

Abstracts

3 Middle East Studies and Academic Cooperation in the Wake of the Arab Uprisings

Florian Kohstall

The Arab uprisings represented a watershed event for Middle East studies. They have allowed us to reflect critically not only on our own scholarly output, but also on the relations between foreign and local scholars, and on appropriate formats for academic cooperation. In this article, I explore some of the new research trends that have emerged since the uprisings. While current circumstances in the region have left the discipline in a fragile and fragmented position, it is important to remember the vivid debates of 2011 and 2012, with the aim of building on them for future cooperative projects. Reviewing the research literature from this period, I identify the need for more comparative analyses in the field of Middle East studies, as well as for greater inclusion of local scholarship.

4 Political Science in Egypt: Talkin' Bout a Revolution

Jan Claudius Völkel

This article describes the experiences of a long-term political science lecturer for the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) who started teaching Euro-Mediterranean Studies at Cairo University's prestigious Faculty of Economics and Political Science (FEPS) in February 2013. Though the political science field — like all social sciences — has been subject to increasing pressure by the Egyptian authorities, particularly since the military coup in summer 2013, the author has continued to receive considerable positive responses from students seriously interested in analyses of the European Union, political developments in the Middle East and North Africa, and relations between the two regions. However, the fundamental differences in how political science is understood in Egypt and in Europe, especially in Germany since 1945, has led to some significant challenges: While in Egypt, political science is primarily used to educate future members of the public administration and the state institutions,

less emphasis is placed on critical thinking and the value of developing an independent perspective on narrated truths. In consequence, students and colleagues who dare to criticize the government or its actions risk exposing themselves to legal consequences, rather than being able to expect academic rewards for advancing the quality of Egyptian political science. Hence, many students and professors have lost the enthusiasm for the subject they initially showed during the 2011 events, and are afraid to defend their opinions in public. Under these conditions, it will be difficult or impossible to establish competitive and fruitful coexistence between state officials and critical social scientists — a crucial goal if Egypt were working seriously to deepen its democracy.

5 Opening Up the Text: Arabic Literary Studies on the Move
Barbara Winckler and Christian Junge

The uprisings associated with the “Arab Spring” since 2010 have had a multifaceted impact on the field of Arabic literary studies in general and in Germany in particular. The political protests in the Arab world evolved along with a “cultural revolution” that sees literature and art as tools of the “new political”. In consequence, Arabic literary studies have begun revisiting the relationship between literature and society, thereby “opening up” the concept of the traditional literary text. Scholars of Arabic literature are now eager to study new text forms such as blogs, graffiti and slogans and explore the sociopolitical conditions of texts and the sociocultural practices of writing. However, this opening up is by no means limited to academic research in Arabic literary studies. Indeed, practices of networking, language instruction and societal commitment throughout the discipline are opening up. Strengthening collaborative research efforts among scholars based in the West and the Arab world, teaching Arabic as a modern language of communication and knowledge production, and demonstrating societal commitment in the growing presence of Arab refugees and migrants in Germany, the field of Arabic literary studies is on the move.

6 An Uprising in Teaching Arabic Language
Bilal Orfali, Rana Siblini and Maha Houssami

The Arab uprisings that began in 2010 brought change not only to Arabs, but also to the study of their language. Traditional textbooks used to teach Arabic as a foreign language were of little help in understanding the colloquial speech and slang of the angry protesters demanding the fall of various regimes. Arabic left the elite *majlis* (literary salon) to dwell in the public *maydan* (square). Certainly, travel to the region became more difficult and at times dangerous, although it has become increasingly important to learn the language in the social and cultural setting where it is actually used. Lebanon became an unlikely shelter for students who had been studying in Egypt and Syria. New teaching methods necessitated the abandonment of the glamour of classical Arabic and efforts to blend Modern Standard Arabic with its dialects, a phenomenon that has become increasingly visible in the media and in literature. Students in intensive Arabic summer programs, such as the program of the American University of Beirut, were required to leave their traditional classrooms in order to mingle and communicate with native speakers, refugees and disadvantaged groups in the streets. This shift has left its mark on the curriculum, in part through an increase in the use of pop songs, slogans and talk shows as classroom teaching materials.

7 Justice in Transformation:
Rethinking Theory and Practice of the Global Transitional Justice Model
Fatima Kastner

This article aims to investigate whether and to what extent the policies of transitions initiated in post-revolution societies in the aftermath of the so-called “Arab Spring” have affected the academic socio-legal discourse on transitional justice. Starting with a brief history of transitional justice as a normative concept, this contribution then presents the standard tools of transitional justice that had been developed for transitioning societies in order to address systematic violations of human rights perpetrated by former dictatorial or authoritarian regimes. In addition to strict retributive instruments like ad-hoc international and hybrid criminal tribunals, further elements of the present global transitional justice model include restorative and restitutive mechanisms such as commissions of inquiry, truth and

reconciliation commissions, lustration policies, reparations programs, and memorials. Socio-legal debates on transitional justice usually focus exactly on these standardized elements of transitional justice, weighing up the pros and cons of various measures to address a violent past as a means of promoting lasting peace and processes of democratization and reconciliation in post-conflict societies. Current scholarly discussions regarding the Arab uprisings seem to follow that general line of human rights discourse. Yet, given both the cultural particularities of the region as well as the systematic nature of economic wrongdoings committed in many pre-revolution societies, there is a strong demand to widen the present, rather liberal, understanding of transitional justice both in the direction of local notions of justice as well as economic accountability.

8 Philosophy in Transition — Philosophy of Transition
Sarhan Dhouib

In his dual role as actor and observer, the author of this article reflects on specific events, projects and issues in philosophy and philosophical practice in the wake of the uprisings in North Africa from an autobiographical perspective. In doing so, he asks whether philosophy in an authoritarian state can be understood as a form of resistance, and seeks to define the role that it should take in a post-dictatorial society. Can philosophy contribute to societal transformation, and what institutional transformations must it go through itself? The article advocates the renewal of philosophy as a transcultural project.

*9 Communication Studies in Transformation —
Self-Reflections on an Evolving Discipline in Times of Change*
Carola Richter and Hanan Badr

In this article, we review the scientific knowledge produced in communication studies of media change and the transformation of communication after the Arab uprisings. We critically examine the wave of techno-deterministic euphoria in the mainstream communication studies literature of the last decade, contrasting it with more cautious evaluations of media effects. Furthermore, we ask whether scholars located in the Arab world can contribute to a reorientation of communication studies, and if so, how they

can achieve this. We conclude by stating that the Arab uprisings were indeed a major catalyst for rethinking the impact of the media on political and social change within the field of communication studies.

10 Webs of Change? The Transformation of Online Social Networks and Communication Infrastructures from a Technological Point of View
Tobias Amft and Kalman Graffi

Online social networks and online real-time communication tools have gained significant popularity in the last few years. During the Arab uprisings they emerged as one of the main tools for exchanging ideas and for organizing activities. In this article, we review the technology and infrastructures of online social communication, as well as the weaknesses that rendered it susceptible to spying, censorship and blocks. We additionally highlight current research trends, examining how these obstacles can be overcome. Specifically, we present networking technologies that provide tools which enable users to make their communication resilient, secure and impossible to track. Thus, we investigate social communication during but also beyond the Arab uprisings from the perspective of computer science, and combine the resulting insights with current developments in this discipline.

11 The Damage Done: The “Arab Spring”, Cultural Heritage and Archaeologists at Risk
Ammar Abdulrahman

The Arab uprisings have not only affected the politics of Middle Eastern and North African countries. Instability and militant power struggles are also endangering the preservation of the cultural heritage in these regions. The field of archaeology faces tremendous challenges to safeguard valuable artifacts from historical eras, particularly in Syria, but also in Iraq, Egypt and Libya. The author argues that the cultural heritage of this region is much more than a local issue — as a global matter, it concerns all of humanity.

