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Article abstract

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EU cultural action in the Southern Neighbourhood Policy: the development of a national cultural strategy in Jordan

By Fanny Bouquerel[i] [ii]

Abstract
Med Culture (2014–2019), the European Union (EU) regional program dedicated to culture in Southern Mediterranean countries, aims at "supporting culture as a vector of democratization and development," and encouraging reforms in cultural policies. Responding to the desire of Jordan's Ministry of Culture to develop a national cultural strategy, the Med Culture Technical Assistance Unit suggested implementing a process that included a series of consultations that would bring together authorities and independent cultural players. Through a thick description of the process and an approach that focuses on the sociology of the actors, this paper aims to identify the social effects of this European program on relations between the different stakeholders involved.

Key words: EU external action, cultural policies, Jordan, participative methodology

Résumé
Med Culture (2014–2019), le programme régional de l'Union européenne dédié à la culture dans les pays du sud de la Méditerranée, a pour objectif de « soutenir la culture comme vecteur de démocratisation et de développement » et d'encourager les réformes dans le domaine des politiques culturelles. En réponse à la volonté du ministère de la Culture jordanien de développer une stratégie nationale pour la culture, l'assistance technique de Med Culture a proposé de mettre en œuvre un processus prévoyant des consultations réunissant les autorités et les acteurs culturels indépendants. Par le biais d'une description approfondie de ce processus et en adoptant une approche centrée sur la sociologie des acteurs, cet article vise à identifier les effets sociaux induits par ce programme européen sur les relations entre les différents acteurs impliqués.

Mots-Clés : Action extérieure de l'Union européenne, politiques culturelles, Jordanie, méthodologie participative

Introduction

Med Culture (2014-2019), the European Union (EU) regional program dedicated to culture in Southern Mediterranean countries, aims at "supporting culture as a vector of democratization and development," and encouraging reforms in cultural policies.[1] In line with Med Culture's mandate, the Technical Assistance Team responsible for implementing the program undertook a three-year initiative to develop a national cultural strategy in Jordan. Through a thick description of the process and an approach that focuses on the sociology of the actors, this paper aims to identify the social effects of this European program on relations between the different stakeholders involved. Finding convergences between the EU program and their own agendas, participants in the initiative displayed a high level of commitment throughout the process. However, participants' perceptions and their actions also revealed both their critical distance from the process and their own way of using it to strengthen their position.[2] In the end, the main effect of the process is found in a joint endeavour undertaken by representatives of national institutions and non-state cultural actors, as well as a reconfiguration of the Jordanian cultural scene. This was made possible by the mediation of the European Union, which facilitated meetings of players who would not usually confer.

Focusing on small players based far from Brussels, my approach seeks to analyze the ways that groups and individuals interpret and use European approaches and programs in their daily work, as well as the effects generated at the micro level. This approach differs from that of many authors who tend to focus on institutions at the macro level (e.g., Rupnik, 2014; Del Sarto, 2016). The paper also analyzes an initiative related to a weak policy field for both the EU and Jordan. Culture is only a supporting competence at the EU level, and EU cultural action beyond its borders remains largely unexplored (Calligaro & Vlassis, 2017), save for, notably, Isar (2015) and Garner (2017).[3] Furthermore, the cultural scene in Jordan is a poorly structured community that has been little studied. And yet, an emerging policy in the field of culture offers an interesting perspective in terms of analyzing governance as promoted by the EU, one in line with the communitarian participatory turn (Saurugger, 2010). Empirical research also enriches the debate over how an EU program might be partly shaped by social and political dynamics that can be observed in the country in which it is implemented. In this case, Med Culture might reflect on and draw support from relations between authorities and society in Jordan (Bouziane, 2010; Esber, 2016). My methodology is based on participatory observation of Southern Mediterranean countries' cultural life over the last fifteen years as a cultural operator, researcher, and particularly my direct involvement in the

[1] Med Culture is funded under the EU's Neighbourhood Policy.

[2] For the development of the notion of "use," see Jacquot and Woll (2008).

[3] For the recent communication on international cultural relations, see European Commission (2016).

implementation of the Med Culture program as an expert in the Technical Assistance Unit. Semi-structured interviews with several players involved in the strategy—mainly with cultural operators, a representative of the Ministry of Culture (hereafter Ministry), and international experts—were conducted in 2017 and 2018. My research also employs a series of documents published or commissioned by EU institutions.

1. The Definition of a National Strategy for Culture in Jordan: Genesis of and Players in a Participatory Process

At the program's onset in 2014, the Med Culture team organized a series of national-level consultations to identify the main priorities and actions to be implemented within the program's framework. The Ministry had expressed a desire to develop a national strategy for culture and sought support from Med Culture to undertake the endeavour. As this request was in line with the EU program's mandate, the Technical Assistance Unit agreed to go forward with it.

1.1 Profile, Aim and Methodology of the EU Actors Involved in the Development of the Strategy

In response to the Ministry's request, the Med Culture team suggested implementing a process that included a series of consultations that would bring together authorities and independent cultural players. These independent players, defined by the EU as "civil society actors," are those who do not work in cultural institutions funded mainly by local or national authorities.[4]

The Genesis of the Approach and the Challenges Associated With It

The development of a national cultural strategy in Jordan involved a number of different stages. After the Ministry expressed its desire to define a national strategy for culture, it took a while before it effectively committed itself to the process. Finally, an introductory regional meeting was organized in the spring of 2015 in Amman together with culture ministry representatives and operators from Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia, and Palestine. The representative of the Jordanian Ministry left before listening to her international colleagues, and did not return on the following day. This led the Med Culture team to rethink its strategy and focus on the influential Ministry of Planning and International

[4] For the official definition of civil society in the region, see European Commission (2012). "Independent" refers here mainly, but not solely, to freelance or independent work. The director of a national cultural centre established by the Jordanian royal family, close to the Ministry and mainly funded by international donors, said during her interview: "I am independent. … For me, to be independent—I don't have to abide by any regulatory bureaucratic procedures." In the cultural field, independence may be envisaged as "a social construction, depending on singular institutional and merchant environments, submitted to fight dynamics, power games and specific opposition systems" (Alexandre, Noel, & Pinto, 2017, p. 10).

Cooperation, which had a mandate to deal with Med Culture and was perceived as a genuine source of support.[5] The first challenge was to encourage all parties to demonstrate commitment throughout the initiative, which was carried out as part of an EU program, and to ensure that national authorities and cultural operators worked in tandem with interlocutors whom they would not normally meet**.** Generally speaking**,** the Ministry's modest budget, amounting to around 8 million Jordanian dinars in 2012—around 9.5 million euros (Touq & Hijjawi, 2015, p. 8)—coupled with the limited visibility of its action and its scarce human resources prevents it from playing a major role. So, independent cultural players are the true drivers of the cultural scene. Furthermore, cultural players view public servants as conservative and close to the source of power, which clashes with their creative work and values.[6] Consequently, there is very little interaction between the two groups.

Profile and Perception of the EU Representatives Involved in the Process

The recognition that the EU enjoys was important to the process. Even if some cultural players may criticize EU's policy towards migrants or certain countries, such as Libya, they perceive the EU as a valuable ally in developing collaborations. The same was true of a Ministry representative who said she saw the EU as an actor "that really tries to help." In all Southern Mediterranean countries, the EU's institutional body is the European Delegation. However, due to the specificity of EU cultural competences, the action of these delegations is somewhat limited in this field.[7] As a result, the European Delegation is not regarded in the cultural scene as a main player. To design and implement a national strategy for culture in Jordan, the EU was primarily represented by a team of experts working for Med Culture's Technical Assistance Unit.[8] Based in Florence, Italy, this international team includes an experienced French-Palestinian team leader who was previously in charge of the Euromed Heritage monitoring unit; a French capacity development expert with extensive experience conducting cultural work in the region; and a Jordanian communication expert who had previously worked at the European

[5] In each country, a ministry is appointed to deal with EU regional programs. In general, they are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or of Planning and International Cooperation. To deal with national authorities, Med Culture first contact these ministries, who in turn identify interlocutors in other ministries, including the Ministry of Culture.

[6] Some of these characteristics echo the situation in Turkey (Polo & Üstel**,** 2014).

[7] For an analysis of EU approaches to culture and challenges linked to it, see Calligaro & Vlassis (2017). Culture is rarely expressed as a priority by EU partner countries. Tunisia may be seen as an exception, as a bilateral program supporting culture is currently being implemented.

[8] Med Culture is managed via a service contract signed between the EU and a consortium led by the engineering company Hydea (Italy). The consulting firm Transtec (Belgium), the Institut national de l'audiovisuel (France), and the Royal Film Commission (Jordan) are also involved.

Delegation in Jordan.[9] In addition, three short-term experts were recruited by Med Culture for the initiative, among them an independent Palestinian researcher and cultural activist previously responsible for culture in the Municipality of Ramallah. The Technical Assistance Unit works closely with DG NEAR, its task manager based at the European Commission in Brussels at the General Directorate in charge of the enlargement, and regularly informs European Delegations about its activities.[10]

There is a "big difference between Med Culture and the EU," a UNESCO representative acknowledged, "they [participants of the initiative] never say the EU. They say Med Culture." This may have made the process easier. According to one of the experts recruited by the EU programme to work on the strategy, the low profile of the Technical Assistance Unit was also key to facilitating Ministry involvement:

> The initiative was not very imposing—[Ministry representatives] didn't feel very threatened. Nobody claimed that there was a hidden agenda. Med Culture was very clear in saying that we are a facilitator, we don't intervene in the content.

The same was true of cultural actors. The Med Culture expert who used to work at the European Delegation claimed that it would have been difficult for the Delegation to gain the trust of civil society operators in the way Med Culture was able to do: "The Delegation is more sensitive. Med Culture has some kind of liberty that the Delegation does not have, which made all these actors trust Med Culture."

Promotion of a Participatory Methodology

The approach designed by the EU Commission for Med Culture to include all stakeholders in the field of culture as potential beneficiaries of the same program was quite unusual for donors in the region, even in the framework of EU action.[11] The growing amount of attention paid to non-governmental organizations in the framework of the EU's Neighbourhood Policy, especially after its review in 2015, did not have a significant impact in that sense. This might reflect the ambiguous position and discourse of the EU in the region, promoting civil society organizations while supporting governments that infringed on their peoples' rights before the Arab Spring, and in some

[9] This expert left the team in January 2017 and was replaced by a Lebanese expert. Four editions of the EU regional program were implemented between 1998 and 2014.

[10] In 2014, Med Culture was managed within the DG DEVCO dealing with development and cooperation. The transfer of the program to another directorate had political implications, as the program's development has been influenced by the orientations of the DGs and their staff.

[11] This observation was shared during a meeting of international donors for culture in the region. These figures usually focus on independent actors, without involving public authorities. See the action fiche for ENP South region Annual Action Programme 2012 (part II), pp. 20–21, retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/action-fiche-enp-south-region-annual-action-programme-2012-part-ii_en

countries continue to do so.[12] In any case, the methodology identified for the development of a national cultural strategy echoed the participatory discourse that emerged at the European level in the early 1990s, as well as the promotion of participatory processes within the EU (Saurugger, 2010).[13] In spite of it being recognized as a norm after a turbulent development period, the participatory approach is still contested "as it has not been homogenously implemented and remains subject to different interpretations" (Saurugger, 2010, p. 472). The status of what Sabine Saurugger (2010) identifies as a polity norm does not automatically lead to its internalization as a legitimate and socially accepted behaviour. The reference to Erving Goffman's (1959) theory of dramaturgical action provides an interesting insight into the way that participatory approaches may be understood. Saurugger recalls that in Goffman's theory, socially constructed norms establish a "framework of appearances that must be maintained, whether or not there is a feeling behind the appearances" (p. 242). In other words, players may follow the ritual of a framework, maintaining appearances, all the while using their margin of manoeuvre to use the framework in a way convenient to their interests.

Regarding the initiative explored in this paper, the participatory process implemented via the series of consultations represented a non-binding format that could help overcome the challenge of bringing together institutional representatives and independent actors at the initiative of an EU entity. In the eyes of the expert recruited for this initiative, "the Ministry had nothing to lose but perhaps something to gain; they could also stop whenever they wanted, so they could just take the risk." As for the cultural operators, the active involvement of an informal group set up to accompany the process was fundamental. According to the Med Culture team leader, "nothing would have happened without this group," even if "it took quite a while, it really did, to convince them that we were merely acting as facilitators and overcome their suspicion about our agenda."

1.2 Features, Motivations, and Expectations of the Local Main Players Engaged in the Definition of a Strategy for Culture

An analysis of the position and challenges of the Ministry and the group of cultural operators may provide some insight into their commitment to the process.

The Ministry of Culture, an Opportunity for Increased Visibility

The Ministry was represented by the secretary general's assistant for Cultural and Artistic

[12] For an analysis of the ambiguities inherent in the EU approach to civil society, see Visier (1999). On the topic of "seemingly inconsistent EU policies," see Del Sarto (2010).

[13] For a recent analysis of participative case studies and the transnational circulations of participative engineering, see Mazeaud, Nonjon, and Parizet (2016).

Affairs, a leading position in the hierarchy. This PhD holder in his fifties possessed a conservative sensibility and displayed a high degree of commitment throughout the process. Several experts emphasized his key role, underlining the necessity of having at least one convinced and competent person within the administration to do the work. In 2016, a savvy secretary with a good command of English joined the secretary general's team. This woman in her late thirties used to be the director of Intangible Heritage at the Ministry.[14] In addition to her position at the secretary general's office, she is currently the director of Governorate Affairs and was appointed as UNESCO's interlocutor within the Ministry. According to one expert, she is an exception in the Ministry's staff, whose members are generally not knowledgeable or bold enough to discuss strategy. Royal organizations, the Greater Amman Municipality, and international donors, including cultural institutes of European states, may enjoy better consideration from professionals in the cultural field.[15] Indeed, beyond the pressure put on the Ministry and the conviction of some of its representatives about a need to be provided with a culture strategy, its lack of resources and budget may have influenced its commitment in the process, as the EU program gave it a chance to strengthen its position, even within the government body. Furthermore, the engagement of the Jordanian government in this process coincides with its recognition of culture as a tool in the fight against radicalization, which, according to cultural operators, the government currently perceives as one of the country's major problems. As a young film producer commented, "[I]t places a value on culture in a country where culture is often devalued." In fact, radicalization used to be dealt with exclusively by the Ministry of the Interior, but during the national strategy process a part of the dossier was transferred to the Ministry to achieve the government's objectives. Through Med Culture, the Ministry could obtain necessary support to play a leadership role in the area.

The Enlarged National Focus Group and the Need for Legitimacy to Address Cultural Policy Work

In most of the countries where it operates, Med Culture has established "National Focus Groups" whose main objective is to bring together governmental and independent cultural actors to discuss the program. Following the introductory regional meeting in Amman in 2015, Med Culture organized a National Focus Group meeting and put the strategy process on the agenda. The participants represented different backgrounds, positions, and generations. Bringing together a representative of the Ministry of Planning, another from the Ministry of Tourism, and a high-level consultant working for the

[14] For discourse, policies, and practices associated with heritage in Jordan, see Maffi (2004).

[15] The cultural institutes of European states gathered in Jordan to establish a EUNIC (European Network of National institutes for Culture) cluster designed to lead joint actions. See also Bouquerel and El Husseiny (2009) and Culture Resources (Al Mawred Al Thaqafy) et al. (2010).

Greater Municipality of Amman (whose mayor is appointed by the king), it was attended mostly by independent cultural operators in their thirties and forties. These included, among others: a photographer dividing her time between her artistic work, educational activities, and the management of a private cultural café in Amman; a film and media professional educated at Goldsmith University in London; an employee of the Royal Film Commission who subsequently set up her own production company; and a young communication officer at an independent theatre. They discussed with government representatives and the Med Culture team how to proceed with the development of the strategy. Other participants joined later on, among them two female veterans of the cultural scene, the director of a large international organization dealing with community and youth empowerment through the arts, and the head of a national cultural centre established by Queen Noor Al Hussein. Med Culture also invited to the meeting the coordinator of a cultural policy group.[16] Aiming at promoting grassroots work, the program's Technical Assistance Unit was willing to work with this local group to implement the strategy's actions. The group's members immediately agreed to get on board with the initiative. One of the founders of the cultural policy group was willing to:

> [p]rovide [the Ministry with] the possibility of having a voice, providing [them] with either methodologies or tools to make a shift in awareness and orientation at the political and cultural level, providing [them] with alternative ways of thinking/tools … instead of having only one voice of the Islamic party as a cultural tool for society, or education system, or whatever. … [W]ho [else] is going to have an alternative voice?

She also expected better access to national institutions thanks to EU mediation.

2. Implementation and Perception of a National Strategy for Culture in the Making

Med Culture's implementation plan included three consultation meetings. It took over a year to organize the first of these.

2.1 The Implementation Process and its Challenges

As the main organizer of the implementation process, the Med Culture team was able to define most of the meetings' features. However, it involved its partners in some key aspects, beginning with the guest list.

[16] El Mawred Al Thaqafy (Cultural Resources), a regional initiative led by a non-governmental organization, was established in Jordan in 2012. This major cultural player in the Arab region has implemented a cultural policy program over the last ten years, helping to develop cultural policy groups in various Arab countries.

Drawing Up the Guest List

The list of guests invited to participate in developing a national cultural strategy was jointly established by the Med Culture team, the Ministries of Culture and Planning, and the National Focus Group, which suggested independent cultural players, including those from outside Amman. In the end, Med Culture provided a majority of the names, based on Med Culture experts' contacts from previous professional work in the region, contacts provided by the European Delegation, and all Jordanians who had been in contact with Med Culture. The guest list included institutional contacts from all over the country, independent cultural centres, festivals and artists from all disciplines, and a representative of UNESCO willing to join the process. Managers of outreach projects involving communities and children were also represented. This initial list of invitees included entities and individuals who enjoyed professional recognition, many of whom having obtained funding from the Jordanian government or international donors. In this sense, the guests represented a form of elite inspired by Norbert Elias' concept of configuration, one focusing on the relational dimension (Heinich, 2004). Identified for their potential input into the strategy, they brought together players seemingly ready to work together on a public project rather than contest it. In other words, this approach to Jordanian cultural policy had the potential to reinforce the government's action via the participation of what the EU defines as civil society actors, enjoying a certain level of autonomy. In that sense it was in line with the governance dynamics promoted by the EU. Around 420 people received an invitation from Med Culture for the first consultation meeting, 135 for the second, and 70 for the last, restricted meeting. The Med Culture team established the list for the second and third meetings according to the level of involvement of participants in the debates, while at the same time attempting to maintain a balance in terms of geographical origin, sector of activity, and gender. In the end, this approach favoured independent actors mostly based in Amman, while the institutional representatives who were present until the end were from the Ministry in Amman.

Implementation of the Consultation Meetings

The first of the three national-level consultations was held in July 2016. The program included a day and a half of debates, and participants were able to choose between three working groups to reflect on the definition of a common vision and strategic objectives, the role of the main actors involved in the initiative, and the governance of centralized and local initiatives. The meeting was held in an Amman hotel large enough to accommodate the one hundred attendees. Among them was the Minister of Culture, who was welcomed by the ambassador of the European Delegation. The number of representatives from the Ministries of Labour, Education, Tourism and Planning, and Municipal Affairs demonstrated the degree to which the Ministry and the EU program succeeded in promoting the initiative within the government. This consultation was characterized by the presence of a number of participants from remote regions who made

sure their voices were heard. Although the official language of the program was English, discussions were in Arabic to accommodate most participants' language of choice.[17] Facilitation of the debates was entrusted to the National Focus Group in conjunction with a high-level representative of the Ministry and experts recruited specifically for the job. The second consultation was scheduled about six months later, in December 2016, and adopted the same format. The first session was devoted to revising the first version of the strategy. The seventy participants also debated issues associated with monitoring and evaluating the strategy. The third consultation, held in July 2017, was designed to finalize the action plan by addressing the three themes identified as priorities: governance, youth and education, and culture and development.[18] Bringing together around forty people at the Royal Film Commission premises, it was conceived as a retreat. In between these consultations, other meetings took place with the Med Culture team—particularly with the enlarged National Focus Group—with a view to working on drafts of the strategy. Meetings were also held with representatives from the ministries to guarantee follow-up discussions.

2.2 Tensions and Disruptive Players in the Development of the Strategy

According to the interviewees, the consultation meetings provided, for the first time, an arena in which diverse opinions generated genuine debate. However, they also caused glitches and clashes linked to the content of the discussions and the positions of the players.

Addressing Sensitive Themes During the Working Sessions

Cultural operators and a Ministry representative acknowledged that the mention of religion gave rise to one of the most tense moments in the discussions. A young visual artist who studied in London stated:

> I remember, most of the people who showed up were very sweet, of course, but what they were representing was scary, dangerous. There was an Islamic kind of lingo all over the talk, very much representing the institutions, the government. The big concern I think was when this term came that Jordan culture is "Arab Muslim culture," which meant the exclusion of so many, such as Circassians, Chechenians, Druze, Christians. … There were Christians—a librarian who worked in a governmental body. She was the first to raise the flag. How about us? I still remember her. We all followed and backed her up.

[17] According to the Med Culture team leader, formulating the draft documents in two languages was a challenge because the writing styles of each language vary dramatically when applied to official discourse.
[18] These themes were selected from the eight main themes of the strategy, partly because they reflected priorities included in the plan for the development of the Ministry's cultural approach, and also because they corresponded to Med Culture's main fields of intervention.

It was no surprise that the session dedicated to the definition of the Ministry's cultural parameters triggered lively discussions. Still, the team leader of the program was shocked by the reaction of the participants:

> Religion, the space that religion takes in the Arab world, I was amazed by the frankness with which they dealt with it. … People who were fighting were mostly women. They said enough with the religion. There was a group from Jerash, which was a contact from the Ministry, really fighting for the need to maintain it …. It was like a gulf between two ways of seeing things.

Anticipating possible tensions, the Med Culture team leader asked the Ministry representative to moderate this session, his position granting him the legitimacy to do so. In the end, he decided the matter. As Jordan's constitution states that it is a Muslim country, there was no need to mention it in the strategy. In doing so, he drew closer to most of the independent cultural operators who were vehemently opposed to mentioning religion. In that sense, the episode revealed state representatives' different profiles and opinions, sometimes partially converging with the values of cultural activists, and blurring the frontiers among the various groups. Other issues, such as national identity and its relationship to the question of refugees, were also sensitive. Participants discussed the way that refugees have contributed to Jordan's identity, as well as how they shape the cities where they are quite numerous. On a different note, the mention of cultural heritage revealed a certain confusion about this notion, one that a Ministry representative tried to clarify to her colleagues, making the distinction between tangible and intangible heritage, and explaining the Ministry's responsibility to protect and promote it. In regard to an EU survey, it is no wonder that defining a shared vision for the Ministry was a true challenge. When asked to explain their understanding of culture, the most common characteristic expressed by Jordanian interviewees was lifestyle and manners (27%), followed by traditions, languages, and social and cultural communities (25%). Arts and literature were mentioned by only 8% of respondents (TNS Opinion, 2014). These deeply contrasting views tended to fade into the background in later meetings, when many of the most conservative participants, usually based outside Amman, were not invited.[19]

Institutional Power Games

Beyond tensions linked to content, other episodes represented challenges for the development of a strategy at the institutional level. During the same period, the Ministry

[19] The voices of these people, most of whom worked in institutional organizations dependent on the Ministry, are usually neglected. They acknowledged that their participation in the initial consultation meeting was the first time they had been consulted in the field of culture and they were grateful for the invitation. Neither they nor the Ministry claimed that they should be involved in the entire process.

produced a document outlining its cultural policy for the period 2017–2019, presenting some convergences but also many actions that had little to do with the results of the strategy. Additionally, almost a year later another body, the Economic and Social Council, whose director was appointed by the king, produced a document dealing with culture in Jordan and presented it in a meeting. According to a Med Culture focus group member who was present, the meeting shed light on power games played at the institutional level. The Ministry complained that it had not been involved in the document's drafting, and feared that the recommendation to create a High Council of Culture could lead to the emergence of a competing body. In any case, the meeting highlighted the current focus on culture, which, according to one participant, was closely linked to the need to review the education system, which had failed to prevent the rise of extremism among young people. As another participant put it rather bluntly, the link between culture and radicalization might offer another explanation for a renewed interest in culture; this was where the money was at the moment, especially concerning the prevention of violent extremism.[20]

2.3 Perceptions and Limits of the Development of a National Strategy for Culture

Even though the parties involved in the strategy displayed a degree of commitment that practically no one was expecting at the outset, their perceptions of the process and its effects revealed a number of limits.

Towards the Reformulation of a Public Policy?

The initiative may have helped shift the Ministry's approach, encouraging a long-term perspective and a more inclusive methodology. According to the Palestinian expert recruited for the strategy, debates regarding values such as diversity and working on the peripheries may have influenced some participants' opinions. In addition, she believes that the Ministry used an original kind of terminology, very different from the traditional approach that one would normally find in Jordan: "How can I say it? In classical Arabic you can have this very elaborate language, and not get anything out of it." The Jordanian member of the Med Culture team is convinced that this process contributed to shifting the views of a number of cultural operators. Instead of expressing their frustration at the lack of support and a scarcity of funds, they were encouraged to think about a specific policy issue, which changed their perspective on their role and expectations. However, according to the Med Culture team leader, it would be overly optimistic to conclude that the initiative had a significant impact on the perception of cultural policy. At the time of

[20] In countries where international aid plays a major role, donors' agenda is studied carefully. Two EU documents, "Preventing radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent extremism" (European Commission, 2014), and "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe" (European External Action Service, 2016), clearly describe counter-radicalization as one of EU's main objectives.

this article's writing, the strategy has not been endorsed by the Ministry, and there are some signs of resistance. In the end, the Jordanian member of the Med Culture team believed the Ministry treated it all as "a show," bringing to mind Goffman's focus on appearances.

The Skepticism of Cultural Actors

The independent actors' commitment did not prevent them from bringing a critical approach to the strategy. For example, one felt that some participants had too limited a capacity to contribute constructively to the process. Indeed, she was concerned about the influence they wielded in the debates due to their greater numbers:

> [There were] a lot of people invited from the public sector, who were invited chaotically, they had no real knowledge about culture and cultural strategy and the topic in general … but because of the amount of people, their voice was louder than ours.

In another case, a music producer expressed her perplexity about the process as a whole. She wondered who exactly was expressing a desire to develop a strategy. She also felt that the strategy was the culmination of a process lacking any kind of robust basis, such as a cultural mapping. Another operator, a photographer and cultural entrepreneur, wondered about how the process might be followed up, and how the work so far carried out could be exploited:

> Even if we have a perfect strategy, at some point, who will activate it, who are the people who are involved in the strategy, who will implement it, who will benefit from it? ... I believe it should be used, but I am really worried about how it will be used—or not.

In other words, perceptions of the result of the consultations were characterized by a certain distance on the part of the actors involved and their mixed feelings about the strategy itself.

3. Beyond the Strategy: (Re)configurations and Structuring Effects on Jordan's Cultural Scene

Beyond the strategy itself, an analysis of its effects on the ground, which were not necessarily expected, sheds new light on the process.

3.1 A New Stakeholder Configuration and Socio-Political Dynamics in Jordan

Before the initiative analyzed in this paper was launched, several national strategies for culture in Jordan had been drafted and involved only a limited number of cultural actors, most of them close to those in authority. The inclusion of independent actors in the

participatory process to elaborate a national strategy for culture was a rather unexpected development, and in that sense constituted a shift of emphasis. According to a music producer:

> It was the first time I saw people from the Ministry of Culture and artists, the first time in my life, sitting together. … Even the artists–I know them very well, I work with most of them, but individually. We never had met together. They were talking … no miracle, but still they were together.

On the other hand, the EU has had a degree of influence in increasing the legitimacy of the Ministry among cultural players, providing its representatives with an opportunity to be seen in a different light. In this context, the EU has played a third-party role, facilitating meetings between groups who usually have little contact with one another. In other words, the Med Culture program has provided an opportunity to legitimize such meetings.

The collective work done on the strategy has led to a reconfiguration of relationships between those involved. First, it has changed the way some cultural actors perceive the Ministry. As a young curator stated, "[T]hey are not 'they and we'." A visual artist recalled "seeing the variety" among the representatives of the Ministry: "I thought that it was more a one colour institution. It was a nice surprise. I could see that some people could push." Some Ministry members have gained a new understanding of the cultural operators with whom they had been working, enabling them to get to know individuals as more than interest group members. The active representative of the Ministry admitted that, after meeting many cultural players, her perception of them had changed; she realized that many of them were working very hard to contribute to society. Signs of this new perception were noticeable when actors in the strategy met outside the strategy's framework. The music producer confirmed a change had occurred in her relationship with the Ministry. Although she was concerned about its reaction to her talking publicly about its shortcomings and suggesting the kind of action she believed it should take, she noted that every time she went to the Ministry's offices, she received a very warm welcome.

This new, more open attitude to relations among strategy participants has emerged in Jordan at a time when the government is taking a more progressive view of civil society, and when, in spite of their relative mistrust, civil society organizations continue to talk to government institutions with a view to effecting change. As Esber (2016) argues, the revolutionary and reform movements active in Jordan in 2011/2012 can be characterized as a "refo-lution," a concept promoted by Asef Bayat to describe the amalgamation of a revolutionary agenda with a reform process. Acknowledging that the status quo is no longer sustainable, advocates of refo-lution focus on state institutions to push for reforms

(Esber, 2016, p. 3). In that sense, the Ministry representative sounded as if she were trying to convince herself, asserting that:

> Without them [civil society] the action would be incomplete. We need them as much as they need the Ministry to activate their proposal. Without them, we can't … *yanni*. They are our arms. They have to work with us and we have to work with them.

Likewise, there may be more common ground between civil society organizations and government institutions than previously considered. According to one cultural activist, members of that group have not contributed to protest movements:

> In the last two years there was the idea that the left, the intellectuals could bring us to a sort of uprising, but with ISIS, the danger manifested itself in a different way, it was scary, it was dreadful—now we have become the drivers for peace, we don't want to make trouble.

The concern shared by cultural operators and the Ministry about the radicalization of youth and their desire to address this issue through culture may have provided another reason to take a shared approach to the initiative.

However, a cautious attitude should be taken regarding this new configuration. The fact that the Ministry talked about the fundamental role of civil society might be at least partially motivated by a desire to display goodwill towards the EU, aware that support for a strong civil society aligns with EU values. Moreover, while it might be enlightening to go beyond, in the words of Malika Bouziane, "the conventionally assumed dichotomy between state and society" in Jordan, it is nevertheless useful to underline the dynamics linked to this phenomenon. First, Bouziane's analysis of governance in Jordan focuses on the local level, even though the strong interactions between state and non-state actors that she explores "have to be embedded into the national context of institutional arrangements and policies." Second, interactions resulting from the increasing marketization and use of NGOs for public services are based on the practice of the players, and have "result[ed] in the mutual transformation of the state and other social forces" (Bouziane, 2010, pp. 38–41). In other words, boundaries may blur when state and non-state organizations engage in collaborative and, at times, conflicting practices. Indeed, the absence of strong relationships might make impossible such deep interactions.

In any case, very few of the players involved in the elaboration of the strategy asserted that the process had radically changed relations between the Ministry and civil society, or even between Ministry representatives and cultural operators. As a visual artist argued, relations are relatively untroubled as long as the Ministry's leadership is not questioned; the Ministry seeks to stay in control as policy maker and authorities "want to decide what

culture is."[21] In other words, although the positioning of actors has shifted and general climate improved, this new configuration remains fragile.

3.2 Reconfiguring Peer Relationships Within the Ministry of Culture and the Cultural Scene

The strategy has also had an impact on the perception and positioning of individuals within specific groups. At the governmental level, the strategy has helped the Ministry receive greater recognition from other ministries:

> I think that the concept of the Ministry of Culture began to change. [Other ministries] began to appreciate its role inside the government as well: when they want to give us our budget, there is a parliamentary committee responsible for culture. Directory of finance, of budget, of legal affairs, and the assistant of the office secretary general, they go there, meet, defend ourselves, try to make the role of the Ministry clear, to make it more visible.

Development of the strategy has also had a major impact on the nature of relationships among independent cultural actors involved in the process. While the Jordanian scene is characterized by a high degree of fragmentation, the Med Culture initiative encouraged cultural actors to meet in different arenas. The National Focus Group described above emancipated itself from Med Culture, yet remained close to the Med Culture team, and recast itself as a "Cultural Action Group." It now has around thirty participants and meets on a regular basis. Its members include the main cultural elites of the country who thus become accessible to less recognized cultural actors and artists, which boosts the sector's representativeness and reinforces it structurally. The photographer mentioned above commented:

> One of the benefits of these meetings was to be engaged with these communities—this provided us with a unique opportunity to know what was going on. It was one of the most interesting elements, knowing my peers and others. ... This could never have happened before.

One of the co-founders of the cultural policy group shared this vision, expressing his delight at the Cultural Action Group's existence, at being able to take part in meetings, and at having new relations with officials. In other words, individuals who tended to work on their own have begun to open up to their environment and to younger colleagues, and became more amenable to working as a group. For the Med Culture team

[21] This reflection echoes in some ways the analysis of Claire Visier (2017) concerning the effects of the European Union's pre-adhesion policy in Turkey. Even if the enlargement process in this country did not produce the expected results in terms of governance, it did generate some effects, notably the extension of the perimeter and power of the State.

leader, this has been "extremely rewarding. Even more important than having the strategy endorsed." These new dynamics, encouraging collaborations between professionals in the cultural sector, have enabled them to consolidate their role and legitimize their interests. In this sense, the activity of the European Union, through Med Culture, has contributed to a structural reconfiguration of cultural operators and encouraged cooperation.

3.3 The Legacy of the Strategy

The Learning Experience of the Participants Throughout the Process

By involving the actors in a series of debates with institutional and independent elites, the initiative has allowed for the development of a number of cultural actors' capacities vis-à-vis the government. In particular, some have gained experience in negotiating, developing strategies, and interacting with public authorities. While the development of the strategy was not perceived as training per se, it has helped strengthen a number of cultural operators, especially those who took part in other development activities elaborated by Med Culture. The music producer said that she gained confidence step by step, while the film producer asserted that she became "more enlightened" about what was happening in Jordan, deepening her understanding of her environment.

This effect was, perhaps, more striking among Ministry representatives, particularly the women who took part in the process. One stated:

> I really got interested [in the strategy] because … we need to gather, to share, to participate, we need to change so … being involved in such a process for me is something very important, for me personally, because you learn.

In this perspective, the value of the process was key. While the Ministry representative recognized that "discussions are healthy," it is also fundamental to recognize the value of discussions with people with whom one may not agree. For the Palestinian expert, recognizing the value of the participative process itself may be the most important legacy of the initiative. In her opinion, it was "something that people will take home with them."

Conclusion

This analysis of a specific action implemented in the framework of an EU program has revealed that one of the main impacts of the initiative was to create new, sometimes unexpected relations among the stakeholders, leading to a reconfiguration of the cultural scene. First, some government representatives and cultural players involved in the strategy got to know each other better, which helped establish a common, albeit fragile basis for interaction that, in some ways, echoes broader socio-political dynamics in Jordan. Furthermore, development of the strategy has contributed to strengthening the positions

of its main participants. In Jordan, the initiative has encouraged the government to take the Ministry more seriously. It has also strengthened the position of a number of cultural actors and increased their awareness of their role and power vis-à-vis the authorities, encouraging them to potentially become more involved in the development of a public policy. Last but not least, it has encouraged them to work collectively and be more open to newcomers, leading to new collaborative dynamics in Jordan and beyond. In other words, this EU initiative has been used by some of its participants, authorities and cultural actors willing to work together on a public action, to reinforce their positions and contribute to structuring their field. A recent conference entitled "Rethinking Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Partnership" offered the opportunity to broaden perspectives on other EU programs.[22] One example, Net Med Youth, is a regional project that seeks to improve access for young people in designing national youth policies.[23] Its representative advocated a shift to the municipal level, especially in terms of cultural policies and heritage, creating more opportunities to involve young people in heritage governance in conjunction with local authorities. This view is shared by the Med Culture team, particularly with regard to the crucial role that cities play in cultural life in Europe and elsewhere, as well as in the growing importance of local authorities in some countries in the region. It remains to be seen whether this message has been fully appreciated.

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