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*MASTER'S THESIS*

**Bottom-up Approach in International Cultural Relations:  
A case Study**

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## **Abstract**

In today's globalized world, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue have become important. International cultural relations, implemented by international organizations aim to increase cultural awareness among national audiences. One approach to achieve that is the bottom-up approach, that involves local communities and individuals in promoting cultural exchange, empowering them to share their culture and fostering a more inclusive and diverse cultural landscape.

This research utilizes qualitative methods to investigate the effectiveness of the bottom-up approach, focusing on the Street Carnival project as an example of how it can promote cultural diversity and understanding. The results of this research prove that the bottom-up approach encourages personal understanding, empathy, and breaks stereotypes and prejudices through projects like Street Carnival. It plays a crucial role in international cultural relations by promoting diversity and dialogue, empowering individuals, and building bridges between nations for a more peaceful world.

*Keywords: international cultural relations, international organizations, cultural policy, cultural democracy, European Union, bottom-up, freedom of artistic expression, cultural diversity, Egypt.*

*Mohab Saber Masoud*

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## **1- Introduction**

The purpose of this research is to examine the role of a bottom-up approach in international cultural relations (ICR) as implemented by international organizations, such as the European Union. The research investigates how this approach can draw attention to cultural diversity for national audiences. This is achieved by showcasing the work of international organizations in Egypt, with a focus on the Street Carnival project as a case study. Specifically, the research will analyze how this project contributes to promoting cultural diversity and fostering intercultural dialogue.

Supranational organizations, such as the European Union and The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) aim to promote mutual understanding between nations through International cultural relations. While these organizations typically work with governments, some instruments also support civil society organizations. These instruments aim to enhance international cultural relations and promote intercultural dialogue between countries. Furthermore, some instruments advocate for a bottom-up approach to influencing internal cultural policies, believing in its role in promoting social cohesion, cultural diversity, and democracy.

Both UNESCO and the European Union have a long history of collaborating with the Egyptian government. UNESCO primarily cooperates formally with the Egyptian authority, promoting multilateral relations through the UNESCO Office in Cairo, which was established in 1947 (State Information Service. (n.d.). This office serves 17 Arab countries and contributes to the promotion of a culture of peace and security in the world by promoting intellectual cooperation among nations. According to the Egyptian State Information Service, UNESCO provided support for the establishment of the Center for Nubian Studies in Aswan and the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization in Cairo. Additionally, UNESCO has contributed to the revival of the Library of Alexandria (Ibid).

The European Union utilizes multiple instruments, including providing cross-border collaboration funding through the European Union Delegation to Egypt. One example is a three-year EU-funded project with a grant of 3 million euros, designed to promote cooperation between Egyptian scholars and their peers from five European museums in Turin, London, Berlin, Paris, and Leiden (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, n.d.). Furthermore, the EU supports grassroots independent cultural organizations through the national cultural institute's programs, such as the Goethe Institute, French Institute, and Pro Helvetia. On the regional level, the EU provides support to Egypt and eight other countries through the European Union Neighbourhood and Enlargement policies, such as the Med Culture program (2014-2018) (Med Culture, n.d.).

The Egyptian government has adopted a top-down approach to cultural policy, dating back to President Gamal Abdelnaser (Khedr, 2021: 1). This approach uses arts and culture as a tool for propaganda (ARCP, 2014: 10). In Egypt, there are documented violations of cultural freedom of expression that rank the country as the highest in the MENA region (Freemuse, 2023: 37). Conversely, civil society organizations have implemented a bottom-up approach to promote diversity and inclusion, involving the audience as active citizens and ensuring everyone has access to cultural activities.

This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of the bottom-up approach used by international organizations in international cultural relations and its impact on cultural diversity. It examines the current and potential links between international cultural relations and cultural policy through a case study. It is important to mention that this research focuses on one individual case in a particular context. However, these findings could be applied to other similar contexts and generalized for other international organizations.

The main hypothesis of this study is that Street Carnival project in Egypt, as a representation of the bottom-up approach in international cultural relations, effectively promotes cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. This bottom-up approach is particularly important in countries with unstable political

settings, achieved through empowering local communities, enhancing arts management's aspects, and countering autocratic top-down cultural policies.

### **1.1 Research Objectives**

This research advances the current state of knowledge in the field of international cultural relations by uncovering nuanced patterns used by international organizations to enhance understanding of their different approaches. The study paves the way for future research in international cultural relations, encouraging further exploration into bottom-up approaches, such as street theater projects. Furthermore, one of the main objectives of this research is to inform international organizations through evidence on how a bottom-up approach can effectively contribute to promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. It explores the potential of non-state, bottom-up cultural initiatives in international relations, emphasizing the importance of grassroots efforts in fostering cross-cultural understanding and cooperation. Additionally, the study provides recommendations for the future of international cultural relations.

### **1.2 Research Question**

This research aims to examine the extent to which the bottom-up approach in international cultural relations, specifically the Street Carnival project in Egypt, effectively promotes and enhances cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

This study will contribute to the academic understanding of the role of bottom-up approach adopted by international organizations in promoting cultural rights, such as freedom of expression, and cultural diversity. This will be achieved by examining the different approaches and frameworks, such as the democratization of culture (top-down) and cultural democracy (bottom-up). The research sheds light on the importance of promoting bottom-up approach

in international cultural relations as a tool for countering inequalities. The practical implications of this research and its findings can inform policymakers, international cultural institutions, and cultural practitioners in Egypt and other countries with similar contexts of the potential benefits of adopting a more inclusive and participatory bottom-up approach in their cultural policies. This research may also assist international organizations in refining their frameworks to promote more inclusive international cultural relations worldwide. Moreover, this research could contribute to broader discussions on international cultural relations and their role in promoting cultural diversity, social cohesion, and inclusivity.

#### **1.4 Relevance of the Case Study to Research Objectives**

The research objectives and questions specifically focus on the effectiveness of the bottom-up approach in international cultural relations, particularly in promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Street Carnival project, as a grassroots cultural initiative, closely aligns with these objectives, making it a pertinent and relevant case study for the following reasons:

**Practical Application of the Bottom-up Approach:** The Street Carnival project serves as a practical example of how the theoretical concept of bottom-up cultural policy is implemented in a real-world context. This practicality enhances the research's ability to draw meaningful insights and lessons for policymakers and practitioners in international cultural relations.

**Local Community Empowerment:** The Street Carnival project's emphasis on engaging local communities and artists aligns with the research's focus on bottom-up approaches that empower local stakeholders. The case study allows for an in-depth exploration of how local engagement impacts cultural diversity and dialogue.

**Unstable Political Setting:** In recent years, Egypt has experienced significant political instability and transitions. This context offers an opportunity to examine how cultural initiatives, such as the Street Carnival,



operate in challenging environments while still efficient. This examination is particularly relevant to the research's focus on the project's effectiveness in an unstable political setting.

**Comparative Analysis:** Egypt shares similar cultural policy landscape and international relations with different other countries, which provide an opportunity for comparative analysis. This can help assess the unique aspects and potential transferability of the Street Carnival model to other contexts.

**Accessibility and Feasibility:** Accessibility to relevant stakeholders and data, as well as the feasibility of conducting research within the Egyptian context, are practical considerations that influenced the case selection. The accessibility to Street Carnival project facilitated data collection and interviews with key participants.

**Rich Data Source:** The project's documented activities, experiences, and outcomes provide a rich source of data that can be used to address the research questions and test the hypothesis. The availability of data was a crucial consideration in case study selection.

In summary, selecting the Street Carnival project in Egypt is justified because it closely aligns with the research objectives, provides a relevant and rich source of data, and offers insights into the practical application of bottom-up approaches in international cultural relations, especially in challenging political settings. This project allows the research to address key questions and contribute valuable insights to the field.

## **2. Literature Review**

This chapter examines the theoretical frameworks of international cultural relations and the bottom-up approach to cultural policy. It discusses the definition of international cultural relations and the concept of cultural policy, as well as the different approaches to cultural policy and the involvement of international organizations. The chapter also explores the connection between international cultural relations and cultural policy.

The concepts of International Cultural Relations, Cultural Policy, democratization of culture, and cultural democracy have been introduced by international organizations and studied by academics and practitioners. These terms intersect with both sociology and political science. To begin with, it is important to provide a historical context and clearly define these terms to avoid any ambiguity and recognize their interconnectedness.

### **2.1 International Cultural Relations**

There is no commonly agreed upon definition of cultural relations (Gillespie et al., 2018). This term is primarily used by practitioners and is often associated with cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy, which contribute to a country's soft power (Ibid). There is a lack of clarity in the definition of international cultural relations as it is often used interchangeably with terms such as cultural diplomacy, cultural exchange, public diplomacy, soft power, and propaganda (Senkić, 2017: 4). One limitation of the literature review was the confusion of terminologies. In order to have a clear understanding of the aims and tools of international cultural relations, it is essential to define the term and establish its relation to other terminologies.

International cultural relations can be defined as an umbrella term that refers to fostering understanding between countries and their people (Isar, 2014: 135). This type of relationship aims to engage in dialogue with a wider audience than traditional cultural diplomacy. Cultural relations offer a more comprehensive perspective of a country compared to the approaches of cultural diplomacy, which typically focus on promoting a positive image (Ibid).

Cultural diplomacy is not a new or neutral term (Gienow-Hechtand and Donfried, 2010: 21). It raises questions due to its association with the pursuit of geopolitical and trade advantages, or propaganda. According to many national governments, cultural diplomacy is an example of 'soft power' or the ability to influence and promote mutual understanding through values and culture (Ibid). According to Joseph S. Nye, Soft Power is the ability to influence others through attraction rather than payment in order to achieve desired outcomes (Nye, 2008: 94). The main components of a country's Soft Power are its culture, values, and policies (Ibid).

In contrast, the term International Cultural Relations encompasses all relations between nations and their people, including cultural activities and heritage (Stelowska, 2015: 56). Stelowska also explains that these types of relations, on a multilateral scale, are often implemented by international organizations such as UNESCO and the European Union, where multiple countries work together to promote mutual understanding and their own cultural and national heritage (Ibid).

## **2.2 International Cultural Relations Versus Cultural Diplomacy**

To distinguish cultural relations from cultural diplomacy, Richard Arndt argues that cultural relations occur naturally through tourism, media, books, and cross-cultural interactions without government intervention. However, cultural diplomacy involves diplomats using cultural exchanges to further national interests (Arndt, 2005).

The international cultural relations term has become popular among scholars of International Relations, stemming from anthropological studies applied in the field (Stelowska, 2015: 55). The author emphasized that this term originated from the separation of political science and international relations in countries like Poland and France. On the other hand, the term Cultural Diplomacy was first used by officials in the U.S. State Department in 1959

(Ibid: 62). In our research, we will primarily use the term "international cultural relations," as it is less politically-oriented and more relevant to the social sciences in today's world than traditional cultural diplomacy.

Furthermore, cultural diplomacy represents a traditional and familiar approach to diplomacy, while cultural relations offer a revolutionary perspective (Dâmaso, 2021). In this context, Dâmaso further explained the two main existing paradigms, cultural diplomacy which follows a top-down, one-sided approach, and cultural relations which embraces a bottom-up, collaborative approach. While the latter may be more inclusive, it also presents its own set of challenges in terms of management and impact (Ibid).

According to Stelowska, cultural diplomacy, soft power and propaganda are three different terms associated with International Culture Relations. Cultural diplomacy, although not necessary, involves the state and aims to target foreign audiences, particularly elites. Its goal is to gain prestige and support among foreign audiences through the promotion of high culture. The author further gave an example of cultural diplomacy would be an art exhibition organized in a foreign country with the support of the state (Stelowska, 2015: 65).

On the other hand, Stelowska mentioned that soft power, does not necessarily involve the state and seeks to influence foreign governments and people. Its aim is to create a positive public opinion, increase awareness of a country and improve its image. The author added, it utilizes all forms of culture, including popular culture such as Hollywood movies (Stelowska, 2015: 65).

Stelowska pointed that propaganda, which involves the state, aims to target both foreign and domestic audiences. Propaganda aims to achieve carefully planned outcomes. It is typically intended to support popular culture, as seen in war posters during World War II (Stelowska, 2015: 65).

Figure 1: Definitions summary inspired by Stelowska, 2015.

**Cultural Diplomacy**

- o Involves the state.
- o Targets foreign audiences, particularly elites.
- o Aims to promote high culture.
- o Example: Utilizes elite forms of culture (e.g., Art exhibition).

**Soft Power**

- o May or may not involve the state.
- o Targets foreign governments and people.
- o Aims to create positive public opinion.
- o Example: all forms of culture, including popular culture (e.g., Hollywood).

**Propaganda**

- o Involves the state.
- o Targets both foreign and domestic audiences.
- o Aims to achieve carefully planned outcomes.
- o Example: typically supports popular culture (e.g., war posters)

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Cultural relations are more neutral and comprehensive compared to cultural diplomacy (Mitchells, 1986: 5). The purpose of cultural relations is not solely to seek one-sided advantage; rather, it aims to achieve understanding and cooperation between national societies for their mutual benefit (Ibid). On one hand, cultural diplomacy takes a promotional and advocacy approach, using cultural content to support foreign policy objectives and national interest (Rivera, 2015: 35). On the other hand, cultural relations occur outside the influence of government, fostering mutual trust and understanding and creating positive relationships and influence in the process (Ibid).

There is a clear link between cultural policy and cultural diplomacy, as cultural diplomacy serves as a tool for implementing a state's external cultural policy (Pajtinka, 2014). Therefore, as we are using the terms cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations interchangeably, it is important to delve into cultural policy definitions and approaches to understand the connection between the two terms.

## 2.3 Cultural Policy and its Approaches

International and supranational organizations, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the European Union, play a significant role in shaping and influencing cultural policies worldwide. The concept of cultural policy was first formalized and introduced by UNESCO in 1966, in preparation for the Roundtable of Monaco in 1967 (Rosenstein, 2018: 50). The documents prepared for the Monaco meeting included the very first understanding of cultural policy as a concept and discussed related questions, such as what cultural policy means, what challenges it addresses, and what it aims to achieve (Ibid). Furthermore, international organizations develop frameworks, guidelines, and conventions to provide a common basis for cultural policies across countries. For instance, UNESCO has established various conventions pertaining to cultural property, heritage, diversity, and the protection of cultural expressions (Braman, 2010). These international standards have helped shape national cultural policies and aim to preserve and promote cultural property, diversity, and expression (Rosenstein, 2018: 50).

Cultural policy is a term used to describe the strategies and activities implemented by the government to promote and preserve arts, culture, and heritage for achieving specific objectives (Schuster, 2003, as cited in Mulcahy, 2006). According to Varbanova (2013: 94), there are three main models of cultural policy. The author explains that the first model relies heavily on government support as the primary source of funding for all arts-related activities. This model operates under a centralized management structure, which poses a risk of censorship and direct involvement of the state in the creative process. As a result, Varbanova points out that this model limits cultural diversity. However, it has a well-developed cultural infrastructure and provides high state subsidies (Ibid). On the other hand, Varbanova adds that non-profit organizations and companies only have a small place in the arts and culture sector. In this model, artistic products and services reach a wider audience due to regular state subsidies, resulting in lower prices and increased accessibility. It also allows for the dissemination of artistic

programs to remote areas and smaller cities and towns (Varbanova, 2013: 94).

In contrast, the second model, according to Varbanova, operates on market principles where the government indirectly supports creative work through legislation. In this model, arts and cultural markets are well-developed, and the main source of revenue for arts organizations and projects is generated through activities and services. Varbanova also added that the level of artistic mobility and exchange is high in order to reach a wider audience. As a result, programming is important in order to cater to the tastes of paying attendees in this second model. This leads to consumer choices determining the policies and decision-making at an organizational level (Varbanova, 2013: 94).

The third model that Varbanova mentioned is the mixed approach, which combines elements from the previous two models. In this model, most cultural organizations and projects receive funding from various sources, such as state subsidies, business companies, individual donors, and foundations. The state not only provides subsidies for arts and culture in this model, but also uses indirect measures, such as legislation. Varbanova added that in this model, the market is well-developed, particularly in larger cities, and the creative industries have a significant impact on the country's economic development. Furthermore, the social sector is also well-established and influences decision-making through advocacy efforts. Varbanova (2013: 95) states that there is a diverse range of art forms and arts organizations in this mixed model.

## **2.4 Role of the State in the Cultural Policy**

Hillman-Chartrand & McCaughey (1989: 2) define cultural policy models that are based on the state's involvement in the cultural sphere. The authors identified four models: facilitator, patron, architect, and engineer. The first approach, known as the Facilitator Model, relies on taxation as its main source of state revenue. Its primary objective is to promote a wide variety of activities in both amateur and high art sectors. Instead of favoring specific art

forms or styles, this model focuses on supporting the creative process. It does not impose any particular artistic standards, but rather operates based on the preferences and tastes of corporate, foundation, and individual donors. In this model, funding for fine arts may be unpredictable as it is influenced by the changing preferences of private donors. The authors further explained that the economic success of high arts and artistic ventures depends upon their appeal to audiences and the financial capabilities of private patrons. The strength of the Facilitator Model is its ability to cultivate diversity in funding sources. Individuals, corporations, and foundations have the freedom to choose which artists, artworks, and arts organizations to support. However, this model has its weaknesses. It may not consistently promote high standards of excellence and lacks the ability to direct resources towards nationally significant activities. Additionally, complications arise regarding the valuation of in-kind donations from private sources (Hillman–Chartrand & McCaughey, 1989: 2).

According to the authors, the second model, known as the Patron Model, involves state funding allocation through independent arts councils. In this model, the government determines the overall financial support available but refrains from selecting specific organizations or artists to receive this support. These councils consist of a board of trustees appointed by the government, and they are expected to carry out their grant-making duties independently, similar to trustees of a blind trust, without being influenced by the daily interests of the ruling party. Hillman–Chartrand & McCaughey further explained that decisions regarding grants are typically made by the council based on the recommendations of professional artists who participate in a peer evaluation system. While this model supports the creative process, its primary objective is to uphold high standards of professional artistic excellence. The policy dynamics of the patron model tend to be evolutionary and adapt to changing forms and styles of art as expressed by the artistic community. The financial status of artists and artistic enterprises is determined by a combination of box office success, the preferences of private donors, and grants from independent arts councils. The current model, which prides itself on its arm's-length independence, is often criticized for potentially



promoting elitism by prioritizing certain types of art and catering to specific audiences. This pursuit of artistic excellence may result in art that is less accessible or appreciated by the general public (Hillman-Chartrand & McCaughey, 1989: 2).

The third model, known as the Architect Model, distributes state funds through a Ministry of Culture, with bureaucrats responsible for deciding funding for artists and arts organizations (Hillman-Chartrand & McCaughey, 1989: 3). The Architect Model often supports the arts as part of its social welfare objectives and prioritizes art that aligns with community standards rather than strictly adhering to professional standards of artistic excellence. The policy dynamics of the Architect Model can be revolutionary as resistance to change may lead to the establishment of specific community standards, potentially hindering current creative development. In this model, the financial status of artistic enterprises is mainly determined by direct government funding, with minimal influence from box office revenues and private donations. However, when it comes to artistic choices, artistic enterprises typically have a certain level of autonomy from government control (Hillman-Chartrand & McCaughey, 1989: 3).

The fourth model, known as the Engineer Model, involves state ownership of all means of artistic production. According to Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey's model, only art that aligns with political standards of excellence receives support, while the creative process itself is not prioritized. In this model, political commissars make funding decisions with the intention of serving political education rather than fostering artistic excellence. The Engineer Model is known for its tendency to revise artistic decisions to adhere to the evolving official political line. Additionally, an artist's economic status is determined by their membership in officially-approved artists' unions. The authors state that those who do not belong to these unions are not considered artists. All artistic enterprises are owned and operated by the state, giving the state full control over the means of artistic production. While the Engineer Model may be appealing to totalitarian regimes as it directs artists' creativity towards achieving official political objectives, it also has its weaknesses. One

of which is that all art is subservient to political or commercial objectives. Moreover, the creative energy of artists cannot be completely constrained, often leading to the emergence of "underground" art that challenges party aesthetics or capitalist values (Hillman-Chartrand & McCaughey, 1989: 3).

**Figure 2: Summary inspired by Hillman-Chartrand & McCaughey (1989)**

Table inspired by Harry Hillman Chartrand & Claire McCaughey

Model	Source of Funding	Objective	Funding Approach	Strengths	Weaknesses	Economic Status	Decision-Making
<b>Facilitator</b>	Taxation	Promote a wide variety of activities in amateur and high arts sectors	Based on preferences of corporate, foundation, and individual donors	Cultivates diversity in funding sources	May not consistently promote high standards of excellence, lacks ability to direct resources toward nationally significant activities	Dependent on appeal to audiences	Private donors
<b>Patron</b>	Independent arts councils	Uphold high standards of professional artistic excellence	Arm's length arts councils	Consistently promote high standards of excellence,	Potential elitism, prioritizing certain types of art, catering to specific audiences.	Determined by box office success, private donors, and grants from independent arts councils	Peer evaluation system and board of trustees appointed by government
<b>Architect</b>	Ministry of Culture	Support art aligning with community standards, not strictly professional standards of artistic excellence	Tends to support art that meets community development rather than professional standards	Liberation from box office	Potential hindrance to current creative development due to established community standards	Mainly determined by government funding, minimal influence from box office revenues and private donations	Bureaucrats
<b>Engineer</b>	State owns all means	Support only art aligning with political standards of excellence, not the creative process	Intended to further political education	Main focus of the creative process is to attain political goals.	All art is subservient to political or commercial objectives, emergence of "underground" art challenging state aesthetics or values	Determined by membership in officially approved artists' unions	Political commissars

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## 2.5 Democratic Cultural Policy

The concept of Democratic Cultural Policy has not received much attention in discussions. However, existing literature on this topic primarily focuses on aspects such as accessibility, engagement, co-creation, diversity, participation, and inclusion (Hadley 2021). Cultural policy primarily deals with regulating and overseeing culture, specifically managing cultural products and the organizations responsible for creating them (Ibid). In its broadest sense, cultural policy involves government interventions in the realms of arts, culture, and heritage, whether pertaining to non-profit or for-profit cultural industries (Schuster 2002; Miller and Yúdice 2002 as cited in Hadley 2021). It encompasses governmental strategies and initiatives aimed at promoting the

production, dissemination, marketing, and consumption of art (Rentschler, 2002: 17). In democratic societies, culture is a broad dialogue between citizens about their experiences, ideas, beliefs, identities, and values (Matarasso, 2019: 75). It is a space for encounter, exchange, negotiation, praise, and celebration (Ibid).

## **2.6 Democratization of Culture versus Cultural Democracy**

The debate between the democratization of culture and cultural democracy is an ongoing issue that governments and organizations must address. The democratization of culture aims to promote aesthetic enlightenment, self-improvement, and educational development for the general population (Mulcahy, 2006: 323). This is usually accomplished through large and well-funded institutions that strive to make the arts accessible to all, even to those who do not typically participate (Ibid). However, this approach can also perpetuate the elitist nature of the audience (Hanquinet, 2014).

In contrast, cultural democracy is a bottom-up participatory approach that empowers communities to create and share their own critical forms of culture (Hadley, 2021). In this approach, the government's main responsibility is to ensure equal opportunities for all social classes and races to engage with and participate in cultural activities on their own terms (Mulcahy, 2006: 324). Additionally, cultural democracy emphasizes the value of various cultural forms, including popular cultural expressions. It promotes a more active and participatory approach to cultural policies, rather than simply the idea of making culture more democratic (Ibid). As a result, the significance of High Culture has gradually declined (Hanquinet 2014).

## **2.7 The Democratization of Culture**

The concept of democratization of culture is closely connected to the increase in public funding for the arts after World War II (Langsted 1990). Making cultural activities available to a wider range of people was seen as a crucial part of advancing democracy (Ibid). This concept of accessibility was defined as

the democratization of culture (Bennett 1996). The democratization of culture is based on the belief that art and culture have a civilizing influence, and the desire to make it accessible to everyone (Matarasso and Landry, 1999). It refers to the processes that make official culture, typically represented by well-funded institutions, available to non-participating communities with the intention of benefiting them (Hadley, 2021). The key aspect of the democratization of culture is to cultivate a more diverse audience for culture, as defined by privileged groups in society (Langsted, 1990, as cited in Hadley, 2021).

## **2.8 Cultural Democracy**

The idea of cultural democracy, where the power comes from the bottom-up, can be traced back to UNESCO in the 1970s (Girard, 1972, as cited in Hadley, 2021). The concept was established at a 1976 conference of European Ministers of Cultural Affairs (Langsted, 1990). At an international level, UNESCO recognized the need to shift from a top-down approach of democratizing culture to cultural democracy (UNESCO, 1995). This policy aims to provide equal access to an accepted standard of culture while also catering to the diverse tastes of all sectors in society (Ibid). Additionally, cultural democracy, as a democratic cultural policy, should be designed to serve the public interest while also promoting accessibility to the public good by developing mechanisms to democratize the 'high arts' (Duelund, 2001, as cited in Hadley, 2021).

DuBois defined cultural democracy as the sharing of values among various cultural groups (Ewell, 2000, as cited in Hadley, 2021). It aims to increase accessibility to cultural production and distribution (Matarasso and Landry, 1999, p. 14). Cultural democracy strives to adopt a more participatory or populist approach in defining and providing culture, shifting from a top-down to a bottom-up policy (Ibid). In other words, the government's role is to ensure equal opportunities for citizens to engage in cultural activities on their own terms (Mulcahy, 2006: 324). Cultural democracy is the right and ability to fully immerse and freely participate equally in cultural life, not only to enjoy the arts but also to create, present, and disseminate artistic work (Matarasso, 2019: 77).

Through cultural democracy, individuals and groups can define and engage in cultural activities that cater to their specific interests (Cohnstaedt 1992: 178). The goal of cultural democracy is to address the social needs of all citizens, regardless of their class, economic status, race, ethnicity, disability, gender, region, or aesthetic preferences (Ibid). Cultural democracy arises when communities themselves create and share their unique cultural expressions (Hadley 2021). This approach is "bottom-up" rather than "top-down," and its main distinction lies in its reflective nature, which involves both creating and questioning forms of participation (Ibid).

In his argument, Owen Kelly (1985: 7) outlined several important principles of cultural democracy. Firstly, he stressed the need for genuine cultural pluralism by acknowledging the different value systems that naturally develop within various communities. These diverse value systems should inform the individual or collective endeavors of these communities. Secondly, Kelly emphasized the importance of granting access rights to both cultural outputs and the means of cultural input. In a complex democracy, the creation of common meanings should follow a democratic process. At the very least, the methods used to create these meanings should be open to democratic scrutiny and available for democratic decision-making (Ibid). Additionally, Kelly argues against the division of high arts and other forms of expression, and instead suggests addressing funding methods that favor high arts and disregard other forms of artistic expression. Finally, Kelly encourages a shift in focus from creating art for the sole purpose of being "right" or serving propaganda to creating the right conditions for communities to have their unique creative voices recognized and nurtured (Kelly 1985: 7).

The challenge of cultural democracy in a modern bureaucratic society is its potential to empower individual citizens or societal groups, which may lead to conflicts with traditional cultural management within public administration (Vestheim, 2012). The relationship between the democratization of culture and cultural democracy is a subject of debate, with various perspectives on whether these concepts complement or oppose each other (Ibid).

## **2.9 The Tension Between Top-down and Bottom-up Approaches**

The ongoing debate between democratization of culture and cultural democracy, also known as top-down and bottom-up approaches, centers around the tension between elitist and populist viewpoints. This disagreement stems from the issue of whether cultural accessibility should be expanded or if participation in cultural activities should be enabled for a wider audience (Mulcahy, 2006: 324). In the following section, we will further discuss this tension.

### **2.9.1 Elitist Versus Populist**

According to those who take the elitist perspective, cultural policy should prioritize aesthetic quality as the primary factor for receiving public funding (Mulcahy, 2006: 324). This viewpoint is commonly supported by leading cultural institutions, creative artists in the traditional field of fine arts, cultural critics, and educated, affluent audiences for these art forms (Ibid). Ronald Dworkin further argues that art and culture must reach a certain level of sophistication, richness, and excellence for human nature to thrive, and if the people cannot or will not provide it for themselves, the government must provide it (Dworkin, 1985: 221 as cited in Mulcahy, 2006: 324).

In contrast, proponents of the populist approach advocate for a broader definition of culture and increasing its availability (Mulcahy, 2006: 324). The focus is on personal growth, with fewer boundaries between amateur and professional art activities. The goal is to offer opportunities for those outside the professional mainstream (Ibid). This is often supported by advocates for minority arts, folk arts, ethnic arts, or counter-cultural activities (Wyszomirski 1982: 13-14 as cited in Mulcahy, 2006: 324).

On the other hand, cultural "elitists" argue in favor of excellence over amateurism and prioritize aesthetic discipline over "culture as everything" (Craik, McAllister, and Davis 2003, 29 as cited in Mulcahy, 2006: 324). It has been suggested that two main tensions exist in cultural policy between the goals of

quality versus accessibility, and the government's role as a facilitator versus an architect (Ibid).

## **2.10 Street Theater**

Street theatre is a type of theatrical performance that deals with social and political issues. It is typically presented outdoors and in public spaces to large audiences (Street Theater 2014). These productions actively engage the viewers, promoting direct participation in the creative process. Street theatre is marked by its dynamic nature, often incorporating minimal lighting and costumes, while utilizing music, song, and dance. Its origins can be traced back to the 19th century, with ties to labor movements and suffragette activities. Throughout its evolution, street theatre has tackled various social and political matters, often merging performance with forms of protest. Despite challenges in the contemporary postmodern society, street theatre persists as a distinctive form of public entertainment (Ibid).

Street theatre directly involves audience members in performances through methods such as soliciting input and inviting contributions, as well as employing popular songs, and physical interactions between performers and the performance space, breaking down the boundaries between the two (Kotze, 2017). Once it is communicated to the audience that active participation is welcome, post-performance engagement is likely to occur more effortlessly. The dialogue between the artist and the audience is considered an integral part of the performance, just as the assessment and critical reflection, are essential components of popular education processes (Ibid).

Street theatre has the ability to reach a wide range of individuals in public settings, particularly those who are marginalized and excluded from society. It can serve as a means to educate and mobilize support for various causes. Often, plays are utilized as part of larger resistance efforts against oppressive powers, fully encompassing the context in which they are presented (Kotze, 2017).

## **Moving Forward**

Most literature discusses the concept of cultural diplomacy as a form of state intervention, while the idea of international cultural relations has recently emerged to break free from political bias. Its main objective is to reach a diverse audience and promote cultural diversity as a means of intercultural dialogue and coexistence.

This approach entails state involvement in reaching and promoting the national interest. On the other hand, international cultural relations, described as people-to-people interactions, are interconnected with the bottom-up approach of cultural democracy through external cultural policy. This approach focuses on promoting inclusion, diversity, participation, and intercultural dialogue without state intervention.

Based on this research, it is clear that there is limited coverage of the bottom-up approach in the international cultural relations arena. The question then is, to what extent does the bottom-up approach in international cultural relations, exemplified by the Street Carnival project in Egypt, effectively promote and enhance cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue?



### **3. Methodology**

Qualitative methodology was used to understand the objectives and roles of international organizations in the promotion of cultural diversity through bottom-up instruments. The data analysis provides insights that confirm the importance of adopting a bottom-up approach in international cultural relations to advance cultural rights and diversity.

#### **3.1 Qualitative Research**

This empirical research uses a qualitative data collection method, with the Street Carnival project in Egypt as a case study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with cultural practitioners, EU policy experts, and artists to gather primary data. For the analysis of the qualitative data collected, a grounded theory approach was used involving a coding process to conceptualize components extracted from interview transcripts. In addition, content analysis was conducted for relevant documents, and reports, related to the Street Carnival project as secondary data.

The reason for using the grounded theory approach is that it provides an epistemological perspective through which meaning can be constructed from events and reality, in order to confirm or develop theories. In this research Grounded theory is the best option for analyzing and testing the hypothesis of the impact of the Street Carnival project. This is because it includes social behaviors, such as diversity and acceptance, especially when only a small amount of knowledge exists surrounding this phenomenon. Furthermore, it is the best choice as an inductive approach to test existing theories with small sets of data, such as the interviews used in this research.

Grounded theory was first developed by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss and was mentioned in their book (1967) as a unique research style. It is used to identify connections and develop theories (Ibid). Grounded theory is considered a highly effective approach for analyzing qualitative data, from formulating research questions to interpreting results (Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, 1967) . The primary objective of grounded theory is to use

data to construct a social reality that reflects how individuals interpret the world (Ibid). According to Flick (2004) "social reality" is shaped by the interplay of meanings and contexts. Grounded theory has numerous advantages, including its ability to utilize various types of data, navigate complexity, and achieve specific objectives (Suddaby, 2006, as cited in Khathrin, 2023). However, this approach requires a significant amount of effort and may result in descriptive data that is not thoroughly analyzed (Ibid). Grounded theory utilizes an inductive reasoning approach to analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Inductive reasoning considers data collection as a means of gaining knowledge and does not generate any hypotheses (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The primary tools of grounded theory include coding, theoretical sampling, comparisons, and theoretical saturation, with the ultimate outcomes being concepts, categories, hypotheses, and theory (Bryman, 2012).

Coding is the process of conceptualizing the components extracted from collected qualitative transcript data. Strauss and Corbin described three steps of coding: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The authors explained that the main objective of the open coding stage is to break down the data into smaller parts and analyze them in order to produce concepts. This can be achieved by asking questions about the collected data, analyzing words and phrases, and comparing different phenomena (Ibid). Przyborski and Wohlrab-Sahr (2008) along with Strauss and Corbin (1990, 2015), discuss the three-stage process of Axial Coding, Selective Coding, and Theoretical Sampling in Grounded Theory. In Axial Coding, relationships between concepts are used to create categories in order to build a paradigm (Ibid). This is followed by Selective Coding, which involves referring back to research questions, consolidating data into categories, and linking these categories to form a theory (Ibid). In Grounded Theory, the first step involves conceptualizing data from transcripts, followed by consolidating it into categories, and finally building a theory (Hodkins, 2016).

Theoretical Sampling (TS) is the simultaneous process of data collection, analysis, and theory-building until theoretical saturation is reached (Przyborski & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2008 as cited in Khathrin, 2023). The process of TS is dependent on the level of knowledge achieved in the subject matter of the research (Merkens, 2004).

### **3.2 Data Collection and Interviews with Experts**

The interviews were prepared and conducted as a semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, that were followed by additional questions where needed. The questions were communicated with the interviewees beforehand. The interviews themselves were conducted in Arabic and English, transcribed, and translated into English when needed. A total of eight interviews were conducted on two stages, following two sets of questions. The first stage consisted of four macro-level interviews discussing cultural policy approaches, international organizations, and diversity status in Egypt. On the other hand, the second set of interviews (micro-level) was conducted with four additional participants, focusing on the Street Carnival project and its effectiveness in the Egyptian context.

The methodology of using two sets of questions in the interviews served the following several purposes:

1. **Reflection and Depth:** The decision to separate the phases based on topics suggests a desire for in-depth reflection on each aspect. The first stage/more macro-level explored broader cultural policy and international relations, while the second stage/more micro-level focused on the specifics of the Street Carnival project and its contextual relevance. This allows for a more nuanced exploration, enabling to gather detailed insights and perspectives from the interviewees.
2. **Complexity of Topics:** The subject matter covered in the interviews appeared multifaceted, involving cultural policy, international cultural relations, and a specific project (Street Carnival) in a socio-political

context. Dividing the interviews into two phases based on thematic areas allowed for a more in-depth examination of each of those topics. It acknowledges the complexity of the subject matter and allows for a comprehensive exploration of different dimensions without overwhelming the interviewees or diluting the depth of discussion.

3. **Expertise and Specialization:** The selection criteria for interviewees necessitated individuals with a specific set of expertise. The first set of questions targeted experts who could discuss cultural policy approaches, international organizations, and diversity status in Egypt. The second set of questions focused on individuals with expertise of the Street Carnival project and its effectiveness in the Egyptian context. This categorization allows for a more targeted and in-depth exploration of the topics, ensuring that the interviewees are well-versed in the areas under discussion.
4. **Integration of Perspectives:** The methodology recognizes that finding individuals who possess expertise in both the Street Carnival project and broader cultural policy issues might be challenging. By dividing the interviews into two phases, it was more efficient to integrate perspectives from different experts, ensuring a more holistic understanding of the overall research objectives. This approach promotes a comprehensive analysis by drawing on diverse viewpoints and expertise.

This approach allows for a more tailored and comprehensive investigation, aligning with the specific requirements of the research project. The sets of questions can be found in annex 1.

#### First set of interviews:

1. X Cultural Policy and Human Rights Expert: With more than 15 years of expertise in cultural policies in the MENA region, along with the management of a well-established organization engaged in advocacy and projects related to international cultural relations.

2. X Art Manager: Possesses 12 years of experience in visual arts curating and managing projects related to arts and democracy in local and international organizations in Egypt. Additionally, holds expertise in coordinating cultural policy research projects in the MENA region.
3. X Cultural Manager and Researcher: Boasting 10 years of experience in coordinating arts in public spaces after the Egyptian revolution, with a research background in independent cultural organizations in Egypt.
4. X Cultural Manager: With over 25 years of experience in managing arts and cultural projects locally, regionally, and internationally.

Second set of interviews:

5. X Artist, Cultural Manager, and Policy Expert: Brings 25 years of experience as a theater director, managing a theater company in Egypt that operates internationally. Additionally, has expertise in cultural policy, managing several research projects advocating for cultural policy reforms, and participating in the Street Carnival Project.
6. X Artist, Cultural Manager, Researcher, and Trainer: Possessing over 15 years of experience as an artist, theater director, and researcher. Also, holds expertise as a trainer in cultural management and has participated in projects such as the Street Carnival Project.
7. X International Project Manager and Consultant: With over 25 years of experience in grant-making for intergovernmental organizations in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Also, possesses expertise as a monitoring and evaluation consultant and has participated in the Street Carnival Project.
8. X Artist: With over 25 years of experience working as an artist and director in Egypt and internationally. Also, has been involved in the Street Carnival Project.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Through the semi-structured interviews, a comprehensive analysis was employed to meticulously examine the interview transcripts, identifying recurring themes, topics, and patterns. To enhance the analytical process and align with best practices, the guidance of Schmidt (2004: 257) was followed, prompting the creation of analytical categories. A systematic coding guide was then carefully applied to efficiently organize the wealth of qualitative data, facilitating the extraction of meaningful insights and conclusions.

Adhering to an inductive approach, the interview transcriptions were subjected to a meticulous analysis, wherein themes were clustered to allow the emergence of main categories directly from the data. This method, rooted in grounded theory, provided a nuanced understanding of the data without imposing preconceived notions or hypotheses, aligning with the inherent exploratory nature of the qualitative research.

The outcome of the open coding analysis revealed six overarching categories that encapsulated the diverse dimensions of the research context:

**1. The Impact of the Street Carnival on Cultural Diversity:** Unveiling the profound influence of the Street Carnival in shaping and fostering cultural diversity within the Egyptian context.

**2. The Effectiveness of Street Carnivals in an Unstable Political Setting:** Delving into the role and effectiveness of Street Carnivals amid the challenges posed by an unstable political climate, offering insights into cultural resilience.

**3. A Bottom-Up Approach to Arts Management:** Exploring the paradigm of a bottom-up approach in managing arts and cultural initiatives, shedding light on alternative organizational structures.

#### **4. The Importance of a Bottom-Up Approach in International Cultural Relations:**

Investigating the significance of adopting a bottom-up approach in international cultural relations, emphasizing the empowerment of grassroots initiatives.

#### **5. Non-State Initiatives for Promoting Dialogue:**

Unveiling the role and impact of non-state initiatives in fostering meaningful cultural dialogue within the socio-political landscape.

#### **6. Tensions in Egypt's Cultural Policy Approaches:**

Examining the complexities and tensions inherent in Egypt's cultural policy approaches, providing a critical perspective on the challenges faced.

To aligned with Jankowski's framework (2015: 69), the subsequent reporting of findings incorporated three distinct types of reports:

- **Descriptions:** Offering a comprehensive overview of each identified category, presenting a detailed account of the observed phenomena.
- **Analytical Discussions:** Engaging in an in-depth analysis of the identified categories, delving into the underlying meanings, connections, and implications, drawing on both theoretical concepts and empirical insights.
- **Substantive Accounts:** Providing a substantive narrative that weaves together the conceptual underpinnings derived from the case study and the theoretical assumptions advanced in the literature review, enriching the discussion with a nuanced understanding of the research context.

This comprehensive and structured analytical discussion serves to illuminate the multifaceted dimensions of the research findings, combining empirical observations with theoretical insights to contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact and dynamics surrounding Street Carnival and international cultural relations within Egypt. The open coding process concluded with axial coding, formulating six categories of Street Carnival impact. These axial

codes were then used to summarize the impact achieved and the challenges faced by entities adopting bottom-up approach in Egypt. Finally, these challenges aided in proposing two sets of policy recommendations targeting policy-makers in Egypt and international organizations.

### **3.4 Limitations and Boundaries**

Firstly, the examination of the concepts of democratization of culture and cultural democracy in the context of the Street Carnival project in Egypt presents challenges due to their multifaceted nature. The complexity of these concepts can be interpreted in various ways and may lead to ambiguity in the interviews' questions, potentially impacting the accuracy of the data collected. To address this challenge, the researcher has implemented the macro-level stage interviews with the first set of questions - as mentioned in the data sampling section - to ensure clarity and shared definitions of key terms with the second micro-level phase participants. This helped to mitigate misinterpretations.

Secondly, the continuous evolution of the political climate in Egypt over the past decade also have an effect on the recollection of events and experiences by the interviewees. Additionally, it must be noted that the Street Carnival project took place in 2015, approximately eight years before the interviews were conducted, making it difficult for participants to recall all the details and nuances of the project.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

This research prioritizes the ethical treatment of participants by ensuring informed consent and anonymity for interviewees. Additionally, the data collection process adheres to the data protection regulations and guarantee confidentiality. In order to address the ethical considerations surrounding the collection of qualitative data, we have referenced the work of Bryman and Bell (2007). The following guidelines were strictly adhered to in regards to our interview participants:



- All participants were provided with a full explanation of the purpose of the research and the role of the researcher, without any instances of deceit or exaggeration. The interview questions were also shared in advance with the interviewees via email.
- Measures were implemented to guarantee the safety and well-being of the individuals involved in the research, both through actions and communication.
- Before commencing the interviews, explicit consent was acquired from each participant. Participants were fully informed of their right to withdraw from the interview process at any point.
- In order to maintain the confidentiality of the participants, their identities were not revealed in the resulting research.
- To protect the privacy of the interview content, all recordings were exclusively stored on the researcher's computer and were not shared with any external parties.
- The collection and analysis of data was carried out with complete objectivity and impartiality.

## **4. Case Study**

This chapter aims to provide context for the case study of this research by showcasing the Street Carnival project and its funder, the European Union. It also gives an overview of the cultural policy and political landscape in Egypt, as well as how the European Union operates in Egypt and what instruments and approaches are used in this context.

### **4.1 Historical Overview of Cultural Policy in Egypt**

The origins of cultural policy in Egypt can be traced back to the reign of Muhammad Ali (1805-1849), who led Egypt to independence from Turkey after being under Ottoman rule (ARCP, 2014). The author further mentioned that during this time, Muhammad Ali prioritized education and established connections with Europe to benefit from its scientific advancements and modern education. He also sent educational missions overseas to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and establish a connection between Egypt and Europe. Additionally, it was mentioned that Ali established several institutions focused on scientific research. These exchanges helped create prominent figures who spread education and culture in Egypt during this time (Ibid).

After Egypt was colonized by British in 1882, modernization rapidly increased due to the country's full integration into the international capital market (ARCP, 2014). In 1896, a number of theater troupes from Syria and Lebanon came to Egypt, and many Egyptian troupes were also formed during this period, with the talented composer Sayed Darwish performing a variety of roles (Ibid). The occupation of Egypt resulted in a mode of resistance that was reflected in various forms of art and culture (ARCP, 2014). Theater, in particular, was seen as a tool for resistance, prompting the British army to issue "Theatrical Regulations" (1907-1911) to control theater venues and allow for shutdowns in case of violation of public order or manners (Ibid).

During the Nasser era, after the military coup in July 1952 when Egypt regained its independence and became a Republic, cultural policies and institutions became closely linked to the new military agenda in order to

confirm Egypt's Arabic identity (ARCP, 2014). The regime also attempted to control and restructure all of the country's institutions, including cultural ones, and nationalized all newspapers (Ibid). In an effort to propagate its rule, the new regime established several agencies and institutions, such as the Ministry of National Guidance (ARCP, 2014). Culture was included to the Ministry after renaming it as the Ministry of Culture and National Guidance, which was established as a separate and independent entity in 1958 (Wahba, 1972). The Ministry was responsible for organizing the state's efforts to preserve heritage in all its forms. Its main objectives included the dissemination of cultural services to the widest possible audience, the discovery and encouragement of artistic talents, and the reactivation of Egyptian rural culture (Ibid). The author mentioned that the ministry also aimed to enrich national culture and promote it internationally through cultural cooperation. Additionally, it aimed to support and promote the arts and social sciences to contribute to the goals of a democratic socialist society (Wahba, 1972).

In 1959, the Ministry of Culture began establishing cultural centers and houses in all governorates across Egypt (ARCP, 2014). This non-centralized strategy was implemented in order to reach audiences in all regions, although the decision-making authority remained centralized in Cairo, the capital city (Kassab, 2013). Dr. Tharwat Okasha, in his role as minister of culture, established the framework and direction for the ministry (Abou Ghazi 2017). After serving for two years during a second term, he proposed a strategy called the Policy of Culture in 1969 and submitted it to the national council for approval (Ibid). The committee responsible for developing national strategies, known as the Supreme Council of Culture, has continued to do so since then (Kassab 2013).

During this time, it is noteworthy that international cultural cooperation was divided among the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kassab 2013). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was responsible for serving as the official link between cultural organizations and their counterparts abroad, and this was carried out through the Department

of Cultural Relations and Technical Cooperation, which oversees various divisions such as planning, research, projects, and treaties, on a global scale (Wahba 1972).

In the 1990s, the first cultural policy to resurface was during Farouq Hosny's tenure as Minister of Culture until the uprising in 2011 (ARCP, 2017). During this time, the ministry expanded its resources and launched various cultural programs (Ibid). During this period and since then, approximately 0.23 percent of the State's annual budget has been allocated to culture. However, the majority of this amount (92.5 percent) is spent on salaries for Ministry of Culture employees, and the remaining 7.5 percent is used for activities (ARCP, 2017).

In 2011, with the rise of the January uprising, Dr. Emad Abou Ghazi, the Minister of Culture, proposed a project for a cultural policy and a cultural plan for the transitional period. Later in 2014, Dr. Gaber Asfour, the Minister of Culture (2014-2015), proposed a strategy for a cultural work system in Egypt (Khedr 2021: 6). Since 2016, the policies of the Egyptian government have been based on the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy (UNESCO 2020). The Strategy's eighth pillar discusses culture as a system for promoting positive cultural values while respecting diversity and differences (MPED 2016). The Strategy mentioned that culture serves as an enabler to access knowledge and helps build the capacity of citizens to engage with contemporary developments, while also recognizing Egypt's rich history and cultural heritage. The document also mentioned that culture aims to empower citizens with the freedom to choose and express their creativity within their culture. This in turn adds value to the national economy and allows Egypt to showcase its soft power on regional and international platforms (MPED 2016).

#### **4.2 Culture Policy Development Since the 2011 Uprising in Egypt**

The primary source of funding for arts and cultural agencies is the Egyptian state, and the Ministry of Culture is in charge of this centralized administration

through the state general budget (Fazulla, 2018). As a result, the government is able to control the creative process through "The Censorship of Works of Art," a central authority that must approve any artistic work before it can be presented to the public (Ibid).

For example, after the January 2011 Uprising, the film industry has been faced with a complex bureaucratic process for obtaining approvals (Allam, 2019). This includes obtaining a complicated legal approvals from the Censorship Authority, as well as a costly shooting permit from the Filmmakers' Syndicate and approval from the Censorship Board before a film can be released (Ibid).

Years ago, the government owned few national cinema and television production companies (e.g., The Egyptian Radio and Television Union) that reached and impacted not only Egypt but also the whole Arab region with its productions. Cairo was known as 'the Hollywood of the Arab World' (Allam, 2019). It is worth mentioning the contribution of few independent cinema producers during the last century to produce high arts without any political orientation outside the state propaganda strategy. Currently, according to Media Ownership Monitor website, the cinema, television and music scenes in Egypt have been acquired by the government through newly established media companies owned by the "General Intelligence Service Agency", which is leading the cinema, television and media production agenda in Egypt nowadays (MOM n.d.). In this regard, Culture policy development in Egypt has changed since the 2011 uprising.

#### **4.3 Arts in Public Spaces Post January 2011 Uprising.**

After the January 2011 uprising, the topic of public arts in Egypt has become a major issue. According to project documents, provided by EIMadina Arts for the research purposes, It believes that the centralization of arts and culture was the main challenge facing Egypt at this time. This challenge had a significant impact on various aspects, including the production of cultural activities in marginalized areas, particularly in the border cities where minority

communities reside. Furthermore, the government's lack of desire towards funding street theatre activities, which are often viewed as equivalent to political demonstrations and are prohibited by law, has further exacerbated the issue. One of the main challenges that street artists in Egypt face is providing artistic production in marginalized areas, both at the level of decision makers and within the community itself.

The issuance of Law No. 107 for 2013<sup>1</sup>, also known as The Protest Law, has sparked widespread criticism, particularly from human rights defenders and legal personnel who are concerned about the rights granted by the Egyptian Constitution. These groups rightly believe that the law violates an important human right guaranteed by the Egyptian Constitution and all human rights conventions - the right to peaceful demonstration. As more people are severely affected by the law, the opposition to it grew stronger. However, this did not result in a strong alliance of opposition forces actively resisting such crackdown on human rights. Amidst this struggle, no one has considered how the Protest Law can severely restrict the rights and freedoms of Egyptian artists to express themselves socially and artistically, even in a manner complying with moral and societal norms.

#### **4.4 External Cultural Policy in Egypt**

As being said, since the 1960s, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been responsible for maintaining official connections between cultural organizations and their counterparts abroad (Wahba 1972). This is carried out through the Department of Cultural Relations and Technical Cooperation, which is divided into various divisions such as planning, research, and projects and treaties all over the world (Ibid). International cultural cooperation is divided among the Ministry of Culture, Education, and Foreign Affairs (Kassab 2013). Egypt is the only Arab country with cultural offices in some of its embassies abroad (Yang 2023). In 2017, Egypt had 31 cultural offices and centers around the world; currently, that number has been

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.refworld.org/docid/551a5f2a4.html>

reduced to 20 centers (Ibid). Concurrently, Egypt's soft power has declined due to internal and external constraints such as prioritizing militarization and stronger competition from other regional powers and Gulf states (Al Qassemi, 2014). Egypt promotes its cultural soft power predominantly through Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, along with several related museums that actively engage in international cooperation with other nations and intergovernmental organizations (Yang, 2023). In 2019, the European Union initiated a 3-year project, valued at 3.1 million euros, to support the establishment of the Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo (EU Neighbours, 2019).

#### **4.5 European Union International Cultural Relations**

According to "Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations," document the European Union (EU) has expressed its commitment to promoting diversity as a vital part of its values (European Commission, 2016). The strategy mentions that the European Union has ratified the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, indicating its dedication to supporting and preserving diverse cultural expressions in its international relations. It also committed to the integration of culture into international cooperation strategies. This aligns with the EU's fundamental values, which include human rights, gender equality, democracy, freedom of expression, and the rule of law, as well as cultural and linguistic diversity (Ibid).

One aspect of the EU's strategy for implementing this commitment is to strengthen international relationships through various actions, such as supporting culture as a crosscutting pillar and a driving force for sustainable social and economic development (European Commission, 2022). The strategy also aims to use culture as a tool for peace-building and to improve cooperation on preserving cultural heritage. It emphasizes the importance of equality, reciprocity, trust, and fairness in these international relationships. The document also acknowledges the significance of addressing common challenges together through cultural relations, rather than solely through cultural diplomacy. The strategy emphasized that this acknowledgment is

important to ensure that cultural relations are not perceived as being Eurocentric or neo-colonial, and instead, are built with the participation of local civil society through a bottom-up, people-to-people approach. As a result, the EU has mentioned plans to develop its own frameworks for achieving this (Ibid).

The EU-Egyptian cultural cooperation activities are managed by the EU Delegation through annual support and calls for proposals targeting NGOs, private and public entities, as part of the bilateral cooperation with Egypt (Helly, 2014). Additionally, there are ongoing regional programs, including Egypt and other countries in the south neighborhood, organized by international and intergovernmental organizations such as the Anna Lindh Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures and the European Commission Headquarters (Ibid).

#### **4.6 EU - Egypt Relations**

The European Union (EU) is committed to strengthening its strategic partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood, including Egypt, as outlined in the Barcelona Declaration (European Union, 1995). The EU also cooperates with Egypt as part of its European Neighbourhood Policy (European Neighbourhood Policy, n.d.). According to the European Union Delegation to Egypt's website, the EU is the second-largest actor of foreign direct investment in the Middle East and North Africa region, with around 39% of the foreign direct investments (European Union and Egypt, n.d.). The EU and Egypt cooperate through the following three different approaches:

##### Bilateral cooperation:

Bilateral cooperation with Egypt is arranged through a Joint Document that outlines partnership priorities (European neighbourhood policy, n.d.). These documents are agreements made between Egypt, the EU, and its Member States, which establish the political and economic goals for cooperation (Ibid).



### Regional cooperation:

Regional cooperation is based on specific regional strategies, such as the new Agenda for the Mediterranean. It complements bilateral programs, addresses regional challenges, promotes cooperation, and builds bridges through the (European Neighborhood Policy, n.d.).

### Civil society

Groot roots organizations are essential elements of the European Neighborhood Policy, both in bilateral and regional cooperation (European Neighborhood Policy, n.d.). They play a vital role in strengthening and promoting the role of civil society actors, particularly local organizations, and improving their ability to engage with public authorities to create a more engaging environment. (Ibid).

## **4.7 Diversity and Inclusion in International Cultural Relations**

According to Tietze (2022) diversity and inclusion are two important concepts that are crucial for creating a society where everyone can participate and be creative. Diversity is represented by the internal, external, and organizational dimensions of people, such as gender, sexual identity, religion, age, disability, and socio-economic class (Tietze, 2022). The author emphasized that inclusion, on the other hand, refers to the act of ensuring that everyone is given the opportunity to be a part of society fostering a culture of togetherness. It is particularly vital to guarantee that individuals with disabilities are fully included and able to participate in all aspects of society (Ibid).

## **4.8 Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue Framework**

The cultural diversity and the intercultural dialogue institutional framework encourage to consider the relationship between cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue (European Commission, 2014). Intercultural dialogue cannot be achieved without acknowledging cultural diversity. However, cultural diversity can exist without necessarily leading to intercultural dialogue (Ibid). Cultural diversity implies the presence of characteristics among a group of people, such as language, religion, lifestyle, artistic expressions, and

relationships between different demographics as men and women, young and old, etc. This diversity is also present within individuals in modern society, as explained by the Indian philosopher Amartya Sen (European Commission, 2014). He states that it is a combination that everyone experiences in their life through encounters, travel, migration, reading, projects, and examinations. The French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy also emphasizes this idea, stating that "Every culture is a mixture". All cultures are a blend of different influences and backgrounds, making cultural diversity a source of richness in society (Ibid).

Unfortunately, this diversity is often seen as a source of issues for countries that are based on the domination of one nation (European Commission, 2014). The study mentions that these countries may view expressions of national or ethnic minorities as illegitimate or as a threat to their unity. Similarly, multinational states that are facing new cultural expressions due to immigration may also view cultural diversity as a threat. The recognition of cultural diversity brings many benefits. For states, acknowledging cultural diversity can help reduce conflict and division and promote 'living together'. It is an essential tool for peaceful coexistence between nations. For individuals, it allows for the exercise of collective personal rights, as example, learning in one's own language. It also limits discrimination and provides access to opportunities. The promotion of cultural diversity also leads to social recognition, as German philosopher Axel Honneth noted, it is a victory against the 'society of contempt' (Ibid). The advantages of intercultural dialogue are even greater as it aims to establish a framework for relations not just between states, but also organizations and individuals (European Commission 2014).

Capturing and measuring the effects of culture on aspects such as diversity and democracy is a challenge, thus various frameworks have been proposed. These include the Council of Europe's Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy (IFCD).

#### **4.9 Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy (IFCD)**

Recently, the Council of Europe developed the IFCD which has shown a strong relationship between democracy and cultural participation, providing valuable information for policy makers (Council of Europe 2017). Cultural participation can be defined as the participation in cultural and social activities that shape a citizen's cultural lifestyle (Ibid). Studies have shown that there is a connection between cultural participation and political activities, including demonstrations and activism (Council of Europe 2017). Therefore, cultural participation is also linked to a broader range of activities in a more indirect way (Hanquinet 2014). When it comes to cultural policy, it can be challenging to define "artistic expression" and "cultural participation". It is important to consider whether definitions of arts and culture, as well as public investment, are limited to the "high arts", or if they also include a wider range of cultural activities such as grassroots classical forms, storytelling, music, performances, crafts, traditional cooking, and folk events (European Commission, 2023: 57). It is important to consider this debate, as focusing solely on classical forms and their institutions, as well as specific socioeconomic groups who typically engage in them, may obscure the full range of diversity in the arts and culture. It can even lead to cultural inequalities and social segregation (Ibid). This rises the question of what approach should be taken?

According to a recent study by the European Union entitled "Culture and Democracy: The Evidence", it is proved that top-down approaches to cultural funding that limit different cultural perspectives can lead to undermining the democratic values as well as the social and civic impact of cultural participation (European Commission 2023). Instead, long-term impact can be achieved by investing in cultural activities, interventions, and organizations rooted in communities and operating in participatory ways (Ibid).

Building on this argument, the spotlight will now be turned to one of the European Union-funded regional programmes that took place between 2014-2016. The Drama, Diversity, and Development programme (DDD) was

implemented by Minority Rights Group (MRG) in partnership with the Civic Forum Institute (Jerusalem) and Andalus for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies (Egypt). DDD used culture to promote diversity and challenge discrimination against minorities in seven<sup>2</sup> countries within the South Mediterranean region (Med Culture, n.d.). Through subgranting schemes, the programme aimed to support art and cultural organizations in raising awareness around the role of culture in fostering social cohesion. As part of this program, the Street Carnival project by EIMadina in Egypt was selected as one of the projects to receive the grant (Ibid).

#### **4.10 Street Carnival Project – The Case Study**

The Street Carnival project was funded by the Drama, Diversity, and Development program (DDD) implemented by Minority Rights Group, Civic Forum Institute, and Andalus for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies (EIMadina, 2015). The project was funded by the European Union through the Med Culture regional program 2014-2018 and was also co-funded by the Prince Claus Fund and the Swedish Postcode Foundation (Ibid).

The Street Carnival project<sup>3</sup>, implemented in 2015, aimed to showcase the ability of minority cultures, with the focus on the rich and diverse Nubian<sup>4</sup> culture, to integrate into the majority Egyptian culture and overcome common social challenges through a series of street theater performances (EIMadina, 2015). The project trained artists to produce a collaborative tour of thirty performances, which were presented in twelve Egyptian cities (Ibid).

According to Theory of Carnival publication, EIMadina Arts was founded in Alexandria, Egypt in 2000, it works to transform public spaces and marginalized areas into places where people can freely express themselves and create a cohesive social environment characterized by diversity and pluralism (EIMadina, 2015). Additionally, it mentioned that EIMadina works in

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<sup>2</sup> Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia.

<sup>3</sup> Street Carnival is not a typical carnival, it is rather a street theater performance, that was given the name Carnival to give the impression of joy and celebration to the public.

<sup>4</sup> <https://isac.uchicago.edu/museum-exhibits/history-ancient-nubiaOLD>

arts and culture, providing trainings, managing cultural spaces, and supporting artists. EIMadina believes that citizens are the ones who create and produce arts and culture, and they are the developmental factor for their sustainability (Ibid).

EIMadina Arts described the problem statement that Street Carnival project was addressing, was that after the 2011 uprising in Egypt, people started the process of practicing freedom of expression (EIMadina, 2015). However, there were attempts to undermine security in the streets by denying diversity and expressing hatred towards the different others. EIMadina Arts unleashed the need to rediscover the streets through arts and engage in discussions with people around the true meaning of freedom, as well as practicing arts with the public to promote acceptance, human rights, diversity, and tolerance. To achieved this, EIMadina developed Street Carnival project that addresses the daily challenges faced by minority groups, such as Nubian minorities, who experience racial discrimination and sexual harassment due to their skin color. The project aimed to break prejudices and stereotypes against minorities, promoting diversity and building bridges among citizens (Ibid).

One of the main objectives of the project was to promote the values of diversity and coexistence, and break stereotypes against minorities, especially Nubians (EIMadina, 2015). The Nubian community in Egypt has been marginalized for more than sixty years and has faced a multitude of problems such as displacement, dissemination, and violence. Nubian culture is rich with a variety of artistic industries, architecture, and performing arts. The Nubians are a unique minority group, characterized by their distinct physical appearance, language, and ethnicity (Ibid).

#### **4.11 Street Carnival Activities**

The project activities started with a call for participation and selecting artists for the performance production. A capacity building workshop was held for twenty-five artists in a closed camp for two weeks. After that, three tours were implemented over a period of six months, presenting the performances in

various cities across Egypt, including Cairo, Giza, Qalioubya, Luxor, Qena, Assiut, Suez, Port Said, Port Fuad, Damietta, and Alexandria. According to the project evaluation report, the Street Carnival project reached around thirty thousand of audience in twelve different cities in Egypt. Additionally, a two-day stakeholders evaluation meeting was held in Alexandria as a closing event. One of the goals of the project was to share the experience and disseminate the Carnival methodology in different contexts. As part of this, a regional component was included to exchange experience with peers in countries in the south of the Mediterranean. This involved implementing a workshop promoting the project artistic methodology, in addition to the implementation of two performances customized for the context Morocco.

The implementation methodology of the project was based on establishing partnerships with a wide range of partners. This created an added value through reaching a wide audience with different social and economic backgrounds, especially in places where interactions between males and females are not praised. The project team successfully collaborated with grassroots associations, providing the project with the opportunity to perform in underprivileged areas and reach a diverse audience with less complicated procedures. For example, the first performance took place at a mixed-gender school and was attended by approximately 1200 of students and teachers. The project also recruited local coordinators from each targeted region to assist with contacting, selecting performance venues, and making housing and transportation arrangements.

Additionally, and to collect and disseminate the learnings, the project published a book called Theory of the Carnival to share both its artistic and the production approaches for it to serve as a model for other interested in participatory street theatre. The book includes testimonies, reviews, and evaluations from various perspectives. For instance, and as included in the book, Nubian writer and activist Hagag Adoul wrote about the project stating:

*“The message of the Street Carnival is the dissemination of culture and refreshing beauty through art, and the spreading of love and peace among the Egyptian people in all their diversity, and this is only*

*the beginning! There are young loving people like you in the rest of the world! The Egyptian Street Carnival alongside street carnivals in Africa, Asia, Europe, America and Australia, need to converge and coordinate in order to become a force of love and peace, and to repel racist around the world! Your message can be summed up in one phrase: All people are beautiful!” – Hagag Adoul (EIMadina, 2015).*

The external evaluation report of the project, prepared by Corinne Grassi, was published in The Theory of the Carnival publication (EIMadina, 2015). She mentioned that the Street Carnival project took place in a complex and unpredictable environment, where it was difficult to guarantee if the performance would actually take place. Even with permission granted, there was still a possibility of last-minute cancellations. Organizing events in public spaces was seen as a form of protest after the Arab Spring, which was even more challenging due to security officers feeling uncomfortable and stressed with large crowds. She concluded her report with the following statement:

*“We can say that the Street carnival achieved its main goals in reinforcing artists’ capacities and raising awareness on the Nubian minority issues. There are also several other import aspects. This Street carnival was an experiment and for sure it has planted many seeds in several communities to continue to invest public spaces with artistic expression.” – Corinne Grassi. (EIMadina, 2015).*

Figure 3: Street Carnival Performance in Qena, April 2015. © Kirolos Yousif.



## 5. Discussion and Findings

This chapter aims to examine the effectiveness of bottom-up cultural initiatives to foster international cultural relations. This has been done through examining Street Carnival project as a case study. The following questions were addressed: How does the Street Carnival promote diversity? How impactful was the Street Carnival in a politically unstable environment? Why should the bottom-up approach be integrated in international cultural relations? How can non-governmental initiatives promote dialogue and values? How does the bottom-up approach challenge top-down cultural policies as a democratic practice? Lastly, how does the bottom-up approach relate to governance, centralization, and arts management?

These questions were examined under the following categories clustered from the open coding process gathered from the interviews transcription:

- The impact of the Street Carnival on cultural diversity.
- The Effectiveness of Street Carnivals in an Unstable Political Setting
- A Bottom-Up Approach to Arts Management
- The Importance of a Bottom-Up Approach in International Cultural Relations
- Non-State Initiatives for Promoting Dialogue
- Tensions in Egypt's Cultural Policy Approaches

### 5.1 The Impact of Street Carnivals on Cultural Diversity

This section discusses the objectives and impact of Street Carnival project in Egypt, focusing on addressing gender-based violence and promoting the Nubian culture. The project aimed to enhance the abilities of artists, raise awareness about minority and sensitive gender-related issues, and engage with diverse communities, including conservative ones.

**Physical Experience:** One of the interviews provided a simple description of Street Carnival project:



*"It is a physical experience presented in the street to the public. It holds a carnival and offers a variety of festivities that the public can easily accept and enjoy. At the same time, the messages within are cleverly and artistically integrated without being subconscious slogans or a call to action in an overtly propagandist way. Instead, it immerses you in the experience and encourages self-discovery and exploration of your relationship with your surroundings. For me, this is what makes it impactful. It fosters critical thinking and contemplation among the street audience through the use of simple and familiar mobile tools, but in a unique approach."* Artist, Cultural Manager, Researcher, and Trainer.

This quote provides a nuanced perspective on the impact of a street performance or carnival, emphasizing the physical experience presented to the public. The statement highlights that the street performance is a physical experience presented to the public, underscoring the event's accessibility in a public space where a diverse audience can easily engage with it. The use of the term "carnival" suggests a festive and celebratory atmosphere, further enhancing its appeal to a broad audience. Carnivals often involve a variety of entertainment, creating an engaging environment.

This mentions that the public can easily accept and enjoy the festivities emphasizes the inclusive nature of the performance, suggesting that it is designed to be enjoyable and relatable to a wide range of people. The statement also acknowledges the clever and artistically integrated messages within the performance, hinting at a thoughtful approach that avoids overt slogans or propaganda. The performance ,as suggested, aimed to engage the audience on a deeper level, encouraging a more subtle and immersive interaction with the content for a richer experience.

The performance is described as encouraging self-discovery and exploration of one's relationship with the surroundings, indicating a focus on personal engagement and reflection beyond mere entertainment. By fostering critical thinking and contemplation, the performance aims to create a more

meaningful and transformative experience for the audience. Instead of relying on traditional forms of communication, the performance employs a creative and innovative approach, suggesting a willingness to experiment with different mediums to convey messages and engage the audience.

**Diversity and Inclusion:** According to Tietze (2022) diversity and inclusion are two important concepts that are crucial for creating a society where everyone can participate and be creative. The author added that diversity is represented by the internal, external, and organizational dimensions of people, such as gender, sexual identity, religion, age, disability, and socio-economic class. All the interviews highlight positive outcomes for the Street Carnival on the level of diversity and inclusion, such as the acceptance of the project by diverse audiences and the promotion of critical thinking. It emphasizes that Street Carnival serves as a tool for promoting diversity and finding solutions to societal problems through dialogue, which enhance the diversity and inclusion of different groups in the society,

One of the interviews highlights that the project was concerned with a dual focus on addressing the image of women and gender-based violence, as well as promoting the Nubian culture and its positive stance on women in society. This shows a commitment to women's rights and a desire to contribute to the reduction of violence against women. On the other hand, the project aims to promote the Nubian culture, emphasizing its respect for women in society at all levels. This highlights a cultural empowerment aspect, showcasing positive values and traditions.

The overarching focus of the Carnival is addressing the pervasive issue of violence against women in society. The Street Carnival, through its various activities and initiatives, was actively working towards finding solutions to this problem. The project also suggested that the Nubian culture, being a minority culture, holds a solution to a major societal problem—the issue of violence against women. This indicates a belief in the potential of some cultural values to address broader social issues.

**Nubian Culture and Gender-Based Violence:** The French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy emphasizes that "Every culture is a mixture". All cultures are a blend of different influences and backgrounds, making cultural diversity a source of richness in society (European Commission, 2014).

Based on this assumption, Street Carnival is ideally promoting diversity, the interviews mention that the project presents positive solutions instead of constant conflict. This is achieved by showcasing positive aspects of Nubian culture, with the aim of encouraging care, appreciation, and support for the culture. It also outlines a perspective on the positive impact of interacting with Nubian culture and the value of diversity. The interviews suggest that when the majority interacts with Nubian culture, they develop an appreciation for it. This implies that exposure to different cultures can foster understanding and admiration. Furthermore, it emphasizes that as people learn more about Nubian culture, they gain a deeper understanding and empathy. This suggests that cultural exchange can contribute to breaking stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive society.

The interviewees stated that the main focus of the Carnival is "value of diversity investment." This reflects a belief that actively investing in and promoting diversity is key to addressing societal issues and fostering positive change. The central theme of Street Carnival is the value of diversity as a source of solutions. The interviews suggest that investing in diversity leads to solutions for many problems. This viewpoint challenges the perception that diversity merely brings challenges, and underscores its potential for innovation and problem-solving.

**Cultural Diversity within the Team:** Cultural diversity implies the shared characteristics among a group of people, such as language, religion, lifestyle, artistic expressions, and relationships between different demographics such as men and women, young and old, etc. (European Commission, 2014). The Street Carnival also strengthened cultural diversity within its team of artists. The approach used in the Street Carnival project had a prototype that could be upscaled. This could create a harmonious dynamic within the team, even

if not all members were not sharing the same background. Therefore, such prototyping was one important factor.

The interviews emphasize the inclusion of individuals from various backgrounds, genders, and minority cultures, such as Nubian artists. This indicates a commitment to diversity and a recognition of the richness that different perspectives bring to the artistic endeavor. Thus, the diversity among musicians, movement artists, and theater performers was seen as contributing to harmony within the team. This suggests that collaboration across different artistic disciplines and cultural backgrounds can lead to a more holistic and integrated artistic expression.

The interviews stress on the importance of the team immersing themselves in the diverse cultures represented. This immersion is crucial for a deeper understanding of the subject matter, reflecting a commitment to authenticity and respect for cultural diversity. Living together, exchanging ideas, having discussions and training, contribute to a sense of togetherness and shared experience among team members. This implies that relationships and a shared journey play a significant role in the creative process.

**Impact in Different Contexts:** One of the interviewees shared the experiences of the show in various cities in Egypt, noting active discussions between men and women. It was observed that the focus of these discussions sometimes shifted from Nubian culture to gender-related topics. The interview highlighted the positive impact of the Carnival by encouraging people to interact and engage with the performance in public spaces. Additionally, one of the interviewees mentioned a diverse audience attended, including those from underprivileged neighborhoods, demonstrating the success of the project in reaching a wide range of audience and promoting diversity.

"In Port Said city , I remember the active discussions between women and men. Sometimes, women had differing views from men. It wasn't just about Nubian culture, but also about women's rights. Lots of discussions were more on women than Nubians. Most of the time, we

were in the streets, in the middle of the road, taking photos and seeing the people - relaxed and smiling - trying to interact during the show. They were not used to it, but it was nice to see them really get into their feelings, with smiles on their faces. I have a photo of a woman, completely veiled, where you could only see her two eyes. It was something significant for me, with so much contradiction. For me, it means that the project achieved its objectives, because the audience was very diverse. I also remember in a poor neighborhood, there were both poor kids with bare feet and others well dressed, mixing without realizing. It was a sign that the diversity in social class was present as well". – International Project Manager and Consultant.

It was also mentioned in the interviews that the project successfully engaged the community through active discussions on Nubian culture and women's rights. Noteworthy moments, such as capturing a veiled woman with only her eyes visible, symbolized the project's ability to navigate contradictions and complexities within the community. The project achieved its objectives by fostering a diverse audience, with discussions extending beyond cultural aspects to encompass broader social dimensions. The observation of individuals from different social classes mixing in unprivileged neighborhood highlighted the project's success in breaking down social barriers and celebrating the richness of varied experiences, contributing to a positive and impactful community engagement.

**Community Engagement and Acceptance:** The interviews further discuss the unexpected positive impact of Street Carnival in various communities in Egypt, including conservative, socially and economically challenged areas. The Carnival's impact is highlighted through specific examples, such as the enthusiastic engagement of children and teenagers, the audience's ability to self-organize during performances, and instances of hospitality and invitation by community members. The interviews point out the Carnival's role in promoting the fusion of dance between men and women and its effectiveness in encouraging critical thinking and interaction among the public. This simple, mobile tool-based street theater experience successfully integrated diverse

messages and engaged the audience in a thought-provoking manner, ultimately fostering contemplation and awareness.

One of the interviews highlighted the initial perception held by adults that the attending children and teenagers posed a challenge or risk to the event. This suggests a preconceived stereotype about this demographic, possibly rooted in assumptions or biases. On the contrary to the initial impression, the young attendees interacted positively with the event, with no negative incidents reported. This challenges the stereotype that children and teenagers are potential troublemakers or disruptors.

The fact that the young attendees were willing to focus, ask questions, and interact positively suggests that there was a strong level of engagement, acceptance and openness among the audience. This implies a curiosity and open-mindedness among the audience, challenging the notion that they would be uninterested or resistant to novel ideas.

The interviews also discuss that the performance were implemented in conservative and socially challenged communities, including schools and underserved areas. Despite challenges, such as the potential lack of acceptance by the society to unconventional forms of expression, the Carnival received a surprisingly high level of acceptance from these communities.

One of the interviewees recalled a situation where a conflict emerged between a couple during a performance. What followed was a form of self-regulation within the audience, with individuals stepping in to mediate or defend one party. This suggested a dynamic and responsive audience, actively participating in the unfolding events. This incident highlights the importance of individuals having the courage to speak up during the conflict. This act of courage is seen as empowering, enabling others to express themselves as well. It suggests that vocalizing concerns or intervening in a situation has a cascading effect, encouraging others to do the same.

While there was a conflict, the interviewee emphasized that the situation did not escalate into physical violence. This underscores the potential for conflicts to be resolved through verbal communication and intervention rather than resorting to physical harm. It reflects a form of conflict resolution that prioritizes dialogue and discussion. Additionally, it was mentioned that artists helped to slow down the situation which indicates that the performers played a role in diffusing tension. This suggests a collaborative effort between the audience and the artists in maintaining a harmonious atmosphere during the performance.

**Adaptive Nature in Challenging Situations:** The interviewee recounts an instance in Dumyat where the Carnival faced logistical challenges due to a crowded venue and heightened security. Despite these obstacles, the audience and performers improvised, creating an interactive and dynamic space for the show. People autonomously organized themselves, offering solutions and adapting to the situation. This not only facilitated the performance, but also indicated a positive impact on the audience's behavior and engagement, even if they do not fully agree with the messages addressed.

The interviews highlighted the challenging circumstances of the performance in certain cities. The combination of being on a beach and facing a high security presence added pressure, setting the stage for potential difficulties in executing the performance. Despite these challenges, one interviewee noted that the audience, singers, and people in the neighborhood were so numerous that finding space to perform became a significant issue. This overwhelming interaction indicates a high level of interest and engagement from the community. Despite these logistical challenges, during the performance, the audience began to spontaneously expand and organize themselves. This spontaneous response suggests a collective effort by the audience to address the spatial constraints, indicating a shared desire to engage with the performance.

**Fostering Critical Thinking:** One of the interviews discussed the positive effects of Street Carnival in a village in Upper Egypt. Despite addressing controversial topics, the locals showed their appreciation by inviting the Carnival team to share a meal and perform in other villages. This demonstrates the Carnival's ability to foster community engagement and acceptance, even in the most conservative places. The interviews also highlight how the Carnival brought men and women together in dance, highlighting Nubian culture and promoting critical thinking among the audience. It concludes that the Carnival's simple, mobile setting, and non-traditional approach has far-reaching impact, encouraging contemplation and critical thinking among street audiences without resorting to slogans or propaganda.

The interviews acknowledged the potential controversy associated with discussing topics related to women, especially when an actress played the role of someone holding a higher position than the actor. This indicates an awareness of the cultural and social sensitivities within the conservative community. Despite the potentially controversial content, the community expressed appreciation by inviting the performers to share meals. This gesture is significant as it represents a form of welcome and hospitality, suggesting that the community enjoyed and respected the performers and their work. Furthermore, invitations from another village upon learning about the performance indicate that the experience resonated positively, creating a ripple effect of interest and appreciation. The act of inviting the performers to eat is symbolic, representing a gesture of welcome, acceptance, and appreciation in many cultures, including Egypt. It suggests a willingness to engage and connect, despite potential differences in perspectives or controversial themes addressed in the performance. These invitations reflect the positive impact of the performance on the community. The willingness to extend invitations suggests that the performance not only resonated positively but also fostered a sense of connection and understanding between the performers and the audience.

In conclusion, the Street Carnival project in Egypt has had a profound and positive impact on cultural diversity, gender-based violence, and societal



engagement. This took place through promoting the Nubian culture and addressing sensitive gender-related issues. Street Carnival has become a powerful tool for fostering critical thinking and contemplation among diverse communities, including conservative ones. It has successfully demonstrated that diversity and inclusion are not only about recognizing differences but also finding solutions to societal problems through dialogue and interaction.

The project's ability to engage with a wide range of audiences, from different socioeconomic backgrounds and age groups, has been a testament to its success. The Carnival has not only showcased the richness of cultural diversity but also encouraged people to interact, think critically, and explore new perspectives. It has bridged the gap between various cultures, bringing men and women together in dance, and creating a harmonious dynamic within the team of artists.

The Carnival's impact extends to even the most conservative and socially challenged communities, where it has been welcomed with surprising acceptance and has led to self-regulation and discussion among community members. The ability of the audience to autonomously organize and adapt to challenging situations during performances further demonstrates the positive influence of the carnival.

Table 1: Grounded Theory Coding Summary:

<b>Themes from the Inter-views</b>	<b>Codes (Conceptualization)</b>
Physical Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street Carnival as a physical experience presented in the street to the public.</li> <li>• Festivities offered to the public for easy acceptance and enjoyment.</li> <li>• Clever and artistic integration of messages without overt propaganda.</li> </ul>
Diversity and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity as represented in the artists and performance messages.</li> <li>• Positive outcomes related to the acceptance of the project by diverse audiences.</li> <li>• Promotion of critical thinking through engagement with different cultures.</li> </ul>

Nubian Culture and Gender-Based Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of Nubian culture and its respect for women in society.</li> <li>• Addressing gender-based violence as a focus of the project.</li> <li>• Strengthening understanding and establishing closer relationships with Nubian culture.</li> </ul>
Cultural Diversity within the Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity among performers in terms of backgrounds, genders, and minority cultures.</li> <li>• Creating a harmonious dynamic within the team through prototyping.</li> <li>• Importance of understanding cultural diversity within the team before presenting to the community.</li> </ul>
Impact in Different Contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active discussions between men and women in various cities.</li> <li>• Positive impact on audience behavior, self-organization, and engagement.</li> <li>• Diverse audience, including those from underprivileged neighborhoods.</li> </ul>
Community Engagement and Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surprising acceptance in conservative and socially challenged communities.</li> <li>• Self-regulation and discussions among community members.</li> <li>• Positive effects on audience behavior, autonomy, and adaptability.</li> </ul>
Adaptive Nature in Challenging Situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audience autonomously organizing and adapting to challenging situations.</li> </ul>
Fostering Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvisation and dynamic interaction during performances.</li> <li>• Positive impact on audience behavior and engagement during logistical challenges.</li> <li>• Encouraging critical thinking among diverse communities.</li> <li>• Impactful role in promoting contemplation and awareness.</li> </ul>

## 5.2 Street Carnival's Effectiveness in an Unstable Political Setting

Street Carnival project in Egypt faced a multitude of challenges that span from the realms of organized policies and security concerns to difficulties in securing institutional support and financing. The project's unique approach and unconventional style made it a less traditional option, often presenting hurdles when seeking sponsors. Nonetheless, the project's core objective was to underscore the importance of cultural diversity and social intervention in Egypt. It served as a platform to address and solve pressing societal issues and promote a more positive and inclusive national framework. This vision necessitated the support and understanding of both funders and institutions, especially when dealing with unique and unconventional projects.

Despite the following challenges, Street Carnival's commitment to celebrating diversity, enhancing societal understanding, and effecting change in Egypt remained unwavering. Its significance laid in its potential to transform communities and pave the way for constructive dialogue and creative solutions to contemporary challenges, fostering a more inclusive and diverse society.

**Existing Policies:** The project faced challenges at the level of laws and regulating policies, particularly concerning peaceful assembly and the presence of art in public spaces. Sometimes, it can be difficult to ensure that artists are able to work in a safe environment, especially when dealing with conservative and bureaucratic authorities who may view the project as incitement.

Studies have shown that there is a connection between cultural participation and political activities, including demonstrations and activism (Council of Europe 2017). The issuance of Law No. 107 for 2013 in Egypt, also known as The Protest Law, has sparked widespread criticism, particularly from human rights defenders and legal personnel who are concerned about the rights granted by the Egyptian Constitution (ElMadina 2015). The Protest Law severely restricts the rights and freedoms of Egyptian artists to express themselves socially and artistically even in a manner that is within moral and societal norms.

The interviews highlighted the challenges faced by artists in navigating policies related to peaceful assembly and the role of art in public spaces. They underscored the complexities that arise from opposition, conservative viewpoints, and security concerns, particularly in sensitive post-revolution contexts.

Some interviewees point to challenges related to the nature of peaceful assembly, suggesting that even with certain levels of approval, artists may encounter opposition, especially from conservative and bureaucratic individuals. This implies a tension between artistic expression and societal norms or policies related to public gatherings. It also suggests that there is a significant challenge in positioning art and its role in public spaces, which could be due to differing perspectives on the purpose and impact of art and the potential for it to be misunderstood or misinterpreted.

The interviews also emphasized the importance of providing artists with a safe working environment. This implies that artistic expression is sometimes constrained by concerns for the safety of artists, particularly in contexts where certain forms of expression may be perceived as controversial. The interviewees also noted that the post uprising period was a sensitive time, and security concerns during this time could limit artistic expression, especially in public spaces. This suggests that societal and political contexts significantly impact the freedom of artistic expression. It also mentioned that the main focus of the state after the uprising was the security situation, indicating that security concerns may take precedence over artistic freedom, potentially leading to limitations on public artistic activities.

**The Security Challenge:** The security situation was a significant challenge for the project. It affected the project's nature, community interaction, artistic quality, and overall impact.

The interviews reflected on the complex interplay between security considerations, community dynamics, and the overall impact of a project. It

suggested that while efforts to address security challenges were essential, they may have had nuanced effects on different aspects of the project and its interaction with the community. The specific example of rejected requests of holding the Carnival in some cities added a concrete dimension to the challenges faced in the project's implementation.

**Institutional Collaboration:** The project faced challenges related to government institutions and their readiness to support and cooperate with such experiments. Some institutions, such as youth centers or schools, had strong concerns that limit their involvement and, in some cases, hindered their involvement altogether.

In one of the interviews, the speaker, reflected on the varying levels of openness and collaboration offered by different types of institutions. Local clubs and theaters were open to collaborate. However, in government institutions like youth centers or schools, there seemed to be a perception of hesitancy or fear that limits their involvement.

**Financing:** Financial challenges were also significant. While financing may not always be readily available, even when it is available, dealing with foreign funding sources can be complicated due to state regulations. Financing posed a hurdle to the project's sustainability and development.

The interviews pointed out the challenges faced when attempting to revive or create new models of artistic creation, emphasizing that financing is a significant hurdle. This suggest that financial constraints are a common obstacle in the pursuit of innovative or experimental projects. They suggested that financing is not only challenging to secure but is often unavailable. This underscores a broader issue in obtaining the necessary resources for creative initiatives, potentially limiting the ability to bring new ideas to fruition. Furthermore, they highlighted the difficulty in obtaining foreign funding due to an unclear procedure. This lack of clarity can involve bureaucratic complexities, legal procedures, or a lack of transparent processes, making it challenging for individuals or projects to access international financial support.

**Bottom-up Approach:** The project's unique and unconventional approach challenged traditional styles, making it difficult to attract sponsors or funders, especially those who prefer more conventional approaches. Explaining and justifying the concept's uniqueness and its potential positive impact posed a challenge when seeking support.

The interviewees reflected on the challenges associated with conducting experiments in public spaces, emphasizing the complexity of the endeavor. One of the speakers touched on legal, institutional, security, and financial aspects, highlighting the multifaceted nature of the obstacles faced in bringing creative and experimental initiatives to the street.

**Risk Aversion by Funders:** Some funders could not fully understand the context and challenges of the project, pushing the project implementing organization to look for funders who are willing to take calculated risks in this unique context.

The interviews underscored the challenges faced by the Carnival concept in securing sponsorship due to its unconventional and incomprehensible style, which diverges from traditional norms. One speaker noted the difficulty in communicating this unique selling point to potential sponsors, as their preference for conventional models raised skepticism and questions about the concept's viability. The acknowledgment of potential misunderstandings by funders, coupled with an emphasis on continuous innovation, reflected a nuanced approach to navigating these challenges and building trust in a landscape where a different, innovative model was presented as a potential source of income.

Table 2: Grounded Theory Coding Summary:

Themes from the Interviews	Codes (Conceptualization)
Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organized laws, restrictions on peaceful assembly, impact on artists' expression</li> <li>Protest Law (Law No. 107 for 2013) limitations</li> </ul>
Security Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact on project's nature, community interaction, artistic quality</li> <li>Challenges in locations like Ismailia due to security concerns</li> </ul>
Institutional Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government institutions' hesitancy, concerns limiting involvement</li> <li>Examples: Youth centers, Ministry of Education</li> </ul>
Financing Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial challenges, complications with foreign funding sources</li> <li>Hurdles to sustainability and development</li> </ul>
Bottom-Up Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unconventional style challenging traditional sponsorship preferences</li> <li>Difficulty in attracting sponsors who prefer more conventional approaches</li> </ul>
Risk Aversion by Funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funders' lack of comprehension of the project's uniqueness</li> <li>Importance of finding funders willing to take calculated risks</li> </ul>

Despite the myriad challenges it faced, Street Carnival project has proven remarkably effective in its mission to celebrate diversity, enhance societal understanding, and affect change in Egypt's tumultuous political landscape positively. This effectiveness can be attributed to several key factors:

**Resilience and Determination:** The project's organizers and participants displayed an unwavering commitment to their vision. They persistently navigate the obstacles, demonstrating their resilience and determination to bring their message of cultural diversity and societal intervention to the forefront.

The interviews outlined a strategic approach taken by the Street Carnival team in implementing the project, specifically addressing the challenges associated with obtaining approvals for performances in different cities. The interviewees indicated that the Street Carnival team opted for a decentralized implementation plan. This suggests a strategic decision to distribute decision-making and operational responsibilities across different locations, rather than relying on a centralized model.

The decentralized approach was mentioned as a response to the challenges of obtaining approvals for performances in twelve cities. To address this, the team localized coordination and management, aiming to navigate the specific regulations and dynamics of each location more effectively. The team assigned three local field coordinators across three regions where the twelve cities are located, reflecting an acknowledgment of the importance of local expertise and relationships in successfully managing the logistics and obtaining approvals in each region. The decentralized plan was described as efficient, suggesting that the distributed nature of decision-making and coordination was seen as a more streamlined and effective way to handle the complexities of the project.

**Community Impact:** The Street Carnival's ability to connect with local communities and engage with diverse audiences is a testament to its effectiveness. Street Carnival created a sense of belonging and inclusivity, fostering a more positive and inclusive national framework, even in the face of societal challenges.

*“The original project plan was to present the performance in 10 cities, but we ended up performing in 12 different cities. Some members of the audience even invited us to perform in their neighborhoods and venues after attending our performance. We were able to perform in a variety of locations including streets, churches, and clubs. This demonstrates the significant impact our performance had on the audience, despite the sensitive topics that we discuss.” – Artist.*



This artist's statement reveals a change in the original plan to present the performance in 10 cities, ultimately expanding to 12 cities. The change underscores a flexible approach, potentially influenced by unexpected opportunities or increased demand. The artist highlighted audience engagement, noting that some attendees extended invitations for performances in their neighborhoods, reflecting a positive response and a strong impact on the audience. The diverse range of performance locations, including churches, clubs, and streets, showcased adaptability and a willingness to connect with various audiences in different settings. Despite addressing sensitive topics, the artist emphasized the significant impact on the audience, suggesting effective navigation of these subjects. The invitations to perform in additional neighborhoods and venues further indicate a commendable level of community involvement, illustrating a successful project that not only achieved its original goals but also fostered community engagement and exceeded expectations.

**Creative Problem-Solving:** The project's team showed remarkable adaptability and creativity in addressing challenges such as laws and regulations, security concerns, institutional hesitancy, and financing difficulties. They continually found innovative solutions to keep the Carnival thriving.

One of the interviewees described a proactive approach taken by the artistic direction and team of a performance to ensure mobility and quick evacuation, presenting a contingency plan to avoid potential shutdowns or objections from security forces or conservative communities. The unexpected, positive interaction with security forces was also highlighted.

- **Proactive Contingency Plan:**

The team decided to design all props and sound equipment to be as mobile as possible. This suggests a deliberate effort to ensure the performance could be set up and evacuated quickly, allowing for flexibility in the event of unforeseen challenges. The goal of making everything mobile was explicitly stated as facilitating the ability to start the performance and evacuate the

place within just one minute. This demonstrated a commitment to adaptability and readiness to respond swiftly to any potential issues.

- **Mitigating Potential Challenges:**

The contingency plan was explicitly mentioned as a measure to avoid shutdowns of the performance by security forces. This suggests an awareness of the potential for security concerns and a proactive approach to address them. The plan also aimed to minimize objections from conservative communities. This indicated an understanding of potential cultural or social sensitivities that might arise and a desire to navigate those challenges proactively.

- **Advocacy for Change:**

The Street Carnival did not only provide a platform for artistic expression but also served as an advocate for change. By addressing pressing societal issues, it sparked conversations and promoted solutions to contemporary challenges, thereby contributing to the transformation of Egyptian society. One of the artists, during the interviews, noted that security forces, upon discovering about the show, interacted with it, took photos, and thoroughly enjoyed it. This unexpected, positive interaction contrasted with the initial expectation of potential shutdowns, showcasing the success of the performance.

*“The project also contributed to promoting arts in public spaces. When the security and police saw the performance, they liked it and supported us. During our tour in Ras El Bar, the police drove us in their car from one venue to another and even attended the performance. This happened spontaneously without any prior security approvals or permissions. This was a big deal in Egypt.”* Artist, Cultural Manager, and Policy Expert.

**Fostering Inclusion:** The tangible impact of the Street Carnival on communities, individuals, and the national conversation cannot be underrated. It fostered positive dialogue, creative solutions, and a stronger sense of unity in a society marked by instability and divisions.

*“The performance not only addressed or advocated for cultural diversity and the importance of inclusion for all minorities, but it also showed the added value that minorities or others can provide to the whole community.”* Artist, Cultural Manager, and Policy Expert.

This quote asserts that Street Carnival performance went beyond advocating for cultural diversity and inclusion, also highlighted the added value that minorities or others contribute with to the broader community. This comprehensive approach, blending artistic expression with cultural management and policy expertise, suggests a commitment to promoting inclusivity not only through creative means but also within societal frameworks. The statement underscores a positive narrative, emphasizing the enriching impact of diverse communities and the potential for the performance to influence policies that foster a more inclusive environment.

In conclusion, the Street Carnival project in Egypt, operating in an unstable political setting, faces a myriad of challenges ranging from organized policies, security concerns, institutional openness, financing difficulties, and a lack of understanding by potential funders. However, despite these formidable obstacles, the project proved to be remarkably effective in achieving its core objective of celebrating diversity, enhancing societal understanding, and effecting positive change in Egypt.

This effectiveness can be attributed to the project's resilience and determination, as the organizers and participants persistently navigated obstacles, displaying unwavering commitment to their vision. Their ability to connect with local communities and engage diverse audiences created a sense of belonging and inclusivity, fostering a more positive and inclusive national framework.

Moreover, the project's team have demonstrated creative problem-solving skills, finding innovative solutions to address the various challenges they encountered. Street Carnival project also served as an advocate for change by addressing pressing societal issues and sparking conversations that promoted solutions to contemporary challenges.

The tangible impact of the Street Carnival on communities, individuals, and the national conversation is undeniable. It fosters positive dialogue, creative solutions, and a stronger sense of unity in a society marked by instability and divisions. Despite the obstacles, Street Carnival project remains a shining example of the power of art and culture to result in meaningful change in challenging environments.

### **5.3 Bottom-Up Approach in Arts Management**

Cultural policy involves government interventions in the realms of arts, culture, and heritage, whether pertaining to non-profit or for-profit cultural industries (Schuster 2002; Miller and Yúdice 2002 as cited in Hadley 2021). It encompasses governmental strategies and initiatives aimed at promoting the production, dissemination, marketing, and consumption of art (Rentschler, 2002: 17).

In one of the interviews, the discourse revolved around the contention that the overarching goal of cultural policy in Egypt lacks explicit clarity in written documentation. The interviewee ardently argued that the true essence of the culture policy should be centered on empowering citizens to express themselves and preserving the diverse tapestry of cultural heritage. The emphasis on empowering citizens signaled a fervent desire for cultural policies that not only facilitate individual expression but also foster creativity and active participation in cultural activities, aligning seamlessly with the vision of cultivating a dynamic and engaged cultural landscape.

Furthermore, the interviewee underscored the paramount importance of cultural policy in safeguarding diversity. This commitment towards safeguarding diversity is achieved through recognizing and supporting various cultural expressions, thereby ensuring that the cultural landscape authentically mirrors the profound richness embedded in the country's diverse heritage. Simultaneously, the interview offered a critical perspective on the state-centric approach, cautioning against the risk of cultural policies used as instruments of control rather than empowerment.

**Centralization:** The discussion during the interviews revolved around the cultural policy in Egypt and its impact on freedom of expression and art production. There is a need for cultural policy to empower citizens and preserve diversity, rather than centralizing power with the state. Two enlightening interviewees provided comprehensive insights on cultural policy in Egypt, drawing attention to the vital principles of empowering citizens, preserving diversity, and challenging the prevailing centralization of cultural policies around in capital.

In one interview, the focus shifted to the issue of centralization, particularly the concentration of cultural activities in Cairo or around the capital. This geographic centralization suggests a disproportionate focus on cultural decision-making and activities in a specific area, potentially neglecting the cultural vibrancy of other regions. The interviewee astutely pointed out that existing cultural policies tend to center around mainstream expressions, inadvertently sidelining the unseen diversity that may be hidden in the lesser-known cultural practices. This observation raises concerns that cultural policies might inadvertently prioritize popular or mainstream cultural expressions, inadvertently neglecting the richness of diverse and lesser-known cultural practices.

The critique of centralization and a mainstream-centric focus implicitly advocates for the adoption of more inclusive cultural policies. This shift towards inclusivity entails a broader consideration and support for a diverse range of cultural expressions, including those that may be marginalized or less visible. The emphasis on the importance of research within the interview highlights

the crucial role of evidence-based approaches in understanding and addressing issues related to cultural policy. This nuanced perspective underscores the necessity for a thorough understanding of cultural dynamics and the need for policies that genuinely reflect the diverse cultural landscape of the country.

**Freedom of Expression:** There are criticism to the lack of freedom for marginal production which deviates from the state's imposed central production. This comes in addition to the bureaucratic challenges in collecting data for research in Egypt. Cultural policies tend to focus on Cairo and mainstream culture, neglecting diversity.

The interviews shed light on the challenges faced by independent production, particularly in the context of cultural research in Egypt. It mentioned difficulties in collecting data independently due to bureaucratic hurdles and complex approval processes. The mention of those legal intricacies and the potential for prolonged delays indicates the restrictive nature of the environment for researchers.

Another interviewee contended that the limited space enjoyed by marginal production, defined as anything deviating from the central production imposed by the state, is emphasized in both the public and virtual sphere. This suggests a tight control over cultural expression. The overarching narrative suggests a challenging environment for independent cultural production, where both bureaucratic obstacles and restrictions on freedom of expression contribute to a constrained landscape, particularly for those diverging from the state-approved mainstream.

**Civic Space:** There are suggestions that the government's fear of any future uprising or political movements is the reason behind imposing restrictions on civil society and shutting down institutions.

The interviews highlighted the challenges faced by artists due to laws and regulating policies, particularly concerning peaceful assembly and art in public spaces. The artist described the significant challenge in creating art

within a safe environment where even with official approvals, conservative and bureaucratic elements may consider it as incitement. The security situation is identified as a substantial hurdle for artists. The speaker suggested that without those constraints, there could have been a more positive impact on the nature of artistic products, community interactions, and the overall project. This emphasizes the complex dynamics between regulatory environments, security concerns and artistic expression.

Another interviewee endorsed that the shrinking civic space in general, attributing it to the government's fear of potential unrest or opposition. The speaker mentioned restricting measures such as amending laws and restricting funds for arts and cultural organizations. The overarching sentiment is that these actions stem from a sense of fear within the government, suppressing alternative opinions and preventing dissent. The interviewee expressed skepticism about the connection of these measures to cultural sector and asserted that the overarching issue persists across various sectors of civil society. This perspective suggests a broader pattern of control and restriction driven by fear of dissent, impacting not only the cultural sphere but also civil society as a whole.

**Sustainability:** There is some criticism to top-down approaches where financiers impose guidelines without considering local needs, resulting in wasting resources and a lack of project continuity. One of the interviewees mentioned the negative impact of swift policy changes and inactive management of cultural programs funded by the European Union.

The interviews highlighted the challenges in the funding landscape, particularly issues related to top-down approaches, sudden changes in funding priorities, and perceived inefficiencies in program management. The critique emphasized the importance of local participation, continuity of projects, and strategic, well-managed funding to ensure meaningful and sustainable impact in the cultural and project management domains.

Another interviewee also criticized the top-down approach to funding, where organizations develop guidelines without local participation, leading to irrelevant projects that do not address local needs. It was pointed out that the issues arising from sudden shifts in the funder's focus, causing grassroots organizations to redirect their efforts, even if this is not aligned with their expertise or the specific needs of their community. The lack of sustainability in projects was emphasized, indicating a potential loss of impact due to changing funding priorities.

Another interviewee shared the same concerns about the inefficiencies and negative consequences of sudden changes in the policy or agenda proposed by funders. The speaker suggested that the funds allocated to programs might be wasted due to these abrupt shifts. Additionally, there's criticism of the European Union's funding and management practices, implying that the impact of programs is diminished, possibly due to a lack of strategic planning or effective oversight.

**Participation:** The interviews discussed the effectiveness of the bottom-up approach and its role in empowering societies, fostering change, and promoting cultural awareness. The interviewees mentioned the challenges that artists face in creating art in a safe environment.

The interviewees emphasized the significance of a bottom-up approach in cultural and societal development, with a focus on grassroots initiatives and the role of art. One interview underscored the importance of popular culture at the grassroots level. It was suggested that this approach fosters critical thinking and self-expression, emphasizing that the goal is not necessarily to make everyone an artist but to create awareness about the role of art in shaping social consciousness, promoting public peace, building relationships, and expressing diverse perspectives and experiences.

Another interview also reinforced the efficacy of the bottom-up approach. It is seen as more efficient and effective, playing a vital role in empowering societies, generating demand, fostering social dialogue on pertinent issues,



building solidarity among diverse social groups, and enabling organizations to advocate for the needs of the people they serve. This perspective underscores the dynamic and participatory nature of the bottom-up approach, where communities actively engage in the processes that impact them, leading to a more responsive and inclusive cultural development.

Table 3: Grounded Theory Coding Summary on Bottom-Up Approach and Arts Management.

<b>Themes from the Interviews</b>	<b>Codes (Conceptualization)</b>
Centralization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cairo-centric policies, mainstream cultural focus.</li> </ul>
Freedom of Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bureaucratic challenges, lack of freedom for marginal production.</li> <li>• Bureaucratic challenges in collecting data.</li> </ul>
Civic Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governmental manipulation, restrictions on civil society.</li> </ul>
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top-down approach where the financer comes with guidelines and negative impact of sudden policy changes.</li> </ul>
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empowering societies, social dialogue, demand from grassroots.</li> <li>• Bottom-up approach more efficient, building solidarity between different social groups.</li> </ul>

In conclusion, the interviews shed light on the intricate landscape of cultural policy in Egypt, revealing both strengths and challenges. The centralization of cultural power in Cairo, bureaucratic obstacles affecting freedom of expression and research, and the shrinking civic space due to governmental fears of another uprising pose significant hurdles. The sustainability of cultural initiatives is also questioned with top-down approaches criticized for not aligning with local needs and impacting the sustainability of the projects.

On a positive note, the discussions emphasized the crucial role of a bottom-up approach in empowering societies, fostering dialogue, and solidarity among diverse social groups. The importance of preserving diversity and empowering citizens, as opposed to concentrating power in the state, emerges as a key theme. The interviews advocate for a clear cultural policy that not only supports artistic expression but also contributes to social awareness and public engagement.

In navigating the complex terrain of cultural policy, the call for a more inclusive, participatory, and sustainable approach resonates. It is evident that fostering a cultural environment that values diverse voices, encourages freedom of expression, and empowers citizens at the grassroots level is essential for the flourishing of the arts and the well-being of society as a whole.

#### **5.4 The Importance of a Bottom-Up Approach in International Cultural Relations**

**Bottom-Up Approach:** The interviews highlighted the importance of the bottom-up approach in international cultural relations. Interviewees emphasized the need for international organizations like the European Union to engage more with civil society organizations, support long term structural projects that empower local organizations and enhance knowledge sharing and networking.

One interviewee articulated a holistic perspective, asserting that events anywhere in the world have a strong influence, emphasizing the interconnectedness of global dynamics. This statement underscored the paramount importance of the European Union in supporting projects globally, viewing its existence as transcending narrow perspectives. It identifies with the EU's values, including rights and cultural diversity, positioning them as essentials to a broader identity. The advocacy for the global promotion of these values reflects a belief in their power to foster peace and understanding, mitigating social conflicts that directly or indirectly affect the

EU. The acknowledgment that isolating oneself from global events could be a threat underscores a recognition of the inextricable link between individual well-being and global issues, while also suggesting a proactive stance in addressing challenges faced by the EU arising from social conflicts.

**Grassroots organization:** Interviewees also stressed on the importance of decentralizing financial support to reach grassroots organizations and peripheries, ultimately giving up on the rigid guidelines of the international organizations.

*“I think that one of the most important things to me is that the support must go to structural projects, I mean structural activities, meaning that the money has to be used to help the cultural sector to be better organized, better structured, empowered in terms of knowledge, in advocacy techniques and networking. I think that it needs to be extended to more grassroots organizations, to decentralize, to go to smaller towns outside the big capitals, working with organizations, youngsters, and maybe cross-transversal.”* – Cultural Policy and Human Rights Expert.

This Cultural Policy and Human Rights Expert underscored the significance of directing support towards structural projects within the cultural sector, emphasizing the need for better organization, improved structures, and empowerment through knowledge, advocacy techniques, and networking. Calling for a shift towards grassroots organizations and decentralization, the expert advocates for extending cultural support to the peripheries outside major cities, working collaboratively with youth and adopting cross-transversal approaches. This comprehensive perspective reflects a commitment to holistic cultural development, acknowledging the interconnectedness of cultural issues with broader societal concerns and striving for inclusivity and equitable distribution of cultural resources and opportunities.

**International Organizations Processes:** On the other hand, there were criticisms of bureaucratic processes and the need for more flexible and adaptable frameworks in project management to better respond to local needs and realities. Overall, the focus is on enhancing collaboration, empowering local communities, and promoting shared values in international cultural relations.

The interviews reflected a nuanced perspective on the European Union's involvement in the cultural field, particularly in terms of legitimacy, support, and bureaucratic processes. One statement suggested that while the European Union gains legitimacy in cultural initiatives, there are some reservations. The emphasis on formal agreements with governments is seen as prioritizing diplomatic relations over a deeper engagement with civil society. The desire for more effort to involve the independent or free community suggests a yearning for a more inclusive approach beyond formal channels.

Another interview criticized the EU bureaucracy, indicating a perceived gap between the EU's financial support and understanding of local needs. The imposition of guidelines and bureaucratic processes is seen as restrictive, hindering the adaptability of projects to local contexts. The speaker acknowledged the ability to innovate in the absence of a rigid framework, highlighting the tension between the need for support and the desire for flexibility in managing projects. Overall, these perspectives convey a complex relationship between the European Union and cultural initiatives, addressing issues of legitimacy, support mechanisms, and bureaucratic challenges.

Table 4: Grounded Theory Coding Summary on Importance of Bottom-Up Approach in International Cultural Relations.

<b>Themes from the Interviews</b>	<b>Codes (Conceptualization)</b>
Bottom-Up Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grassroots engagement</li> <li>• Local empowerment</li> <li>• Knowledge sharing</li> <li>• Networking</li> </ul>

Grassroots Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil society collaboration</li> <li>• Structural projects</li> </ul>
International Organizations Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility in project management</li> <li>• Ease bureaucratic challenges</li> <li>• Adaptable frameworks</li> </ul>

In conclusion, the discussions underscore the significance of a bottom-up approach in international cultural relations, emphasizing the need for increased engagement by international organizations like the European Union with civil society. The interviews stress the importance of supporting structural projects that empower local organizations and promote knowledge sharing and networking. The conversation with the interviewees highlights the interconnectedness of global issues and the holistic nature of societal changes. The promotion of values such as cultural diversity and human rights by international organizations is seen as crucial for fostering peace and understanding globally. However, there are criticisms to the bureaucratic processes and a call for more flexible project management frameworks aligned with local needs. Despite challenges, the overarching focus remains on collaboration, empowering local communities, and promoting shared values in the realm of international cultural relations.

### 5.5 The Power of Non-State Initiatives in Cultural Dialogue

**Empowerment:** The smaller and grassroots organizations can be supported with the right combination of resources, even if they believe that they lack the capacity or experience. Pressure on governments tends to come from international organizations which may not always have an in-depth understanding of what is happening on the ground.

*“The funders will tell you that grassroots organizations don't have the capacity, they can't manage the money, they don't have enough experience, but I'm sure that you can find some combination to support smaller organizations and grassroots organizations.”* – Cultural Policy and Human Rights Expert.

This statement reflects a nuanced perspective on the influence of international organizations and their policies on the ground. One interviewee suggested that the pressure exerted by international organizations is largely based on policies that may not always align with the realities on the ground. The separation between international policies and on-the-ground dynamics is emphasized, implying a potential disconnect between the overarching goals of these organizations and the local context in which they operate. The interviewee questions whether it is realistic to expect all international organizations to have an in-depth understanding of what is happening on the ground to effectively influence governments. This inquiry implies a recognition of the complexity and diversity of local situations that may not be fully grasped from a centralized international perspective. Overall, the statement highlights the complexity and potential limitations of the influence exerted by international organizations in shaping on-the-ground outcomes.

**Governmental Control:** The government's policies are effectively controlled ideas and centralizing production, sometimes even demonizing and accusing dissenters of working against the state. According to Media Ownership Monitor website, the cinema, television and music scenes in Egypt have been acquired by the government through newly established media companies owned by the “General Intelligence Service Agency” which is leading the cinema, television and media production agenda in Egypt nowadays (MOM n.d.).

*“If someone starts advocating for change, it has to come from outside. No one within the cultural elite is interested in this change because they consider it taboo. The government's policies have been highly successful in controlling ideas and centralizing production, even to the point of demonizing and accusing those who speak out of working against the state”. – Artist, Cultural Manager, and Policy Expert.*

This acknowledges the tight control of ideas and centralized production by the government in Egypt, highlighting a concerning situation where dissenting voices are demonized and accused of working against the state. The mention

of the government's influence on the cinema, television, and music scenes through media companies owned by the General Intelligence Service Agency underlines the extent to which the state is involved in shaping the cultural landscape. This perspective suggests a reluctance within the cultural elite to address such issues, deeming them taboo, which may further contribute to the challenges faced by those advocating for change. The overall statement conveys a critical view of the government's policies, emphasizing their success in controlling the cultural narrative and stifling dissent within the cultural elite.

**International Cultural Exchange:** International cultural exchange can help combat stereotypical images and promote understanding between different groups. By funding projects and activities that foster dialogue and engagement, non-state organizations can contribute to social change and development.

One interviewee reflected on the role of cultural exchange and international projects, particularly those supported by entities like the European Union, in countering stereotypical images and fostering understanding between different parties. The interview emphasizes that such initiatives serve as a form of promotion for not only the European Union but also other major institutions representing minorities or specific countries. The importance of challenging stereotypical images is highlighted, with the aim of dispelling conspiracy theories and promoting a more positive understanding of these entities. The mention of creating an exchangeable dialogue suggests that open communication plays a crucial role in breaking down preconceived notions. The idea of funding projects and activities is seen as a means to facilitate dialogue and understanding, emphasizing the transformative power of cultural exchange. Overall, this emphasizes the potential of cultural exchange initiatives, supported by international organizations, to contribute to improved mutual understanding, challenge stereotypes, and foster positive relationships between different entities and countries.

**Social Change:** The positive impact of projects such as Street Carnival implemented in various cities, bring culture and participation to communities that often lack access to such opportunities. Such projects can lead to a change in perspective and behavior, fostering a movement toward positive change.

*“The Street Carnival played a positive role, by going to 12 cities, and presenting it in various places within these communities which are usually far from the capita, especially in terms of culture, and also in terms of civil participation, political participation, and economic participation. So, you start to open up a space for them to discuss, interact and discuss issues that are important to them related to their daily life, their relationships if they are at home or their relationships with their surroundings, so it changes the society's perspective. This itself leads to a change in behavior over time.”* – Artist, Cultural Manager, Researcher, and Trainer.

In this quote, the expert articulated the transformative potential of a Street Carnival that visited twelve cities. The emphasis is on the carnival's role in bridging cultural and social gaps, particularly in communities often distant from mainstream cultural, civil, political, and economic participation. The expert argued that taking the Carnival to various places within these communities created a space for dialogue and interaction. This space facilitated discussions of issues integral to people's daily lives and relationships, fostering a societal perspective shift. The expert suggested that this altered perspective can, over time, contribute to a positive behavioral change and, importantly, become a catalyst for broader societal change.

Table 5: Grounded Theory Coding Summary on Non-State Initiatives and Dialogue Promotion.

<b>Themes from the Interviews</b>	<b>Codes (Conceptualization)</b>
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource support</li> <li>• Capacity building</li> <li>• Grassroots potential</li> </ul>
Governmental Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control over ideas</li> <li>• Centralized production</li> <li>• Demonization of dissenters</li> </ul>



International Cultural Exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combatting stereotypes</li> <li>• Promoting understanding</li> <li>• Funding dialogue-focused projects</li> </ul>
Social Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cultural engagement</li> <li>• Bringing culture to marginalized communities</li> <li>• Fostering positive change in behavior and perspective</li> </ul>
Transformative Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catalysts for change</li> <li>• Reshaping perspectives</li> <li>• Promoting inclusivity and progress</li> </ul>

To sum up, the influence of non-state initiatives and the promotion of dialogue stands out as a potent force for change. The often-overlooked voices of smaller organizations and grassroots movements hold immense potential, even when they claim a lack of capacity or experience. The pressure exerted by international organizations on governments may not always align with the realities on the ground, as pointed out in the interviews.

The interviews underscored how governmental control over media and narratives can stifle dissent and consolidate power. The success of such policies in demonizing dissenters is evident. Despite these challenges, the promotion of international cultural exchange emerges as a crucial strategy. Supporting projects that challenge stereotypes and foster dialogue becomes instrumental in driving social change and development.

perceiving events like Street Carnival as platforms for cultural engagement in marginalized communities reinforces the transformative power of non-state initiatives. These initiatives bring culture and participation to areas often left out, sparking conversations on critical issues. The observation that such engagement leads to changes in perspective and behavior highlights the potential impact these initiatives can have on fostering positive societal transformations.

In essence, the collective narrative of the interviews advocates for a comprehensive approach—supporting grassroots organizations, challenging media control, promoting international cultural exchange, and embracing

community engagement. Through these avenues, non-state initiatives can serve as catalysts for meaningful change, reshaping perspectives and behaviors towards a more inclusive and progressive future.

## **5.6 Tensions in Cultural Policy Approaches in Egypt**

The concept of “Democratic Cultural Policy” has not received much attention in the academic discussions (Hadley 2021). Existing literature on this topic primarily focuses on aspects such as accessibility, engagement, co-creation, diversity, participation, and inclusion. Cultural policy primarily deals with regulating and overseeing culture, specifically managing cultural products and the organizations responsible for creating them (Ibid). The discussions in the interviews highlighted the tensions and challenges within cultural policy approaches in Egypt. The cultural policy landscape in Egypt is characterized by uncertainty, government tight control, and challenges related to democracy and cultural diversity. The debate between top-down and bottom-up approaches reflects the complex nature of addressing cultural issues and promoting diversity in the country.

**Lack of Clarity and Tight Government Control:** Cultural policies in Egypt lack clarity, leading to uncertainty and vagueness. The government has been successful in controlling cultural ideas and centralizing production. There have been instances of organizations facing sudden orders to shut down without prior notice.

Since 2016, the policies of the Egyptian government have been based on the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy (UNESCO 2020). The Vision's eighth pillar discusses culture as a system for promoting positive cultural values while respecting diversity and differences (MPED 2016).

Many of the interviewees pointed out the lack of clarity of the Egyptian cultural policy, the analysis of these interviews can be clustered in the following four points:

1. Lack of clear cultural policies in Egypt. It was mentioned that the 2030 Vision had been removed from the official government website without explanation. Another interviewee echoed this remark, suggesting a difficulty in understanding the overall direction of cultural policies due to lack of transparency and accessibility of official texts and decisions.
2. The vagueness surrounding cultural policies, with specific reference to abrupt decisions, such as the shut down of organizations like Darbs 1718 without prior notice. This aligns with the notion presented in another interview about a "terrible hierarchy" and a lack of understanding of the long-term goals in cultural policy.
3. The concept of cultural policies was confusing for the government, especially in the context of the growth of independent institutions and cultural managers. One of the interviewees suggested that the government struggled to respond to the evolving landscape of independent cultural entities. This pushed those independent cultural entities to seek partnerships with civil society.
4. A perceived top-down approach to cultural policies, with a clear distinction between the world around the Ministry of Culture and government bodies and the civil society which feels disconnected from decision-making processes.

The interviews collectively convey a sense of confusion, vagueness, and a lack of transparency in Egypt's cultural policies. The perspectives highlight challenges such as sudden decisions, a top-down approach, and a divided cultural sector, raising questions about the overall effectiveness and direction of cultural policies in Egypt.

**Democracy as a Fundamental Challenge:** Democracy is seen as a fundamental challenge in Egypt, as it is intricately linked to the development and effectiveness of cultural policies. Without democracy and respect for human rights, it is difficult to formulate and implement effective cultural

policies that benefit society, promote equality, and empower citizens to participate in the social, political, and economic life.

The interviews suggested a strong link between democracy and the effectiveness of cultural policies. According to the interviewed Cultural Policy and Human Rights Expert, democracy is a fundamental requirement for shaping an effective cultural policy. Cultural policy is viewed not as an end in itself but as a means to achieve broader societal goals. It is seen as a tool for fostering a better society, ensuring equality, providing opportunities for citizens, and facilitating their active participation in the social, political, and economic life. The challenges faced by Egypt and other non-democratic countries, according to this perspective, are tied to the absence of democracy and a lack of respect for human rights.

**Top-Down Versus Bottom-Up Approaches:** There is a debate between the opponents of top-down and bottom-up approaches. While a top-down approach can be more efficient when decision-makers have the political will to support change, in Egypt's context, the bottom-up approach is often perceived to be more effective with the need of addressing specific challenges at the local level.

One of the interviews pointed that despite the inherent efficiency of a top-down approach in driving change and addressing social problems, its effectiveness is often hindered in a country like Egypt. The speaker argued that challenges in decision-making, attention to issues, and alignment with people's priorities make a bottom-up approach more pragmatic. The crux of this argument lies in the belief that individuals directly affected by problems are uniquely positioned to advocate for the change due to their personal connection, and understanding of the issues at hand. While acknowledging the potential efficacy of top-down initiatives, this perspective contends that, in the face of challenges, a bottom-up approach is better suited to address the nuanced and localized concerns of the population.

**Cultural Diversity Facing Challenges:** Despite the Egyptian constitutional support for cultural diversity, the practical implementation of cultural policies falls short. There is a lack of financial support and cultural spaces for groups such as the Nubians and the Amazigh minorities. These diverse cultures and their languages, customs, and traditions are not adequately represented or supported in society.

The interviews reflected on the evolving dynamics of cultural identity and diversity in Egypt, particularly noting changes that have become more pronounced since 2014. The interviewees expressed concern over the state's efforts to shape a national identity, suggesting that while the intention is not necessarily erasure of minority cultures, there is an observable attempt to establish a specific identity pattern. This effort, however, is seen as posing a challenge to various regional cultures, such as Nubian, Amazigh, and other minority cultures, whose unique languages and heritages face pressure due to the imposition of Arabic as the only official language taught in schools and as a language of communication.

Furthermore, this perspective contends that the push for a national cultural pattern might inadvertently marginalize or neglect the distinct needs and specialties of the diverse cultures within the community. The critique extends to the thematic focus under the banner of national themes, which, despite their broad association with nationalism, are perceived to follow a specific track, potentially limiting the broader, more inclusive concept of nationalism.

Overall, this perspective highlights a tension between the pursuit of a cohesive national identity and the preservation of cultural diversity, revealing a nuanced concern about the potential consequences of such cultural policies.

Table 6: Grounded Theory Coding Summary on Tensions in Cultural Policy Approaches in Egypt.

<b>Themes from the Inter-views</b>	<b>Codes (Conceptualization)</b>
Cultural Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncertainty and vagueness</li> <li>• Control over cultural ideas</li> <li>• Centralization of production</li> <li>• Sudden decisions impacting organizations</li> </ul>
Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link between democracy and cultural policy effectiveness</li> <li>• Lack of democracy and respect for human rights</li> <li>• Challenges in cultural policy due to lack of democracy</li> </ul>
Top-Down Vs Bottom-Up Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate between top-down and bottom-up approaches</li> <li>• Efficiency of top-down with political will</li> <li>• Effectiveness of bottom-up due to local challenges</li> </ul>
Cultural Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of financial support</li> <li>• Insufficient cultural spaces</li> <li>• Imposition of a national cultural pattern</li> <li>• Challenges to diverse cultures (Nubians, Amazigh, etc.)</li> </ul>
Government and Civil Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dominance of top-down approach</li> <li>• Lack of transparency</li> <li>• Disconnect between government and civil society initiatives</li> </ul>
Practical Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of representation for diverse groups</li> <li>• Shortcomings in practical implementation</li> <li>• Gap between constitutional ideals and realities</li> </ul>

In conclusion, the tensions in cultural policy approaches in Egypt are multifaceted and rooted due to various challenges. The lack of clarity and government control in cultural policies contribute to uncertainty and

vagueness with sudden decisions impacting cultural organizations. The dominance of a top-down approach, coupled with a lack of transparency, creates a disconnection between government-driven cultural initiatives and independent civil society efforts, instead of complementing each other.

Democracy emerges as a fundamental challenge, with the effectiveness of cultural policies closely tied to the broader political landscape. The absence of democracy and respect for human rights hinders the formulation and implementation of inclusive cultural policies that empower citizens and promote societal equality.

The debate between top-down and bottom-up approaches further highlights the complexity of addressing cultural issues in Egypt. While a top-down approach may be efficient with political will, the reality of challenges at the local level often necessitates a bottom-up approach, where individuals facing specific issues are better equipped to address them.

Moreover, the practical implementation of cultural diversity policies falls short, despite constitutional support. Diverse groups, lack adequate representation and support, showcasing a gap between constitutional ideals and on-the-ground realities.

In essence, navigating the tensions in cultural policy approaches in Egypt requires addressing issues of clarity, government control, democratic deficits, and the effective balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches. Additionally, bridging the gap between constitutional support for cultural diversity and its practical implementation is crucial for fostering an inclusive and representative cultural landscape in the country.

## **5.7. Summary of Impact**

The Street Carnivals in Egypt had a primary objective of addressing gender-based violence and promoting minority cultures. It aimed to raise awareness about Nubian minority and sexual harassment while engaging with various

communities, including conservative ones. It is evident from the above open coding process that bottom-up approach exemplified in Street Carnival has been efficient in promoting cultural diversity, the result of the open coding mentioned above can be clustered in the following six axial coding:

**Promotion of Minority Cultures:** Interviews with the project's participants highlighted the Street Carnival's positive outcomes, such as the acceptance of the Carnival by diverse audiences. The Carnival succeeded in as generating acceptance and interest from people in various social and economic backgrounds, as well as fostering understanding and appreciation of Nubian culture. The Carnival effectively brought men and women together in discussion related to gender issues, highlighting the Nubian culture openness and respect for women, and creating a sense of understanding and appreciation within the team and the audience.

**Promotion of Critical Thinking:** The Street Carnival served as a platform for promoting the audience's critical thinking. It encouraged people to think about cultural diversity, gender-related issues, such as sexual harassment and possible solutions to societal problems through dialogue and interaction.

**Audience Proactivity:** The Street Carnival's unique and non-traditional approach had a positive impact on the behavior and engagement of the audience. It encouraged self-organization during performances, promoted proactivity, and created dynamic and interactive spaces.

**Community Engagement:** The Street Carnival was successful in fostering community engagement, even in socially and economically challenged areas. It was invited to perform in more villages than planned, with locals showing their appreciation by inviting the Carnival team to share meals, demonstrating acceptance and engagement.

**Diverse Audience:** The Street Carnival reached a wide range of people, including those from less privilege neighborhoods, proving its ability to promote diversity and to appeal to a broad spectrum of the population.



**Adaptation and Problem-Solving:** The project has demonstrated a strong ability to adapt to security and logistical challenges, such as crowd situations, as well as to promote self-regulation and problem-solving among the audience.

In summary, the Street Carnival in Egypt had a positive impact on cultural diversity, gender-related issues, and community engagement. It successfully achieved its intended objectives and fostered critical thinking while reaching a diverse audience and promoting the acceptance of Nubian culture. The carnival's unique approach made it an effective tool for encouraging community dialogue and awareness.

## **5.8. Summary of Challenges**

This part of this chapter will summarize the findings of the empirical research by using the axial coding process mentioned above, in order to summarize the main challenges faced by Street Carnival project as a bottom-up initiative, these challenges can be clustered in the following two main categories:

- Cultural Policy in Egypt
- Bottom-up approach in Egypt

### **1. Cultural Policy in Egypt**

The cultural landscape of Egypt has always been a topic of great interest and discussion, both within the country itself and on a global scale. One crucial aspect that contributes to the shaping of this landscape is the underlying cultural policy that governs the production, dissemination, and preservation of cultural ideas and expressions in Egypt.

**Lack of Clarity and Tight Government Control:** The shortcomings of cultural policies in Egypt have been exacerbated by a lack of clarity and a tight government control. The overall effect of this lack of clarity is uncertainty and vagueness, as the government has failed to establish clear guidelines and

regulations when it comes to cultural strategies. Furthermore, the government maintains a firm grip on cultural ideas with its centralized production approach, resulting in swift and often explained decisions to shut down or disband cultural organizations. Such actions, without proper communication or consideration, create an atmosphere of ambiguity and confusion within the cultural sector. This also hinders the development and growth of the cultural landscape, ultimately stifling artistic expression and limiting the potential for cultural advancement in Egypt.

**Absence of Democracy:** In Egypt, the notion of democracy poses a significant challenge that is deeply intertwined with the effectiveness of cultural policies. The absence of a democratic government and the disregard for human rights presents an obstacle for the development and implementation of cultural policies that strive to promote social equality and empower individuals to actively participate in all facets of society. The absence of a democratic system deprives citizens of their fundamental right to have a voice and influence in decision-making processes, particularly in matters that directly affect their lives. Consequently, cultural policies in Egypt are often fragmented and disconnected from the needs and desires of the people, characterized by a lack of inclusivity and representation. Furthermore, a lack of democracy and human rights impedes progress towards achieving social equality, as marginalized and underrepresented groups are being left out unable to advocate for their rights and needs. Thus, it is crucial for Egypt to prioritize the establishment of a democratic government and foster a culture of respect for human rights in order to effectively address the challenges that cultural policies face in promoting social equality and citizen empowerment.

**Top-Down Versus Bottom-Up Approaches:** In the realm of Egyptian cultural policy, a continuous debate arises between the merits of top-down versus bottom-up approaches. On the one hand, the use of top-down policies is prevalent in the country, with the government taking the lead in deciding on cultural initiatives and programs. However, a closer examination reveals that Egypt runs cultural venues in the peripheries, which can be described as a form of bottom-up approach. Despite this, a high level of centralization in

decision making still hinders the effective participation of local communities. This approach undermines the ability of the unrepresented groups to address their own challenges and advocate for their rights, ultimately limiting the potential impact of bottom-up approaches. Ultimately, striking a balance between these two approaches is crucial in ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive cultural policy in Egypt. Through incorporating both top-down and bottom-up approaches, Egypt can harness the full potential of its diverse cultural landscape through promoting greater community engagement in shaping its cultural policies.

**Cultural Diversity Only on Papers:** Despite the recognition of cultural diversity within the country's constitution, the practical application of cultural policies has proven to be ineffective in Egypt in this regard. Despite the acknowledgement of multiple cultures and languages, certain groups, such as the Nubians and Amazigh, continue to face discrimination and marginalization. This can be attributed to the government's efforts to impose a singular national culture, which ultimately undermines the richness and diversity of other cultures across the country. The failure to fully embrace and celebrate cultural differences not only goes against the fundamental principles of equality and inclusion, but also hinders the country's progress and advancement. It is essential for governments to recognize, protect, and promote the cultural identities of all communities within their borders, in order to create a truly inclusive and diverse society. This can be achieved through a comprehensive and holistic approach that not only acknowledges the existence of various cultures and languages, but also actively works towards their empowerment and preservation. By doing so, the gap between constitutional recognition and practical implementation can be bridged, leading to a more harmonious and culturally rich society.

In summary, the discussions on cultural policy in Egypt highlight issues related to the lack of clarity, government control, the challenge of democracy, the debate between top-down and bottom-up approaches, and the difficulties in implementing cultural diversity policies. These findings illustrate the complex and often uncertain nature of cultural policy in Egypt.

## **2. Bottom-Up Approach in the Egyptian Context**

In today's interconnected world, it has become increasingly important to foster positive relations between different cultures on a global scale. The significance of a bottom-up approach entails actively engaging with members of civil society, supporting structural projects that empower local organizations, and promoting knowledge exchange and networking. Prioritizing the voices and perspectives of individuals and grassroots organizations, a bottom-up approach enables a more organic and inclusive exchange of ideas, values, and traditions. The analysis has yielded significant findings regarding the efficacy of the bottom-up approach, demonstrated in the positive impact of the Street Carnival project in spite of operating in a politically tumultuous environment. These findings have shed light on the positive impact of engaging and empowering local communities in driving change and promoting development. Specifically, the key findings of this analysis highlight the potential of grassroots initiatives in fostering stability and progress amidst challenging circumstances. Furthermore, the success of the Street Carnival project serves as a model for other organizations and governments to consider when seeking to address similar challenges. It is clear that a bottom-up approach can be a powerful tool in creating sustainable and meaningful change within communities, particularly in times of uncertainty and unrest. This analysis provides valuable insights into the potential benefits of this approach and underscores its relevance in a world that is constantly evolving.

**Existing Policies:** Organizing a Street Carnival is a complex process, especially when the regulatory policies in place are rigid. The very nature of peaceful assembly and presenting of art in public spaces can present a multitude of challenges for artists. In order to ensure the safety of participating artists, it is crucial to navigate and comply with existing policies. However, this task can prove to be particularly difficult when faced with conservative and bureaucratic authorities. The clash between artistic expression and established rules can pose significant obstacles that must be carefully navigated in order to create a successful and enjoyable event for all parties involved. Striking a

balance between adhering to regulations and allowing for artistic freedom is key to successfully navigating the challenges posed by existing policies.

**Security Considerations:** In addition to the regulating laws, security approvals play a crucial role in shaping not only the success of a project, but also the nature of the project itself. With strict security measures in place, culture activities can face challenges when it comes to artistic quality, community interaction, and hence the overall impact. Therefore, closely monitoring the general atmosphere and responding to the security related requirements in a timely and effective manner is essential for the overall success and impact of the cultural activities. By being proactive in identifying and addressing potential security concerns as much as possible, potential risks and disruptions can be minimized, allowing the project to thrive and reach its full potential. Moreover, prioritizing security alongside other aspects of the project shows a strong commitment to the safety and well-being of all individuals involved, further promoting a positive and welcoming environment for both the community and artistic collaborators. In the face of potential security challenges, it is imperative to have a thorough and comprehensive approach in place to ensure the smooth progression and success of project's implementation.

**Governmental Cooperation:** The issue of governmental cooperation is one that demands careful attention and consideration, particularly when it comes to governmental bodies such as youth centers and schools. While these entities have the potential to serve as valuable partners offering access to wider communities in unconventional projects, they may also have concerns or reservations that limit their involvement and support. This poses a significant challenge for those seeking to collaborate with such government bodies, as their readiness and willingness to support initiatives that differ from conventional norms is not always guaranteed. As such, it is imperative that efforts are made to address and alleviate any concerns shared by these actors, in order to foster successful partnerships and promote effective cooperation with the government allowing for more space to unconventional projects.

**Financial Constrains:** The availability of funding poses a significant challenge to the sustainability and development of the project at hand. The availability of financial resources cannot be guaranteed and is often unpredictable, which can hinder the progress of the project at any moment. Additionally, the involvement of foreign funding sources further complicates matters due to the strict state regulations. These obstacles highlight the need for careful financial planning and management in order to mitigate the risks of the limited financial resources and bureaucratic barriers. To ensure the successful implementation and continuation of projects, it is crucial to devise a comprehensive and diversified financial strategy that takes into account the various potential challenges and seeks to mitigate them. Only by addressing these financial challenges in a proactive and strategic manner, projects can reach its full potential and make a lasting impact.

**Risk aversion by Funders:** As society becomes increasingly saturated with traditional styles and methods, ventures that challenge the status quo can be met with hesitancy and skepticism. Thus, promoting and justifying the project's distinctiveness and its potential for positive impact can prove to be a formidable task during the pursuit of support. It is crucial to emphasize the originality of the project and its potential to push boundaries and break new ground, while also highlighting its value and relevance in today's ever-changing world. In the world of non-profit organizations and projects, securing funding is a pivotal aspect of achieving success and making a positive impact. However, one major hurdle that these projects often face is a lack of understanding by potential funders. This can be due to a variety of reasons, including limited knowledge about the unique context and challenges of the project. In order to address this issue, it is crucial to seek out funders who are open-minded and willing to take calculated risks in supporting the project. This requires thorough research and strategic outreach to potential funders who not only have the financial resources but also possess a deeper understanding of the project's goals and vision. By finding funders who are not only willing to provide financial support but also show a genuine interest and understanding of the project's context, the chances of success and sustainable impact are greatly increased. In the end, a strong partnership between the project

and its funders is crucial in achieving positive change and making a lasting difference in the community.

In summary, the analysis highlights both the remarkable achievements of the Street Carnival project as a bottom-up approach and the various obstacles that were overcome in its implementation. Such a comprehensive examination serves to not only emphasize the success of the project as a noteworthy example of the effectiveness of a bottom-up approach, but also illuminates the significant challenges that were encountered and ultimately overcome through strategic planning and resourceful problem-solving. By addressing critical issues such as policy, security, governmental cooperation, and finance, this analysis offers valuable insights for organizations and governments considering similar initiatives in complex and ever-changing environments. It serves as a useful resource for informed decision-making and highlights the potential for collaborative bottom-up efforts to drive positive change and overcome obstacles in pursuit of meaningful and impactful projects.

## **6. Practical Application and Conclusions**

The findings of this research confirm that the bottom-up approach in international cultural relations, as exemplified by the Street Carnival project in Egypt, plays an effective role in promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. These findings aim to demonstrate that non-state initiatives like Street Carnival can be instrumental in fostering cultural diversity, particularly in countries with unstable political settings. This approach can also promote diversity, empower local communities, enhance arts management, and counter autocratic top-down cultural policies.

The findings summary of the main challenges proposed the following brief policy recommendations to guide both Egypt policymakers and international organizations.

### **6.1. Recommendations for policymakers in Egypt**

The following recommendations are based on extensive analysis of the current cultural policy landscape in Egypt. It is imperative for policymakers to carefully consider these recommendations in order to create a more inclusive and sustainable cultural environment. By adopting these recommendations, policymakers can demonstrate their commitment to promoting democratic values and supporting grassroots initiatives that promote cultural diversity. Furthermore, these recommendations will help Egypt to overcome existing challenges and pave the way for a more vibrant and dynamic cultural sector that benefits both its citizens and its global image.

#### **6.1.1 Recommendations for Improving Cultural Policy in Egypt**

- a) **Clarity of Cultural Policies:** Egypt should work towards formulating clear and transparent cultural policies to provide a defined framework for cultural activities and organizations.



- **Policy Formulation:** Establish a task force comprising cultural experts, policymakers, and representatives from diverse communities to collaboratively formulate clear and transparent cultural policies.
  - **Public Consultations:** Implement a transparent public consultation process to gather input from various stakeholders, including cultural practitioners, local communities, and civil society organizations.
  - **Accessible Documentation:** Offer accessible and concise documentation of cultural policies, ensuring that they are easily understandable by the general public, cultural organizations, and policymakers.
- b) **Democracy and Cultural Policies:** Promote democratic practices, respect for human rights, and freedom of expression as fundamental principles in cultural policy development. Cultural policies should align with democratic values.
- **Human Rights Integration:** Embed principles of human rights and democratic values in cultural policies to ensure that they actively contribute to social equality, freedom of expression, and citizen empowerment.
  - **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch public awareness campaigns highlighting the link between democracy and cultural policies, emphasizing the role of cultural diversity in fostering a vibrant democratic society.
  - **Training Programs:** Establish training programs for cultural policymakers, focusing on democratic principles, human rights, and the ethical responsibilities associated with cultural decision-making.

c) **Balancing Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches:** Strive for a balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches in cultural policy. While top-down approaches can be efficient, it is essential to empower local communities and involve them in decision-making.

- **Community Empowerment Initiatives:** Develop initiatives that empower local communities to actively participate in decision-making processes related to cultural policies, ensuring a balance between top-down directives and grassroots involvement.
- **Capacity Building for Local Governments:** Provide training and tools to local government officials to enhance their capacity to engage with and support cultural initiatives at the community level.

d) **Promotion of Cultural Diversity:** Ensure that cultural policies actively support and promote cultural diversity, recognizing the importance of preserving and celebrating various cultural expressions within the country.

- **Inclusive Policies:** Revise existing policies to explicitly support and promote cultural diversity, recognizing and celebrating the richness of various cultural expressions within Egypt.
- **Cultural Diversity Index:** Develop a Cultural Diversity Index to assess the impact of policies on different cultural groups, ensuring that minority cultures and languages receive adequate recognition and support.

### **6.1.2 Recommendations for Enhancing Bottom-Up Approach Efficiency in Egypt:**

a) **Addressing Policy Challenges:** Focus on addressing policy challenges related to peaceful assembly, art in public spaces, and facilitate the bureaucratic process to ensure the safe execution of cultural projects like the Street Carnival.

- **Peaceful Assembly Regulations:** Revisit the assembly laws and regulations, ensuring that cultural events like the Street Carnival can take place without unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles.
  - **Public Art Guidelines:** Develop tailored clear guidelines incorporating public art, providing a framework that balances artistic expression with community values and regulatory considerations.
- b) **Security and Monitoring:** Develop robust security measures and monitoring systems to ensure the safety of artists and participants in cultural initiatives held in public spaces.
- **Artist Liaison Officers:** Introduce Artist Liaison Officers who act as intermediaries between cultural event organizers and security forces, ensuring effective communication and addressing concerns to enhance the safety of artists and participants.
  - **Technology Integration:** Explore the integration of technology, such as crowd-monitoring apps and real-time communication platforms, Taking into consideration the privacy of audience. This can enhance security measures and promptly address any emerging issues during cultural initiatives.
- c) **Governmental Readiness:** Work on building institutional readiness for unconventional projects, encouraging government institutions to support and collaborate with initiatives like the Street Carnival.
- **Interdepartmental Task Forces:** Establish interdepartmental task forces involving cultural experts and government officials to collectively address the challenges and opportunities presented by unconventional cultural projects, fostering a collaborative approach.

- **Pilot Projects:** Encourage government institutions to participate in pilot projects, allowing them to witness firsthand the positive impact of unconventional cultural initiatives like the Street Carnival and motivating broader institutional support.
- d) **Sustainable Financing:** Explore sustainable financing models for projects like the Street Carnival, which may face financial challenges, including navigating state regulations and foreign funding sources.
- **Cross-sectorial Collaboration:** Advocate for public-private partnerships as a sustainable financing model, leveraging corporate support for cultural projects while ensuring alignment with community values and cultural diversity.
  - **Cultural Impact Investment Funds:** Explore the creation of cultural impact investment funds that attract investors interested in supporting initiatives with both cultural and social benefits, contributing to the long-term sustainability of projects like the Street Carnival.
- e) **Social Impact:** Emphasize the unique social impact of unconventional projects when seeking support, highlighting their positive impact on communities and society.
- **Social Impact Metrics:** Develop and adopt metrics that measure the social impact of unconventional cultural projects, emphasizing their unique ability to address societal issues and foster positive change within communities.
  - **Good Practices:** Highlight success stories of collaborations between unconventional cultural projects and local communities, demonstrating how these initiatives contribute to community development and empowerment.

- f) **Identify and reach out to Funders:** Find funders who understand the context and challenges faced by unique projects and are willing to take calculated risks.
- **Cultural Competency Training for Funders:** Provide cultural competency training for grant makers, enabling them to better understand the cultural context and unique impact and challenges faced by projects like the Street Carnival, fostering informed and supportive investments.
  - **Collaborative Grantmaking Workshops:** Organize workshops that bring together cultural project organizers and potential funders, creating a collaborative space for dialogue, understanding, and the identification of shared goals.

### **6.1.3 Recommendations for promoting Cultural Diversity in Egypt:**

- a) **Empower Local Communities:** Encourage a bottom-up approach to preserving cultural diversity, giving local communities more control over their cultural expressions.
- **Independent Community Cultural Councils:** Establish Community Cultural Councils that empower local communities to actively participate in decision-making processes, ensuring that diverse cultural expressions are considered and supported.
  - **Micro-Grants for Community Initiatives:** Introduce micro-grant programs specifically for community-led cultural initiatives, allowing local communities to shape and showcase their unique cultural heritage.

b) **Policy Revision:** Review and revise policies to ensure they protect and support cultural diversity, making sure that minority cultures, languages, and traditions receive the recognition and funding they deserve.

- **Cultural Policy Audits:** Conduct inclusive cultural policy audits involving representatives from diverse cultural groups, identifying areas for revision and ensuring that policies align with the principles of inclusivity.
- **Language Inclusivity Guidelines:** Introduce guidelines that promote language inclusivity in cultural policies, acknowledging and supporting minority languages to preserve linguistic diversity.

c) **Promotion of Inclusivity:** Promote inclusive policies that celebrate and preserve the diverse cultural identities within Egypt, focusing on those that have been historically marginalized.

- **Funding for Inclusive Cultural Events:** Allocate funds specifically for inclusive cultural events that celebrate historically marginalized identities, fostering a more inclusive cultural landscape.
- **Accessibility Standards:** Develop accessibility standards for cultural venues and events, ensuring that they are physically and culturally inclusive for individuals with disabilities and diverse cultural backgrounds.

d) **Education and Awareness:** Invest in education and awareness programs that teach the value of cultural diversity and promote understanding among different cultural groups.

- **Cultural Diversity Curriculum:** Integrate a cultural diversity curriculum into educational programs at all levels, promoting understanding, tolerance, and appreciation for the country's rich cultural tapestry.

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch public awareness campaigns that emphasize the importance of cultural diversity, celebrating the unique contributions of each cultural group within Egypt.
- e) **Community Participation:** Encourage community participation in cultural preservation and promote cultural exchanges that foster mutual appreciation and understanding.
- **Cultural Exchange Platforms:** Create online platforms that facilitate cultural exchange between communities, allowing them to share traditions, stories, and artistic expressions, fostering mutual appreciation.
  - **Community Dialogue Forums:** Organize community dialogue forums where diverse cultural groups can engage in open discussions, encouraging understanding and collaboration on cultural preservation initiatives.

## 6.2. Recommendations for International Organization

The findings of various studies have shed light on the undeniable linkages between societies, where developments in one country can have a profound impact on others. This understanding emphasizes the importance of recognizing the global nature of cultural relations and the necessity for cooperation among nations. It is evident that no nation can exist in isolation, and as such, mutual understanding and collaboration are key to navigating the complex web of interconnectedness that characterizes globalization. The recognition of this interdependence highlights the need for a holistic approach to addressing global issues and promoting international cooperation to achieve mutual goals and advance the well-being of all societies.

The following brief policy recommendations aim to guide international organizations including the European Union in playing a constructive role in addressing the challenges identified in Egypt's cultural policy landscape and supporting bottom-up initiatives that foster cultural diversity, democratic values, and grassroots engagement.

**a) Clarity in Cultural Policies:**

- **International Collaboration:** Collaborate and assist Egypt in formulating clear and transparent cultural policies.
- **Capacity Building:** Provide support and resources for capacity building to Egyptian cultural institutions to help them articulate and implement clear policies.

**b) Democracy and Cultural Policies:**

- **Human Rights Monitoring:** Actively monitor human rights situations in Egypt and advocate for democratic principles in cultural policy development.
- **Training Programs:** Offer training programs and workshops on democratic values and human rights for policymakers and cultural stakeholders in Egypt.

**c) Balancing Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches:**

- **Capacity Building for Local Engagement:** Collaborate with local communities to build their capacity in cultural policy engagement, ensuring that bottom-up approach is effectively integrated.
- **International Exchange Programs:** Run and facilitate exchange programs that allow Egyptian cultural policymakers to learn from international models that successfully balance top-down and bottom-up approaches.



**d) Promotion of Cultural Diversity:**

- **Diversity Promotion Initiatives:** Support initiatives that actively promote and celebrate cultural diversity in Egypt, emphasizing the importance of preserving and showcasing various cultural expressions.
- **Cultural Exchange Programs:** Facilitate cultural exchange programs that bring diverse international artists and cultural practitioners to Egypt, fostering a richer cultural landscape.

**e) Support for Grassroots Organizations:**

- **Grant Programs:** Develop grant programs specifically designed to support smaller and grassroots cultural organizations in Egypt.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Facilitate knowledge-sharing platforms where successful international grassroots initiatives can share their experiences and insights with their counterparts.

**f) Strengthening Cultural Exchange:**

- **Funding Initiatives:** Allocate funds for projects that promote cultural exchange and understanding between Egypt and other countries.
- **Networking Platforms:** Create platforms for cultural practitioners from Egypt to connect with their international counterparts, fostering collaboration and mutual learning.

**g) Promote Bottom-Up Approach Adoption:**

- **Security and Safety Initiatives:** Collaborate with local and international security experts to develop strategies that enhance the safety and security of cultural initiatives, addressing challenges faced by projects like the Street Carnival.
- **Capacity Building for Institutions:** Provide capacity-building support to government institutions to enhance their readiness for unconventional projects and ensure their active participation and support.

**h) Sustainable Financial Support for Projects:**

- **Sustainable Funding Models:** Work with Egyptian cultural organizations to develop sustainable funding models, reducing reliance on foreign sources and navigating state regulations effectively.
- **Financial Literacy Programs:** Implement programs to enhance financial literacy among cultural organizations, enabling them to manage funds more efficiently.

**i) Support Innovation and Experimental Projects:**

- **Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Provide training for potential Grant-makers and stakeholders to enhance their understanding of the unique cultural and social context of projects like the Street Carnival.
- **Advocacy for Innovative Approaches:** Advocate for the value of unconventional cultural projects in addressing societal issues, encouraging funders to appreciate their unique impact.

**j) Collaborations for Cultural Diversity:**

- **Joint Initiatives:** Collaborate with Egyptian and other stakeholders to develop joint initiatives that actively promote cultural diversity, including educational programs and awareness campaigns.
- **Research and Documentation:** Support research initiatives that document and preserve the cultural diversity of Egypt, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the country's rich cultural tapestry.

### **6.3. Conclusion**

This research was conducted on the impact of a bottom-up approach in international cultural relations, as seen through the Street Carnival project in Egypt, yielded significant results. It has been observed that initiatives led by non-state actors, such as the Street Carnival, can be highly effective in promoting cultural diversity and fostering intercultural dialogue. This is especially true for countries with unstable political environments, where traditional top-down cultural policies may fail to address the diverse needs and voices of local communities.

One of the key findings of this research is that a bottom-up approach can contribute significantly to the promotion of diversity within a society. This can be achieved through giving space and amplifying the voices of underrepresented groups, such initiatives create a space for cultural expressions that may otherwise remain unheard. Bottom-up approach not only promotes diversity but also enriches the overall cultural landscape of a country.

Furthermore, it has been observed that the Street Carnival project has played a crucial role in empowering local communities in Egypt. By involving them in the planning and execution of the events, it has given them a sense of ownership and agency over their own cultural expressions. This has not only boosted their confidence but also instilled a sense of appreciation for their cultural heritage. As a result, they are more likely to actively engage in preserving and promoting their culture.

Moreover, this research also sheds light on how such bottom-up initiatives can enhance the managerial aspects of arts and culture sectors. This could be achieved by involving individuals from various backgrounds and experiences, including artists, educators, and community leaders, this type of projects encourages collaboration and foster new ideas for managing artistic activities. This not only benefits individual artists but also strengthens the overall arts management skills within a society.

The research also highlights how these types of initiatives can challenge autocratic top-down cultural policies. These initiatives can promote diversity and empowering local communities at the grassroots level and present an alternative model for cultural policymaking that values inclusivity and participatory decision-making. The recommendations put forth in this research call for Egypt's cultural policy to adopt a more inclusive and sustainable approach that prioritizes diverse voices and empowers citizens at the grassroots level.

To sum, the findings of this research demonstrate the potential of bottom-up approaches in international cultural relations, exemplified by the success of the Street Carnival project in Egypt. It not only promotes cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue but also empowers local communities, enhances arts management, and challenges autocratic cultural policies. These are important factors to consider when looking for ways to promote cultural diversity, especially in countries with unstable political settings.

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## **Annex 1 First Set of Interview Questions**

1. Can you introduce yourself and provide an overview of your role and experience in the cultural sector in Egypt?
2. How would you describe the current state of cultural policies in Egypt and their significance within the broader socio-political context?
3. How do (top-down) and (bottom-up) approaches manifest in the context of Egypt's cultural policy, especially in relation to artistic freedom of expression and cultural diversity?
4. Are there any instances where the tension between the democratization of culture (top-down) and cultural democracy (bottom-up) has been particularly evident in Egypt's cultural policy landscape? Illustrate with an example, if possible.
5. In your opinion, how do international organizations such as European Union influence cultural policies in Egypt?
6. Have you observed any specific examples where international organizations' frameworks, initiatives or recommendations have positively or negatively impacted Egypt's cultural policies?
7. Can you provide examples on how Egypt has practically implemented certain cultural policies influenced by international organizations?
8. From your perspective, what challenges does Egypt face in upholding cultural diversity within its cultural policies?
9. Do you have a story that illustrate any violation to artistic freedom of expression or cultural diversity?
10. How do you envision the role of international organizations evolving in shaping cultural policies in Egypt over the next few years?

## **Second Set of Interview Questions**

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself and provide an overview of your role and experience in the cultural sector?
2. Can you provide an overview of your involvement with the Street Carnival project?
3. What were the main goals and objectives of the Street Carnival project in Egypt, and how did it aim to promote cultural diversity?

4. Can you share any specific examples or outcomes from the Street Carnival project that highlight its impact on promoting cultural diversity or addressing social issues in Egypt?
5. How did Street Carnival project engage with the Nubian minority culture and integrate it with the broader Egyptian culture? What were the challenges and successes in this regard?
6. In your opinion, what are the key objectives of international organizations, such as the European Union, when it comes to cultural relations with countries like Egypt?
7. From your perspective, why should the European Union needs to support cultural initiatives like the Street Carnival project in Egypt?
8. How does a bottom-up approach differ from traditional top-down approaches in influencing cultural diversity and practices in a country like Egypt?
9. How do (top-down) and (bottom-up) approaches manifest in the context of Egypt's cultural policy, especially in relation to artistic freedom of expression and cultural diversity?
10. Can you provide examples of how bottom-up initiatives have empowered local communities or artists to actively participate in cultural life and promote cultural diversity?
11. Are there any instances where the tension between the democratization of culture (top-down) and cultural democracy (bottom-up) has been particularly evident in Egypt's cultural policy landscape? Illustrate with an example, if possible.
12. How can you argue on the tension between High art and pop art, elitist vs populist?
13. What are some of the challenges or obstacles faced by cultural practitioners when implementing bottom-up cultural projects in Egypt? Projects like Street Carnival.
14. Based on your experience, what recommendations would you offer to improve the effectiveness of bottom-up approaches in promoting cultural diversity in international cultural relations?

15. How do you envision the future of international cultural relations, especially in terms of the role of bottom-up approaches and their impact on cultural diversity?

### **Data privacy agreement**

Privacy Notice pursuant to art. 13 GDPR with declaration of consent  
I, [Mohab Masoud], am committed to data protection. I process your personal data (hereinafter referred to as “data”) in accordance with statutory requirements and seek to do so in a transparent manner. This Privacy Notice briefly explains what data I process, for what purposes and on what legal basis. It also provides information on contact people and your rights in relation to data processing.

### **Purposes and legal bases of data processing:**

1. I process your Interview data [X,] for the purposes of training in my study programme and for the Master’s thesis. The basis for such data processing is your freely granted consent. The legal basis is therefore art. 6(1)(a) General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
2. ONLY IF NECESSARY for the Master’s thesis: I further publish the results and analysis from the interview. When publishing I will make sure that no details to identify you will be released. The legal basis is also your freely granted consent and therefore art. 6(1)(a) GDPR

### **Declaration of consent**

I hereby consent to the processing of my personal data in accordance with the above description of data processing and in the knowledge of my rights as stated above.

XX\_XX\_XX\_\_\_\_\_ X\_\_\_\_\_

Place, date Signature

Name of signatory in block letters



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## **Appendix Interviews Transcription**

To ensure the confidentiality of the content, the pages from 122 to 192 were deleted by the author.

**Declaration**

This page was deleted by the author.