



MECAM Spectrum

MECAM's Event Week « Imagining Future »

15-18 April 2024 / Tunis, Tunisia

Location

The MECAM Event Week “Imagining Future” will be held at the MECAM office in the *Institut Supérieur des Etudes Appliquées en Humanités de Tunis* (ISEAHT) (27, Rue Florian - Borj Zouara Bab Saadoun, 1029 Tunis).

Abstract of the Event Week

This April Event Week brings together researchers from different disciplines and civil society activists to share their perspectives and experiences in order to jointly imagine the future of the Maghreb region and beyond as well as to shed light on the visions of local actors in the face of conflicts over justice, equality and inclusion.

At the crossroads of historical legacies, post-colonial transitions, and socio-economic challenges, especially following the Arab Spring, this April Event Week theme "Imagining Future" emerges as an important issue for the Maghreb countries (Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, in particular) and beyond. Both concerning the Maghreb and the Middle East in general, where access to resources, opportunities, and rights is marked by glaring disparities, it is imperative to address these inequalities in depth. This Event Week, organized by the Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb (MECAM), brings together researchers from different disciplines, civil society activists, and decision-makers to share their perspectives and experiences to jointly imagine futures as well as to shed light on the visions of local actors in the face of conflicts over justice, equality, and inclusion. This involves challenging deep-rooted societal norms, questioning established power structures, and mapping out new paths towards more equitable and sustainable societies. These elements and principles form MECAM's fundamental objectives.

Indeed, MECAM explores the link between multidimensional disparity and the possibilities for constructing and negotiating future-oriented ideas and models in today's Maghreb societies, as launched by the "Arab Spring". It therefore focuses on complex social, political, cultural, and economic processes and issues of common interest that divide and link the Maghreb, the Middle East, and Europe historically and in modern times. These issues include, for example, religious beliefs, resource distribution, cultural transformations, migration,



socio-economic conflict, and justice. These urgent questions are illustrated and come together under the central theme of April's event: "Imagining Future".

Through a series of plenary sessions, presentations, and interactive discussions, speakers will examine different dimensions of disparities such as access to resources, fundamental rights, gender equality, sovereignty, and political participation. They will also explore how legal reforms, citizen activism, and development initiatives can contribute to more equitable and sustainable futures. The event will also provide an opportunity to analyze the specific dynamics of Maghreb countries, such as the Hirak in Algeria, the revolution and the issue of sub-Saharan migration in Tunisia, gender-based discrimination, etc., highlighting the successes and challenges encountered in the fight against socio-economic and political disparities. Particular focus will be directed toward the discrimination encountered by vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women, migrants, and refugees. The discussion will involve a nuanced examination of the evolving dynamics, taking into account the interplay of legal, cultural, and religious factors that influence the rights of these individuals. Along with this, the general role of imagination of the future in the context of social organizational processes is also discussed.

Therefore, the presentations here seek to address the following questions:

1. How does the interplay between the rule of law and individual liberties in the Maghreb region influence the country's governance and social dynamics?
2. What are the challenges and opportunities facing democratic transition in the Maghreb region specifically and the Arab world generally?
3. In what ways can the discussion of the future shape the trajectory of political, social, economic, and cultural development in the region?
4. How does the fundamental role of imagined futures influence decision making and societal aspirations?

The Programme

Day 1 Monday, April 15, 2024

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

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| 9:00- 9:15 | Opening Notes Rachid Ouissa, Khaled Kchir, Julius Distelhoff |
| 9:15- 11:30 | Panel 1: “Rule of law and individual liberties in Tunisia” Round Table: Tommaso Virgili; Sana ben Achour ; Omar Weslati; Amine Jelassi |
| 11.30 - 11.45 | Coffee Break |
| 11.45–12.00 | Welcome Address Amel Guizani |
| 12.00–14.00 | Panel 2: “Navigating Rights and Discriminations: Tunisia's Legal and Cultural Terrain” Presenters: Tommaso Virgili: “LGBT Rights and Freedom of Conscience in Tunisia, between Islamic Norms and Individual Rights” Amine Jelassi: “Controlling undocumented immigration in Tunisia: combating human trafficking or mistreating undocumented immigrants” Chair : Charlotte Fiedler |
| 14.00–14.30 | Lunch break |
| 14.30–16.30 | Panel 3: “Democratic Transition and Rule of Law in Algeria” Presenters: Ahmed Mahiou: “Through Time and Events in Modern Algeria” Massensen Cherbi: “Is the people greater than the Constitution? The “7/8” in the Hirak or the demand for a democratic transition” Adlene Mohammedi: “The foreign policy as a counterrevolutionary tool” Chair: Tommaso Virgili |

Day 2 Tuesday, April 16, 2024

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

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| 9:00—11:00 | <p>Panel 1: “Building the Future Discussing the Past: Reflections on Political Participation in the Arab world: Libya and Jordan”</p> <p>Topic: <i>“Re-assessing the Local Roots of Political Participation as a way to challenge post-colonial narratives: rethinking the legacy of the petitioning system and deliberative processes in the Arab World”</i></p> <p>Panelist: Nora Lafi Discussant: Joshua Rigg</p> <p>Presentation of the collective research: <i>“Reflections on Political Participation in the Arab World at the Beginning of the 20thc”</i></p> <p>Presenters: Abdlkader Amer, Abdul-Hameed Kayali</p> <p>Chair : Nora Lafi</p> |
| 11:00—11:30 | Coffee Break |
| 11:30—13:00 | <p>Keynote: “No social organization without a vision: Revealing the fundamental role of imagined futures through fragmentation research on Syria”</p> <p>Keynote speaker: Benjamin Heidrich</p> <p>Chair: Imad Alsoos</p> |
| 13:00—14:00 | Lunch Break |
| 14:00—15:30 | <p>Panel 2: “Seeds of Hope: Re-imagining a Thrivingly Cultivated Planet”</p> <p>Topic: <i>“Ecological Topics in the Developmental Thought of Ismail-sabri Abdalah”</i></p> <p>Panelist: Max Ajl Discussant: Heythem Guasmi</p> <p>Chair : Joshua Rigg</p> |

Day 3 Wednesday, April 17, 2024

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

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| 9:00—10:00 | <p>Keynote: <i>“Le Hirak et la bataille obstinée des femmes algériennes pour l'égalité des droits”</i> Keynote Speaker: Fatma Oussedik</p> <p>Chair: Intissar Bendjabbellah</p> |
| 10:00—11:30 | <p>Book Launch: <i>“L’Avenir du hirak”</i> Presenter: Massensen Cherbi, Raouf Farrah, Akram Khrief, Zouhour Ouamara and Adel Ourabah</p> <p>Chair : Rachid Ouaisa (ONLINE)</p> |
| 11:30—12:00 | Coffee Break |
| 12:00—13:30 | <p>Panel 1: “Beyond Walls: Reconsidering Women’s Restricted Bodies”</p> <p>Topic 1: <i>“Dar Jwad et insoumission féminine : répression maritale et correction paternelle”</i> Panelist : Olfa Boudaya</p> <p>Topic 2: <i>“La prison des femmes en Tunisie à l’époque coloniale: quelques pistes de recherche”</i> Panelist: Hend Guirat</p> <p>Chair and Discussant: Nora Lafi</p> |
| 13:30—14:30 | Lunch Break |
| 14:30—16:30 | <p>Panel 2: “Labour Market: Mobility and Reimagined Prosperity”</p> <p>Book Presentation: <i>“Intelligentsias algériennes: le double exile”</i> Presenter: Karim Khaled</p> <p>Topic: <i>“Migrants from Sub Saharan Africa in Tunisia: A Storm in a Tea Cup?”</i> Panelist: Mohamed Amara Discussant: Mourad Ouchichi</p> <p>Chair : Imen Trabelsi</p> |

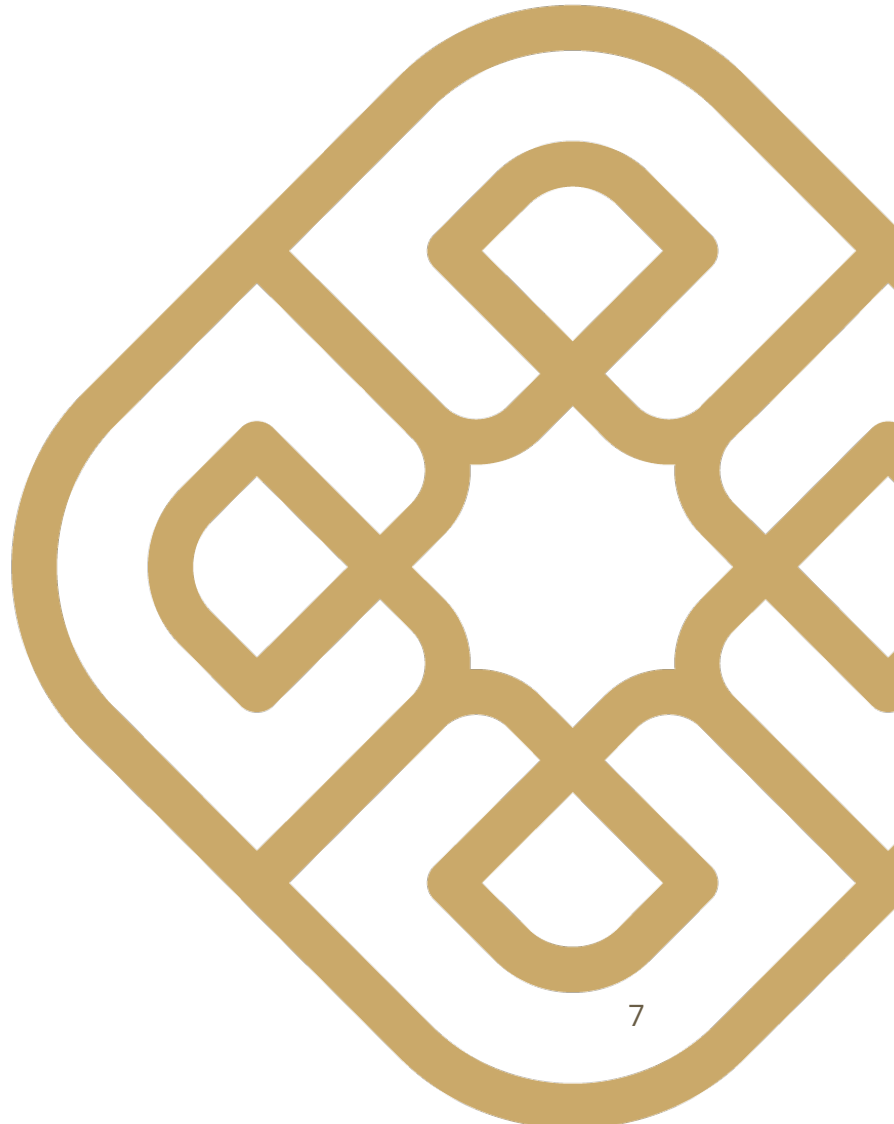
Day 4 Thursday, April 18, 2024

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

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| 9:00—11:00 | <p>Panel 1: “Tunisia and the Transnational: Residual Ideas and Circulating Commodities”</p> <p>Topic: “Textiles, Ksar Hellal and the Fraying Edges of Tunisia’s State-Making Project” Panelist: Joshua Rigg</p> <p>Topic: “Culture-based Activism and Anti-colonial Aesthetic Practices in Tunisia in the Light of the Ongoing War on Gaza” Panelist: Alessia Carnevale</p> <p>Chair : Max Ajil</p> |
| 11:00—11:30 | Coffee Break |
| 11:30—12:30 | <p>Panel 2: “Unruly Voices: Queer Theory and Politics in the Changing Maghreb”</p> <p>Topic: “The Queer Futurities in Tunisia” Panelist: Tarek Shukrallah</p> <p>Chair: Tommaso Virgili</p> |
| 12:30—14:00 | Lunch break |
| 14:00—15:00 | <p>Panel 3: “Various disparities in the Maghreb”</p> <p>Topic: “World’s Unseen: Literature Lens on Metaphysics and Spirituality - The Creative Imagination of Ibn Arabi and its echoes in <i>Women in Love</i> by D.H. Lawrence” Panelist : Cyrine Kortas Discussant : Yassine Najjar</p> <p>Topic: "Morocco’s Green Turn: Environmental Sustainability as a Soft Power Resource" Panelist: Katharina Nicolai (ONLINE)</p> <p>Chair: Julius Dihstelhoff</p> |
| 15:00—16:00 | |
| 16:00—16:30 | Coffee break |
| 16:30—17:00 | <p>Panel 4: “Tunisian Political Parties: between literature and practice”</p> |



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| | <p>Topic: “Ennahda’s Muslim Democracy in Post-Arab Spring Tunisia: Synthesizing Intellectual Thought and Political Practice”</p> <p>Panelists: Julius Dihstelhoff & Imad Alsoos</p> <p>Topic: “<i>Populisme constitutionnel et populisme de gauche dans la Tunisie post 25 juillet</i>”</p> <p>Panelist: Eric Gobe</p> <p>Chair and discussant: Vanessa Barisch</p> |
| 17:30—18:00 | Closing Notes |



Abstracts of Presentations

Round Table: “Rule of Law and Individual Liberties in Tunisia”

Tommaso Virgili, Sana ben Achour, Omar Weslati, Amine Jelassi

Ce panel examinera l'état des libertés individuelles en Tunisie dans le contexte d'un recul général de l'État de droit. Il abordera les principaux défis pour la société civile et les individus vulnérables, y compris l'utilisation de la répression policière et des lois liberticides et discriminatoires pour réprimer les droits individuels et la dissidence socio-politique. Le panel discutera également des stratégies potentielles pour renforcer et protéger l'État de droit en Tunisie, telles que les réformes législatives, l'indépendance judiciaire, la protection de la société civile et le soutien international aux droits de l'homme.

“LGBT Rights and Freedom of Conscience in Tunisia, between Islamic Norms and Individual Rights”

Tommaso Virgili

This presentation explores the complex landscape of LGBT rights and freedom of conscience in Tunisia, examining the interplay between legal, cultural, and religious dynamics. It gives an account of the worrisome constitutional evolution after President Saïed's soft coup, and it analyses relevant provisions and case law pertaining to the LGBT rights and freedom of conscience. The influence of Islamic ethos and rules on the courts, facilitated by the ambiguous language of the Tunisian Constitution and legislation, has historically posed challenges to fundamental rights in both realms. While recent jurisprudence indicates a growing inclination towards a more liberal interpretation of domestic laws in light of international law, the unsteady political situation and the Constitution of 2022, which strikes a still undetermined balance between fundamental rights and the goals of Islam, make it hard to predict whether this trend will persist.

“Controlling Undocumented Immigration in Tunisia: Combating Human Trafficking or Mistreating Undocumented Immigrants”

Amine Jelassi

Amidst global turmoil, undocumented migration from Tunisia has spiked, driven by political unrest, security threats, and economic instability. This study delves into the complexities of transit migration, human trafficking, and the aspirations of migrants. Tunisia's pivotal role as a transit and departure point for migrants, acknowledged by the European Union, has heightened challenges, including the rise of smuggling networks.

The diversity of norms and measures, shaped by domestic and international dynamics, shapes policy responses. Democratic states face a delicate balance between sovereignty and international obligations regarding refugee protection. Drawing from NGO reports and legal

analyses, this paper examines Tunisia's efforts to protect undocumented migrants, particularly in light of agreements with the EU. It advocates for a human rights approach alongside security measures to address this complex issue.

“Democratic Transition and Rule of Law in Algeria”

Massensen Cherbi, Ahmed Mahiou and Adlene Mohammedi

In 2019, Algeria witnessed a peaceful revolution known as the Hirak, which mobilised up to several million demonstrators in the streets against the re-election of President Bouteflika for a fifth term and, more generally, in favour of a radical change of system. This demand for change took the form of a “mystique”, that of articles 7 and 8 of the Constitution, relating to popular sovereignty, brandished and chanted in the Algerian streets against the application of article 102 of the Constitution, which provided for the re-election of a President of the Republic within 90 days, which amounted to a demand for a democratic transition. In order to allow this election to take place, the authorities initiated a judicial crackdown on the movement from June 2019, and to facilitate this, both revised the Constitution and amended the criminal legislation in order to put an end to the Hirak. This demand for democratic transition will need to be revisited in order to assess the current human rights situation in Algeria, in the absence of transitional justice, while at the same time questioning the policy developed by the Algerian authorities internationally to legitimise the political system in place.

“Re-assessing the Local Roots of Political Participation as a Way to Challenge Post-colonial Narratives: Rethinking the Legacy of the Petitioning System and Deliberative Processes in the Arab World”

Nora Lafi

Academic discussions on the relevance and historicity of the concept of deliberation in the Arab world, and the link between deliberation and the civic dimension, should not be based solely on implicit comparisons with other cultural areas. Challenging Eurocentrism, its inertia and the many biases it introduced into interpretations requires, indeed, researchers to have a close look into local practices. This presentation aims at discussing deliberative processes in the Arab world in Ottoman times on the basis of the case study of Tripoli. It examines the question under the angle of consensus building, negotiations and mediations as they can be found in archives and chronicles. It also analyzes petitions as key elements of a governance system which included various forms of participation. Such elements are used in the presentation in order to propose alternative narratives to the ones built in colonial times about the alleged absence of this dimension in the region. They are also used as a way to challenge the inertia of clichés in present-day discussions.

Book Presentation : “Reflections on Political Participation in the Arab World at the Beginning of the 20th c.”

Abdlkader Amer and Abdul-Hameed Kayali

The co-editors of this book published in Amman (Alaan Publishers) in early 2024 present the fundamental elements that presided to this collective research endeavour, as well as some of the results. The spirit of the book is to put together studies on both the Maghreb and the Mashrek, as well as chapters on various periods, with the ambition of reflecting on the importance of interpretations of various pasts in the shaping of the successive layers of present-times. The common goal of the various authors was to track local forms of political participation in the region as well as to analyze under the lens of historical anthropology how decisions were the result of formalized consultations, mediations, negotiations, votes and deliberations in societies marked by confessional diversity and by the access of all individual and groups to the civic sphere. The authors of the book also tracked the ways in which such forms were modernized, sometimes ambiguously in the context of foreign pressures of colonial nature, during the late-Ottoman era, as well as instrumentalized or erased during the era of French and British colonization. The co-editors will also reflect in this panel on the relevance of this book and in general of an attention to an understand of the functioning of the societies of the past in present-day debates.

“No Social Organization Without a Vision: Revealing the Fundamental Role of Imagined Futures Through Fragmentation Research on Syria”

Benjamin Heidrich

Research on state fragmentation is essentially concerned with the causes, symptoms and consequences of collapsing and collapsed states. Depending on whether 'state' is understood as an institutionalized authority ('institutional approach') or a materialized idea ('legitimacy approach'), fragmentation is either associated with the loss of state sovereignty or social consensus. From the perspective of the Essex School of Discourse Analysis, founded by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, only the legitimacy approach comes close to the real core of the problem, although it ultimately misses it: against the background of the Essex School's approach, which is mainly based on (post-)structuralist, (post-)Marxist and psycho-analytical findings, state fragmentation must essentially be understood as an interpretative struggle for the "right" social order, which is conducted with conflicting imaginations of the "ideal" (future) society - a phenomenon that fragmentation research has so far almost completely overlooked, as can also be seen in the example of Syria research. In the course of the presentation, this new post-foundational view of state fragmentation (in Syria) will be elaborated in detail, revealing the fundamental character that imagined futures generally take on in the context of political and social processes.

“Seeds of Hope: Reimagining a Thrivingly Cultivated Planet - Ecological Themes in the Developmental Thought of Ismail-sabri Abdallah”

Author: Max Aji

This paper uses the figure of Ismail-Sabri Abdallah to bring in two arenas of thought heretofore marginalized in current Marxist ecological debate: the problems of socially and ecologically “appropriate” planning and technologies, and the quandaries of national liberation and post colonial planning writ large. Abdallah was a senior official in the Egypt National Planning Institute under Gamal Abdel Nasser and then Anwar Sadat; he was also a central figure in arenas like the Third World Forum. He faced as theorist and practitioner the multi-scalar problems of planning in a post-colonial state. His work wove together the problematics of the appropriate technologies to use for supplying basic needs for a primarily rural or slum-dwelling population; the pressing problem of unemployment; the nascent problem of immediate ecological degradation; the incipient problem of rapid depletion of exhaustible natural resources; and the existential problem of national defense as a component of third world development. This paper therefore reads his oeuvre as a syncretic example of Third World Marxist ecological thought within the national liberation tradition, while placing it in associated debates concerning basic needs, the right to development, delinking, and the particularities of the Third World encounter with the ecological crisis.

“Le Hirak et la bataille obstinée des femmes algériennes pour l'égalité des droits”

Fatma Oussedik

Cette intervention sera centrée sur la question de la transmission intergénérationnelle concernant les femmes en lutte pour l'égalité des droits en Algérie. Le Hirak sera présenté comme un moment particulier de l'élaboration de ce processus. Il s'agira de questionner les contenus et les formes de ces luttes, à l'occasion de ce moment de forte mobilisation, afin d'en comprendre le sens plus général du point de vue des mutations advenues et à venir de la société algérienne.

Book Launch : L'Avenir du hirak

Massensen Cherbi, Raouf Farrah, Akram Khrief, Zouhour Ouamara and Adel Ourabah

Algérie, l'avenir en jeu. Essai sur les perspectives d'un pays en suspens is a collective book bringing together the work of twenty young researchers and setting out ideas for Algeria's post-hirak. The book aims to analyze Algeria's prospects from the point of view of several political, economic, legal and environmental issues. The goal is to publish an intellectual compendium that invites (non)-specialized audience to delve into these questions, which are all linked to Algeria's present and future. It is a multidisciplinary book divided into four parts: (1) Fighting for the democratic rule of law; (2) Emancipating ourselves from extractivist and rentier economic logics; (3) Defending pluralisms and strengthening living together; (4)

Rethinking Algeria's place in its regional spaces. At a time when spaces for freedom (including academic freedom) are shrinking considerably in Algeria, the authors believe that it is crucial to think about the conditions for a new way forward in line with the demands for democracy and social justice expressed by Algerians during the Hirak.

“Dar Jwad et insoumission féminine : répression maritale et correction paternelle”

Olfa Boudaya

Dar Jouad est une maison de correction féminine dont les origines remontent au début de l'époque moderne et dont le fonctionnement cesse à l'indépendance. La transition postcoloniale a mis fin aux différentes institutions d'ancien régime en accordant aux femmes tunisiennes un nouveau Code du statut personnel. Par sa nature correctionnelle, Dar Jouad se confond à Dar Adel, cet espace carcéral destiné à enfermer les femmes qui transgressent les lois islamiques et les normes sociales ou morales. Le Code pénal et civil de 1860 évoque constamment les peines envisagées pour réprimer les femmes coupables de crimes et délits, mais il ne mentionne aucune institution de détention féminine spécifique en dehors de « la prison des femmes » (sijn an-nissâ'-art. 320). Par conséquent, la codification des lois pénales ne correspondaient pas à une réforme carcérale, bien qu'elle ait été envisagée dans un projet qui demeura inapplicable à l'époque précoloniale. Mais même dans ce projet, la catégorie féminine est écartée. Quoiqu'il en soit, la détention féminine était une pratique courante dans la Tunisie précoloniale et coloniale. Cette détention se situe à mi-chemin entre les doctrines judiciaires islamiques et les pratiques masculines. Maris et pères se fient à cette institution afin de redresser femmes et filles insoumises à l'autorité maritale et patriarcale. En ce qui concerne les juridictions en matière du statut personnel, le destin des femmes condamnées relève de la justice et du patriarcat. En effet, les magistrats du tribunal religieux ou Chara s'occupent des affaires de statut personnel relatives aux questions de mariage, de répudiation et de divorce, d'interdiction, de tutelle et d'émancipation, de filiation et de succession. Étant le tuteur et protecteur de tous les incapables, le juge (Cadi) jouit d'un immense pouvoir relativement aux contestations familiales ; il peut détenir dans sa maison de Justice (Dar Adel) la femme qui s'est soustraite aux devoirs que lui imposait le mariage, y recueillir celle dont deux contestants prétendent être le mari ou qui a été abandonnée ; il peut marier les jeunes filles ou les jeunes femmes sans asile et sans ressources. Cependant, cette magistrature était complice du pouvoir marital et du pouvoir patriarcal. Les témoignages recueillis à partir des archives et des faits divers ainsi que les lois et les statistiques pénitentiaires relatives à la population carcérale féminine permettront de retracer aussi bien le fonctionnement de cette institution que les profils de sa population féminine.

“La prison des femmes en Tunisie à l’époque coloniale: quelques pistes de recherche”

Hend Guirat

La dernière décennie a connu une augmentation marquée de l’intérêt des chercheurs à la prison des femmes en Tunisie, mais c’est la sphère militante qui prend le dessus. Les témoignages des femmes victimes de leurs geôliers abondent. Toutefois, la part des recherches historiques reste très limitée. L’histoire de la prison même dans son versant masculin reste encore à écrire. Cette présentation souhaite initier quelques pistes de recherche sur l’incarcération des femmes à l’époque coloniale, à travers la documentation conservée aux Archives Nationales de Tunisie. Il ne s’agit pas uniquement d’étudier les différents espaces carcéraux consacrés aux femmes à cette époque, mais aussi de tracer l’histoire des femmes qui transgressent la loi - ou des femmes tout court - en rapport avec une société patriarcale et coloniale.

Book Presentation: “Intelleigensias algériennes: le double exile“

Karim Khaled

La fuite de l’intelligentsia algérienne vers d’autres pays plus attractifs conduit essentiellement à poser deux points importants. Le premier est d’ordre politique, au sens d’orientations économiques et sociales, prises par l’Algérie nouvellement indépendante, avec ses effets pervers depuis les années quatre-vingt. Le deuxième est d’ordre économique-administratif, dans le sens où la rente pétrolière a transformé systématiquement le rôle réel des compétences à de simples exécutants-alibi dans une hiérarchie administrative transformée, elle aussi, en un appareil de contrôle, de cooptation et de manipulation, refusant ainsi toute forme d’autonomisation relative des corps socioprofessionnels.

Ce travail empirique se veut une analyse compréhensive du processus migratoire qui décrit en profondeur les détails des différentes étapes vécues par l’intelligentsia algérienne, à la fois, dans leur pays natal et dans leur pays d’accueil. Une expérience porteuse de différentes représentations, attitudes et pratiques significatives sous formes de trois moments spatio-temporels structurant le processus migratoire de l’intelligentsia algérienne, en l’occurrence, les ruptures, l’exil et les retours. Un « triangle migratoire » qui décrit les parcours migratoires de ces intelligentsias dans tous ses états et analyse leurs déterminants sociologiques. Un triangle qui complète un travail antérieur, proposant la dynamique migratoire des intellectuels algériens depuis 1847 à nos jours sous formes de grands moments fondateurs et générationnels, qu’on qualifie -les quatre âges de l’émigration intellectuels algériens- (Les intellectuels algériens. Exode et formes d’engagement. Ed, Frantz Fanon, Algérie, 2019).

“Migrants from Sub Saharan Africa in Tunisia: A Storm in a Tea Cup?”

Mohamed Amara

This paper investigates the impact of the sub-Saharan African immigrants on the Tunisian labor market as well as their economic, social and psychological integration patterns compared to other immigrants with a focus on migration influx taking place after the Tunisian uprising of 2010-11. The use of the micro-level annual household labor force surveys combined with information from the last two population censuses data on where immigrants from different countries of origin were concentrated allow us to identify the impact of sub-Saharan African on Tunisian labor market. Additionally, the paper uses the unique first Tunisia Households International Migration Survey (Tunisia-HIMS 2021) in order to understand the labor market outcomes of sub-Saharan African immigrants and their integration in the local fabric as captured by their degree of inclusion or social exclusion compared to immigrants of other origins. Overall, we find that the impact of sub-Saharan migrants on the local labor market is marginal. On the other hand, compared to other immigrants, sub-Saharan immigrants find it difficult to integrate into local society.

“Textiles, Ksar Hellal and the Fraying Edges of Tunisia’s State-Making Project”

Joshua Rigg

The town of Ksar Hellal is well-known as having been the location for the founding meeting of the Neo Destour party in 1934. There has been little research, however, on the town’s economic, social and political history, or its position as the historic and symbolic center of the country’s textile industry. This paper reconsiders the role of textiles generally, and the city of Ksar Hellal in particular, in Tunisia’s twentieth century state-making project. Focusing on two moments of contestation and contention – the final years of the French protectorate and the general strike of 1978 – the paper will analyze the place of the textile industry during these periods of political economic restructuring and crisis. Faced with the emergence of new textile technologies, the expansion of market forces and hardening of class hierarchies, weavers, dyers, unionists, merchants and politicians narrated conflicting stories of economic modernization, and its relation to the modern Tunisian state. This paper reconstructs these competing narratives of modernization, and argues that the textile sector represented the leading – and fraying – edge of wider political, social and economic struggles in Tunisia.

“Culture-based Activism and Anti-colonial Aesthetic Practices in Tunisia in the Light of the Ongoing War on Gaza”

Alessia Carnevale

The ongoing genocidal war on Gaza has sparked massive waves of pro-Palestine mobilizations around the globe. Among the people of the Arab world and the Global South it has renewed widespread outrage and disillusionment towards the West, its imperialist agenda, and its alleged liberal and democratic values. Most importantly, it has powerfully repositioned the cause of the liberation of Palestine as a central issue of global justice and emancipation. Tunisia is no exception, and has witnessed widespread and transversal mobilizations. Besides conventional demonstrations, pro-Palestine solidarity and anti-colonial discourses are articulated through different forms of “resistant” cultural and aesthetic practices, such as film screenings, graffiti, cartoons, and music. Belonging in a consolidated tradition of Tunisian committed art, they reaffirm the necessity of self-representation and question Western cultural hegemony. By focusing on these practices, my paper sheds light on the relevance of culture in the articulation of political discourses, in the recomposition of political and (trans)national identities, as well as in raising awareness and reinforcing social mobilization.

Queer Futurities in Tunisia? Emancipatory Struggles, Solidarities and Hope at Intersections.

Tarek Shukrallah

“Future can be a problem” states Jose Esteban Muñoz in his widely praised work “Cruising Utopia” (2019). Drawing on queer cultural practices in the U.S.-context, Muñoz stresses the contemporaneity of utopia, the transformative future in the present and “a world that should be, that could be, and that will be” (2019, p. 64). This paper scrutinizes the question of imaginative futures in contemporary queer politics in Tunisia. It does so, through looking at two present day examples: In late 2023, the “Queer Maghreb Coalition” published “Maghreb’s Hope”, a film collecting portraits of queer individuals from the Maghreb Region reflecting on their individual and collective hopes for futures. Here, the paper explores the dialectics of hope and fear as presented in the film, and seeks to analyze it within a framework of a queer of Color critique. The other example interrogates politics of solidarity expressed by queer activists in Tunisia in support of the Palestinian struggle, especially since late 2023, and draws on interviews with interlocutors from 2024. As the paper argues, these two examples highlight well the current dilemmas of hope and futurities for queer communities in the country.

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“World’s Unseen: Literature Lens on Metaphysics and Spirituality”
Cyrine Kortas

Ibn Arabi, the influential 13th-century Andalusian Sufi mystic and philosopher, possessed a highly developed creative imagination that allowed him to delve into esoteric realms and spiritual dimensions. His ideas on the nature of existence, divinity, and human potential echoed in English modern literature, notably in D.H. Lawrence's seminal novel, *Women in Love*. Lawrence, known for his daring exploration of human sensuality and deep emotional connections, draws upon Arabi's concepts to present characters who transcend societal norms and venture into the mystical realms of love and self-discovery. Through Lawrence's depiction of the complex relationships in *Women in Love*, he captures the essence of Arabi's belief that the creative imagination is a gateway to a higher consciousness, where the boundaries of self dissolve, and individuals are liberated to experience the fullness of life and love.

"Morocco’s Green Turn: Environmental Sustainability as a Soft Power Resource"

Katharina Nicolai

The Kingdom of Morocco has established itself a reputation as a pioneer of environmental sustainability and renewable energies in particular. But beyond the intrinsic environmental merits of such a green trajectory, Morocco’s green turn serves the ulterior purpose of generating support for its overarching foreign policy realignment. This presentation sheds light on how environmental sustainability policies have become a source of Moroccan Soft Power.

“Ennahda’s Muslim Democracy in Post-Arab Spring Tunisia: Synthesizing Intellectual Thought and Political Practice”

Imad Alsoos and Julius Dihstelhoff

This article explores the interplay between intellectual political thought and political practice of the Ennahda party as socio-political heavyweight in post-Arab Spring Tunisia. It focuses on Ennahda’s time in opposition and in power from 2011 to the present day, under the new political realities imposed by the Tunisian State president, Kais Saied’s policies. Similarly, the article will delve into Ennahda's forward-looking strategies to cope with Saied's ongoing monopolization of power since 2021 and the impact of Ennahda's actions and rhetoric on Tunisia's socio-political landscape. First, we trace the genealogy of the interplay between intellectual political thought and political practice, exemplified by its intellectual core approach, the concept of 'Muslim democracy' and further important reference texts of the party which aim to synthesize three elements: Islam, the socio-political Tunisian context, and universal episteme (mainly European modernity). One significant outcome in 2016 was the

separation between the da'wa and the party politics within Ennahda, commonly referred to in internal and external public international discourse as the 'separation between religion and politics', showing a state/party approach to politics. To this end, the state is the source to secure individual and political freedoms regardless of ideological variation; a development that distinguishes Ennahda's Muslim democracy from other Islamic movements in the MENA region. Secondly, the democratic setback of 2021 not only challenges Ennahda's concept of Muslim democracy but also all components of its own continuity as a significant socio-political actor, such as its institutional structure, leadership, membership, social base, as well as its political strategy and ideology. Accordingly, both, its institutional political thought and its political practice face an authoritarian resurgence aimed at containing Ennahda and delegitimizing its participation within nation-state structures. Empirical evidence, based on content-analytical evaluations of personal interviews, shows that Ennahda representatives are now focusing on organizational reformation to confront the 2021 coup. Their aim seem to be to democratize both, Ennahda and the state.

“Populisme constitutionnel et populisme de gauche dans la Tunisie post 25 juillet”

Eric Gobe

Depuis une dizaine d'années, nombre de constitutionnalistes américains et européens se sont penchés sur la description et l'analyse des principes constitutionnels implicites et explicites des dirigeants populistes. Ces derniers mettent au cœur de leur discours et de leur pratique politique la critique des diverses composantes du constitutionnalisme libéral qui, selon eux, empêchent l'exercice effectif de la démocratie par le peuple. Ils produisent alors des paradigmes constitutionnels au cœur desquels la souveraineté populaire est mobilisée afin de redonner le pouvoir au peuple. Certains constitutionnalistes, plutôt marqués à gauche, ont tenté de montrer qu'il existe deux populismes, l'un émancipateur, dit de gauche et l'autre autoritaire, dit de droite, les deux étant le résultat de la mise en échec par des élites politiques et économiques néo-libérales d'un « modèle de constitutionnalisme social » promoteur d'un État providence visant à assurer le bien-être social des populations.

Le populisme « émancipateur » produirait un « constitutionnalisme populiste et démocratique » visant à renouer avec des principes constitutionnels à même de libérer les peuples de l'emprise de l'idéologie néo-libérale. Ce populisme de gauche, celui de Podemos ou de Syriza, qui dénonce la corruption, les partis traditionnels et les multinationales en endossant des politiques sociales progressistes et des styles participatifs d'engagement politique, s'opposerait à un populisme de droite, caractérisé par l'obsession de la sécurité (contre les ennemis de l'intérieur et de l'étranger), le conformisme vis-à-vis des valeurs conservatrices et par l'obéissance à l'égard de leaders politiques charismatiques comme Bolsonaro au Brésil ou Orban en Hongrie. Du point de vue de la théorie constitutionnelle, les « populistes de gauche » seraient rattachés à un constitutionnalisme populiste démocratique décrit par le

constitutionnaliste Marc Tushnet comme « mince » et reposant sur l'idée que les citoyens ordinaires devraient être autorisés à proposer, délibérer et décider d'importantes transformations constitutionnelles par le biais des méthodes les plus participatives possibles. Dans cette intervention, nous nous demanderons s'il est possible de présenter la pratique constitutionnelle du président de la République de Tunisie, comme respectant les principes d'un hypothétique constitutionnalisme populiste et démocratique. Notre réponse sera négative : certes, si la nouvelle constitution de 2022 contient des dispositifs institutionnels renvoyant, en apparence, à certaines dimensions du « populisme de gauche » (révocation des mandats des représentants, usage du tirage au sort, élaboration de projets de développement au niveau local), la pratique constitutionnelle du chef de l'État épouse largement les contours d'un populisme autoritaire.

Participants

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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.

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Dr. Imene TRABELSI KHEFACHA holds a Doctorate in Behavioral Accounting Sciences from the University of Tunis. Her research interest centers on the idea that business leaders “work with words” in their reporting and communications. That is why she undertook her doctoral research on the implications of words’ choice in terms of the textual sentiments in a context where manager communication is mainly descriptive, i.e. the context of biopharmaceutical R&D of new drugs.

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In his career, he has worked with constitutional institutions, national and international organizations, alternative and professional media and Tunisian civil society associations.

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