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Digital Arabs

This project seeks to revisit legacies of the digital in Arab architecture produced in the 1990s with the aim of constructing an alternative, regionally nuanced and more faceted history of the digital. It pushes the archaeology of the digital into different time zones and extends it beyond the Western world, by focusing on the early history of digitally conceived architectural designs in Egypt and Lebanon during the 1990s. This is an inaugural attempt at understanding the “digital south,” which is to locate the origin of digital thinking and tooling in alternative geographies and temporalities not necessarily synonymous with the global north or advanced capitalism. The research work revolves around extensive archival investigations of data trapped on more than 30 year-old digital storage media corroborated with an oral history knitted together from first-hand testimonials

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The first phase of the archival work has been almost done. However, there is still data to be consulted in two archives in Orleans, France and Montreal, Canada which should take around 3 months. Interviewing the research focus group has also already begun, and several interviews are still underway, which are expected to take about 3 more months. While the essential goal is to culminate the work with a publication that combines a collection of digital archival materials from Egypt and Lebanon with an extensive analysis, it is necessary to cross-pollinate this publication with lateral contributions by discussions with other experts in addition to the wide public. I envision a series of events and open discussions to showcase and further problematify the project's initial findings. Throughout these events, video documentary specifically produced (also currently underway) out of the interviews and scale models would be used to enrich the audience's experience.