Theory of the Carnival
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This project is part of “Drama, Diversity and Development in the MENA region” funded by the European Union under the Med Culture regional program, by the Prince Claus Fund, and by the Swedish Postcode Foundation. And implemented by Minority Rights Group International, Civic Forum Institute, Andalus for Tolerance and Anti Violence Studies.

This project is funded by

This Project is implemented by

This project is in collaboration with

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ElMadina was founded since 2000 in Alexandria, Egypt. It Works in arts and culture through training, production, culture space’s management and for supporting artists and youth initiatives. Also seeks to create culture market for artists in Alexandria as it is one from the main culture cities in the Mediterranean, and transform public spaces and marginalized areas to spaces where people can practice free expression and create a cohesive social environment characterized by diversity and pluralism.

ElMadina believes that citizens are those who always make and produce arts and culture, and they are the developmental factor for its sustainability. ElMadina seeks for bringing arts and culture to be a main part of the human life and one of the main parameters for sustainable human and social development and that they are determining factors for democracy, human rights and economic growth.

ElMadina by its work and projects are keen to target the artists, youth groups and women from all different social and economic backgrounds.
Message to the Carnavalians

Maskagro, Sabah El Kheir, Good Morning, Bonjour, Naharkom Said, Alawafi, Hello

I wish we could create, at some point, a youth gathering able to say good morning to each other in all languages of the world! All languages are beautiful and all people are equally beautiful. My friends, the Street Carnival group! You succeeded, as boys and girls, despite your diversity, to form one group united through love and respect! You succeeded to be brave despite the tyranny of backwardness that increased in our society and created stupid prohibitions. The way you dress, your hairstyle, the way you talk, the friendships between you girls and boys, all these are challenges against the prevailing stupidity! It is courageous to assert the importance of art in a society that is fighting art ... very courageous. This is the first step ... more steps need to be taken. Rest assured that all people are beautiful.

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 extremism around the world! Your message can be shorten in one phrase: All people are beautiful. It is one world! People vary in appearance, religion, and language. Underlying all these differences, there is one essence that unites us all. Differing from one another becomes an indication of sweet diversity, when we whole-heartedly espouse the concept that we are essentially the same. This is a call for you to join us in singing and in affirming the beauty of life. When extremism tries to have the upper hand, we sing. It is still possible to sing, thereby stressing the fact that all people are beautiful.

Socrates, the philosopher once said: «Speak so that I may see you» and I say: «Create so that I may see you» Create until you are able to see your soul and get to know it. Draw, write, play music, sing, dance, until you can understand yourself and others can understand you, until you yourself learn and in turn teach others! The world is not about numbers, the world are made up of human feelings. My personal call to you is to continue practicing art and to enjoy doing so and at the same time give pleasure to others. Spread culture and beauty in Egypt and outside Egypt!

Continue in order to prove that All People are beautiful.
First of all, I would like to thank El Madina Foundation for Performing and Digital Arts, the ones in charge of it, all its members and also those who made it possible for this wonderful theatrical performance to come into being. Special thanks go to the artist, Ahmed Saleh, whom Haggag Oddoul described as a person who believes in values such as love, diversity, joy, and respect for the Other and for our heritage. All these beautiful values are part of the makeup of El Madina and the Carnival team. During their quick visit to El Mokattam, I felt the overwhelming joy radiating from their hearts. They were happy to perform a unique work of art for the poor citizens of Egypt. We are proud of the Jesuit Order motto "men and women for others" and we all work for the happiness of others, for the happiness of our compatriots. If each one of us repeated the same motto and practiced it in real life, we will find ourselves working for the good of each other. This value, namely the value of altruism is a great value!

We wholeheartedly participated with El Madina foundation in the preparation and the bringing into being of the performance of the Street Carnival. The beginnings go back to a meeting between us, which took place in El Mokattam more than two years ago. The writer and critic, Rasha Abdel Moneim, once suggested the establishment of an coalition for street theatres belonging to all parts of Egypt and El Nahda Society adopted her initiative. The first meeting between more than fifteen teams from about eight governorates took place under the umbrella of El Nahda Society in the Mokattam. We talked about the need to transfer the theatre experience from a closed area into the street and to strengthen the cooperation between us and close the gap between the actor and the audience. The participants in the Mokattam meeting also agreed on the establishment of an office to be based in the Jesuit Centre, Cairo to follow up and to coordinate between various street theatre groups in the country. The revolution of January 25, 2011 had a huge impact on the people in charge of this initiative. They were able to see the highly important role that art plays in our lives and the initiative itself gained momentum. Also, El Madina’s role as an effective institution started crystallising after the revolution. As for our participation in the Carnival Street project, it was an extension to what we have agreed upon in the Mokattam.
Dear Ones! The Mokattam camp offered a unique experience to thirty young men and women from El Madina foundation; the first of its kind! For these young people to co-exist for a period of ten days in a quiet place dedicated to retreats and to silence and for them to bring into being such a unique performance is a step forward in the field. This experience caused us some problems here and there, but all this will not deter us from repeating it for the benefit of everybody within this context. I want to make it clear that the Jesuit house in El Mokattam plays a very important role. Silence, meditation and prayer summarise the role of this place in the refinement of spiritual experiences. Meditation on the texts of the Holy Scriptures, whether it is the Bible or the Quran, takes place here. We reflect on the meaning of love, forgiveness, gentleness and compassion ... etc. All the neighbours know this, and when we booked the place for El Madina team, I personally had in mind that this place would play an important role in bringing into being a distinct work of art and this is actually what happened. I respect young people's private space as much as possible. I remember what Father Danny Denis, our regional director, said to the El Nahda Society artists after he had heard of their experiences: " What you are doing, namely performing various arts, is what we call spiritual resistance: resistance of the spirit of depression, resistance of negativity in society..." I believe that what the Street Carnival team has done and is still doing is very important. This enthusiasm for art and the vivid spirit are the biggest proofs of the ability of young people to overcome the arguments of the counter-revolution and expand the culture of life against the culture of death, despair and negativity. And I would like to thank the Jesuit father in charge of the house in Mokattam because he allowed us to go through this important experience. We hope that this experience would be repeated with other groups for the purpose of developing the artistic skills involved in producing street theatre performances and bringing in more spirituality into the artistic output.

My dear ones! I end my talk by congratulating El Madina, the Alexandrian foundation, for acting as a melting pot for the people and cultures it represents, whether Alexandrian, Caireen, Nubian, Upper or Lower Egyptian, in order to create for us a rich and enjoyable artistic product, a product well received by Upper Egyptian as well as Suez Canal area audience. Everywhere the work was performed, it proved to be a success!

Once again, thank you all! Looking forward to the next initiative!
Visions clash, intertwine, and battle in the arenas of the political scene. The carnival breathes and all adversaries join it, it puts forward, the option of co-existence, rather than inevitable replacement and exclusion...

The carnival is the voluntary presence of people during a performance presented by an artist. (S)he presents it with an unusual degree of participation between perform and receiver that erases all peremptory differences. It is this kind of partnership which is unrestricted by a performance space separated from the audience hall. The differentiation between artist and spectator is no more. Hence, the former is no longer on the guidance and direction platform, and the latter is, not anymore, on the throne of transcendence, above the acts of narrative and performance. In other words, the carnival is an intimate space that is based on the demolition of distinguishing aesthetic spaces alongside their psychological, social and socio-cultural denotations.

Carnival is diversity, when you walk from one performance to another with your own free will. You may stay on till the end of the first performance or you may be attracted to another one without any justification. When you do this, you are not subject to a temporal moment that starts when you have escaped another one. The artistic structure of the carnival is non-sequential. It does not know a beginning, middle, or end, because before the virtual beginning, there has always been another one. Similarly, after the imagined end, there will always be another end which the artist won’t permit the recipients to experience. As long as the carnival is about diversity which is the inevitable non-progression, it has to be the counterpart of interactivity which allows viewers to exercise free choice and formulate their chosen scenes, and therefore they are trained to choose both in the figurative and true sense.

The carnival acquires its legitimacy through its participants. Yes! The participants are the defenders of the carnival, as much as they are sheltered by it. Groups, made up of the common people, come into being, under the protection of the carnival. They yearn for moments of escape from strict rules which control their daily life. The egg in the carnival has a different colour from the usual one, for it to be able to acquire, during the festivities, a different mask and to reveal another potential which the world hasn’t seen before. During the carnival, social differences, whether based on class, ethnicity, sect or nationality or any other differences which may be added to the term “human being”, melt away.
The carnival is the contesting of the power of any authority in the arena of the three strictly defined tracks, which crystallize its limits and taboos, namely religion, the homeland and sex, in order to redraw the boundaries of the timeless authorities above the transient ones. What the community has accepted as a fixed law is questioned at moments of change. The carnival is the mask, when the face asks for it. It is the transient toying with the timeless, the variable tickling the fixed and the talkative dallying with the calm.

The carnival always takes place after moments of misery, tragedy and suffering. They say that the birth pangs that bring into being civilizations, have given precedence to the tragic element over laughter, first tragedy and then comedy. Laughs, then, are dispersed everywhere to make fun of the inability to surmount pain. Carnival is the joy of confronting despair, it touches the wounds caused by constitutions and charters, which failed, even when they did strive and irrespective of how hard they strove, to include any smithereens of justice.

The carnival is the chaos of opposing discourses, wasted energy, betrayed dreams, forgotten promises, abandoned paraphernalia, the ignored claims, and the margin dancing with the center and recapturing the lime light, even after a long time.

**The carnival is the seduction of lawlessness.**
Rumour has it that the street is ours. This, however, is not true ... street practices and public space formulas are controlled by thugs and political Islam groups, contractors and brokers. This is not a random policy; it is systematic and deliberate. I will give you an example. Someone builds a tea shack on the Corniche, in the city of Alexandria and imposes on those who want to sit within his precinct to buy either his goods or leave. When someone complains to the authorities about this, they use lack of means, the need of this person to make a living instead of stealing (in reality he is both involved in stealing and bullying people) as an excuse for what is happening. The authorities also tell you that if you were a decent person you would go to one of those legally rented cafes on the beach. This means that it is no longer possible for lovers, friends, or families to breathe free air. Love is forbidden. Now, go to the same place and try to give a simple one-person artistic performance and you will be surprised. This is simply not possible. You will realise that this is not a randomly run state. It has very clear goals and a mission and its message to you is: “The street is not yours! It is our private property and you are not one of our customers!”

It was not my intention, when we started the Street Carnival Project to produce an awareness-raising, didactic or enlightening performance, as it is the case with most experiments in Egypt. El Madina foundation and I are totally against the idea of awareness raising and enlightening as such, because it takes a fully aware party that conveys its awareness to a less aware one. However, our social and political crisis is too complex to be solved by awareness-raising campaigns. We are all in the same predicament, in a daily confrontation with fierce life conditions. The Street Carnival goal is to imbue art and its techniques with power and magic, so that it can supersede theories of security and thuggery. The Street Carnival does not just invite you to be aware of the problem but to share it with us. We tell you: “This is a game! Come and play it with us!” The carnival appreciates your local culture and your way of living and celebrates it. We do not aggrandise the prevailing street culture because we are not its creators, but we give support to vulnerable and marginalised voices for them to find a space and for them to be able to say: The Street is ours! Ours alone!
We have learned a great deal through the street training project, which went on from 2011 to 2014. Together with the people on the street, we created our subject matter. We did discover many voices with enough awareness but with no space of their own. We also learned not to prejudge what is acceptable by the street culture and what is not. We were quite daring as to the subjects we presented and the artistic techniques we used including modern dance, storytelling, monologue recitation, pantomime...etc. I have learnt from the carnival experience to be more modest and to respect the minds of the passer-by viewers and give priority to what is human rather than what is aesthetic and formal.

Nora Amin, the Egyptian director and playwright who has a pioneering experiment with the Theatre of the Oppressed in Egypt and the Arab world after watching the show, told me: “This show is fantastic. I can watch it for ten hours. It fixed all the problems of the street theatre in Egypt and benefited from all the past experiments”. With regard to the last part of the sentence, I think she is right. From the beginning, I did not work in isolation from the past experiments, especially the Egyptian ones starting from Yaqub Sanu in the early 20th century, Saleh Saad’s Pavilion Theatre, Ahmed Ismail’s Barn Theatre and ending with Mohamed Abdel Fattah’s Hala Group, and Nora Amin’s Egyptian Theatre of the Oppressed project, in addition to the experiments of the Alexandrian foundations, which began working on the streets from early 2005 such as Gudran, Eskenderella and Safinat Nuh’s foundation. I was involved in most of these experiments and I followed the rest of them closely and with love. I have benefited a great deal from the positive aspects, which are many, as well as the negative aspects of this experiments. However, what laid the foundation for the Street Carnival experiment and made us consider it a new theory of work, is the street training project, which served as our laboratory for a period of four years. We stayed on the streets in several areas of Alexandria, had one experience in Aswan, completed seventeen diverse workshops and presented a number of performances with the participation of the people of the aforementioned areas. This project stemmed from the idea that we did not have a theory of work on the street. To evolve one, we needed to do intensive research and find a functional laboratory. This is how the street carnival theory, which we consider as a budding theory, subject to development and growth, came into existence. There is something else that contributed in shaping and maturing our experience, namely our partnership with the Scientific and Cultural Nahda Association (The Jesuit Centre, Cairo), especially because they have been adopting a very similar methodology to ours in their project “Madraset Nas Theatre for Social Theater”, which is a laboratory and unique school for street art in the Middle East.
A theatre artist and trainer, Mostafa Wafi, one of the very few who spent their whole lives working in the field of street theatre, run this project. We were more than happy to collaborate with Father William Sedhoum, the man exuding love, knowledge and courage, which are an essential part of our work strategy and which enabled us to bring into being our first carnival performance.

A number of unique trainers in the field of street theatre joined us in making this experiment come into being, under the wonderful guidance Haggag Oddoul. I would also like to deeply thank the group of trainees with diverse skills. However, for their lack of focus sometimes, their work would have been remarkable.

We all worked harmoniously together, a clear signal for there being scope for continuity of this experience, because we strongly wanted a work of art that would reshape the public space, create a new type of imagination around it, and take us to the realms of long forgotten joy. This is exactly what the street carnival achieved. The comment I most frequently heard was “This is something beautiful that brought us out of our depression.”

**What is a Carnival**

The carnival is an artistic and revolutionary theory of work in the field of street and open space theatre. It is based on the carnivalesque joy, on driving both the actor and the audience to think critically and participate in the celebration, as well as on the belief in the importance of cultural and social diversity. The carnival is also based on foregrounding the strength of and the positive role played by any local culture within a society in solving social problems, whether these problems are an effect of a national culture or an imported one that ignores or does not respect or even prohibits this local culture. The carnival differentiates between the customs and traditions on the one hand and the injustice, violence or oppression that later became part of them. The carnival works on improving the attitude towards the local culture, restoring people’s respect for it and breaking stereotypes. The focus would be on the joy inherent in this culture and its vocal and kinetic aesthetics and on imbuing it with some modernity through the re-employment of its basic elements as well as the addition of modern arts such as Modern Dance and Physical Theatre. The Carnival Theatre benefits from the Theatre of the Oppressed by inserting scenes following the same pattern, not for making the viewer participate in the event, but as an attempt to assess the impact of the performance in an artistic way. The theory is based on innovative technical elements, such as the procession, the two rows, the complex scenes, and the closing ceremony of the carnival, in addition to music, singing and dancing.
1- The Local Culture:
Within each nation/country, there is what is sometimes called subcultures, local cultures or minority cultures. Bearing in mind that though the meaning of the concept has been more or less agreed upon, this is not the case with the terminology. This local culture is linked to a group of people within a nation, irrespective of whether they are indigenous or foreign, such as in the case of refugees. This group is connected to a specific environment and most of the time, they have their own language, irrespective of whether it is recognised and taught or not, their own ethnicity and a history which they are proud of. A local culture also has its own architecture, music, songs and dances as well as social customs and traditions and social system. It has a specific way of dealing with the Other and with the majority within a nation/country. This can be summed up in one sentence, namely that a local culture of any people, is a way of thinking and a style of living. During the Middle Ages and until the mid-twentieth century, people did not respect local cultures, since they regarded them as backward. Even developed countries did not have any respect for the cultures of the countries they invaded. The invaders even tried, in various ways, to erase these cultures, such as in the case of the Native Americans and with less success in the case of Arabs under European colonialism and this procedure repeated itself when these countries containing people with local cultures regained their independence.

2- Social Problems:
The carnival concentrates on social problems caused by either a national or foreign culture. These problems usually escalate because of the disregard of the local cultures and their diversity. The carnival works with the actors and participants on presenting minor examples of shameful social behaviour, without going into ambiguous or contentious areas.

3- Joy and Modernity:
There is no conflict between joy and modernity. Joy is inherent in the old and in the modern alike. We all enjoy the Ancient Greek theatre and what came after it, and the relatively outdated Shakespeare is still the most important playwright, and he still fills us with joy and spreads it around us. At the same time, the street carnival makes us rejoice. The element of enjoyment is what makes a human being happy. Joy is an integral part of happiness. The world has lately come to understand that each work, idea and vision should have spreading happiness and joy in the lives of human beings as its goal.
**The Carnival Procession**
This is a procession that takes place before the actual performance, and is composed of simple and joy-spreading movements.

**The Two Rows**
In all cultures, there is the concept of two rows facing each other. The performance takes this as its form, also for the purpose of establishing the acting space within the stree without having to direct the audience or having to resort to physical elements.

**Songs and Music**
The show starts with a panorama of local culture and in the middle, there is a song about the problem that is being presented.

**Complex Scenes**
These are scenes that combine individual and group performances at the same time. While one actor performs a scene within the space between the two rows, the group participates with him in performing this scene in different ways while they are standing in those rows.

**The Closing Ceremony of the Carnival**
The show ends with a dance and a carnivalesque performance combined with a few and simple circus movements.
Mohab Saber
Cultural Manager

Street Carnival
A Space for Art, Dialogue and Joy

El Madina has been engaging for the past five years with the street theatre, aiming at filling the gap between the common people and artists through projects in the street and training artists outside closed venues to participate with the locals in the formulation of the artistic production. We realized that acceptance and support is the second step after tolerance so we developed the Street Carnival method because of acknowledging that we are in an urgent need to get to know each other, for us to be able to accept diversity and spread tolerance.

Centralization of arts and culture in Egypt is the main challenge, which has a marked effect on different aspects of artistic production such as the encouragement and provision of cultural productions in marginalized areas, the creation of a cultural market for artists outside the capital and the facing of the limitations on the freedom of expression. The decision makers do not recognize these challenges and when they do, security reasons and complicated procedures disturb logistic and artistic processes especially when they touch on sensitive topics such as minority and gender rights. Art has the power to stimulate change; arts and cultural expression are the soft power of non-violent resistance, conflict transformation and peace building. Providing artistic productions in marginalized areas is one of the main cultural rights that the people are entitled to. This is a challenge that street artists generally face in Egypt, on both the level of the decision makers and the community itself. Therefore, the Street Carnival project contributes in fulfilling the needs of the artists who want to play an influential role in raising awareness on citizenship and civil participation. Because there is lack of communication between artists and the public street inhabitants and because there are no clear ways of working effectively during this sensitive period in Egypt, the Street Carnival has come up with creative means to be used in order to fill the gap between artists and the public and to promote cheerfulness.
The Street Carnival highlights, through street theatre performances inspired by the richness of the Nubian culture and diversity, the ability of the Nubian culture to integrate with the main Egyptian culture in order to overcome social challenges. The Street Carnival worked on training artists to produce a tour consisting of thirty performances to be presented in Ten Egyptian Cities. The performances tackled several social issues such as discrimination and sexual harassment against women. The aims of these performances were to break prejudices and stereotypes, promote diversity and acceptance, and stress the overlap between the minority cultures and the main Egyptian culture. The project ultimately aims at the empowerment of young artists who will continue working with ElMadina in future street theatre projects.

The Logic of Love:

The following lines highlight the methodology that we used in the Street Carnival project in many different contexts. As a result of five years of working in the area of street theatre and arts in urban spaces, we realized that rule number one is to make the society fall in love firstly with our target groups or minorities whose culture we are advocating and whose challenges we are bringing to the fore, and in the case of the Nubians what we needed to achieve was to make the society understand the essence of their culture. First of all we tackled the Nubian culture from the vantage point of promoting its values as solutions for the problems of the whole Egyptian society, not from the perspective of them being specifically Nubian ones. We adopted this method, because if we tackled the problem of Nubian marginalization or the constrains that they face, this may cause a gap between what we need to promote and the real needs of society and its common challenges. The main common challenge in Egypt nowadays is sexual harassment against women, which Nubian women are also facing outside their community as a result of their different skin colour or clothes. The project highlighted the great respect accorded to women in the Nubian culture and how Nubians do not have honour crimes or a sexist attitude towards women, which reflects the openness and tolerance of the Nubian culture. This means that the Nubian community can be a source of inspiration for solutions of societal challenges that the whole of Egypt faces. In general, our methodology works on breaking stereotypes and prejudices against any different culture and on promoting co-existence and as such this methodology can be applied to the cases of other minorities such as refugees, Bedouins and religious minorities.
Street Carnival Activities in 2015

**FEB**
- Call for participation, selecting artists and logistical preparations

**MAR**
- Capacity building workshop for twenty five artists and the performance production

**APR**
- First tour: 10 performances in Cairo, Giza and Qalioubya

**MAY**
- Second tour: 10 performances in Luxor, Qena and Assiut

**JUN**
- Third tour: 10 performances in Suez, Port Said, Port Fuad and Damietta

**AUG**
- Fourth tour: 2 performances in Alexandria
- A two days partners evaluation meeting

**SEP**
- Fifth tour Street Carnival: workshop and two performances in Casablanca, Morocco in addition of the issuing of a film and a book about the project

**OCT**
- Street Carnival (Syrian Edition)

**DEC**
The Capacity Building Camp

For ten days, between the 4th and the 15th of April 2015, the capacity building and the production camp were held through intensive training and peer to peer sessions led by the theatre director Ahmed Saleh, with the participation of street theatre training specialists and they were Mustafa Wafi, Nada Sabet, Mustafa El Garhi, Ahmed Abdel Rasoul, Yousef Nour and Hager Magdi from Egypt, in addition of Tina Angelstm and Martin Angelstm from Sweden, who facilitated sessions on physical theatre, dramaturgy, theatre games to build trust and cooperation between the participants in addition of sessions about their personal security. Twenty five artists with expertise in street theatre participated. They were chosen from ninety five eligible applicants who responded to the Street Carnival open call. The capacity building camp method was designed according to the participant’s expectations and experiences depending on combing the participants’ variety of expertise and the proposed ideas, which played an essential role in the facilitation of the production process both as far as quality and time frame are concerned. The trainers helped in facilitating the production process and the elicitation of ideas under the supervision of the performance director, Ahmed Saleh.

The performance (The Passage):

The artists stand in two rows facing each other (as in Nubian dances), and then they start singing, playing music, or participating in the solo scenes (from their place). They sit or stand based on the scene requirements and according to the vision angle and the performance venue. The performer while acting his/her scene has to walk through the space between the two rows performing his/her scene until s/he reaches the other side. The scenes tackle sexual harassment, discrimination and gender equality. This artistic method gives access to the audience to stand in the performers’ area and interact spontaneously by joining the performance from the beginning by dancing or singing until they reach the two impact measuring scenes when the audience are invited to participate by giving feedback about Nubian culture and sexism against women inside the scene, which helps break the gap between the artists and the audience from the beginning of the performance. This method also allows the artists to manage the audience by creating a way of interaction. The visible space between the two rows, inspired by Nubian dances was the invisible rule of the game between the artist and the audience that ensured the smooth interaction between them without disturbing the performance workflow.
The Performance consist of:

**The Parade**  
The technique which used for walking into and out of the performance venue

**Soundtracks**  
Two collaborative improvised songs and two originally composed music tracks

**Scenes**  
Sixteen solo modern dances, clown, miming and storytelling scenes. Not all scenes are enacted in a single performance, but a series is selected according to the settings and the audience

**Dances**  
Folkloric dance from The Nubian Culture

**Sustainability:**
Partnership is the key word for reaching our target groups as well as the objectives of the project as our planning methodology depends on creating partnerships with a wide number of partners. This gives an added value as we planned to reach a wide audience which are different in social and economic backgrounds especially in places which do not allow mixed genders. We succeeded in connecting with grass-root associations which gave us immediate access to perform in under-privileged places full of audience without complicated procedures, such as in a mixed-gender school with an outreach of about 1200 persons. This was our very first performance. We also recruited part-time coordinators from each region we targeted in order to facilitate contacting and choosing places for performing, housing and transportation plans.

**Artists Empowerment:**
This being our main objective, we focused on enabling the participating artists to share in the leadership of the project. We decided to choose every day one of the artists to be the leader of the whole group with the right to change or adapt the performance according to the circumstances of the street or the audience background. This brought perfect results as the artists were able to lead the group and take decisions, which was an experiment for them to work separately without the project team on the long term.
Sharing Experience:

Promoting our methodology through sharing experience in different contexts was another goal of ours. We supported ten artists to travel and apply the Street Carnival experience in Morocco. We created a core team of five of the most committed artists to select the other five artists who would travel to perform in Morocco. In addition, we asked them to create a training schedule for a three-day training workshop that they facilitated following the same method of the street carnival capacity building camp held in Egypt and which they implemented in Casablanca using new artists to perform the Street Carnival side by side with them in Morocco.

Our carnival method makes people interact spontaneously with the performance from the beginning without any prejudices, since they can perfectly understand that we come especially to their own places to draw a smile on their faces and they do appreciate our initiative although they live under challenging circumstances. This method makes them more accepting to what messages we want to highlight during our performance and makes them interact with us with respect and hospitality. They even invite us to their homes and ask us to come again!
Did the project achieve its goals?

The Street Carnival project took place in an Egyptian environment and context where it is difficult to know, even at the last minute, if things you want to do will take place as foreseen and even if it will take place at all. You can get permission to hold your activity and still on the spot, a few minutes before the event, things can suddenly become complicated. After the Arab Spring, organising activities in the streets can sometimes be seen as initiating protests and is, nowadays, even more of a challenge since the police, security officers, and city administration are not comfortable with large gatherings. In general, these people do not have any understanding for the positive, and fun aspects of this kind of cultural activities.

ElMadina stuff had previous experiences with holding cultural activities in streets and in over-populated neighbourhoods. However, they could not predict how the present project would go and if they would be stopped or not. For this reason, they had foreseen a six month period to hold the performances and they also had a plan B in store. But as Egypt is never predictable, there were no major difficulties in holding performances. The reception of the performances went beyond all expectations and the carnival was always attended by dancing, singing and happy audiences.

Main Results:

1- The management of the performance:
The activity was run in a way that artists had a growing role in the performance management. After a while they could select the scenes to be played, the order of the scenes, and the leader of the group who managed the safety issues related to the show.

In general, and according to their evaluations after the capacity building camp and at the end of the project, the artists liked the way the performance was brought into being, integrating their ideas and skills. There has been a strong feeling of teamwork power and of growing confidence in the artists’ ability to face large audiences.
2- The Relevance of the Project:

- Training Artists to Develop and Learn New Skills:
In Egypt, artists are still working within traditional settings and their skills need to be stretched beyond what established and conventional institutions can provide. In the last few years, some artistic projects have been quite “Avant Garde” but they usually reach a public already initiated into alternative ways of performing arts. By mixing theatre, dance, acrobat, clown performances and music, the project offered an opportunity for artists to develop their skills. Some trainers and local partners suggested the introduction of other art forms such as the puppet show and show theatre into the performance. At the end of the project, many artists have developed capacities that enabled them to join other professional artistic projects. Already a few of them were contacted to work with other groups after the publicity around the Street Carnival project, since all the artists have developed confidence in performing in challenging street settings.

- Bringing Arts to Public Spaces:
Performing in the street has never been easy because it involves crowds that the security agents are afraid to lose control over especially since the 2011 Revolution. However, when performances such as the Street Carnival took place, they proved to be a space for joy. For a certain period of time, very young as well as elderly people, and all types of people could enjoy themselves and at the same time experience how a number of society challenging issues were being addressed. Their happy faces are visible in hundreds of pictures and videos taken during and after the performances. Most of the performances were deliberately held in poor and marginalised neighbourhoods where artistic events are rare. This was a way of showing people that public spaces can be theirs. It also allowed artists to be more confident and realise that the street can be their stage.

- Performing Arts is Accessible to Everyone:
The scenes performed did not need a lot of props or arrangements which could encourage local groups to start their own projects within their communities. It is always quite astonishing to see that in Egypt, where children and young people are in large numbers, not much is offered to keep them busy and entertain them during their holidays, especially the long summer ones. This could explain why most of the performances were even more crowded than expected, because people are thirsty for activities where they can enjoy themselves. One should also notice that lots of girls and women joined the audience.
- Arts Can Address Important Issues of Society:
The project was initially created in order to address Nubian minority issues. One can say that this was achieved with some drawbacks that will be addressed later. The project managed to address many more aspects of diversity as the group was composed of artists with different skills, capacities and cultural backgrounds. There were men and women, Muslims and Christians, people from Alexandria and from Cairo as well as Nubians, and people with different artistic skills. For them, it was an achievement, which the audiences also witnessed, to create and perform side by side. Some of the scenes addressed gender issues, such as how women are treated in the Egyptian society and in the Nubian culture. One of our partners said during the evaluation meeting:

“The Carnival broke the usual rules regarding religion, politics and sexuality”

3- The effectiveness of the project:
The project had three main objectives:
- Breaking stereotypes and increasing awareness on racism in order to promote diversity.
- Developing the artists’ capacities in performing in the streets as part of the social transformation process.
- Opening public spaces for artistic expression.

According to the evaluations of both artists and partners, which varied mostly between very good and excellent , the project did achieve most of its objectives . The project was, for sure, an eye opener on Nubian culture for the artists, some of the partners and for the audience. Many artists felt that they had learned a lot through Hagag Addoul’s input and from other Nubian participants. However, several are aware that they only learned a little about the Nubian culture, since it needs more time in-situ to really know about any different culture. Several scenes were not so clear in the first performances and there was a risk of misinterpretation as one could think that these scenes endorsed violence and dominance towards women. After discussions with ElMadina staff, it was important to draw the attention of the artists to the message they wanted to pass on to the audience which resulted in introducing new interaction methods with the crowds.
2- The Relevance of the Project:

- Training Artists to Develop and Learn New Skills:
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Even though the promotion of the event had not been well done in some places, the large number of people attending has to be underlined. The smallest audience was around the swimming pool of Port Fouad, where about twenty children and few adults came out of the water to see what was going on, but in general the performances gathered from 200 people, to 500 in most of the cases and up to a thousand in a big school in Cairo and in Ras el Bar. These people were from all ages, with lots of girls and women, something that needs to be noticed since it happened in areas where traditions are still strong in controlling women public appearance. In many performances, girls and women were not afraid to be in the front and did not hesitate to answer artists’ questions.

In most of the cases, the performances were warmly welcomed by people stopping by spontaneously. The one in Ras el Bar, with one of the largest attendance, was even under the protection of the army who seemed to be quite willing to secure a moment of happiness.

3- The efficiency of the project:
In Egypt not many artists can really make a living from their arts, so, when a paid job appears it often gets priority. The project was over quite a long period (really intense work had to be done in the period between April and August) which was probably a challenge for the full commitment of some participants. After the first tours in Cairo and Upper Egypt, the group lost a few artists. It gave the opportunity for others to be more active and to shoulder more responsibilities in running the performances.

In terms of covering the costs, ElMadina paid for the capacity building camp, gave the artists a lump sum for daily costs during tours and a small sum for the performances, which was not bad, bearing in mind that twenty people were constantly involved in over thirty two performances.

An investment was made that went beyond the Carnival Street project. Several artists made steps in developing their own projects, in getting offers to join other cultural projects, and in bringing other performances to the streets. ElMadina has enlarged also its pool of artists with 18 people committed who can continue to work and develop projects.
5- The Impact of the project

- In many places where the Street Carnival took place, people have been approaching local coordinators and staff, after the show and up till now, to ask for more performances.

- Due to the increasing media coverage of the different tours, requests to host the performance in new places were received.

- Several parents on behalf of their children and young people have been asking to join such a project.

- Partners in other cities than Alexandria suggested to help local groups in developing their own street carnival.

- What has been surprising to the organisers, is the fact that no major obstacles occurred in the planning of the performances in most of the cities. Only the performance in Ismailia could not take place because of some permissions that were not given. But in general, plans went quite smoothly despite the fact that ElMadina had foreseen difficulties and had planned longer periods for the tours in case some performances would have needed to be postponed.

In conclusion, we can say that the Street carnival achieved its original main goals in reinforcing the artists’ capacities and raising awareness on the Nubian minority issues. As mentioned above, there are also several other important aspects. This Street carnival was an experiment and for sure it has planted many seeds in several communities and encouraged them to continue opening public spaces for artistic expression.
Street Carnival in Casablanca .. Morocco

Mehdi Azdem
Manager of Racines Association

Association Racines, in partnership with the Theatre of Oppressed Casablanca and The Minority Globe had the pleasure to host ElMadina for Performing and Digital Arts, as part of the international exchange program "Drama, diversity and development". This meeting has given place to a creative residency of 3 days where the Egyptian actors shared their experiences with the actors of Mix City, to readapt the "Street Carnival" show at the Moroccan context. The restitution of that time of sharing was the result of two live performances on the square of Casablanca “Nevada” And has known a great success with the public present around this cultural event.

The thematic of “discrimination and sexual harassment against the woman” remains a current topic in our respective countries. The gender issue affects the entire society, thus, it is essential to open the public debate about this problem and educate the individual on the role and place of women in the city. This playful form, which is street theater is seen as a perfect way, to awaken the collective conscience of Moroccan, through these bodily expressions, songs and tales that were played during Street Carnival.
Making theater out in the public space, does not dissociate the slogan "If the public does not come to you, you go to it." This kind of initiative fits perfectly into the actions of Racines. Which is trying:

- Firstly: to make access to the arts and the universal culture.
- Secondly: sensibilise and educate the individual to citizenship and democracy through artistic expressions in public space.

Finally, these moments of exchange proved to be fruitful over militant objectives that our structures defend.
El Madina for Performance and Digital Arts was recognized by us, the actors in Morocco, as a great organization from Alexandria, Egypt during their brief stay in Casablanca from the 28th of October to November the 2nd 2015. During the three-day artistic residence, under the instruction and direction of Ahmed Saleh, we felt like we had been working with El Madina and had been performing together, for a long time. Ahmed Saleh had the wisdom to explain and discuss what he wanted from the actors in a very simple manner and within a very short period of time and we all understood what he needed from us.

On the first day of the residence, nobody knew the outcome of the interaction between actors of El Madina, The Oppressed Theater of Casablanca, The Minority Globe and Zaaz Band, under the supervision of Racines Association. Actors and leaders were very careful and were doing their best to interact with each other and bring out the best in themselves.

The day of the performances fell on the 1st of November 2015, and was very stressful. It was raining all day long. Reuben of The Minority Globe discussed the weather conditions with Ahmed Saleh, the artistic director of the Street Carnival. Both men believed the rain would stop for the Carnival to take place. Other actors complained about the effect the bad weather would have on their health, and Reuben assured them that, the rain would stop for the Carnival to start, and that nobody would fall ill. Our Egyptian guests couldn’t have come all the way from Egypt for them not to perform, because of the rain, were the last words of Reuben to the actors in Morocco.
Finally on the day of the performance, the actors went into the rain, to figure out the locations where the Carnival would take place. As they were about to start, the rain began pouring heavily again. Reuben still remained optimistic and was sure that the Carnival had to go on irrespective of the rain. Few minutes later and just in time, the rain stopped and immediately, the performance began.

The artists performed in a bad weather, and they do deserve credit for that. They also changed the venue of the performance from the Nation Unis square as was previously scheduled to the Nevada square. They also had to put up with all kinds of disturbances from the photographers and journalists who invaded their allotted open space. The second section of the performance began after a break of two hours, still at the Nevada square, but in a different area of it. All the actors gave their best and were applauded by the crowds.

Dalia Samir was the most popular with the crowds, as she naturally knows how to carry everyone away into her pure artistic world. Hicham Belaoudi, Meanet Emaleu, Soukaina Benchekroun, Sondos M. Soumitte, and all the rest of the actors were very good at their performances, and so were the great musicians who accompanied them.

The assistant director, Hosni Almoukhlis, who is also the director of The Oppressed Theater of Casablanca, played an important part in the Street Carnival project. He also did a good job of translating to the non-Arabic speaking actors of the Carnival.

The experience was really a new discovery for us, despite the fact that we already knew that Egyptians are very good at acting and theatre performances. But, we got more than we expected from them in a very short period of time. We will be glad to work with them in other projects in the future.

ElMadina was a school for us in Casablanca during this short visit, and we hope that in the near future we would learn many more things from them. In life, the more we learn, the more we can control our destiny. The human being is the only animal who can store knowledge. This has made humans greater than other creatures, because they keep on learning, and are multi-skilled.
The Carnavalians

Ahmed El Sawy
Sondos Mohamed
Sara Hany
Mohamed El Sory
Kireles Makram
Taha Malek
Sara Hamdy
Yousef Nour
Farah Saleh
Farida Saleh
Sylvie Ogou (Côte d'Ivoire)
Soukaina Benchekroun (Morocco)
Ayoub (Morocco)
Manal Shehab (Morocco)
Hicham Belaoudi (Morocco)
Minette Emaleu (Cameron)
Participating Trainers

Moustafa Al Garhy
(Egypt)

Tinna Ingelstam
(Sweden)

Nada Thabet
(Egypt)

Moustafa Wafy
(Egypt)

Martin Ingelstam
(Sweden)

Mehdi Azdem
(Manager of Racine Association in Morocco)

Reuben Odoi Yemoh
(Manager of Minority Globe - Ghana)

Hosni Al Moukhlis
(Manager of Al Mahkour Theater - Morocco)

Brahim Glim
(Logistic Management in Morocco)
Street Carnival
Project Statistics
12 Cities

20 Local Partners

35 Performances 25 Artists

15,000 Audience
15,000 Audience

64% Adult
36% Children

53% Male
47% Female

7% Alexandria 2000
32% Cairo & Giza 4500
25% Canal Cities 3500
36% Upper Egypt 5000
95 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS
25 ARTISTS ACCEPTED

17 MALE
8 FEMALE

5 FROM NUBA
5 FROM CAIRO

20 ALEXANDRIAN
12 WITH EXPERIENCE WITH ELMADINA

7 MUSICIANS

15 PERFORMERS

3 FILMMAKERS
45 Evaluation Interviews with about 120 persons

Interactive Interviews with about 620 persons

15 Interactive Impact Measuring Scenes with about 500 persons

7 Artists
Empowering Meetings

3 Projects
Evaluation Meetings
5 TV Channels

35 Electronic Newspapers & Articles

18,000 Photos

50 Video Hours

150 Posters

12,000 Flyers

3 Rollups Banners
STREET CARNIVAL IN MOROCCO

21 Participants

Egypt 9  Morocco 7  Cote D’Ivoire 1  Cameron 1  Ghana 1

Artistic Residency and a Workshop for 3 Days

2 Performances in Nevada Plaza - Casablanca

- Audience 600
- Local Partners 3
- Evaluation Meetings 1
- Newspapers & Press 12
- TV Interviews 3
- Radio Interview 1
Street Carnival (Syrian Edition)

There is no proof that the carnival theory has worked out in dealing with local cultures except through this period. After we succeeded with Nubians in Egypt and immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, we worked with Syrian refugees. We were able to give a new carnival performance that was representative of their culture and that could help them integrate into the society and encourage society to love them and appreciate them.

Total project participants 53 Persons

41 Syrian refugees
16 females
20 males
5 children

12 Egyptian Artists
6 females
6 males

1120 Audience
8 Local Partners

7402 Reach on Facebook
385 Photos

1 TV Interview with Alexandria Local Channel
1 Evaluation Meeting

4 Electronic News recording to Google
7 Videos
SPECIAL THANKS

- William Sedhom (ElNahda Association - Jesuit Cairo)
- Behna Film
- Civil Work Commit in Alexandria
- Saeed Abel (Bibliotheca Alexandrina)
- Ahmed Shawky (Stage Manager in Bib Alexandrina)
- Ahmed Ezzat (Stage Supplies in Bib Alexandrina)
- Heba Radwan (Culture Consultant)
- Lamis Soliman
- Reem El Tayeb (Radio Tram)
- Alaa Nasr (Al Dokan)
- Sameh Nabil (Fig Leaf Studio)
- Shaker Saeed (Cairo Coordinator)
- Inas El Masarawy (Qanal Cities Coordinator)
- Gamal Youssef (Upper Egypt Cities Coordinator)
- Father Locas (Franciscans Fathers in Luxor)
- Elsaam Hashim (Al Masryeen Coffee Shop)
- Fawzy (Assistant of Jesuit Cairo)
- Adel Hagy (Kafry Ashry Coordinator)
- Roshdy Abo El Wafa (Vice President of Arab Farmers Association)

Translation: Pro./ Nevien Al Asdody
Participation in Final Evaluation Meeting:
Dr./ Yasser Allam Rasha Abd El Mounem Maryam Al Garhy

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www.elmadinaarts.com/Street-Carnival