ميكام
مركز ميريان
للدراسات المتقدمة
في المنطقة المغاربية

MECAM
Merian Centre
For Advanced Studies
In The Maghreb

Dear Colleagues, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

MECAM looks back on exciting months (October 2023 to March 2024) that have been filled with events, meetings and exchange opportunities. With this newsletter, we would like to give you insights into our work from this period.

Fellowship Programme

Internal Colloquium of the MECAM Fellows

12/10/2023

On 19th October 2023, the first internal colloquium of the MECAM Fellows was held: a series of discussions in which Fellows are invited to present their projects and detail the progress they are making, and discuss it with other Fellows. Dr. Imad Alsoos presented a paper inspired by his project at MECAM entitled "Disparities and Similarities Between the Mashreq and the Maghreb".

Visiting Scholars

Short Visit: Prof. Dr. Albrecht Fuess

18-22/10/2023

We were delighted invite Prof. Dr. Albrecht Fuess of the Philipps-Universität Marburg in the framework of his Short Visit to the Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb (MECAM) to participate at the international colloquium "The humanities, literature and the arts: realities and perspectives", organised by the Doctoral School "Structures, Systems, Models and Practices in the Humanities and Social Sciences" at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Tunis. The topic of his captivating presentation was "Does current European funding policy in the humanities influence the global view of the Arab world?"

Workshops & Conferences

Extractivisme & Rente : Reconfigurations au Maghreb

24-25/10/ 2023

The participation of Prof. Dr Rachid Ouaissa, in the framework of the conference of "Extractivism & Rent: Reconfigurations in the Maghreb" Co-organised jointly by the Universität Kassel, Philipps-Universität Marburg, MECAM - Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb, and the Laboratoire de recherche Gouvernance et Développement Territorial. which took place at the Bibliothèque Nationale de Tunisie Faculté des sciences humaines et sociales de Tunis.

Workshops & Conferences

Round Table "MECAM MECILA: Asymmetries of International Knowledge Production and Circulation. Experiences, Best Practices, and Challenges" and Participation at MECILA Annual Meeting and Young Researchers Forum 2023, São Paulo, Brasil

29/10-5/11/2023

MECAM visited its brother centre in São Paulo, Brazil - marking the first bilateral substantive collaboration. Prof. Dr. Rachid Ouaissa (MECAM's German Director) and Dr. Julius Dihstelhoff (MECAM's Academic Coordinator) took part in the Round Table jointly conceived and organized by MECAM and the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America (MECILA) entitled "MECAM MECILA: Asymmetries of International Knowledge Production and Circulation. Experiences, Best Practices, and Challenges" which aimed to create an open space for representatives from MECAM and MECILA, the Merian Centres located in São Paulo and Tunis, to share their experiences in mediating research processes across various institutional logics and epistemological gaps. In a world marked by asymmetrical opportunities, this discussion explored the urgent need for horizontal exchange and cooperation. Moreover, Dr. Julius Dihstelhoff participated as a discussant in Panel IV: "Challenges of Open Science for Young Researchers" and Prof. Dr. Rachid Ouaissa was a speaker at "Roundtable I: Area Studies in the Era of Global Turbulence" at the MECILA Annual Meeting and Young Researchers Forum 2023. at the MECILA Annual Meeting and Young Researchers Forum.

Visiting Scholars

Short Visit: Prof. Dr. Ilka Agricola

31/10-04/11/2023

We were delighted invite Prof. Ilka Agricola of Philipps-Universität Marburg in the framework of his Short Visit to the Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb (MECAM) to participate at the 7th Tunisian-Janepanese Conference with an intervention entitled "Invariant Spinors on Homogeneous Spheres (Joint work with Jordan Hofmann and Marie-Amelie Lawn, London)"

Workshops & Conferences

MECAM Joint Panel at the MESA Annual Meeting 2023

03/11/2023

On Friday, 3rd November 2023, the panel "Between Democratization and Authoritarian Resurgence: The Future of Political Islam in the Maghreb" took place at the MESA Annual Meeting 2023 in Montréal, Canada. Dr. Julius Dihstelhoff, the MECAM Academic Coordinator, and Alumni Fellow Dr. Guy Eyre (Alumni of MECAM Interdisciplinary Fellowgroup 5: Identities & Beliefs) identified thematic overlaps. Consequently, they proposed a joint panel with esteemed international scholars and outstanding experts in the field of Islamist research at the highly competitive MESA. The proposed discussion "Between Democratization and Authoritarian Resurgence: The Future of Political Islam in the Maghreb", aligns thematically with MECAM's research in the IRF "Identities & Beliefs" and relates to MECAM's overarching theme. The MESA panel specifically delves into how the evolving social and political contexts in the Maghreb region continue to influence the strategies, guiding principles, and behaviors of Islamist movements. It also addresses their competition and coping mechanisms regarding unequal access to material resources, human capital, religious and political authority, and inequality—core themes of MECAM's Interdisciplinary Research Field (IRF)V, Identities & Beliefs.

MECAM Spectrum

MECAM Spectrum: MECAM's Event Week "Disparities"

14-17/11/2023

MECAM organised its first Event Week ("MECAM Spectrum"), entitled "Disparities", which has been jointly organised by its Fellows in Tunis from 14th to 17th November 2023. 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 MECAM Spectrum's various panels seeked 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?

Visiting Scholars

Short Visit: Prof. Dr. Mohammad Reza Farzanegan

12-17.11.2023

In the framework of the MECAM Event Week, Visiting Scholar Prof. Dr. Mohammad Reza Farzanegan from Philipps-Universität Marburg, delved into the intriguing topic of "The Effect of the 'Woman Life Freedom' Protests on Life Satisfaction in Iran: Evidence from Survey Data." The event took place at the Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Economiques et Commerciales de Tunis - Université de Tunis. Benjamin Heidrich, MECAM's Academic Coordinator from Germany, kicked off the event with insightful opening words. Khouloud Senda Bennani, hailing from the Institut Supérieur de Gestion de Tunis at Université de Tunis, chaired the session.

Workshops & Conferences

Annual Conference of CrossArea e.V. “Doing Area Studies a in the Polycentric Condition”

16-17/11/2023

The annual conference of CrossArea e.V. took place on November 16-17, 2023, at the University of Regensburg, focusing on "Doing Area Studies in the Polycentric Condition." Hosted by DIMAS and the Leibniz Science Campus, it featured presentations on area studies, a members' meeting, a panel of early career researchers, a project presentation on a Science Portal for Global and Area Studies, and a roundtable on digitalizing archival infrastructure. Dr. Steffen Wippel, coordinator of an Interdisciplinary Fellowgroup in the pre-phase and now MECAM publication manager at GIGA
MECAM and explained its current activities since the start of main phase, including the new Fellowship Programme, as part of the exchange between the Merian Centres at the General Assembly. As an experience to be continued, the CrossArea e.V. members agreed to convene their next conference in Frankfurt/Main in the coming year.

MECAM Governance

6-8/12/2023

MECAM’s Joint Executive Council and International Advisory Board Meeting in Tunis

MECAM's Executive Council and International Advisory Board gathered in Tunis from 6th to 8th December 2023, to review the center’s advancements and delve into planning its future activities. Discussions centered on MECAM's present status, interactions with fellows, and the formulation of plans for its 2024 activities, aligned with established working formats. The meeting concluded with a group visit to the Bardo Museum, offering an enriching experience for all participants.

Visiting Scholars

Short Visit: Prof. Dr. Eckart Woertz

7-12/12/2023

MECAM was delighted to welcome Prof. Dr. Eckart Woertz Director of the Institute for Middle East Studies (IMES) at the German Institute for Global and Regional Studies (GIGA) in Hamburg. The topic of his captivating presentation was: "Oil for Food: The Global Food Crisis and the Middle East". This talk analyzes agricultural development in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in the post-war decades and how food security has interacted with geopolitical risk factors, from the oil crisis of the 1970s to the global food crisis of 2007-2008 and the impact of the war in Ukraine. Particular attention is paid to the interconnections between water and food security, and how they interact within the water-energy-food nexus.

Rencontres Ibn Khaldun

Book Presentation: “Histoire du Maghreb depuis les indépendances”

8/12/2023

On December 8th, 2023, a captivating event unfolded at the National Library of Tunisia. Renowned scholars Prof. Dr. Karima Dirèche and Prof. Dr. Nessim Znaien presented their latest collaborative masterpiece, "Histoire du Maghreb depuis les indépendances" published by Armand Colin. The evening started with an illuminating welcome address by Prof. Dr. Khaled Kchir, setting the stage for an insightful exploration of Maghreb's post-independence narrative.
Moderated by the esteemed Isabelle Werenfels, Senior Fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, the discussion delved deep into the complexities of Maghreb's historical trajectory, offering fresh perspectives and enriching dialogue.

Workshops & Conferences

Internal Colloquium of the MECAM Fellows

19/12/2023

On 19th December 2023, the second internal colloquium of the MECAM Fellows was held: a series of discussions in which Fellows are invited to present their projects and detail the progress they are making, and discuss it with other Fellows. Dr. Joshua Rigg presented a paper inspired by his project at MECAM entitled "Offcuts, Seconds, Rags and Fripe: Textiles and the Remainders of Tunisia's State-making Project".

Workshops & Conferences

MECAM Visit at Université de Sfax

15-17/01/2024

Prof. Dr Rachid Ouaissa, Dr Julius Dihstelhoff and Vanessa Barisch visited the Université de Sfax from 15th to 17th January 2024. During the visit, meetings were held with high-ranking representatives of the university to intensify and standardise cooperation between the Université de Sfax, MECAM and the Philipps University of Marburg. Topics of discussion included the integration of Sfax into the working formats of MECAM, bilateral cooperation opportunities, the presentation of MECAM and the organisation of events. The possibility of organising an interdisciplinary workshop in Marburg on environmental and climate protection was also discussed.

Workshops & Conferences

Doctoriales of ISGT-ESSECT-TBS 2023

18-19/01/2024

MECAM was pleased to co-organsie the 3rd edition of the Doctoriales ISGT-ESSECT-TBS 2023 (Institut Supérieur de Gestion/ Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Economiques et Commerciales de Tunis / Tunis Business School: the three faculties with economic orientation of Université de Tunis) 18 and 19 January 2024 at the Tunis Business School, in which MECAM participated as a partner, on the theme of "The innovations brought by the Artificial Intelligence revolution to scientific research in theoretical, methodological and empirical terms". These days were animated by doctoral workshops aimed at providing doctoral students with tools to help them "Succeed better in their thesis thanks to artificially intelligent methodological approaches".

Workshops & Conferences

Internal Colloquium of the MECAM Fellows

17/01/2023

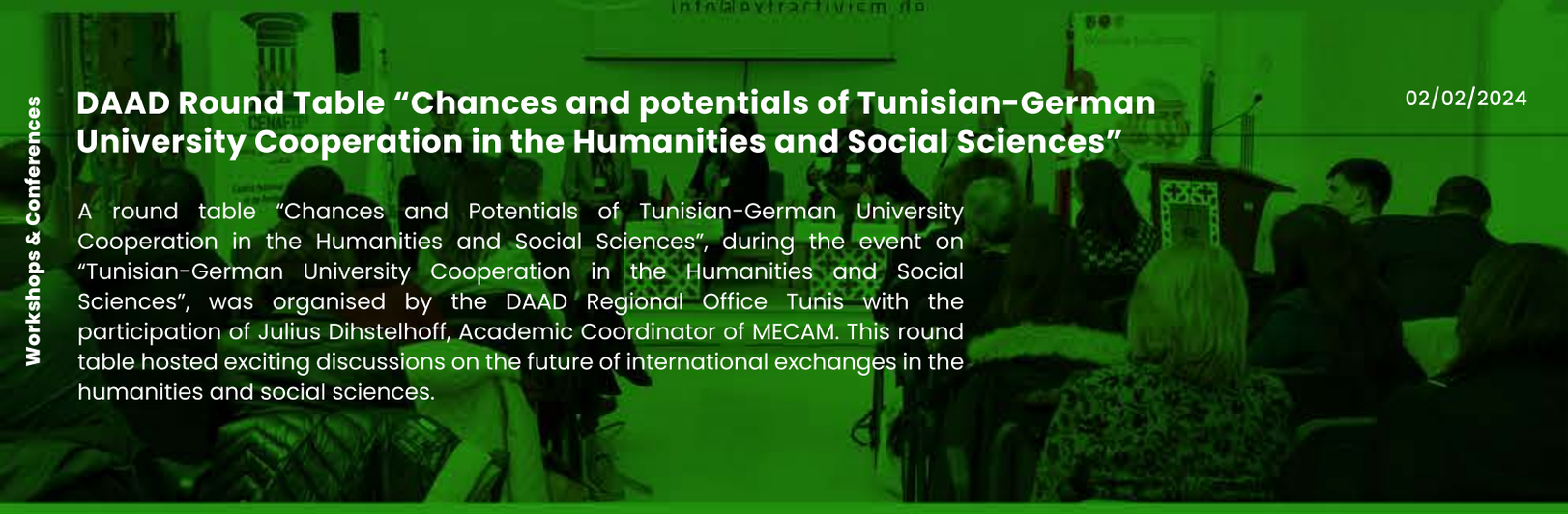
On 19th January 2023, the third internal colloquium of the MECAM Fellows was held: a series of discussions in which Fellows are invited to present their projects and detail the progress they are making, and discuss it with other Fellows. MECAM Fellows met to discuss the organisation of the next Event Week in April 2024. During the meeting, Fellows brainstormed possible sub-themes related to Imagining the Future. Suggested entries include examinations of the region's future cultural, political and economic aspirations and expectations.

Workshops & Conferences

International Conference: “Peace Building and Gender in Transitional Societies”

31/01-01/02/2024

Co-organised by the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) and MECAM, the international conference “Peace Building and Gender in Transitional Societies” took place at MECAM’s premises and in the lecture hall on the campus of the Institut Supérieur des Etudes Appliquées en Humanités de Tunis (ISEAHT). Arab and German researchers and members of civil society groups convened to discuss various facets of women living in conflict-affected areas, the contributions of women researchers in societies undergoing transition, and initiatives related to promoting peace through education.



Workshops & Conferences

DAAD Round Table “Chances and potentials of Tunisian-German University Cooperation in the Humanities and Social Sciences”

02/02/2024

A round table “Chances and Potentials of Tunisian-German University Cooperation in the Humanities and Social Sciences”, during the event on “Tunisian-German University Cooperation in the Humanities and Social Sciences”, was organised by the DAAD Regional Office Tunis with the participation of Julius Dihstelhoff, Academic Coordinator of MECAM. This round table hosted exciting discussions on the future of international exchanges in the humanities and social sciences.

Workshops & Conferences

Faculty Club at Philipps-Universität Marburg

05/02/2024

Prof. Dr. Rachid Ouaissa (MECAM Director) presented MECAM at the Faculty Club of the University of Marburg in the presence of the Presidential Board and more than 80 colleagues from all disciplines of the Philipps-Universität Marburg. The Faculty Club is an internal university platform that offers a transdisciplinary exchange on ongoing research projects/projects.

Workshops & Conferences

Extractivism Flying Academy “Global Extractivism: Actors and Cultures in Latin America” in Cuba

19-23/02/2024

Prof. Dr. Rachid Ouaissa, one of the two directors of MECAM, was present at the Extractivism Flying Academy “Global Extractivism: Actors and Cultures in Latin America” Havanna, Cuba from 19 to 22 February 2024. The conference looked at which commodities will gain in importance and which countries and/or groups of countries may benefit from this, bearing in mind that they may also be among the losing groups. What social and cultural dynamics characterize the extractivist regimes in Latin America? How do the impending and future changes challenge these structures, institutions, cultural representations and social habitus? Which social groups are becoming drivers of change, and which are blocking these processes? And what geopolitical outcomes are already foreseeable?

Workshops & Conferences

MECAM First Publication Workshop

27-29/02/2024

MECAM's Publication Workshop Series, led by the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) in Hamburg, aimed at training MECAM fellows, partners, and collaborators in academic authorship, reviewing, and editing. These workshops, held biennially, with two in Tunis (2024, 2028) and one in Hamburg (2026), cover academic text, policy paper, and blog writing. Featuring experts from the MECAM network and beyond, the sessions will offer practical insights into drafting, peer review, and engaging with policy communities. Emphasis was placed on addressing publishing dynamics and fostering discussions on academic knowledge production imbalances. Participants gained the skills to navigate academic outlets effectively. The inaugural workshop focused on academic publishing, catering primarily to current MECAM fellows and alumni in Tunisia.

Seasonal Talk

Winter Talk: "Decolonising Academic Writing and Diversifying Publication Languages: Positions and Possibilities"

28/02/2024

The international academic publishing system is increasingly dominated by Anglo-American publishers, procedures, and writing requirements, and by the exclusive use of English. In contrast, in the Global South, for example in the Arab world, there are calls for the decolonisation of academic writing, the promotion of regional publishing houses, and the (re)recognition of Arabic as an academic language. Moreover, in many countries, such as in the Maghreb, scholars have grown up in a French-based academic system to which they are accustomed, but from which they are also trying to escape. But even in the Western world, the traditional "big" languages of knowledge such as German, French, and Spanish are increasingly being replaced, less and less perceived internationally, and less recognised, even in their own countries. In this context, this public MECAM "Winter Talk" addressed issues such as postcolonial writing, Anglicisation and Americanisation vs. diversity of academic languages, multilingual publishing, linguistic (but also conceptual, ...) translation problems, different linguistic logics and possibilities of expression in the respective languages, etc.

Rencontres Ibn Khaldun

"Branding the Middle East and North Africa" (Book Presentation)

29/02/2024

The edited volume "Branding the Middle East and North Africa" presented at this Rencontre Ibn Khaldoun of MECAM investigated place, product, and personal branding in the Middle East and North Africa, including some studies from adjacent regions and the wider Islamicate world. Going beyond simply presenting logos and slogans, it critically analyses processes of strategic communication and image building under general conditions of globalisation, neoliberalisation, and postmodernisation and, in a regional perspective, of lasting authoritarian rule and increased endeavours for "worlding." In particular, it looks at the multiple actors involved in branding activities, their interests and motives, and investigates tools, channels, and forms of branding beyond the ubiquitous logos and slogans.

Visiting Scholars

Short Visit: Prof. Dr. Annette Henninger, Dr. Funda Hülagü and Dina Zabaneh

29/02/2024

We were delighted to welcome Prof. Dr. Annette Henninger, Dr. Funda Hülagü and Dina Zabaneh from the Philipps-Universität Marburg in the framework of their Short Visit to the Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb (MECAM) to hold an event at MECAM entitled "Exchange Marburg - Tunis: Gender Politics between Backlash and Neoliberalism" at which Tarek Shukrallah will hold a talk entitled "»The 14th of January was our first pride«. Tunisian queer politics and the crisis of hegemony". The delegation from Marburg will also participate at the Conference "Taboos in Language, Society, Culture and Literature", organised by the English Department at the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of Tunis.

Strategy day

MECAM Steering Committee of Philipps-Universität Marburg (UMR)

18/03/ 2024

On March 18, 2023, a half-day meeting of the "MECAM Steering Committee of Philipps-Universität Marburg (UMR)" took place, designed as a strategy day. The main goal was to advance strategy development on two levels: firstly, by promoting joint research synergies within and emanating from the UMR, and secondly, by internationalizing scientific cooperation in Marburg both within and beyond the UMR. The discussion was based on an assessment of the previous main phases and working formats of MECAM as well as a previously drafted strategy paper highlighting the importance of MECAM for the UMR.

Fellowship Programme

Internal Colloquium of the MECAM Fellows

07/03/2024

On 7th Mars 2024, the first internal colloquium of the MECAM Fellows was held: a series of discussions in which Fellows are invited to present their projects and detail the progress they are making, and discuss it with other Fellows.

Publications

MECAM Papers:

· Eyre, Guy. 2023. Quietist Salafism between (neo)liberal apprehensions and convergence. MECAM papers 5.
http://doi.org/10.25673/108767,
http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:gbv:3:5-1351414153-1851053042-12.

MECAM Book Series:

· The MECAM book series "Perspectives on the Maghreb" has launched with Amsterdam University Press. It aims to be a premier platform for interdisciplinary research related to MECAM, publishing manuscripts in English with most available in open access. MECAM covers editing, translation, and open access costs. Initial submissions are underway.

MECAM Blog Series:

· Joshua E. Rigg, The World in the Rearview Mirror of an Isuzu D-Max: Mohamed Bettaieb and the Tunisian Southern Imaginary, in: TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research, 12.10.2023,
https://trafo.hypotheses.org/48974

· The Politics and Poetics of the New Man's Body Image in the Modernist Novel: A Sufi Comparative Study – 5in10 with Cyrine Kortas, in: TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research, 31.10.2023, https://trafo.hypotheses.org/49169

· Vanessa Barisch, Dream City – Contemporary Art and Dynamics Towards Decolonialization, in: TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research, 07.11.2023,
https://trafo.hypotheses.org/49199

· Julius Dihstelhoff ; Tomaz Amorim, Working Together Across Borders: What MECAM & MECILA Can Teach Us, in: TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research, 28.11.2023,
https://trafo.hypotheses.org/49497

· Capitalism and Rent: A Destructive Relationship – An Interview with Hartmut Elsenhans, in: TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research, 05.12.2023,
https://trafo.hypotheses.org/49627

· Migration, whether internal or international, can contribute to reducing inequalities – 5in10 with Mohamad Amara, in: TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research, 28.12.2023,
https://trafo.hypotheses.org/49871

· Steffen Wippel, Branding the Middle East: Communication Strategies and Image Building from Qom to Casablanca, in: TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research, 09.01.2024,
https://trafo.hypotheses.org/50000

· The End Zones of the Circular Economy: Capitalism and Waste in North Africa – 5in10 with Joshua Rigg, in TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research, 13.02.2024,
https://trafo.hypotheses.org/50402

MECAM Further Publications

· Rachid Ouaissa, Energie, Flüchtlinge, Geopolitik: Die Welt hofiert Nordafrika – aber der Maghreb ist zerrissen, Tagespiegel, 03.10.2023.

· Steffen Wippel (ed.), Branding the Middle East: Communication Strategies and Image Building from Qom to Casablanca, De Gruyter, Volume 38 in the series Studies on Modern Orient, 2023.
https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110741100

· Massensen Cherbi, La révision constitutionnelle algérienne de 2020 : Mettre un terme au Hirak et prévenir sa résurgence par le droit, in Mondes arabes 2023/2 (N° 4), Éditions La Découverte, pp. 93-115.

· Elizabeth Bishop, Arabs at the 6th World Festival of Youth and Students: UGEMA in the USSR, 1957, in The Maghreb Review, Maghreb Publications,Volume 48, Number 4, 2023, pp. 424-442, 2023.
https://doi.org/10.1353/tmr.2023.a911142

· Massensen Cherbi, l'islam religion de l'Etat: une énigme algérienne, dans Revue française de droit constitutionnel 2023/4 (N° 136), pages 811 à 842, Éditions Presses Universitaires de France. DOI 10.3917/rfdc.136.0811

· Julius Dihstelhoff and Mounir Mrad, Kais Saied's reconfiguration of Tunisia's political system : Hegemonic ambitions to no avail? – Une approche critique ", L'Année du Maghreb [En ligne], 30 | 2023, mis en ligne le 27 novembre 2023, consulté le 23 décembre 2023. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/anneemaghreb/12223

· Massensen Cherbi, Les mécanismes législatifs de l'autoritarisme algérien face au hirak : entre répression de la mobilisation et prévention de toute organisation du mouvement », L'Année du Maghreb [En ligne], 30 | 2023, mis en ligne le 22 décembre 2023, consulté le 24 décembre 2023. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/anneemaghreb/12193

· Cyrine Kortas, An Exploratory Practice Study on the Use of Film Adaptation in the Tunisian Literature Classroom, in Studies in Applied Linguistics & TESOL at Teachers College, Columbia University, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 118-127.

· André Weißenfels, Development at Work: Postcolonial Imaginaries, Global Capitalism, and Everyday Life at a Factory in Tunisia, Politik und Gesellschaft des Nahen Ostens (PGNO), Springer VS, 2024.

· Imad Alsoos, Gazan perspectives on Hamas and the day after, in Governing Gaza After the War: Palestinian Debates, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 09.02.2024. URL: https://carnegieendowment.org/2024/02/09/governing-gaza-after-war-palestinian-debates-pub-91605

· Julius Dihstelhoff and Moritz Simon, Power-Sharing Processes in Post-Arab Spring Tunisia: From Elite Compromise to Presidential Monopolization, in Power-Sharing in the Global South, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 85–120, 2024.