



Universität
Marburg



UNIVERSITÄT
LEIPZIG



Forum
Transregionale
Studien



Press Release

September 2026

Imagining Futures and Dealing with Disparity 2026/27: MECAM Welcomes New Fellows and New Tunisian Co-Director

The Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb (MECAM) begins its 2026 –2027 academic year by welcoming nine short-term and three long-term Fellows to Tunis. The new academic year also brings a change in the Centre’s directorship, as Prof. Emna Beltaïef takes up the position of Tunisian Co-Director, succeeding Dr. Amel Guizani.

Beltaïef is Vice President of the Université de Tunis and a specialist in literature and cultural studies. Alongside German Co-Director Julius Dihstelhoff, she will help shape MECAM’s academic programme and further develop the Centre’s collaborations with Tunisian and international partner institutions.

Since its founding in 2020, MECAM has brought together researchers from the Maghreb, Europe, and other regions of the world to work on their research projects in relation to the Centre’s overarching theme, *Imagining Futures – Dealing with Disparity*. Over the past six years, it has grown into a hub for open Maghreb studies. As MECAM’s Co-Directors put it: “The Maghreb becomes not only a field site, but a region from which global issues such as inequality, postcolonial legacies, environmental challenges, cultural transformation, migration, and matters of justice and governance can be debated and theorized.”

This year’s incoming Fellows come from France, Germany, Tunisia, the United Kingdom, the United States and other countries, from École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Freie Universität Berlin, Harvard University, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, King’s College London, Mediterranean School of Business, SOAS University of London, Université de Tunis, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and Université Tunis El Manar. Their projects address a wide range of questions, from migration, forced mobility and memory to issues of cultural mobility, political expression and literary representation. Other projects focus on revolt in postcolonial literature and, folklore and radio, knowledge production and academic mobility, student mobility and Saharan futures, print culture and Islamic thought, as well as environmental justice, ecological imagination, youth futures and urban inequality. Together, the projects reflect the breadth of MECAM’s five Interdisciplinary Research Fields and its commitment to innovative and engaged scholarship in and on the Maghreb.

During their fellowships, the researchers will pursue their individual projects while also contributing to MECAM’s academic programme, which includes formats that bring the Fellows into conversation with one another, researchers and students, and a wider local and international academic public.

With funding from the:



Federal Ministry
of Research, Technology
and Space

The new academic year will begin with an Introduction Week for the incoming Fellows from 7-9 September in Tunis, followed by a study visit to the Université de Sfax. MECAM Fellows will also contribute to the *Journées culturelles d'automne de l'Université de Tunis* at the Université de Tunis.

International exchange remains a central part of MECAM's work. In this context, members of the Centre will attend the 32nd Congress of the German Middle East Studies Association (DAVO) in Munich. A small MECAM delegation will also travel to Delhi for the workshop "*Southern*" *Theory Formation: Maghrebian and Indian Approaches*, jointly organised with colleagues from the International Center for Advanced Study (ICAS)/ University of Erfurt and the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in Delhi. The workshop follows-up on MECAM's collaboration with other Merian Centres and its wider engagement with partners in the Global South. From 14–21 November, MECAM will welcome students from the Centrum für Nah- und Mittelost-Studien (CNMS) at Philipps-Universität Marburg in Tunis for the workshop *Urban Development & Postcolonial Memory*. The workshop is part of MECAM's efforts to strengthen bilateral academic cooperation between Germany and Tunisia.

In Berlin, MECAM will organise the workshop *Imagining Feminist Futures Across the Global South: Comics in Protest Culture* on 21–22 September at the Forum Transregionale Studien, convened by Rasha Chatta (Freie Universität Berlin/MECAM Fellow 2021) and Jasmin Wrobel (Ruhr-Universität Bochum/Maria Sibylla Merian Centre Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America [MECILA] Thematic Fellow 2025). The workshop will explore the role of comics, graphic narratives, and visual culture in feminist activism across the Global South. On 25 September, MECAM will also organise a *Rencontre Ibn Khaldun* event featuring a screening of *Lella* by Habib Ayeb at Cinema Moviemento.

MECAM is supported by a consortium of six Tunisian and German institutions: the Université de Tunis, the Université de Sfax, Philipps-Universität Marburg, Universität Leipzig, the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) in Hamburg, and the Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin. The Centre also has network sites in Casablanca and Beirut. These institutional partnerships are an important foundation for MECAM's work and its international network. Funded by the German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space, MECAM is part of the network of Maria Sibylla Merian Centres for Advanced Studies, which promote international cooperation in the humanities and social sciences.

More information: www.mecam.tn

Public Relations Contacts:

MECAM Coordination Office

Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the
Maghreb (MECAM) - Tunis

E-Mail: mecam-office@uni-marburg.de

Rashof Salih

MECAM Science Communication Coordinator
(Arabic, English, German)

Forum Transregionale Studien - Berlin

E-mail: mecam@trafo-berlin.de

www.forum-transregionale-studien.de