Overview
The project aims at a better understanding of the general indifference of the Western scholars for the study of Arabic manuscripts of the New Testament (NT) since 1945. It is only recently that some researchers, both from the West and the Middle East, have taken up a renewed interest in this field of study. Moreover, some Islamic groups also seem to desire an awareness of the importance of Greek and Arabic NT manuscripts. To study the evolution of this field, it is necessary to transcend the classical philological approaches. Digital culture will allow Western and non-Western scholars to study these ancient objects – particularly the Arabic text of the NT as well as the relevant manuscripts – in a cross-disciplinary manner, using sociology, history, philology and epistemology.

Approaches and Results
A first step is to enlighten the history of research of this field, using a cultural studies approach, with the objective to better understand the disinterest in the Arabic manuscripts.

A second step is to help understand this tradition by setting up and studying a list of the Pauline Arabic manuscripts. The importance of context and language for the setting up and studying a list of the Pauline Arabic manuscripts. The importance of context and language for the study of these neglected manuscripts – particularly the Arabic text of the NT as well as the relevant manuscripts – in a cross-disciplinary manner, using sociology, history, philology and epistemology.

A third step is the analysis of the impact of digital culture on our object. The renewed interest for these neglected manuscripts is linked to the digital revolution in the discipline of the NT textual criticism: digitalization of manuscripts, digital editions, collaborative work.

We also investigate the phenomenon that Christian and Muslim websites use Greek and Arabic NT manuscripts to affirm their identities, notably by actualizing a classical polemical topic: the falsification of the Bible (tahrîf). Furthermore, the interaction of these groups with NT scholars generates a new kind of academic discursive hybridization.

Discussion
Beyond printed culture, the digital support of writing manages by itself to reconfigure the boundaries of knowledge: In such a project, not only the knowledge of diverse ancient languages is required (Greek, Arabic, Syriac, Latin) as well as classical codicology and philology, but also deep epistemological inquiries, with the help of sociology (network analysis), pedagogy (multiliteracies), and other disciplines. With this emergence of an interdisciplinary terra incognita, the hybrid cross-cultural scholarship, new concepts and approaches will have to be created and applied.

References

Digital critical edition and collaborative work: Virtual Room of NT manuscripts: http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/manuscript-workspace