



**Arrays  
of  
Egyptian and Tunisian  
Everyday Worlds**  
 An update on the project  
*In 2016—How it felt to live in the Arab  
World five years after the “Arab Spring”*

edited by

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## **Introduction: From “Issues” to “Arrays”**

STEPHAN GUTH and ALBRECHT HOFHEINZ (University of Oslo)

The following *dossier spécial* is the outcome of a workshop, held in November 2017 at the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages (IKOS), University of Oslo, to discuss first drafts of entries on the “arrays” in Tunisian and Egyptian everyday life of 2016. The workshop formed part of a 3-year research project, funded by The Research Council of Norway (Norges forskningsråd, NFR) and IKOS, entitled *In 2016—How it felt to live in the Arab World five years after the “Arab Spring”*.

The project’s main idea was to take an analytical “one-year snapshot” of life in two countries of the Arab world that had been of particular importance in the context of the so-called “Arab Spring”—Egypt and Tunisia—and to introduce into Middle East Studies an unconventional, innovative approach to how post-revolutionary everyday-worlds were experienced or ‘felt’: we use fiction (in the widest sense, including cartoons, graffiti, cinema, etc.) and social media ‘buzz’ published or prominent during 2016 to gain a more intimate understanding of the contemporary Arab world and the people living there.<sup>1</sup>

The project’s five main methodological features—the one-year snapshot, the focus on the experience of everyday-worlds, the use of data from several spheres of cultural production, the idea to “let the material speak for itself” by not imposing on it pre-conceived analytical categories, and the presentation of our findings in the form of alphabetically arranged entries, suggesting a non-linear reading guided by numerous cross-references the ensemble of which adds up to a kind of rhizome through which the user will, it is hoped, be able to find his/her own, individual access to these everyday-worlds—these features are inspired by Hans Ulrich GUMBRECHT’s seminal “essay in historical simultaneity,” the study *In 1926: Living at the Edge of Time*.<sup>2</sup> This book provided the model for what our project group was and still is eager to achieve: an approach that allows the reader/user to “jump right into” and move around in the everyday-worlds of the year in question, to pick up its peculiar *Stimmung*<sup>3</sup> without too much analytical intervention or interference from the part of those who collected the material. The latter idea seemed particularly important to the designers of the *In 2016* project since our target year, unlike Gumbrecht’s 1926, was, and still is, not separated from the present by several decades but belongs to a more or less contiguous present. This fact is also mirrored in the “dual identity” or double status of some among the contributors: as researchers on the contemporary Middle East they were/are, on the one hand, observers and analysts with a look “from above” at the everyday-worlds studied as “objects”, while on the other hand, they were/are themselves living *in* these worlds, acting as “subjects”, concerned with, involved in, and both formed by and forming these worlds.

Work on the project began in October 2015. During the “target year,” 2016, activities consisted mainly in collecting relevant material<sup>4</sup> and in assigning preliminary keywords to the data to facilitate search and processing. Towards the end of 2016, in a workshop in November, a first attempt was made to “bundle” pertinent aspects of the extensive data under a number of overarching headings that would have the potential of becoming entries/lemmata in the future publication. These efforts, which were documented in a special dossier of the *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* the same year,<sup>5</sup> continued and intensified during the current year, 2017. In regular meetings, the project’s core group and associated researchers discussed the collected data in the light of the project’s methodological approach and the publication of the research results in the form of a dictionary- or encyclopedia-like monograph, as the print-version of a corresponding website. The main challenge consisted in narrowing down the long list of over 550 keywords and issues observed<sup>6</sup> and transforming them into a new list of terms deemed to be the most suitable ‘points of entry’ into the world of 2016 and, hence, entries in the future publication.

As in Gumbrecht’s *In 1926*, the entries of our *In 2016*, too, are of three types: “arrays” (French: *dispositifs*), binary “codes”, and “codes collapsed”.<sup>7</sup> Let us repeat here, for the sake of convenience, the description of these categories as given in the Introduction to last year’s *Living 2016* dossier:

**Arrays** are ways in which “*artifacts, roles, and activities influence bodies,*” because these “artifacts, roles, and activities [...] require the human bodies to enter into specific spatial and functional relations to the everyday-worlds they inhabit.”<sup>8</sup> For instance, for the year 1926 Gumbrecht identified the following arrays (my selection):

*Artifacts:* Airplanes | Assembly Lines | Automobiles | Bars | Elevators | Gomina | Gramophones | League of Nations | Movie Palaces | Mummies | Ocean Liners | Railroads | Revues | Roof Gardens | Telephones | Wireless Communication

*Roles:* Americans in Paris | Employees | Engineers | Hunger Artists | Reporters | Stars

*Activities:* Boxing | Bullfighting | Cremation | Dancing | Endurance | Jazz | Mountaineering | Murder | Six-Day Races | Strikes

What Gumbrecht calls **codes** are *clusters of arrays* that coexist and overlap in a space of simultaneity and “tend to generate discourses which transform [their] confusion into [...] *alternative options,*”<sup>9</sup> for example:

*Codes:* Action vs Impotence | Authenticity vs Artificiality | Center vs Periphery | Immanence vs Transcendence | Individuality vs Collectivity | Male vs Female | Present vs Past | Silence vs Noise | Sobriety vs Exuberance | Uncertainty vs Reality

Since such binary codes “provide *principles of order* within the unstructured simultaneity of everyday-worlds, one might,” according to Gumbrecht, “reserve the concept of ‘culture’ for the ensemble of such codes.”<sup>10</sup>



When the codes lose their de-paradoxifying function, Gumbrecht calls them **collapsed codes**. Collapsed codes, he says, “are particularly visible because, as *areas of malfunction and entropy*, they attract specific discursive attention and, often, specific emotional energy.”<sup>11</sup> Here are the collapsed codes the author identified for his target year:

*Codes Collapsed:* Action = Impotence (Tragedy) | Authenticity = Artificiality (Life) | Center = Periphery (Infinitude) | Immanence = Transcendence (Death) | Individuality = Collectivity (Leader) | Male = Female (Gender Trouble) | Present = Past (Eternity)

Our discussions regarding which arrays, codes, and codes collapsed should be considered most characteristic for Egyptian and Tunisian everyday-worlds of 2016 are certainly not yet concluded. As of end-2017, we are operating with a list that took shape over the course of our regular meetings and further crystallized during the workshop held in November 2017, which was dedicated exclusively to the discussion of “array” entry drafts. This list contains the following entries:

**ARRAYS** (“artifacts, activities, or roles that affect human bodies”) [NB: entries contained in the present volume are highlighted in bold here]

<p>ʔAlsh (a parodic technique)          ʿĀmmiyya (Egyptian Arabic)          Apartment wanted          ʿAshwāʿiyyāt  <b>Baby milk</b>          Celebrities  <b>Clash</b> / Polarisation          Conspiracy theories  <b>Conversions</b>          Court trials  <b>Crowdfunding</b>          Dancing: see → Music  <b>Dérja</b> (Tunisian Arabic)          Disappearances          Disasters          Dollar crisis          Downtown  <b>Dual identities / Masking</b>  <b>Father Figures</b>          Football  <i>Francophonie</i></p>	<p>Friends          Garbage / <i>zibāla</i> / <i>qumāma</i>          Gated communities / Compounds          Gyms          Suicide High school exams          The Honourable Citizen / <i>al-Muwāṭin al-sharīf</i>          In Islam...  <i>Kamīn</i> (informal random checkpoints)          LGBT  <i>Mā-nīsh musāmiḥ</i> (fighting corruption)          Memorial days / Commemoration          Migration          Mobile phones          The Mother of the Hero / <i>Umm al-baṭal</i>          Music (incl. Dancing)          New Cafés          Prison          The Police(man) Criminal  <b>Psychiatrists</b>          Red Sea Islands</p>
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<b>Satire</b> (incl. <i>adab sākhir</i> and YouTube channels; possibly to be divided into two or more individual arrays)	Transitional Justice
Self-censoring	Tricking the System / Tricked by the System
Self-help (incl. exploring the self, authenticity, self-formation, self-help literature)	Tuk-tuk
Social media (Facebook, Twitter)	Uber
The Suspect Foreigner	Valentine's Day
Tickling Giants / <i>ʔillit adab</i>	The Voice from Above (omnipresent propaganda discourses)
	<i>Zahma</i> / Crowd (probably including <i>Asphyxia/Suffocation</i> )

As for the **CODES**, i.e., those “clusters of arrays” that “tend to generate discourses which transform [their] confusion into [...] alternative options” and as such provide “principles of order within the unstructured simultaneity of everyday-worlds” (amounting to what may be conceived of as “culture”, see above, p. 506), our preliminary list comprises the following pairs. Question marks “[?]” indicate where we still are particularly in doubt; an additional workshop in spring 2018 will be dedicated to further discussion and clarification, both with regard to appropriate terminology and to assigning phenomena and issues observed to the terms agreed upon. In some instances, the reader will find additional information after a vertical line “|”, indicating alternative names under discussion. Parentheses are also used to remind us of a number of issues/phenomena that may “belong” to the code in question.

Affluence vs Destitution	Individuality vs Collectivity (incl. “Public morals” and space, freedom vs constraint, individual freedom vs <i>al-maṣlaḥa al-ʿamma</i> , egotism vs altruism/solidarity, “Schicksals-gemeinschaft”, sense of duty, ir-/responsibility, etc.)
Beautiful vs Ugly (incl. Clean-pure vs Dirty-filthy, Culture [as Humanism] vs Barbarism   re-enchantment; ...)	Male vs Female / Man vs Woman
Culture vs Politics   Healthy vs Unhealthy (dehumanisation)	Normality vs Heroism
Center vs Periphery (incl. City vs Compound, <i>Ashwāʿiyyāt</i> vs Center; Provinces vs Big cities, esp. the Capital)	Past vs Present (Continuity vs Change)
Egypt/Tunisia vs Barra	Private vs Public (taxi; new cafes; as a space where public and private intersect; street)
Egypt vs Tunisia	[?] Right vs Wrong (moral normativity, <i>mā-yiṣaḥḥ-ish kidā</i> )
Freedom vs Constraint	Security vs Fear   Stability vs Freedom/ Democracy
Hope vs Despair	“The System” vs “The People” (incl.
[?] Idea vs Practice (Letter/rules/principles vs Application, “Spirit of the laws” vs Non-implementation)	
Individual vs Collective/Community,	

Deep state)	Voice vs Silence (“Who has a voice in the country?”, Freedom of expression vs self-censoring, + Rant)
Superiority vs Inferiority   Victory vs Defeat	
True vs False	<i>Waṭan vs Ghurba</i>
	Young vs Settled

What was said about the Codes—still work in progress—holds true perhaps even more so for the **CODES COLLAPSED**, i.e., those that have lost their de-paradoxifying function and are now “particularly visible because, as areas of malfunction and entropy, they attract specific discursive attention and, often, specific emotional energy” (see above, p. 506). There remain even more open questions here than in the case of the Codes, and the list we shall end up with in our *In 2016* publication later in 2018 will mirror our opinion on how deep the Revolutions really have shattered Egyptians’ and Tunisians’ worldviews: can we really speak of “collapsed” codes, codes that have lost their de-paradoxifying function and point to areas of malfunction? In some cases, it looks as if, in spite of the Revolutions, people in 2016 still conceive of their worlds with categories that are *not* so different from earlier ones. Often, codes still appear to provide meaningful options rather than having become meaningless, “neutralized” by each other. In other cases, however, collapsed codes may indeed have generated new “states of matter,” express new configurations and ways of perception. Here is the list that reflects our current state of discussion (end-2017):

[?] Hope = Despair/Hell (Dystopia) (*ikti’āb*; frustration; apocalypse; apocalyptic descriptions of the end of the city, both in novels and in television shows; environmental dystopias: earthquakes, desertification; horror fiction; Trump; global war; dehumanisation; upholding humanity) | Future = No Future (Dystopia). – It seems to be quite clear that we are dealing with a collapsed code here, but we are still undecided on whether it should be merged with, or be kept apart from, the following:

Past = Present (Stuck) (blocked energy/dreams/hope; as in social media and youth’s cultural productions; activists’ *ikti’āb*, *ta’ab*, “I can’t leave but I can’t stay”; *maznūqīn* / asphyxia, *ṭarīq masdūd*; *kamīn*; *nafsinā itsaddir*; related also to *Waṭan = Ghurba*; frustration / *iḥbāt*, sense of defeat, see Victory vs Defeat; political demobilization, “we withdrew from politics”; also related to rant; cf. also Gumbrecht’s “Action = Impotence (Tragedy)”.

Normality = Heroism (Surviving) (the Ordinary citizen as Hero; Managing / mastering everyday life) | Lack of Resources = Resourcefulness (*Ibtikār*). NB: We may be dealing with a secular(ized?) version of “martyrdom” here, so perhaps the equation is “Defeat = Superiority (Citizen heroism)” or “Powerlessness = Strength (Citizen heroism)”.

Security = Fear | Order = Chaos (Police State)

[?] State = People (Patriotism)

*Waṭan = Ghurba* (Alienation)

We also have a brief list of **ISSUES**, i.e., topics/phenomena that appear important but where we have not yet come to a conclusion on how to deal with them within the Arrays/Codes/Codes Collapsed framework (such as *Azma*; Dream/Imagination vs Reality; Environment, nature and pollution; Escaping/Get out of here; Suez Canal). Further discussions will determine how to deal with these phenomena.

In its current state, our list of arrays, codes, and codes collapsed provides a preliminary snapshot of our discussions that we are publishing here to document our work in progress. We hope that the entries presented below may inspire others to join in the creation of the “encyclopedia of how it felt to live in the Arab World five years after the ‘Arab Spring’”.

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## Notes

### Introduction: From “Issues” to “Arrays” (S. Guth & A. Hofheinz)

- 1 For a discussion of our approach in the context of others in an “Academia in Transformation” (to quote the title of a research initiative of the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities, AGYA), see Barbara WINCKLER and Christian JUNGE, “Opening Up the Text: Arabic Literary Studies on the Move,” Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) – Transformation Group, Working Paper No. 2/2017, available from <[http://agya.info/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Working\\_Groups-images/Transformation/WPS\\_Academia\\_in\\_Transformation/Paper\\_7\\_Opening\\_up\\_the\\_Text\\_Winckler\\_Junge.pdf](http://agya.info/fileadmin/user_upload/Working_Groups-images/Transformation/WPS_Academia_in_Transformation/Paper_7_Opening_up_the_Text_Winckler_Junge.pdf)>.
- 2 Free pdf available from <[https://monoskop.org/images/9/95/Gumbrecht\\_Hans\\_Ulrich\\_In\\_1926\\_Living\\_on\\_the\\_Edge\\_of\\_Time.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/9/95/Gumbrecht_Hans_Ulrich_In_1926_Living_on_the_Edge_of_Time.pdf)>.
- 3 “atmosphere, mood, spirit, vibe, ...”—a key word in Gumbrechtian thinking that is difficult to translate, which is why the author himself usually prefers to leave it untranslated. See especially his *Stimmungen lesen: Über eine verdeckte Wirklichkeit der Literatur*, München: Hanser Verlag, 2011 (translated into English by Erik BUTLER as *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2012). Cf. also the public lecture “The dimension of ‘Stimmung’ in contemporary popular culture,” given on December 13, 2016, in Minsk, available on YouTube: <[https://youtu.be/t\\_dajId2BaA](https://youtu.be/t_dajId2BaA)>.
- 4 Much of the material was collected in a shared researcher’s notebook, using *Evernote* (<https://evernote.com>).
- 5 The “special dossier” *Living 2016: Cultural Codes and Arrays in Arab Everyday Worlds Five Years After the “Arab Spring,”* edited by Stephan Guth and Elena Chiti, appeared as pages 221-388 of *JAIS*, 16 (2016), and is accessible both at *JAIS*’s previous website ([http://www.hf.uio.no/jais/volume/vol16/v16\\_09\\_living2016.pdf](http://www.hf.uio.no/jais/volume/vol16/v16_09_living2016.pdf)) and at the new pool of open-access journals hosted by the University of Oslo, see <<https://www.journals.uio.no/index.php/JAIS/article/view/4761>>.
- 6 The list, processed from the data collected in our researcher’s notebook as well as from the studies contained in the *Living 2016* dossier (see previous note), is given on pp. 229-33 of Stephan Guth, “Introduction: *Living 2016* and the *In 2016* project,” *JAIS* 16 (2016): 224-33.
- 7 GUMBRECHT 1997: 434.
- 8 Ibid. (our emphasis, S.G./A.H.).
- 9 Ibid. (dto.).
- 10 Ibid. (dto.).
- 11 Ibid. (dto.).

### ‘Āmmiyya (E. M. Håland)

- 1 My translation – E.M.H.

### Clash (E. Chiti)

- 1 Andeel, “Al-’adāla li’l-jamī’”, *Mada Masr*, 11 February 2016: <<https://www.madamasr.com/en/2016/02/11/cartoon/u/justice-for-all/>>.
- 2 Fieldwork notes, January-February 2016.
- 3 “Al-yawm... intilāq ma’raḍ al-Qāhira li’l-kitāb,” *Al-Shurūq News*, January 27, 2016: <<http://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=27012016&id=fe442bc5-e180-45fa-afaa-745f748240bf>>.
- 4 “Tajribatu-hu ma’a ’l-Ikhwān fī ḍayf al-sharaf,” *Akhbār al-Adab*, February 14, 2016: 6.

- 5 Fieldwork notes, Round Table Al-thaqāfa fī'l-muwājaha, Cairo Book-Fair, Main Hall, January 29, 2016.
- 6 Shahira Amin, "Three years on, wounds of Egypt's deadly sit-in dispersals linger," *Al-Monitor*, August 21, 2016: <<https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/08/egypt-three-year-anniversary-rabaa-sit-in-brotherhood.html>>.
- 7 "I was terribly wrong"—writers look back at the Arab spring five years on," *The Guardian*, January 23, 2016: <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jan/23/arab-spring-five-years-on-writers-look-back>>.
- 8 "Ishṭibāk: fīlm miṣrī fī iftitāḥ mahrajān Kān," *al-Ahrām*, May 13, 2016: <<http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/978271.aspx>>.
- 9 Thomas Sotinel, "Clash : après le bus 678, le fourgon de police," *Le Monde*, May 12, 2016: <[http://www.lemonde.fr/festival-de-cannes/article/2016/05/12/clash-apres-le-bus-678-le-fourgon-de-police\\_4917875\\_766360.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/festival-de-cannes/article/2016/05/12/clash-apres-le-bus-678-le-fourgon-de-police_4917875_766360.html)>.
- 10 <<https://twitter.com/moezmasoud/status/730910281442971649>>.
- 11 TV show *Anā Maṣrī*, ḥalqat "Fīlm Muḥammad Diyāb *Ishṭibāk*, bi-nakha siyāsiyya wa-thawriyya", May 15, 2016: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiwWQxmP5WQ>>; see also: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmujpDCBA>>.
- 12 "Tom Hanks and Daniel Craig Express Their Love for Egyptian Movie 'Eshtebak'", *Scoop Empire*, July 26, 2016: <<http://scoopempire.com/eshtebak-tom-hanks-daniel-craig/>>.
- 13 Aḥmad Miḍḥat, "Mā lā ya'rifu-hu Tom Hanks," *Masralarabia*, July 30, 2016: <<http://www.masralarabia.com/المقالات/907-أحمد-مدحت-1180705-ما-لا-يعرفه-توم-هانكس-عن-فيلم-اشتباك>>.
- 14 Sāmih Faraj, "Intībā'āt sarī'a 'an fīlm *Ishṭibāk*", *Za2ed18*, July 31, 2016: <<http://www.za2ed18.com/انطباعات-إذا-نشتبك-من-مع-يكتب-فرج-سامح/>>.

#### Conversions (M. Lindbekk)

- 1 "Āwiz tighayyir diyāntak fī Maṣr, ibqā qābilnī," *al-Ṣabāḥ*, April 12, 2016, <<http://www.elsaba7.com/NewsPrint.aspx?Id=142416>> (accessed November 1, 2017).
- 2 al-Buḥayrī, Aḥmad, "Shaykh al-Azhar: Ḥurriyyat al-i'tiqād shay' wa-ḥurriyyat al-irtidād shay' ākhar," *al-Miṣrī al-Yawm*, June 16, 2016, <<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/965579>> (accessed November 1, 2017).
- 3 "Āwiz tighayyir diyāntak fī Maṣr, ibqā qābilnī," *al-Ṣabāḥ*, April 12, 2016, <<http://www.elsaba7.com/NewsPrint.aspx?Id=142416>> (accessed November 1, 2017).
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 *Egypt Independent*: "Egypt's Jewish community diminished to 6 women after death of Lucy Saul," July 30, 2016, <<http://www.egyptindependent.com/egypt-s-jewish-community-diminished-6-women-after-death-lucy-saul/>> (accessed December 15, 2017).
- 6 *Nmisr*: "Quwwāt al-amn ta'zil anṣār al-ikhwān al-muslimīn ba'd tasabbubihim bi-islām thalāth masīḥiyyīn bi-Ṭurah," *Nujūm Miṣriyya*, January 29, 2016, <<https://www.nmisr.com/arab-news/egypt-news/الامن-تعزل-انصار-الاخوان-المسلمي>> (accessed November 1, 2017).
- 7 'Abd al-Ḥafīz, Ṣabrī. "al-Aqbāt yatazāharūn li-sti'ādātihā wa'l-muslimūn li-tasallumihā," *Īlāf*, May 7, 2016, <<http://elaph.com/Web/News/2016/5/1087240.html>> (accessed November 1, 2017).
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 "Āwiz tighayyir diyāntak fī Maṣr, ibqā qābilnī," *al-Ṣabāḥ*, April 12, 2016, <<http://www.elsaba7.com/NewsPrint.aspx?Id=142416>> (accessed November 1, 2017).

**Dual Identities / Masking (S. Guth)**

- 1 English *mask* is from Middle French *masque* 'covering to hide or guard the face' (16c.), from Italian *maschera*, from Medieval Latin *masca* 'mask, specter, nightmare,' which is perhaps from Arabic *maskharah* 'buffoon, mockery,' from *sakhira* 'be mocked, ridiculed' – <etymonline.com> (as of 09Dec2017).
- 2 Quoted in: <[http://www.venice-days.com/FILM.asp?id=9&id\\_dettaglio=552&lang=eng](http://www.venice-days.com/FILM.asp?id=9&id_dettaglio=552&lang=eng)>.
- 3 Khādījah is a traditional Islamic name in reverence for the Prophet's first wife.

**Satire (on YouTube Channels) (M. Mohamed)**

- 1 *yiʔallish*, on the other hand, is the common term among Egyptian youth for all kinds of verbal practices that stimulate laughter, like puns, parody, and irony.