which is no different from what many institutions promoting arts and creation do, as these institutions illegally impose censorship on cultural products and artistic works.

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[24] Tadamon Egypt, 2016

Legislation Concerning the Cinema Sector in Algeria: Between the Pursuit of Industrialization and the Neglect of its Workers

Meriem Mehadji

For decades, the cultural and creative industry has proved its effectiveness as a driving force for economic development and thus achieving economic growth, which has led many developing countries, including Arab ones, in recent years to focus on it in an unprecedented manner. Several countries have developed cultural and creative clusters[1] while others tried to restructure their institutions and cultural programs to integrate them with such industries. The United Nations, through its branches and institutions, has begun to integrate culture into sustainable development goals (SDG) programs, which has also influenced the most relevant governmental decisions.

This attention remained limited to regulations and laws concerning the protection of social and economic rights of workers in cultural industries, and the coronavirus crisis revealed the fragility of the legal status of culture and creative work in many developing as well as developed countries.

The cultural policy consists of three pillars; the legal pillar, the institutional one that encompasses organizational and administrative procedures, and the financial one associated with budgets and their legal distribution. These pillars enable the state to design the policies for the artistic and creative sectors, through legislations and laws regulating the cultural and artistic sectors. These pillars aim to define the basic rules and principles of these sectors and to protect their workers, including the legal framework, cultural laws that deal extensively with identity issues and diversity, cultural and religious freedoms...etc.[2] It also includes the cultural legislations that directly intervene on the practical level in regulating and controlling the cultural product cycle to preserve the economic and artistic value. At the same time, these legislations seek to protect and preserve the economic and social rights of all persons involved in this cycle.

Therefore, integrating cultural industries with the economy directly affects the decision-making process regarding the legal procedures and legislation necessary to protect and develop them.

Today, with the expansion of creative production and its consequent difficulty in controlling the life chain of the cultural product, as well as the competitiveness of the market, the advancements in modern technology, the interconnection of different sectors, and the increase of jobs in cultural industries, legislators should cope with the ever-rapid changes by passing more flexible laws to protect the cultural sector. Noting that, even with achieving the legal frameworks and coverage of the cultural goods and services market, it remains difficult for some countries to keep up with the rapid changes witnessed by the labor market of cultural and creative industries. This is due to the difficulty of providing a legal medium that deals with the specific features of the cultural work (difference in working hours, intermittent periods of work, and multiplicity of jobs...).

And if we take into consideration all this information and add all the differences that exist between the countries with

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[1]   Cultural and creative clusters are the concentrations of a group of companies or economic actors specialized in certain artistic and creative sectors in the same region, taking into account the specialization or integration of the activities of all companies and actors.

[2]   David Throsby, The economics of cultural policy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

solid cultural policies and most of the Arab countries, the reality of cultural legislation, and its impact on developing cultural and creative industry in the Arab region, will easily become clear.

For many years, Algeria has been experiencing major political, economic, and social fluctuations that have directly affected the cultural sector and cultural industries. In the last three years, the cultural legislative domain has witnessed significant movements that accompanied and were influenced by the political, economic, and health crises the country has been facing.

This article attempts to address the problematic reality of the legal status of the cinema sector in Algeria, its impact on the project of building an actual industry, and its consequences on the work market and all the workers in the cinema industry.

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Algeria's cinema sector laws: the ambition to accommodate a fluctuant industry

Since Algeria's independence, Algerian cinema has been widely recognized for its quality, diversity, and professionalism, and many names of Algerian actors and directors have stood out. Although Algeria now lacks a real cinema industry due to the fragile basic infrastructure that works on funding and organizing cinema projects and establishing distribution networks.

It is hard to accurately assess and study the size or capabilities of the cinema sector in Algeria due to the scarcity of statistics and officially detailed figures. Figures for the years 2016-2017 are demonstrated in the following table, courtesy of the UNESCO Organization[3] :

Number of feature films produced									
	International production	National production	%	Documentary	%	Animation	%	Fiction (Feature)	Total
2016	3	18	57,1	12	...	...	42,9	9	21
2017	4	18	8.3	1	...	...	91,7	11	12

Number of films shown in the halls			Number of distribution companies			
	Foreign	National	Total	Foreign	Mixed	National	Total
2016	79	39	118	3	...	15	18
2017	115	73	188	6	...	23	29

Table 1: Statistics of the cinema sector in Algeria in the years 2016 and 2017

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[3] UNESCO Institute for Statistics website

On Cultural Legislations and Attempts of Change

1 Film industry between political declaration and development economic project

The analysis and study of the legislations and laws of the sector illustrate the most important phases of the Algerian cultural policy concerning the sector and its objectives since the beginning of the year 2000.

As of that year, the Algerian cultural policy went through two phases: The first phase was from 2002 to 2014. This stage focused on moving the cultural sector out of the isolation the country was in during the nineties when the cultural sector was marginalized. Re-establishing a positive image regionally and internationally was one of the objectives of this policy. And the increase in the cultural budget of that era was the best demonstration of such an inclination. The funding of the sector increased by a ratio of 387%[4] between the years 2003 and 2014, with the relevant legal texts increasing from 9 in 2002 to 76 in 2012 of which the cinema sector attained a sizable portion[5] .

Since 2000, the Algerian cultural policy went through two phases: from 2002 to 2014, and from 2015 to 2019.

The second phase started at the beginning of the year 2015 when the cultural budget declined due to the decrease in oil prices and the economic deficit that Algeria faced.

Today, most cultural sectors are in a state of substantial stagnation because of the political, economic, and health crises the country has been facing since 2019. Nevertheless, the cinema sector remained the center of attention of Algerian officials. During the period between 2014 and 2019, the Algerian government concentrated on restructuring the cinema sector aiming at founding an effective industry and restructuring its institutions, and changing its tasks to suit and conform to the new objectives, which include searching for alternative industrial and productive profitable sectors to substitute rentier ones. To achieve that goal, it moved on two fronts: the first one, the government struck various partnerships, especially with European countries, that included studies and field research and seeking means to develop cultural clusters, as well as establishing specialized cultural institutions. The second track was cultural legislation.

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[4]   Ammar Kessab, "Overview of the culture sector in Algeria", Regional (Med culture, 2015).

[5]   UIS, "Statistiques UIS".

Type of Legal Text	Number	Date of Release	Name	Main clauses
Executive Decree	236 .04	August 2004 23	Renaming and restructuring the National Center for Film and Audiovisual	
Executive Decree	227 .10	Conditions for the issuance and withdrawal of an occupational card-ID- in the field of cinema	Tasks of the National Center for Film Development	Renaming and restructuring of the Film Distribution Center 2004
Law		Cinema Sector	قطاع السينما	Control of the general rules of cinematic activity, as well as exploiting and promoting it. This is achieved by specifying the steps of practice, funding, promotion, work, and creation in the cinematic field
Executive Decree	90-12	February 2011 17	Procedure for the operation of the special account No. 014-302 called «Fund for the Development and Technologies of Filmmaking»	Rights and duties of the Ministry of Culture and institutions under its auspices
Executive Decree		February 2012 28	Controlling the mechanisms of government support for the cinema sector	Determines the method of creation, formation, management, organization, and renewal of the members of the Committee for the Reading and Assistance of the Film Sector. Also, monitoring and tracking the use of allocated aid
Executive Decree	117.13	February 2012 28	Tasks of the Algerian Agency for Cultural Radiation	Transformation of the Algerian Agency for Cultural Radiation from a government body to a national company of an industrial and commercial nature
Executive Decree	276.13	March 2013 21	Permits and passes for the cinema sector	Work in the field of cinema, screenings of cinematic works, filming permits, passes for workers in the sector, economic exploitation of cinematic products
Executive Decree		July 2013 28	Control of the Cinema Monitor Committee	
Executive Decree		July 2013 28[6]	Conditions for the issuance and withdrawal of an occupational card in the cinematic field	

Table 2: The most important legal texts for the film sector in Algeria

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[6]   After the collapse of prices, these projects experienced a significant recession.

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The legal texts [that were enacted] indicated a governmental desire to invest in the cinema sector by establishing new institutions to run and fund it. Nevertheless, if we adopt indicators of cultural policy analysis[7] , we will note that these changes are consistent with the electoral and political agenda in Algeria for that period, which explains the extensive activity in this domain.

According to film producer Yassine Bouaziz,[8] "At the beginning of the year 2000, it was reasonable to adopt a cultural policy that relies on re-disseminating a positive image of Algerian arts and culture both internally and externally, though it makes no sense to persist with the same perspective and method for thirty years. There must be a real strategy for all the cultural sectors, especially the cinematic ones that keep up with all the changes and fluctuations that the country is facing, and distance itself from the political and electoral agendas[9] ".

Such an attitude indicates in the opinion of Bouaziz that despite the strategic change announced in the second phase, the Algerian government is still seeking to improve its image and make decisions that are aligned with its political agendas without caring about the development and progress of the cinema industry.

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The development of the cinema industry in Algeria represents a real opportunity to move out of the economic crisis and find solid alternatives to oil dependency. From this perspective, the legal measures and political decisions related to integrating the cultural sector, especially the cinema sector, with development projects and companies aiming at growing and developing new industries, could be comprehended.

Nevertheless, the weakness of institutional ministerial integration and the bureaucratic red tape, in addition to other factors, hinder the development of the cinema industry in Algeria. This is confirmed by Ismail Mesbah[10] , former head of the Algerian Agency of Cinema Production for Cultural Radiation: "The first dilemma lies in that the Algerian cinema sector is still hostage to intertwining elements and factors". He further points out that much effort and energy were spent but did not achieve sought results. Simultaneously", we tried to conduct field studies to find the realistic and definite solutions, but we were instantly confronted with the indifference and stagnation of some of the bodies and influential individuals in the sector[11] ".

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[7]   Cultural policies are analyzed in an imperialist way by analyzing the rise in funding (budgets and material subsidies)

[8]   Yassine Bouaziz is an Algerian film producer and cultural activist. He founded the company Tala Film For Production in 2010. The company has produced diverse projects and contributed to the introduction of many young film directors.

[9]   Interview conducted by phone on 24 March 2021.

[10]   Ismail Mesbah studied journalism and majored in communication and art in France. After his studies, he was employed at the Algerian Agency for Cultural Radiation in charge of the cinema sector.

[11]   Interview Conducted via email on 30 March 2021.

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Many projects have been frozen, such as the rehabilitation of cinema halls and the opening of new theaters in various regions of the country, due to differences in opinion among the officials regarding whether to allow the private sector to run them.

2 The Cinema Sector Under the Crisis of the Post-2019 Era

The cinema sector in Algeria has been witnessing, since 2019, changes and fluctuations that are consistent with the previously sought goals and interact with the new political, economic, and health realities. Politically, the development of the cinema industry was incorporated in what was named: "The Action Plan of the Government to implement the President of the Republic Program". It states in the second chapter dedicated to financial reform and economic recovery the following: "the government aims to develop a real national cinema industry by investing in training all categories of working groups in the sector while benefiting from the experiences and the international expertise to provide the latest technology to the cinema workers[12] ".

Administratively, the government tried to establish new agencies specifically for this sector. In a cabinet reshuffle in January 2020, a State Secretariat for Cinematographic Industry and Cultural Production was created in the Ministry of Culture and commissioned with cinema industry and cultural production. Even with the numerous criticisms of this decision, as it was considered a mere formality incapable of addressing the depth of the problem, it should be mentioned that Youssef Soheiry, who was appointed the head of the commission has addressed, in an interview with Algerian News Agency in October 2020, sensitive issues. He talked about the inefficiency of the existing government institutions and proposed the creation of the Algerian Cinematic Center as a central institution that combines all the administrative activities of the sector and serves as a passageway to move from cinematic activities into a true cinema industry[13] .

Indeed, on 24 October 2021, a presidential decree was issued to establish the National Center for the Film Industry, a center "under the supervision of the Prime Minister". Some of its tasks are the development and enhancement of the cinema industry and audiovisual production and the contribution in their support to execute and manage the cinematic cities projects and industrial facilities specialized in audiovisual professions.

While in the post, Soheiry tried to review the legal arsenal of the cinema sector, in particular Law No. 11-303 of 17 February 2011, which stipulates the need to define the general rules of cinematic activity, exploit, and promote it by defining the steps needed to be taken in practice, funding, advertising, work, and creation in the domain of cinema. He further considered that the law is not compatible with the economic and social reality of the cinema sector in Algeria.

Workers in this field, especially the youth among them, realize the necessity of formulating laws and establishing new institutional frameworks that accommodate the needs of the cinema industry. According to Bouaziz, "such decisions designed to establish new departments and structures, as well as appointing officials and then removing them with no follow-up, specifically expresses the inexistence of a medium or long-range strategy for the cinema sector in Algeria.

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[12] République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire, "Plan d'Action du Gouvernement pour la Mise en Œuvre du Programme du Président de la République" (Présidence de la république, 16 février 2020).

[13] Industrie cinématographique: vers la création d'un "Centre algérien du cinéma", APS, 19 October 2020.

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The political or individual will is not sufficient; there must also be continuity in the projects and decisions on the one hand, and on the other hand, all the actors in the sector, including the audience, must be taken into consideration to build a true cinema industry. The best demonstration of that is the cinema industry in Nigeria (Noli Wood) that was initiated by the will of the workers and the audience, forcing the authorities to pay attention to the sector and work on its development".

This indicates that it is impossible to develop the cinema industry without integrating it into the economic cycle like all creative industries. At the same time, its artistic and cultural value and all its workers must be attended to on all levels[14] .

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Technicians in the cinema sector in Algeria: Legal marginalization compounds the fragility of their professions

Analyzing the labor market and labor force from the perspective of cultural economics leads to a distinction between creative work (artists) and technical work carried out by technicians who contribute to the cycle of the cultural product directly but without enjoying what some special legislations offer in terms of copyright and related rights. For this group, the professional option is usually studied and analyzed through personal motives, market fluctuations, and the characteristics of the cultural work[15] ... Finally, it must be mentioned that the concern of the decision makers focuses on the significance and size of the cultural industries if they existed.

The legal status of the artist in Algeria has long initiated a huge debate regarding the nature of their work, economic and social rights, freedom, and creative rights. Like in most countries, the Algerian authorities are attempting to find legal and regulatory solutions for the artists' status, for they represent the image of the national culture. In this context, the Ministry of Culture submitted on 25 March 2021 an executive draft decree to the Council of Ministers that defines the working relationship between the artists and dramatists to guarantee their social and economic rights and

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[14] From the stage of a creative idea through production to the stage of consumption.

[15] Pierre-Michel Menger, "Artistic Labor Markets and Careers", Annual Review of Sociology 25 (1999): 541-74.

differentiates between the following categories: permanent artists, intermittent artists, and circumstantial artists[16] .

But the decree did not mention the cinematic technicians' category in Algeria which has been unnoticed for decades by both the decision-makers and even the audience. The most significant indication of this negligence is the lack of any estimates or statistical research on the weight this category of workers has in the labor market[17] despite the existence of many national and international studies on the size of the cinematic and audiovisual sectors in Algeria.

There was no regulation on their legal status till the year 2013, when executive decree number 278-13 (discussed below) was issued, which implies ignoring a vital working force that eventually was listed in the so-called grey economy (undeclared or unofficial work) on the one hand, and the total absence of any economic and social protection on the other hand. All this without mentioning all the transgressions regarding work conditions, respecting employment contracts, etc.

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1 The discrepancy between the legal texts and their application

On a global scale, work in the cultural sectors and industries constitutes the biggest fraction of the free professions[18] (around 33% compared to 13% of other sectors). Such percentages form a major challenge to most decision-makers, even those of countries with established cinematic culture and creative industries, and this is due to the difficulties in regulating this type of work and integrating it into the regular professional tables. These difficulties are compounded by the global pandemic that halted most cultural activities in the world.

To understand the special and fragile nature of the technical work in the cinema industry in Algeria, some of the work characteristics of the cultural industries should be mentioned[19] :

- A work that demands mental and physical effort and a significant investment of working hours, but at the same time, relies on an economic model based on excellence, artistic quality, and other social values instead of economic objectives.

- A tendency to constant movement does not relate very well with the internal and external laws regarding permits and passes and social security and taxes regulations.

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[16] Karima Slimani, "Communiqué du Conseil des ministres".

[17] UIS, " Statistiques UIS ".UIS, "Statistiques UIS

[18] Roberta Comunian et Lauren England, "Creative and cultural work without filters: Covid-19 and exposed precarity in the creative economy", Cultural Trends 29, no 2 (14 mars 2020): 112-28.

[19] Mark Banks, The politics of cultural work (London: Palgrave Macmillian, 2007).

- A work that is more susceptible to part-time and short-term contracts and multiple jobs.

- In addition to these factors, the lack of a real cinema industry in Algeria compounds the difficulty of establishing an effective legal framework regarding this category of workers.

As we have noted earlier, there was no regulation for the status of this group until the year 2013 when executive decree number 278-13, was published on 28 July 2013[20] . This decree is considered the first legal text that counts for all the non creative workers in the cinema sector. (They directly participate in cinematic works with their technical non creative skills) It stipulates the conditions for obtaining and withdrawing a professional ID in the cinematic domain. It also commissioned the National Council of Arts and Literature to draw a list of all cultural works, including the ones in the film sector[21] .

But several voices were raised against adopting an executive decree instead of a law that could be more effective and binding. In this respect, Salim Dada[22] , former Secretary of State in charge of cultural production and former head of the National Council for Arts and Literature, explains this option in terms of efficiency and practicality. "The approval of the Council of Government, then the Council of Ministers in the presence of the President of the Republic, and finally the endorsement of Parliament in both of its chambers is needed for any law to become effective. This chain may require many years for the law to be applied on the ground. In contrast, the executive decree needs only the approval of the Prime Minister in a meeting of the Council of Ministers with no objection from the President of the Republic. Then, it would be published in the official gazette"[23] .

About the specificity of cultural work in general and art in particular, he added: "the enactment of a legal text in the context of social and occupational status of the artist, should fill some of the void taking into consideration all existing legal texts, to improve, settle, and stabilize the status of the workers in the cultural fields and recognize the artistic activity and artistic occupations".

At the same time, there are no clear mechanisms yet to implement this decree on the ground as explained by Kenza Mehadji[24] , Secretary General in Charge of Communication at the Association of Film Technicians of Algeria. She says: "the executive decree defines the relationship between the employers and their employees. Its articles also mandate the declaration of the workers by the companies and producers so that the technicians can obtain social coverage and be able to resort to the Labor Inspectorate Division in case of violation of the employment contract if there is a dispute between the two parties. However, more than 90% of the production companies do not declare their cinematic technicians to evade general income taxes, and for their part, these technicians are fearful of the decline in their income level, in case they register for social security and general income tax. In addition, the reputation of the film technicians plays a significant role in their employment, and usually, the producers avoid hiring technicians who claim their rights[25] ".

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[20] République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire, "Décret exécutif n° 13-278 fixant les modalités de délivrance et de retrait de la carte professionnelle du cinéma", 4 August 2013.

[21] Ministère de la Culture de la République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire et Conseil National des Arts et des Lettres (CNAL), " Nomenclature des Métiers Artistiques "

[22] Salim Dada is a music researcher, composer, and physician who has held numerous artistic positions. He was appointed as Secretary of State in charge of cultural production from 2 January 2020, to 24 June 2020. He was before the President of the National Council of Arts and Letters of the Algerian Ministry of Culture in 2019, as well as a researcher at the National Council for the Family and Women in 2014, responsible for regulating membership issues at the Centre for Andalusian Studies and the first composer of the Algerian National Symphony Orchestra in 2006. He is the Senior Editor of Algeria›s Quadripartite Periodic Report (2015-2020) of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

[23] Interview conducted by phone on 15 March 2021.

[24] Kenza Mehadji is an assistant director and amateur painter who has worked in many cinematographic works and contributed to the establishment of the first Algerian Association of Film Technicians where she was appointed Secretary General in charge of communication.

[25] Interview conducted by phone on 15 March 2021.

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Subscribing to the Social Security Fund and participating in the Retirement Fund is one of the greatest problems cinematic technicians of both genders face in Algeria. While the ID cards of the artist and author[26] provide benefits (membership in the Social Security Fund, subscription in the Retirement Fund, and obtaining a medical card) as stipulated in the executive decree[27] number 69-14 on 9 February 2014, and according to the signed deal between the two ministries of culture and labor in the year 2015, no similar legal or administrative measures were administered concerning the benefits that the holder of the technician ID card of the cinema get. In this regard, and based on her experience, Kenza Mehadji explains that this shortage is due to officials not understanding the nature of free labor in the cultural industries; she adds: "after the meeting of the representatives of the association with the Ministry of Culture in September 2020, we met the director of the Social Security Fund and the director of Labor Inspectorate Division to study our membership mechanisms and declarations. But the propositions presented to us did not correspond to the nature and reality of our work. For example, it was proposed that we join the free professions under the auspices of the Ministry of Labor, and were asked to establish a commercial register and to propose our services to the producers".

Both Mehadji and Dada agree that the nature of work in the cultural domain constitutes a fundamental problem as to regulation and application, for it usually leads to not declaring employment or working with no contract. For this reason, it is necessary to define, diversify, and digitize the recognition of work criteria on the one hand and work on the other to raise awareness of the workers of their rights and remind the producers of their duties.

2 Film Technicians Between Impediments and Hope of Change

Since 2019, the cultural sector in Algeria has been in a state of sturdy stagnation that was compounded by the corona pandemic. Like all workers in cultural sectors and industries in the whole world, the social and economic status of cinematic technicians in Algeria worsened due to the scarcity of shooting projects and the decrease in their work. However, many activists believe that the last political protests movement (Hirak) the country witnessed, have enabled them to step out, denounce their conditions, and claim their rights. The best illustration of that is the recent acceleration of events that enabled cinematic technicians to establish the first association of its kind in Algeria. Mehadji recounts that: "between 2017 and 2019, our activity was limited to social media, and the main objective was raising awareness by explaining the rights and duties of the various technicians. The Hirak presented an exceptional opportunity as it expanded the work scope of civil society on the one hand, and isolated the General Union of Algerian Workers on the other. Alternatively, we decided to establish an association rather than a union due to the difficulty of acquiring official accreditation and the complexity of procedures.

Between 2020 and 2021, the cinematic technicians benefited from the period of inactivity to organize meetings to exchange views and debate the legal texts, as well as read the relevant labor laws. Simultaneously we focused on the informational and organizational work to communicate with all the technicians in the country and count them as per their work sector. In September 2020, the Ministry of Culture established a special committee to review the legal texts of the sector, and it summoned many workers in the domain, excluding technicians. So we decided to publish open letters and use the media to make our voices heard, and then we transmitted the news of a gathering of technicians

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[26] The National Council for Arts and Letters was commissioned to grant the artist›s ID card while the National Agency for Copyright and Related Rights was authorized as the grantor of the author›s ID card.

[27] Specifies the percentage of participation in the Social Security Fund for this category.

in front of the ministry quarters. Subsequently, we were summoned by the minister to discuss our demands, and consequently, we were able to establish the Association of Algerian Film Technicians on 20 December 2020".

All the questioned respondents in this article believed that the greatest predicament in this domain is the nature of work itself where the work in the fields of different cultural industries demands in addition to a high-level education, practical skills, and continuous technical development to cope with the latest technological advancements, especially in the cinema industry.

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The universities in Algeria do not have specialized educational programs, and the education institutes are limited to the Audiovisual National Institute (Ouled Fayet) and the Higher Institute of Performing and Audiovisual Arts Professions. According to Mehadji, these two institutes are not sufficient for the professional formation of workers in the cinema sector, be they creative or technicians. On the other hand, working in any cultural sector requires having intellectual, cultural, and artistic knowledge, in addition to field training through fellowship and training programs.

For his part, Dada believes that the two institutes offer interesting programs, and supposedly, the Higher Institute of Performing and Audiovisual Professions offers both theoretical and applied aspects. Regarding the quality of training, he believes that it relies on the level of the teachers' and instructors' participation in the vocational practice of their students. And this represents the greatest obstacle in front of vocational training and university education in Algeria.

In conclusion, between hope and obstacles, the rise of a true Algerian cinema industry remains the ambition of all young workers, whether creative or technical. This ambition, as viewed by Dada, is shared with some officials. Mehadji adds that it is crucial to consider all the workers in the sector and recognize their abilities and potential: "there are Algerian technicians that were praised in specialized international magazines such as Youssef Ben Amer, who has invented the technology of tuning the camera that was adopted in France".

For his part, Bouaziz signifies that the only solution for the rise in the cinema sector is to open the doors for domestic and foreign investors at all levels. The movements that the cultural policy is witnessing present a positive opportunity to all workers. Moreover, field practice remains the most vital challenge, especially with the administrative and bureaucratic weight the country is suffering from. On the same issue, Mesbah stresses the necessity of recalling the cultural value of the sector, so that the profit aspect does not dominate. It is also necessary, to move away from works of bureaucratic demands related to partnerships such as reports, statistics, and the like that some foreign bodies like the European Union produce at the request of governmental Algerian bodies and that do not express the true cultural or artistic reality. As for the funding of cinematic projects, the investors should not impose or determine the themes as a condition to receive the funds in order not to limit cultural creativity and expression.

Conclusion

In December 2019, the United Nations General Assembly, at its seventy-ninth session, declared 2021 to be "the International Year of the Creative Economy for Sustainable Development" . A year after the health pandemic, the fragility of the labor sector in the cultural and creative industries became evident in many nations, which indicates a major deficiency in cultural legislation.

Addressing the issues of cultural laws in the Arab region is considered a major challenge to researchers and those who are concerned about the cultural affairs. In addition to the circulating issues currently being discussed such as the freedom of speech and the status of the artist, some issues were routinely ignored by the Arab legislators, especially the labor market of the cultural industries.

Algeria represents an expressive case study of this situation, where the authorities have been trying for many years to develop a cinema industry for various purposes. To realize that, they built a significant legal arsenal but they were not aware of some of the field specificities such as the exceptional situation of the workers in the sector.

It should also be mentioned that the absence of statistics related to the economic size of the cinema sector and the number of its workers, demonstrates a lack of comprehension of the different dimensions of the cinema industry that negatively affects specifically the social and economic status of the workers in this sector.

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Recent movements and changes in Algeria have demonstrated in this regard that the enactment of a legal basis in different cultural domains is not sufficient to draw a true and effective cultural policy if its implementation mechanisms are not regulated. Additionally, it is a necessity to cope with the swift changes the country and the world is witnessing, such as the emergence of a new generation of workers who are trying to get rid of the dependence on the sector to the political will, whether through financing, funding, or even care, as well as the use of modern technology to create new creative spaces.

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ABOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE DIGITIZATION EXPERIENCE

Your Stories from Home to Home: "Taking the Improvisational Theater to the Digital Space"

Nelly Abboud

During the 17th of October uprising (2019) in Lebanon, 33 cultural institutions closed for two weeks in support of the demands of nationwide anti-government demonstrations which witnessed wide participation of some cultural institutions in Beirut[1] .

As soon as these institutions reopened, the corona pandemic strongly hit the country. This drove the government to announce a health emergency, imposing either total or partial lockdown which all the cultural institutions abided by. This shutdown was followed by another compulsory one, which was imposed by the economic crisis and the devastating explosion of the Beirut port on the fourth of August 2020[2].

As a result, these cultural institutions remained closed either totally or partially for around a year and a half. And when the quarantine period ended last month in March, life began to gradually return to them but slowly and discontinuously.

Similar to other worldwide cultural organizations, the institutions in Lebanon tried to move their activities to the digital space. Although this move was not easy, virtual initiatives that included concerts, musical festivals, and film shows were organized. Besides, some museums digitized their collections while others started posting them on online platforms to become accessible to all. There were also many previously recorded plays like the Catharsis show by the actress, the director, and the psychodrama therapist, Zeina Dakkash, in addition to other shows by the actors Osama Hallal and Nada Abou Farhat. All of these tried to bring theatrical culture to wider audiences during the crisis. Likewise, the Istanbouli theater presented several online activities. The actress and producer Josianne Boulos presented online shows to collect funds for the theaters that were damaged due to the fourth of August blast.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, cultural organizations in Lebanon tried to move their activities to the digital space, though this move was not easy.

Only Laban theater, through its troupe Laban - Wasl[3] did succeed in presenting their live interactive performances on an online platform to a greater number of people. Therefore, we talked to the Laban theater team to try to know about their work and at the same time to cast light on their uniqueness as well as the challenges they met. This would

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[1] Statement on open strike in the cultural sector in Lebanon, Sursock Museum, 25 October 2019.

[2] Rebecca Anne Proctor, Huge explosion in Beirut decimates the city and leaves art scene in disarray, the Art Newspaper, 5 August 2020.

[3] Laban - Wasl Facebook page

About the Covid-19 Pandemic and the Digitization Experience

serve as a case study that allows us to understand the reality of online structures in Lebanon that are related to the cultural sector; it could also help in evaluating the current situation to find ways that could strengthen online cultural performances.

Who is Laban Group?

Laban started its activities as a theatrical group using improvisational theater as a means to present its entertaining shows. Rapidly, its members formed a kind of homogeneous group that used the techniques of listening and accepting different opinions to present an interactive experimental show. Now, Laban stages its performances on the roof of Zico House which is a cultural center that organizes and hosts different art shows. The theater is a kind of black room that contains a stage, a hall for the audience equipped with sound (audio) systems, and several other different show equipment.

Laban group became a registered organization in 2010 with the main goal to provide a safe space for expression and to empower the local community by spreading improvisational theater, through its various tools, shows, and rehearsals.

The theater shows are spontaneous to which the people are invited to share their stories. These stories are then performed on stage by the Laban actors. Sometimes the audience is asked to join and play their roles on stage. Therefore, Laban offers a peaceful and safe space of expression that facilitates emotional discharge, elevates the level of compassion, and enables a culture of dialogue among all community members. In fact, Laban enables communication among all the societal components through tracks of expression, solidarity, and reconciliation. Besides, it provides them with skills to solve previous and current problems and conflicts and also avoid future ones. This atmosphere helps create a conscious and mindful society that takes into consideration all social issues and that is active and interactive in the struggle against tyrant regimes that work on triggering differences and creating rifts among the people to keep them under their dominance.

Laban consists of 26 members of different ages and diverse social backgrounds. These members attend several intensive and ongoing training sessions in improvisational theater as well as the theater of reenactment, conflict resolution, and all kinds of civil and social work. They also attend educational sessions, in addition to acquiring the techniques of employing all these skills in supporting different social and political causes.

The Corona Crisis and the Shift to the Digital Platform

Despite the difficult circumstances, Laban theater had continued its shows for eight years, before the coronavirus outbreak forced the theater in March 2020 to freeze its in-person shows. Later, the group realized that this break might take some time. So, they started looking for digital alternatives to ensure their continuity and to maintain their safe space amid these challenges.

In the course of this blended experimentation, the actors invite the audience, both online and in person, to participate and share their thoughts by allowing the camera and the microphones to transmit live video and audio so that the online audience would follow the show that has the same quality as the one in person.

The shift towards the virtual platform started gradually as an experimental project over several phases: First, the troupe held zoom listening sessions and collected people's stories. Second, the actors converted these stories into theatrical scenes that were video recorded. Finally, the footage was sent to the participating audience.

After the success of this experiment, the show was further developed and it acquired its own technical steps starting from the production of the performance tools that could clearly convey the message to the audience to the development of the forms of the performance that could maintain its way of expression, and which fits with the virtual space. This hard work was done in the presence of the actors, each in their own place.

Later on, in a more advanced technical step, there was a total shift towards online live performance under the general title "your stories from home to home". It demonstrated a new and different form of theater that required the actors to meet in one place (Laban studio most often) while the audience was following live on the digital platform. This step was the closest to the live performance. Furthermore, there was also hybrid experimentation (in-person and online) when the lockdown was lifted. It meant that some of the audience would attend in person with the actors in the same working space, while another part would be joining live online. In the course of this blended experimentation, the actors invite the audience, both online and in person, to participate and share their thoughts by allowing the camera and the microphones to transmit live video and audio so that the online audience would follow the show that has the same quality as the one in person.

Added Value and Challenges

As for the Laban team, the experiment was more than satisfactory. The digital world opened new doors to an audience outside Lebanon which consisted of Lebanese immigrants, and Arabs in addition to foreign audiences since the troupe performed several shows in foreign languages during worldwide events. Besides, the team considered that this experimentation maintained the relationship with their regular audience. Most importantly, online shows allow them to reach new audiences in different remote regions outside Beirut, as well as the audience who were unable to attend in person due to security or social reasons.

When we asked about the challenges that faced the troupe while preparing and presenting these forms of online shows, the answers focused on two kinds of problems, technical and artistic. As to the technical problems, the constant poor connection and continuous power outages affected the rhythm of the show, which made it slow and boring to some of the attendees. In addition, the financial challenges made it difficult to acquire sophisticated sound and picture equipment that could provide good quality shows.

Other problems appeared mainly in the coherence and the smoothness of the show. This was the responsibility of the facilitator who was supposed to follow up on the technical details and at the same time communicate with the audience, both online and in the theater, to guarantee the success of the show. It was a complicated issue that required a large set of skills.

Other challenges appeared in the audience's inability to deal with digital platforms used by the theater team like Zoom during virtual meetings. However, the Laban troupe gave training sessions and technical support to the audience to enable them to use digital platforms so that they could easily attend the shows and benefit at the same time from this experience to use them later in other different contexts. Furthermore, the biggest challenge that faced the troupe was protecting the privacy of the attendees, avoiding any kind of embarrassment for those who prefer not to appear on camera or talk in the presence of strangers.

The audience interaction with these shows varied also depending on the time period and the economic and security circumstances of the attendees, in addition to the instability in the power network. The theater team noticed that people rushed toward the platform to express their emotions, especially after the catastrophic blast of the fourth of August. But later, they detached themselves from the platform during the total lockdown of the country, because they got bored and tired from working and studying online, and it was so exhausting for them to spend extra time on the computer even if it was for entertaining theatrical shows.

A lot of people who attended the shows - that exceeded 50 - talked about how easy it was to express themselves online, especially for introverts, or when they discussed very sensitive topics such as the stories that deal with security and gender issues, or stories of the survivors of violence or discrimination. However, the interaction during the in person shows was greater with the actors and the musicians performances, because the audience can better sense the energy or the body language.

Nour Wardani, a member of the Laban team, said that developing online shows starts not only from the determination of the team to perform them despite all the various challenges but also from insisting on the participation of those who were distant after the reopening of the country when the pandemic came to an end. In addition, Wardani highlighted

the importance of providing online protection and security and of protecting the privacy of the participants in the hope that Laban theater could be the place for the most marginalized groups.

The team's shows give the participants a wide space of freedom of expression through which they discuss various political and social issues in total candidness without any kind of censorship. Up to now, the Laban troupe has not been exposed to any kind of harassment or any attempts of repression from any governmental or religious side against any of its shows whether virtual or in person.

The Laban troupe however, has not been given any support from any governmental agency to continue with its online shows, and the group does not collaborate with any official side. To clarify, Wardani said, "the state adopts the principle of favoritism, and we are in a constant confrontation of this oppressive power, and we certainly refuse any conditional support or funding at any cost". Besides, the group does not get any financial returns for their online shows because they consider their work a mission to help the participants express freely their opinions, fears, and concerns during their difficult times.

The group continued their online shows; they technically developed and blended them with the in-person shows based on the development of the coronavirus outbreak.

Currently, with the lifting of the curfew and shutdown in Lebanon, the crew resumed its in-person activity in its theater in Beirut and stopped its online shows since people are no longer asking for them.

Conclusion

It is too early to talk about the impact of the corona pandemic on the cultural sector in Lebanon, since the reopening of the country and its cultural institutions started just a few months ago but in a timid, intermittent way due to the economic crisis that is storming the country.

Since the cultural sector is globally suffering from one of its biggest economic crises that threaten its existence, continuity, role, significance, and connection with its social fabric, the importance of such initiatives, regardless of their differences and diversity, lies in making the varying tools available to all social groups as well as in democratizing the diverse cultural shows. They also contribute to maintaining communication with the audience through insisting on presenting (on stage) any kind of activities even if they are simple and experimental such as Laban shows. Such cultural shows aim to emphasize the role of culture in strengthening and improving emotional and mental health; they also aim to help the people overcome their crises and work on building a better and stronger future.

The Development of the Animation Industry in the Arab Region: Algeria and Saudi Arabia as Examples

Meriem Mehadj

Since its inception, the animation industry has been linked with the cinema industry, both in development and technical modernization. The invention of the single shot camera was the first step for what is called animation films. This was followed by the synchronization between sound and image in addition to other techniques used in a broader range of the cinema domain.

The work of the animators was also influenced by the technical transformations the domain witnessed. In the early days of animation, images were drawn on paper and then on transparent paper (celluloid). Afterward, this domain rapidly transformed into a real industry because of the necessity for sequential work and the deployment of large teams of animators. After the scope of computer use had expanded at the beginning of the nineties of the last century, this domain witnessed a great technological leap that enabled producers to reduce the number of teams. Ultimately, this changed the nature of work in this field, which was no longer restricted to creative workers but required extensive technical skills that led to the development of other creative industries such as video games and special effects (VFX).

The animation industry surfaced in the United States in the 2000s in the city of New York due to the existence of a comics industry complex, which made many animators switch to the cartoon sector after the spread of its initial cartoon works. Then, after the establishment of Disney Studios in Hollywood, the first industrial complex for animated films was created, and this model rapidly spread to several regions and countries such as Japan, Europe, and Post-Soviet states[1] . Eventually, the domain evolved and became very popular with the spread of televisions and the creation of special programs for children, as well as the increased number of TV channels thanks to satellites, and lastly, the advent of the Internet and on-demand programs.

Even with the early appearances of animated films in Egypt with the Frenkel brothers in1930 and 1940, and the Mohib brothers in 1940,[2] animated pictures were not transformed into a creative industry because of the neglect and insufficient support of the authorities as well as its limitation to children's programs and the lack of skills and professionalism in this domain. Nevertheless, thanks to technological advancements, the animated pictures industry moved out of the scope of special programs for children, the traditional production networks, and government support. They also provided more freedom of expression and creativity.

Economic specialists believe that animated pictures, special effects, and video games have enormous potential in the Arab region to become an instigator of growth[3] due to the globalization effect and the spread of technology that enable the transfer of experience and information, Because, on the one hand, the number of Arab companies specializing in animation, special effects, and video games increased, and on the other hand, the new generation of

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[1] Hyejin Yoon M.A, "The animation industry: Technological changes, production challenges, and global shifts" (Doctorate of Philosophy, Ohio, The Ohio State University, 2008).

[2] Tariq Alrimawi, "Challenges Facing the Arab Animation Cinema", in Encyclopedia of Computer Graphics and Games, edited by Newton Lee (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2015), 1-7.

[3] Research and Markets, "The Middle East and Arab Animation, VFX & Video Games Market Report 2021 ", GlobeNewswire NewsRoom, 20 January 2021.

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animators seeks to produce new creative contents that shed light on their cultures, societies, heritage, and language etc.

This article focuses on two different regions of the Arab region, the Gulf and Maghreb regions, to highlight the Algerian and Saudi experiences because both have two different histories and two paths for the animation industry. We will build on these paths to approach the sector based on the factors affecting its development and the obstacles facing its most important actors.

This article focuses on two different regions of the Arab region, the Gulf and Maghreb regions, to highlight the Algerian and Saudi experiences because both have two different histories and two paths for the animation industry. We will build on these paths to approach the sector based on the factors affecting its development and the obstacles facing its most important actors.

The Effect of Globalization and Technology on the Animation Industry in the Arabian Gulf and the Maghreb Region

Animated pictures enjoyed special treatment after the establishment of national television channels and the spread of televisions in Arab homes even though they had few hours of airtime and had a limited audience most of which were dedicated to children. Their production and distribution also required the resort to regional and global networks that have had a distinguished influence on new generations of animators and producers in this field.

1 The Dominance of Foreign Animated Pictures and the Return to Local Cultural Particularity

Contrary to other cultural industries, especially cinema and television, local production of animated films is almost nonexistent in comparison to imported international production.

From the seventies to the beginning of the millennium (the period when television dominated the entertainment and cultural consumption), Arab states imported animated pictures at a high rate from countries that had a sophisticated animation industry. American, Japanese, and European cartoon series were widespread in the Arab region from the Maghreb to the Arabian Gulf, where they were dubbed in studios in Amman, Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo and distributed in all Arab states.

Often, Arab officials and producers have attributed the absence of local animated pictures on Arab television screens to the scarcity of works and their bad quality as well as the high costs of their production. Although some animators and artists have been interested in the animated pictures sector, especially in Maghreb countries such as Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco[4] . Since independence, the limitation of this domain to children programs has frustrated them and consequently, most of them switched to other domains.

Contrary to other cultural industries, especially cinema and television, local production of animated films is almost nonexistent in comparison to imported international production.

The cultural globalization the world witnessed in the early 2000s, and the diversity of media and communication mediums, as well as mainstreaming the use of technology affected the nature of cultural products consumption, including animated films. For example, with the spread of Arab satellites, kids channels were established to broadcast programs dedicated only to children (mostly Gulf productions including Al Jazeera for Children, Ajyal, MBC 3, and Spacetoon). On the one hand, these channels have been widely popular in the Arab region[5] , prompting producers and officials to show interest in this field. On the other hand, the consequences of globalization, especially the dominance

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[4] Animation in the Middle East: Practice and Aesthetics from Baghdad to Casablanca, edited by Stefanie Van de Peer, Tauris World Cinema Series (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2017).

[5] قنوات الأطفال العربية تغزو نايل سات وعرب سات والإعلام الرسمي "مطنش"، اليوم السابع، 2 شباط/فبراير 2013.

of Western culture, led the Arab cultural and artistic circles to start asking questions about the values and stereotypes of the region and the Arab personalities broadcasted by foreign cartoons[6] . Ultimately, this led to the emergence of a new movement among the activists of the sector. Some animators and producers from the Gulf countries specialized in stories adapted from the Qur'an (such as the stories of the prophets), Arabic literature, or Islamic history[7] , and these works were broadcasted on Television channels dedicated to children or on mainstream channels during the month of Ramadan.

2 The Impact of Technology and the Internet on the Works of the Animators of the Region

The wide use of technology and the internet led to a true revolution in the animated pictures industry. Like other cultural industries, the economic production chain has evolved by reducing costly phases and expanding the audience.

Today, social media, blogs, online forums, as well as online video platforms represent unprecedented creative expression spaces.

The Algerian animator Khaled Shihab[8] confirms that: "In the beginning, the domain was very limited in terms of creativity and expression; the use of paper or transparent paper did not leave the animator any room for error, and this may cost him time and money. The deployment of Computer-Generated Imagery and softwares and the development of various technologies such as three-dimensional and augmented reality have created dynamic changes in sketches and simplified work, which inevitably reduced work and expenses. In addition to gaining time, one person is now able to do the work of an entire team"[9] .

Saudi animator Malik Najer[10] elaborates: "Technology influenced all stages of production in the animation industry. It increased the efficiency of production and facilitated its work. So what used to cost 10,000 dollars in the nineties now costs approximately half as much. Even though it is a fact that technology and the use of computers helped develop and distribute this art. But, in my opinion, it did not decrease team numbers, rather it gave an opportunity for small teams and creators with limited resources to produce their work. Furthermore, the internet has helped them disseminate their sketches and spread them outside the circles of traditional networks like cinema and television"[11] .

Shihab believes that technology, especially the Internet, helped many animators in countries that don't have animation industries develop their skills and exchange experiences. "I didn't know before what the quality of my work was, because there were no standards in Algeria or abroad that would enable me to scale and compare my sketches with other works. Blogs and social media have facilitated creating communities specializing in art criticism and training as

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[6] One of the most prominent examples is Disney movies (among them is Aladdin) which has sparked widespread controversy over the broadcast of stereotypes sometimes described as racist and Orientalist.

[7] Omar Adam SAYFO, "Local Minds, Foreign Hands: Animation in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf", in Animation in the Middle East: Practice and Aesthetics from Baghdad to Casablanca, edited by Stefanie VAN DE PEER (London: I.B.Tauris, 2017).

[8] Khaled Shihab (Vynom) One of the most important animators in Algeria. He is a graduate of the School of Fine Arts in Algiers. His graduation project (short animated film) received the Audience Award at the International Festival of Animation Cinema in Meknes in 2008. He is the technical director of Declic specialized in post-production and graphic design. He is also the director of the First Feature Cartoon Film "Fifth" which is being produced locally (under production). He also participated in the festival DjazAnim for animated films as a workshop presenter in the year 2016.

[9] A phone interview conducted on 17 June 2021.

[10] Malik Najer is a Saudi illustrator, director, and animator of the short cartoon series "Screws" which is considered the first Saudi experience in this domain. It was very popular after it was broadcasted on YouTube channel for the year 2011.

[11] A telephone interview conducted on 28 June 2021.

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well as the exchange of experiences. This led to creating positive competitiveness that provides animators with an opportunity to improve and develop their work on the one hand, and to learn about the latest technologies used and the creative works in the world on the other[12] ".

Computer-generated Imagery paved the way to new creative fields such as video gaming, special visual effects, which became commonly used in other areas, such as advertising and cinema. Such opportunities led to a change in the nature of the animators' work by enabling them to reduce their work vulnerability, especially economically[13] . It should be mentioned that this type of change usually occurs in the field of advertising because of the utter weakness or total absence of the film and video game industries in the region. The video game industry represents an attractive domain for many animators and in Shehab's opinion, it "represents the most sophisticated form of expression thanks to its interactive aspect that turns the audience into a key player in the story. It also combines technology and creativity by creating a narrative design that provides information to players and narrates a story at the same time". This interest in video games was not limited to creators and producers such as Mohammed Saeed Hareb, producer of the Emirati animated series Al-Freej, who has been working in his company since 2020 on creating a smartphone video game based on his series; video gaming has also become a target for investment for Saudi officials. The Saudi Public Investment Fund invested at least 3 billion dollars in three American video game companies by the year 2021[14] .

Finally, the work of professional and amateur animators has been impacted by this electronic revolution, opening the spaces of expression for many young people in the region, in terms of themes, techniques, and publishing and distribution strategies. A comparison of animation production in the Gulf and the Maghreb countries demonstrates that there are two different schools for the animation industry in the region. One school aims to spread through participation in regional and global festivals, and the other school aims to disseminate on a large scale across TV channels and modern broadcasting platforms.

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[12] Khaled Shehab, phone interview conducted on 17 June 2021.

[13] "Mohammed Saeed Harib Joins Dubai Studio City Reel Talks", Dubai Media City, 2021.

[14] السعودية تستثمر المليارات في صناعة ألعاب الفيديو، البوابة العربية للأخبار التقنية، 21 شباط/فبراير 2021.

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The Impact of Trends and Changes on the Animated Pictures Industry in the Gulf and Maghreb Regions

1 Webanim and the Spread of Satirical Animated Pictures

In parallel with all the developments witnessed by the animated pictures industry, the internet, and social media led to the emergence of a new genre of animated films, Webanim, which has given film and series makers a field to test their work using audience interaction and broadcasting it on a wide scale.

As for the Maghreb region, the Arab revolutions provided a real laboratory for the dissemination of satirical animations on a wide scale. Although such work has already existed in Tunisia since the sixties, in which symbolism, metaphor, and similes have often been used to criticize the political and social situation in the country, the post-2011 period witnessed an important rise in the so-called cartoons of the Arab revolution[15] that were initially published on the internet and gained enormous popularity. This prompted officials and specialists to show interest in this field through the organization of festivals (the Maghreb Animation Festival Tahrik 2014, for example) and the allocation of special meetings in film festivals such as the International Carthage Festival (2014) as well as the thirteenth edition of 2019 Hergla Film Festival dedicated to animation cinema in Tunisia.

On a smaller scale and despite the small scope of Webanim, Libya witnessed the same phenomenon with young people from the city of Misrata turning to satirical cartoons to recount their reality and criticize their society through the series Ambiance Spot (2013-2011) which was circulated online and on social media[16] .

Algeria did not witness the same movement despite the spread of satirical caricatures in magazines and newspapers and the presence of animators specialized in this domain. The only exception is the work of caricaturist Nime BD[17] , who has produced a series of short animated films in the form of satirical advertisements that address the reality and aspirations of Algerian youth, which were posted on Facebook in 2021.

Gulf nations have been witnessing substantial growth in the production of local television animated pictures such as the Emirati series Al-Freej, the Kuwaiti Diary of Bu Qatada and Bu Nabeel, the Omani Day and Day as well as the Saudi Menahi's Diary and others. It is worth mentioning that these children-oriented series have enjoyed success at the local level because, contrary to imported animations, their characters and stories are depicted from the Gulf society and resort to the popular language used by young people and children in the region[18] .

Recently, the broadcasting and communication platforms have become worthy competitors for TV channels with the emergence of cartoon artworks that scored records in the number of followers and viewers, such as the Saudi satirical series Masameer, which gained huge viewership on its YouTube channel, both regionally and locally. This success has

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[15] Maya Ben Ayed, "Le cinéma d'animation tunisien : des pionniers à la génération 2.0", s. d., 10.

[16] Van de Pehe, Stefanie, Animation in the Middle East, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017.

[17] Facebook Page of Nime BD

[18] Omar Adam SAYFO, "Local Minds, Foreign Hands: Animation in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf", in Animation in the Middle East: Practice and Aesthetics from Baghdad to Casablanca, edited by Stefanie VAN DE PEER (London: I.B.Tauris, 2017).

enabled the production company Myrkott[19] to expand its activities in this domain by producing a feature film for Masameer distributed in Saudi cinemas, as well as signing a contract with Netflix to show Masameer and producing a new series "Ya'rub" in the year 2021.

Najer said that even if Webanim is an important and attractive first step for the freedom it provides and the low cost of broadcasting and publishing, it nonetheless has a certain ceiling. The technological advancements and the rapid transformation of public consumption habits in terms of entertainment programs, urge the producers to seek new means that offer them the same freedom and realize a successful action plan.

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2 Characteristics and Obstacles of Animated Pictures Production in Algeria and Saudi Arabia

This progress enabled the animated industry to expand beyond the scope of children's programs, traditional networks of production, and government support. It gave it more freedom of expression and creativity in both the Gulf and Maghreb regions. At the same time, there are significant differences between the two regions in terms of the type of work and broadcast strategy.

In the Maghreb countries, there is a special focus on short films that give producers and animators an opportunity to gain rapid exposure and fame. Like the film industry, the animated film industry consists of many fields, and the format of works varies from short films, to feature films, and series. As per animator and producer Khaled Shihab, "feature (long film) works are rare in the region, and this is because short, animated pictures enhance the experience, cost less, and require a shorter time to produce. But at the same time, they are not common, for their broadcasts are usually limited to specialized festivals and some television programs. On the other hand, feature films enjoy more popularity and provide producers with a wider space to develop their stories and characters. This was the case with the film Fifth where the complexity of the script and the characters impelled the feature film formation despite the high degree of difficulty of funding such types of projects in Algeria".

Cartoon makers in the Gulf, on their behalf, focus on comedy sitcoms, because they are easy to produce and because of the influence this type of animated picture, which is widely common in the United States in particular, has on producers and audiences[20] .

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[19] Myrkott's official website

[20] Ibid

As for the Saudi experience, Najer said that "the absence of cinemas and theaters in Saudi Arabia for a long time provided a big opportunity for the existence of television, which has become an essential component for the consumption of entertainment programs. This led most producers to turn to this formula. In addition, it is easier in terms of selling and marketing and has been more popular on streaming platforms. We can honestly declare that the participation of Saudi animated film producers in festivals is almost zero, and this is due to the lack of an actual industry and the scarcity of animated pictures' festivals compared to live shooting".

In the Maghreb countries, there is a special focus on short films that give producers and animators an opportunity to gain rapid exposure and fame. However cartoon makers in the Gulf, focus on comedy sitcoms, because they are easy to produce and because of the influence this type of animated picture, which is widely common in the United States in particular, has on producers and audiences.

From these two statements, we conclude that there are two distinct and different paths in choosing the type of work as well as its production and streaming. In the Gulf, for instance, there is a desire for marketing through TV channels or various platforms, while for the Maghreb nations the main goal of the production is still the participation in international and regional festivals. Both Khaled Chehab and Malik Najer justified this situation by the influence of European culture and French in particular on artistic and cultural works in the region since the colonial era.

This is evident through the participation of the Maghreb animators in European Festivals such as the Annecy International Animation Film Festival or the funding given by European or French institutions (such as the French Institute) of this type of projects, as well as their support for regional festivals such as The International Animation Film Festival of Meknes (FICAM).

Therefore, the lack of an actual industry in the domain of animated picture production is the main common element in the Gulf and Maghreb regions. In the absence of industrial complexes with specialized companies or sound and sound effects studios, the production budget increases because of resorting to foreign expertise. Shihab talks about his experience to emphasize that "many times we focus on animation, and we forget about sound. Even if the impact of this situation is minor for advertising works that most production companies do, it is (the sound) of high significance for artistic and creative works. The lack of specialized musicians and sound engineers drives producers to resort to foreign companies. Such was the situation with the characters' voices in Fifth; the choice of classical Arabic led us to resort to actors from another country and similarly with music. At the same time, this situation has provided us with an opportunity to use voices that are familiar to the Arab audience[21] ".

[21] Tariq Al-Arabi›s and his daughters› voices were used in the movie "Fifth", and he is one of the most famous Dubbers of the Cartoon series that used to be broadcasted in the nineties in most Arab countries.

For its part, the Masameer team used the voices of animators to perform multiple characters as well as simplified sketches to facilitate the synchronization of image and sound to reduce production costs.

the lack of an actual industry in the domain of animated picture production is the main common element in the Gulf and Maghreb regions. In the absence of industrial complexes with specialized companies or sound and sound effects studios, the production budget increases because of resorting to foreign expertise.

Finally, and contrary to other creative and cultural industries, the international health pandemic did not have a negative impact on the animation industry in the two regions due to the technology on one hand, and the habit of producers and animators of working independently on the other hand. Shihab said that: "Coronavirus and the Hirak movement in Algeria halted the side works that the team was performing, which forced us to focus further on the Fifth project, and also the spread of computers and softwares use, facilitated work at home during the quarantine period".

"The animation industry is simple and inexpensive compared to cinematography which requires the use of large teams, actors, and live filming sites. This has positively impacted cartoon projects, for many platforms have been interrupted by the suspension of live filming due to the pandemic and focused their investment on this kind of project", added Najer.

Contrary to other creative and cultural industries, the international health pandemic did not have a negative impact on the animation industry in the two regions due to the technology on one hand, and the habit of producers and animators of working independently on the other hand.

Conclusion

In 2020, the global market of animated pictures, special effects, and video games was estimated at 261 billion Dollars, and the rate of growth was projected to be two to three folds annually. The rapid technological developments have facilitated the phases of work and reduced production expenses while enlarging the audience, which has made the manufacture of cartoons, special effects, and video games one of the most growing and competitive sectors in the creative industries market during the last two years[22] .

The spread of technology and social media as well as broadcasting platforms encouraged a new generation of creators to invest and enter the field of animated cartoons, which has always been marginalized by decision-makers and cultural activists. However, in the absence of accurate statistics and studies, it is currently hard to estimate the size of this sector and its impact on the growth of cultural and creative industries in the region.

The Arab region has a small number of animated picture studios and industrial complexes of its own, with an increasing number of medium and small production companies. These companies were able to create products that reflect the reality of the region and align with its values and the taste of the public. Despite successful experiences, most workers in this field still suffer from a lack of support in the production and the distribution of their works, which makes them resort to working in advertising as well, at the expense of the time allocated to their artworks.

Despite its rise, the animation industry still requires government support and more attention from cultural policies on the creativity front, by creating opportunities for education and training, and legal protection for the author's copyright. The strong economic nature of this field cannot be ignored, as production companies and independent animators are in dire need of access to global distribution networks to create a real industry and sustain their artistic and creative works.

The animation industry still requires government support and more attention from cultural policies on the creativity front, by creating opportunities for education and training, and legal protection for the author's copyright. The strong economic nature of this field cannot be ignored, as production companies and independent animators are in dire need of access to global distribution networks to create a real industry and sustain their artistic and creative works.

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[22] Research and Markets ltd, "Global Animation, VFX & Video Games: Strategies, Trends & Opportunities (2021-25)", January 2021.

RESEARCHERS' BIOGRAPHIES

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR

HABIBA LALOUI

A writer and a researcher from Algeria, she holds a doctorate and a habilitation degree in speech analysis and currently works as a lecturer at the Algiers II University. She worked for 10 years in the Scientific and Technical Research Center for the Development of the Arabic Language. She is a member of the Semiotic Translations Laboratory and is responsible for the Al-Lisaniyat Journal. Before that, she worked as a cultural journalist and wrote for several Algerian and Arabic publications. Today, she continues to publish critical and creative writing pieces.

In 2009, she founded the Dialogue on Algerian Culture network for independent and young cultural activists and in 2011 she was elected as the North Africa representative for the U40 Africa network for young cultural activists under 40. During the same year, she founded, in collaboration with other cultural actors, the National Task Force for Cultural Policy in Algeria which worked on developing a cultural policy for Algeria and on establishing the role of civil society in driving the cultural sector in Algeria. She was chosen in 2012 to become a general assembly member of Cultural Resource and in 2016 she joined its artistic board and was appointed as its vice president in 2022.

Her first poetry anthology: "Bitter Coffee...Sips After Mid-Sorrow" was published in 2011 by the Lebanese publishing house Al-Farabi, and her first stories anthology: "Three Women and Four Men... Travel Stories" was published in 2017 by the Jordanian publishing house Fadaat. She also regularly publishes scientific articles related to her fields of specialization.

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AMIRA ELSEBAAI - EGYPT

Amira Elsebaai is a cultural manager and an Egyptian researcher. She worked as a cultural coordinator and manager in many cultural and artistic associations in Egypt for 13 years and is currently the director of the Al Darb Al Ahmar Arts School and a lecturer in the cultural development diploma program at Cairo University. She holds a master's degree in public policy and development economics, and her research work focuses on job and social security for workers in creative industries, and on the economics of culture.

HOSAM ATHANI - LIBYA

Hosam Athani is a Libyan writer and a researcher in the cultural field. He received a master's degree in cultural policy and cultural management from the Hassan II university in Morocco in 2022, and a master's degree in DNA profiling from Huddersfield university, England, and a bachelor's degree in animal science from Benghazi university (Qar Yunis), Libya 2007. He is a founding member of the Tanarout Organization for Libyan creativity, and was previously its executive director (from November 2015 until November 2017). He founded the Libyan Laboratory for cultural policies in 2021 and is the editor in chief of the magazine "Al Ghorfa 211 " (room 211).

FIRAS FARRAH - PALESTINE

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MERIEM MEHADJI - ALGERIA

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Nelly Abboud is a cultural mediator and a researcher in museum science and archeology. She worked in several Lebanese museums in the education and visitors services as well as in museum management. She is a founding member and the director of MuseoLab which provides experimental training workshops that aim to raise awareness on the importance of safeguarding and preserving tangible and intangible heritage. She has many publications in scientific journals and specialized books and currently works on editing and coordinating a podcast for the scientific journal American Anthropologist.

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