

ميكام

مركز ميريان
للدراسات المتقدمة
في المنطقة المغاربية



MECAM

Merian Centre
For Advanced Studies
In The Maghreb

MECAM Spectrum

MECAM's Event Week « Disparities »

Tunis, Tunisia 14-17 November 2023

Philipps



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MECAM Spectrum

« Disparities »

MECAM's Event Week

14-17 November 2023 / Tunis, Tunisia

Disparities refer to inequalities and/or differences that exist between individuals, groups, and communities, deeply marking various aspects of their life. These disparities can manifest a special power paradigm that relegates the unequal and different to the margin. In 2019, Slavoj Žižek distinguished disparity as a unique concept that invites for ontological and epistemological investigation, underpinning aesthetic, political and cultural manifestations in his book entitled *Disparities*. According to Žižek, the implications of disparity have animated academic discourses that reflected a growing interest with the possible readings of the margin.

In MECAM, concerns about disparities are continued through its MECAM-Spectrum event week, where various research papers will tackle the issue from the historical, legal, religious, political, and literary standpoint, utilizing various research methods and approaches. During this event week, the focus of the research extends to exploring the concept of Disparity from a decolonial perspective, emphasizing the need to critically examine the historical roots and colonial legacies that have contributed to existing disparities. MECAM-Spectrum serves as a platform for fostering research exchange and knowledge production and circulation related to Disparity. This exchange not only bridges the gap between the Global North and the Global South but also promotes dialogue and collaboration within the Global South itself. Researchers from diverse backgrounds and regions come together to share their findings, experiences, and perspectives, creating a rich tapestry of insights that enrich the discourse on Disparity. The event week aims to provide a space for analyzing theoretical and practical approaches to disparities, including memory, experience, identity, embodiment, space, and agency. By delving into these multifaceted dimensions, researchers explore the complexities of Disparity and its entanglements with various social, cultural, and historical factors. Through interdisciplinary discussions and collaborative efforts, participants delve into the intricate layers of Disparity, unraveling its nuanced manifestations in different contexts. Moreover, MECAM-Spectrum encourages critical reflections on the methods employed in researching Disparity, questioning their underlying assumptions and biases. By doing so, researchers identify key concerns and considerations that have shaped the development of these methods. This critical self-reflection aids in refining research methodologies, ensuring a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of Disparity. Additionally, it helps outline the purposes and ontology of the concept, allowing scholars to grasp its fundamental nature and implications fully. In essence, MECAM-Spectrum event week serves as a catalyst for advancing the discourse on Disparity from a decolonial perspective. By fostering collaboration, encouraging critical inquiry, and promoting knowledge exchange, MECAM contributes significantly to the ongoing efforts to address and ultimately dismantle disparities on a global scale. Through these collective endeavors, MECAM-Spectrum strives to pave the way for a more just, equitable, and inclusive world, where diverse voices and perspectives are valued, respected, and integrated into the broader discourse surrounding Disparity.

The MECAM Spectrum's various panels seek to address and question disparities in the Maghreb region when answering questions related to:

- How are different disparities perceived, addressed and conveyed?
- What consequences do the interdisciplinary treatment and perceptions of disparity generate?

Contributions to the event address but are not limited to these questions.

Programme

Day 1 Tuesday, November 14th, 2023:

Venues: MECAM at the Institut Supérieur des Etudes Appliquées en Humanités de Tunis (ISEAHT) – Université de Tunis, 27, rue Florian - Borj Zouara (Bab Saadoun)

Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Economiques et Commerciales Tunis, ESSEC Tunis, 4, Rue Abou Zakaria El Hafsi – Montfleury)

9:30 – 10:00	Opening words by Rachid Ouaisa and Khaled Kchir (MECAM Directors) and Julius Dihstelhoff (MECAM Academic Coordinator)
10:00 – 12:00	<p>Panel: “Discussing Disparity: Colonial and Present-Day Situations Revisited by Historians and Scholars in Legal Studies.”</p> <p>Chair: Tommaso Virgili (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ WZB Berlin Social Science Centre, Berlin, Germany)</p> <p>Presenters:</p> <p>Nora Lafi (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin/Germany): "Colonial Categories and Practices of Gendered Disparity: Armed and Juridical Repression Against Female Rebels in Early 20th c. Tunisia" (<i>Presentation in French</i>)</p> <p>Hend Guirat (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Tunis, University of Tunis/Tunisia): “Justice and its 'subalterns': Judicial translators in Tunisia from colonial multilingualism to postcolonial Arabisation” (<i>Presentation in French</i>)</p> <p>Massensen Cherbi (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ University Le Havre, France): “Islam, Religion of the State in Algeria, Identity Expression and Legal Effectiveness” (<i>Presentation in French</i>)</p>
12:00 – 14:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
14:00– 16:00	<p>Presentation: “MECAM Visiting Scholar”</p> <p>Opening words: Benjamin Heidrich (MECAM Academic Coordinator, Germany)</p> <p>Chair: Khouloud Senda Bennani (Institut supérieur de gestion de Tunis, University of Tunis/ Tunisia)</p> <p>Presenter: Mohamed Farzanegan (Philipps-Universität Marburg): “The Effect of the “Woman Life Freedom” Protests on Life Satisfaction in Iran: Evidence from Survey Data”.</p> <p>Venue: ESSEC Tunis, Conference Room</p>
16:00 – 16:30	<p>Presentation: “ESSEC and Lab LARIME “</p> <p>Presenters: Anissa ben Hassine (MECAM, University of Tunis) and Mohamed Amara (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia)</p>

Day 2 Wednesday, November 15th, 2023:

Venue: MECAM at the Institut Supérieur des Etudes Appliquées en Humanités de Tunis (ISEAHT) – Université de Tunis, 27, rue Florian - Borj Zouara (Bab Saadoun)

9:30 – 10:30	<p>Manuscripts Exhibition: “Identities and Beliefs” Chair and Moderator: Nora Lafi (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin/Germany) Discussant: Nabil Arfaoui (University of Tübingen) Presenter: Asma Helali (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ University of Lille, France): “How to build Faith: Para-texts in Religious Manuscripts in IX and X centuries”</p>
10:30 – 12:00	<p>Panel Discussion: “Buried Truth: Reflections of Research on Extractivism” Chair and Moderator: Rachid Ouaisa (MECAM, Philipps-Universität Marburg) Presenters: Mourad Ouchichi (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ Abderrahmane Mira University of Bejaia, Algeria) and Nadjia Ouali (Abderrahmane Mira University of Bejaia, Algeria): « L’Extractivisme Rentier en Algérie : Origines et Conséquences » (<i>Presentation in French</i>)</p>
12:00 – 14:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
14:00 – 15:30	<p>Book Launch: Presenter: Imad Alsoos (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Germany): “Organising Hamas in Opposition: Cohesion and Adaptability” Chair and Moderator: Joshua Rigg (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ Georgetown University, Qatar)</p>

Day 3 Thursday November 16th, 2023

Venue: MECAM at the Institut Supérieur des Etudes Appliquées en Humanités de Tunis (ISEAHT) – Université de Tunis, 27, rue Florian - Borj Zouara (Bab Saadoun)

11:00 – 12:30	Panel: “Myth Making, Myth Debunking: Eternity in Arts” Chair and Moderator: Amel Guizani (ISEAHT, University of Tunis) Presenter: Cyrine Kortas (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/University of Gabes, Tunisia) “Myths and Archetypes: The Image of the Sufi Saint in Tunisian Literature
12:30 – 14:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
14:00 – 17:00	Book presentations: “Disparity in Politics, Disaster in Governance” Chair and Moderator: Alessia Carnevale (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ University of Macerata, Italy) Presenters: Muriam Haleh Davis (California University): “Markets of Civilization: Islam and Racial Capitalism in Algeria” Thomas Serres (California University): “The Suspended Disaster: Governing by Crisis in Bouteflika’s Algeria”

Day 4 Friday November 17th, 2023

The last day of the event will be held internally, excluding the public, to facilitate a focused and intimate dialogue, debate, and exchange.

Abstracts & Biographies

Day 1, Tuesday, November 14th, 2023:

10:00-12:00: Panel Discussion: “Revisiting Disparity: The Colonial and Postcolonial Era from the Perspectives of Historians and Lawyers”

Chair: Tommaso Virgili (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ WZB Berlin Social Science Centre, Berlin, Germany)

Presenter 1: Nora Lafi (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin/Germany): "Colonial Categories and Practices of Gendered Disparity: Armed and Juridical Repression Against Female Rebels in Early 20th c. Tunisia"

Abstract:

Based upon the study of original archives from the National Archives, this work is exploring the way in which French colonial power elaborated categories and consolidated processes of repression. The aim is to understand how such categories created forms of disparity at various levels, from economic to social, political and gendered and how such disparities were used at a broader level in order to extend colonial domination upon land and society. The case studies examined in the research concentrate on how the colonial repressive apparatus dealt with various categories of resisting women. The study discusses how their iter through the judicial process reveals colonial categories at the very moment of their implementation in colonial Tunisia (often mirroring categories and processes already used in Algeria during earlier phases of French colonization) and how such categories constituted tools at the service of the colonial intrusion into local land and society. In other words, colonial disparity was both a constructed process and the result of this process.

Bio: Nora Lafi (PhD, 1999, HDR, 2011) is a historian, working as a Senior Research Fellow at Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin/Germany. She is specialized in the study of Ottoman Empire and the societies of the Middle East and North Africa. She has been chairing since 2020 the international research project HISDEMAB of the Leibniz-Association. She is also a Privat Dozentin at Freie Universität Berlin. In 2020, she was a Senior Fellow at the Max Weber Kolleg at Erfurt University. She co-chairs the Cities Compared project EUM. She has been publishing on various topics including historical anthropology and violence, gender studies, and anti-colonial movements.

Presenter 2: Hend Guirat (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Tunis/ University of Tunis, Tunisia): « La justice et ses « subalternes » : Les traducteurs judiciaires en Tunisie du multilinguisme colonial à l'arabisation postcoloniale »

Abstract :

Aujourd'hui, l'histoire des magistrats français ayant exercé en Tunisie, considérés comme des acteurs dynamiques de la justice coloniale, connaît un engouement particulier. Cet engouement contraste avec

le peu de travaux consacrés aux « subalternes ». Omniprésents dans l'action judiciaire, ils passent en filigrane dans les recherches historiques. Cette recherche souhaite initier une réflexion sur les interprètes judiciaires afin de montrer comment ces « fonctionnaires » invisibles et silencieux étaient les véritables acteurs de la machine judiciaire. Basée sur des archives éparpillées entre les deux rives de la Méditerranée, cette étude envisage ainsi revisiter l'histoire de l'institution judiciaire par le bas, c'est-à-dire en mettant l'accent sur des acteurs de second plan.

Bio: Assistant professor in the department of history at the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Tunis. In 2014, she received her PhD after defending her thesis on “The Death Penalty in Tunisia under the Protectorate: Sentences Handed down by the French Criminal Justice: 1883-1955) at the EHESS (School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, Paris. Her research focuses on the history of justice in the colonial and post-colonial periods and on the various actors in the judicial hierarchy. She is also interested in gender and justice. She is a member of the Medieval Arab-Islamic world Laboratory at the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Tunis.

Presenter 3: Massensen Cherbi (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ University Le Havre, France) : « L'islam religion de l'État en Algérie : entre expression identitaire et effectivité juridique »

Abstract :

La proclamation constante de l'islam en tant que religion de l'État, depuis la première Constitution algérienne de 1963, interroge la valeur d'une telle disposition, à défaut de plus de précisions dans la Loi fondamentale. S'agit-il en effet d'une simple expression identitaire, par mimétisme avec l'essentialisation coloniale de la majeure partie de la population « indigène » au statut musulman, alors que le mouvement national s'était réclamé de la séparation du culte et de l'État, face à la mainmise coloniale sur le culte musulman ? S'agit-il par ailleurs d'une disposition impliquant une effectivité juridique, à défaut que la Charia ne soit explicitement proclamée source de la législation, et le cas échéant comment déterminer l'interprétation de l'islam, à défaut de courant particulier reconnu ? La question est d'autant plus d'actualité qu'à l'heure de l'exception d'inconstitutionnalité, entrée en vigueur en 2019, elle interroge la valeur du Code de la famille de 1984 et des inégalités qu'il maintient encore après 2005, alors que la Constitution algérienne proclame que les citoyens sont égaux devant la loi, sans discrimination de sexe. Elle questionne par ailleurs la révision constitutionnelle de 2020, lorsqu'elle prévoit qu'il est désormais possible de déroger aux droits et libertés, par une loi, afin de préserver des « constantes nationales » indéfinies.

Bio : Massensen Cherbi holds a PhD in law, after defending a thesis on the limits of Algerian constitutionalism” in 2019 at the University of ParisII Panthéon-Assas. To conduct his research, he moved to Algiers in January 2019, which allowed him to experience the first year of “Hirak” protest movement. He is currently working on both the organization of public authorities, when covering themes such as citizenship, presidentialism, and/or constitutional role of the army, other areas would include state religion, gender equality, and linguistic pluralism. He is interested in comparative law, particularly with constitutions in the MENA region.

14:00 – 16:00: Presentation: “MECAM Visiting Scholar”

Presenter: Mohamed Farzanegan (Philipps-Universität Marburg): “The Effect of the “Woman Life Freedom” Protests on Life Satisfaction in Iran: Evidence from Survey Data”.

Opening words: Benjamin Heidrich (MECAM Academic Coordinator, Germany)

Chair: Khoulood Senda Bennani (ESSEC Tunis, University of Tunis)

Abstract:

We examine the effect of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests in Iran during the last quarter of 2022 on individual life satisfaction. We use two original representative surveys in Iran conducted in 2022 before and during protests. Our results, based on an ordered logit regression analysis for a sample of more than 2,000 individuals, show that the violent protest environment had a significant and negative effect on life satisfaction in Iran. To determine the exposure of the respondents to protests, we calculated the number of protests within a 25km radius of the respondents’ locations. The protest environment reduced the probability of life satisfaction by 3.7 percentage points. Moreover, we find significant heterogeneity among the respondents with respect to their life satisfaction before and after protests. The largest negative impact of the protests on life satisfaction is observed among women, members of working class, and those with primary and tertiary education.

Bio: Mohammad Reza Farzanegan is a full professor of Economics of the Middle East at Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (CNMS) and the School of Business and Economics of Philipps-Universität Marburg in Germany. In Marburg, he is the coordinating professor for international MSc program in “Economics of the Middle East-EMEA”. He is a Research Fellow of the Economic Research Forum (ERF, Cairo) and a member of its Advisory Board. In addition, He is a CESifo Research Network Fellow (Munich) and Executive Secretary of International Iranian Economic Association (IIEA).

Day 2, Wednesday, November 15th, 2023:

09:30-10:30: Manuscripts Exhibition: “Identities and Beliefs”

Chair: Nora Lafi (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin/Germany)

Discussant: Nabil Afraoui (University of Tübingen/ Germany)

Presenter: Asma Helali (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/University of Lille/ France): “How to build Faith: Para-texts in Religious Manuscripts in IX and X centuries”

Abstract:

(The presentation will be accompanied by the display of four manuscript fragments from Kairouan collection and Chester Beatty library, Dublin).

Following Gérard Genette (1930-2018), the main function of the paratexts is to surround the text, to announce it, to highlight it (or even to sell it). The presentation explores the forms, functions and cognitive values of the paratexts in the Islamic manuscript tradition at the IXth-Xth centuries. Manuscript fragments from Kairouan collection and from the oriental collection of the Chester Beatty library (Dublin) will be displayed. Visual, phonetic and social “Cognitive potential” of the paratexts will be explored side by side with philological and linguistic analysis in order to highlight the functions of the paratexts as tools of building faith. The paper demonstrates that, in addition to their structural and aesthetic value, the paratexts represent ideological means that take part in shaping religious beliefs and constitute a field of experiment for the historians of religious literature and ideas in the medieval age.

Bio: Asma Helali is an associate professor at Islamic studies at the University of Lille, France. She joined various research centres in the Arab world, U.S., Europe and the UK to explore her main research interest: the transmission of religious texts in early and medieval Islam. Currently, she is a member of the Templeton Religion Trust Project, Paratexts Seeking Understanding, at the University of Glasgow. She is also the director of the Kairouan Manuscript Project (KMP), University of Hamburg, Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC). She is the author of *The Sanaa Palimpsest: the Transmission of the Quran in the First Centuries AH* (Oxford UP, 2017), and *The Making of Religious Texts in Islam: the Fragment and the Whole* (Gerlach, 2019).

10:30 – 12 :00: Panel: “Buried Truth: Reflections of Research on Extractivism”

Chair: Rachid Ouassa (MECAM Director)

Presenters: Mourad Ouchichi (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ Abderrahmane Mira University of Bejaia/ Algeria) and Nadjia Ouali (Abderrahmane Mira University of Bejaia/ Algeria) : « Le caractère extractiviste et rentier de l'économie algérienne : Origines et conséquences ».

Abstract :

Pour des raisons historiques, l'Algérie s'inscrit dans un modèle particulier de développement, à savoir, un régime d'accumulation rentier produisant sa constante double dépendance : i) à la fois des prix internationaux des hydrocarbures pour ses rentrées en devises ; ii) et du marché international pour ses approvisionnements. En effet, le secteur des hydrocarbures en Algérie occupe une place prépondérante dans le fonctionnement économique et social du pays. Il constitue la principale source de devise. Les recettes d'exportation représentent jusqu'à 98 % des recettes d'exportations totales et la fiscalité pétrolière plus de 60 % des recettes budgétaires. En revanche, ce qui constitue sa force constitue également sa plus grande vulnérabilité. En effet, l'économie algérienne est exposée à la volatilité des termes de l'échange. La rente énergétique influence donc en grande partie les décisions du gouvernement en matière de politique économique. Autres caractéristiques – non moins importantes – une domination absolue de l'État sur la vie économique et sociale, un endiguement permanent de l'autonomie de la société civile et un freinage systématique des dynamiques que libèrent les forces du marché. Il en est résulté une matrice institutionnelle – au sens large du terme – de type particulier dans laquelle les contradictions politiques et les conflits sociaux ne sont pas régulés dans le cadre des

institutions formelles régies par le droit, mais plutôt par un jeu complexe de rapports de forces insidieux et de négociations informelles mêlant corruption, clientélisme et prédation.

Cette contribution a pour objectif de mettre en exergue l'origine de cette dépendance structurelle de l'économie algérienne de ses ressources naturelles, notamment des hydrocarbures, et les effets socio-politiques de la rente comme élément structurant du modèle politico- économique régissant les relations entre l'Etat et la société.

Bios: Mourad Ouchichi holds a PhD in political sciences, after defending a thesis at the university of IEP Lyon II. Currently, he is a teacher-researcher at the university of Bejaia. His research focuses on the issue of rent and the nature of institutions in relation to the development of extractive countries. His main focus is on comparative studies between Algeria and Latin American extractive countries.

Nadjia Ouali holds a PhD degree in economics after defending a thesis entitled "Diversification de l'économie en Algérie: Quel rôle pour le rente des hydrocarbures?". She is now a Senior lecturer at the university of Bejaia. Her research interests include: economic diversification, rent economies, institutionalised economy and corruption. She published two papers in renewed journals that covered her areas of research: "Diversification des exportations et croissance économique en Algérie" in the Journal of Profound Economic Studies (REECAP), N. 9 (2018), University of Mostaganem. Another entitled "Etude de la rente, la corruption et la croissance économique en Algérie : Approche de cointégration » in Al-ryada for Business Economics Journal, Vol. 6, No.1 (2020).

14:00 – 15:30: Book Launch

Chair: Joshua Rigg (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ Georgetown University, Qatar)

Presenter: Imad Alsoos (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology/ Germany): "Organising Hamas in Opposition: Cohesion and Adaptability"

Abstract:

This book is about Hamas in opposition and in office. As a Muslim Brotherhood organisation, Hamas has managed to survive repression, win elections, ascend to office and form a state administration in Gaza. To address its resilience, its author focuses on Hamas's internal processes of organising structures and human capital as well as its overall narrative. He explores the learning and training of its cadres and the formation of leadership as well as how its members occupied functional positions within Hamas's centralised hierarchy and executive branches while in opposition. This serves to explain how Hamas maintains the continuity and public outreach that resulted in its electoral victories. The focus then shifts to how these institutions and qualified cadres facilitated Hamas's transitional adaptability to new political and administrative roles and forms of local governance while in office. Through a combination of organisational and discursive analyses, this book contributes to the growing body of work on Hamas and other Muslim Brotherhood groups more generally, while emphasising a single context – that of Gaza. This in turn serves to open comparative avenues of study on how Hamas has so far managed to survive in office while other MB groups have failed.

Bio: Imad Alsoos earned a bachelor degree in English language and literature and a master degree in international studies from Birzeit University/ Palestine. In 2017, he earned a PhD degree from the Free

University of Berlin, after defending a thesis on Hamas's political discourse and organisational mobilisation in Gaza. In 2018, he joined the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. His research at MECAM is a comparative study between Hamas and al-Nahda's forms of internal and external organised mobilisation.

Day 3, Thursday, November 16th, 2023:

11:00-12:30 Panel: "Myth Making, Myth Debunking: Eternity in Arts"

Chair: Amel Guizani (ISEAHT, University of Tunis)

Presenter: Cyrine Kortas (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/University of Gabes, Tunisia): "Myths and Archetypes: The Image of the Sufi Saint in Tunisian Literature"

Abstract: Mohamed khaldi is a Tunisian author whose work "*Awtad* revolves around the sacred and the carnal. His work is imbued with a mythical celebration of the body. Specifically, this body is acknowledged and represented through a special, extraterrestrial encounter with the Sufi saint. Actually, Khaldi has a keen interest in Sufism and Sufi figures, approached as both historical and sacred figures that permit the author to develop an existential narrative immersed into the Sufi journey, commonly known as the revelation.

This paper explores the transformative approach adopted by the author through the use of the mythical figure of the Saint as a prototype and pioneer to the New Tunisian Man. Building upon representation of Sufism as a process, a path and a journey, Khaldi frames his character's search for self and political identity during the late 1980s, enlivening Sufi hermeneutics with political engagement to develop the meeting of the four friends after a separation of over a quarter of a century, aspiring as such to reach the status of the perfect man or Insaan-el-kamal.

Bio: Cyrine Kortas is an assistant professor of English Literature at the University of Gabes, Tunisia. She is also a member of the Research Unit LAD at the faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sfax. Her current research focuses on the influence of modernist English authors such as D. H. Lawrence on the rise of the modern novel in the Maghreb region; it explores the concept of the New Man in a selection of novels published in Tunisia and Morocco, while introducing Sufism as a theory of analysis. This project is influenced by one of her publications: *The Image of the New Man in Post-War Short Stories* "The Man who Loved Islands" by D. H. Lawrence and "The White Rose" by Hanna Mina in 2020.

14:00 – 17:00 Panel: "Disparity in Politics, Disaster in Governance"

Chair: Alessia Carnevale (MECAM Fellow, University of Tunis, Tunisia/ University of Macerata, Italy)

Presenter 1: Muriam Haleh Davis (California University): "Markets of Civilization: Islam and Racial Capitalism in Algeria"

Abstract:

In *Markets of Civilization* Muriam Haleh Davis provides a history of racial capitalism, showing how Islam became a racial category that shaped economic development in colonial and postcolonial Algeria. French officials in Paris and Algiers introduced what Davis terms “a racial regime of religion” that subjected Algerian Muslims to discriminatory political and economic structures. These experts believed that introducing a market economy would modernize society and discourage anticolonial nationalism. Planners, politicians, and economists implemented reforms that both sought to transform Algerians into modern economic subjects and drew on racial assumptions despite the formally colour-blind policies of the French state. Following independence, convictions about the inherent link between religious beliefs and economic behaviour continued to influence development policies. Algerian president Ahmed Ben Bella embraced a specifically Algerian socialism founded on Islamic principles, while French technocrats saw Algeria as a testing ground for development projects elsewhere in the Global South. Highlighting the entanglements of race and religion, Davis demonstrates that economic orthodoxies helped fashion understandings of national identity on both sides of the Mediterranean during decolonization.

Bio: Muriam Haleh Davis is an associate professor at the Stevenson College. Her research interests include development, decolonisation and race in North Africa. Her teaching also touches upon similar areas of interest, Postcolonial North Africa, Modern Arab Thought, Race and Anti-Racism in Europe, and France and its Empire in the 20th century. Her publications include “Race and Decolonization in North Africa” in Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of African History, Spring 2023, and “Algiers and the Algerian desert: Decolonization and Territorial Planning in France, 1958-1962” in Journal of Modern History, Fall 2023. She is also the co-editor of *North Africa and the Making of Europe: Governance, institution and Culture*, Bloomsbury Academic Publishing, 2018.

Presenter 2: Thomas Serres (California University): “The Suspended Disaster: Governing by Crisis in Bouteflika’s Algeria”

Abstract:

After Algeria’s president Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced his intention to run for a fifth term in early 2019, a popular peaceful uprising erupted calling for change. Bouteflika, who had been in office since 1999, was eventually forced to resign, but the Hirak (“movement”) continued to protest the country’s inequalities and entrenched ruling elite. *The Suspended Disaster* examines the dynamics of the Algerian political system, offering new insights into the last years of Bouteflika’s rule and the factors that shaped the emergence of an unexpected social movement. Thomas Serres argues that the Algerian ruling coalition developed a mode of government based on the management of a seemingly never-ending crisis, marked by an obsession with security and the ever-present possibility of unrest, violence, and economic collapse. Identifying this form of rule as “governance by catastrophization,” he shows how attempts to preserve the status quo through emergency policies and constant reforms can also lay the groundwork for a revolutionary situation. Serres contrasts the government’s portrayal of perpetually imminent disaster with the uncertainty, precarity, and indignity experienced by much of the population, which fuelled the rejection of ruling elites, a profound mistrust toward institutions, and new spaces for grassroots opposition. Based on extensive fieldwork and theoretically novel, *The Suspended Disaster* sheds new light on the political, economic, and social processes underlying an uprising that changed the face of Algerian politics.



Bio: Thomas Serres is an assistant professor of politics at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He is a coeditor of *North Africa and the Making of Europe: Governance, Institutions, Culture* (2018) and an editor for the Maghreb page on Jadaliyya.

