

ميكام
مركز ميريان
للدراسات المتقدمة
في المنطقة المغاربية



MECAM

Merian Centre
For Advanced Studies
In The Maghreb

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

“Imagining Futures: Dealing with Disparity”

Deadline 10.03.2025; 12.30h CEST (afternoon).

The Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb (MECAM) invites applications for **nine fellowships for postdoctoral and advanced researchers in the humanities and social sciences for the period from September 2025 to April 2026**. Under the overall theme “Imagining Futures: Dealing with Disparity” MECAM is dedicated to a research agenda framed by five interrelated ‘Interdisciplinary Research Fields’ (IRFs): **Aesthetics & Cultural Practice, Inequality & Mobility, Memory & Justice, Resources & Sustainability, and Identities & Beliefs**. Applications should be related to the main theme and at least one of the IRFs. This call for applications is open to researchers from all countries, including Tunisia. MECAM has been established at the Université de Tunis/Tunisia in October 2020 to strengthen internationalization, free academic research and cooperation in the Humanities and Social Sciences in, with and across the Maghreb, and other regions of the world.



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CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: MECAM- Fellowships 2025-2026

With this call for applications, **MECAM invites postdoc and advanced scholars in the social sciences and humanities to apply for individual fellowships with their own research projects that relate to one or more of MECAM's Interdisciplinary Research Fields (IRFs) under the guiding theme of "Imagining Futures: Dealing with Disparities"**:

- **IRF 1) Aesthetics & Cultural Practice** examines how aesthetic forms and cultural practices influence the process by which models and imaginations of the future are expressed and (re-)negotiated. It also investigates the ways in which disparities, political and societal transformations influence aesthetic and cultural practices;
- **IRF 2) Inequality & Mobility** has a focus on social and economic inequalities, the resulting sense of insecurity, and their role in the (re-)negotiation of visions and models of the future. The IRF specifically explores how distinct forms of disparity (incl. concrete policy decisions) drive or restrain mobility and how in turn, mobility can exacerbate or mitigate inequality;
- **IRF 3) Memory & Justice** discusses legacies of the past, including their legal, political and cultural perceptions and frames in relation to different assessments of the present and to models and (re-)negotiations of the future. Research sheds light on the ways in which differential access to political power shapes questions of accountability, fact-finding, amnesty, judicial reforms, human rights claims and the legitimate sources of law in post-conflict societies and beyond;
- **IRF 4) Resources & Sustainability** investigates how societies in general and political decision-makers in particular deal with burgeoning socio-economic disparities and growing environmental problems. This IRF studies which economic models might ensure a politically, socially and ecologically sustainable future. Especially rentier and extractivist economic models in the Maghreb/Middle East are addressed here as these models generate particular forms of disparities and thus also interesting visions of the future;
- **IRF 5) Identities & Beliefs** examines co-existing, sometimes competing identities and belief systems which are partly impacted by political power dynamics. Disparities are felt, perceived and articulated very differently from the vantage point of diverse identities and beliefs, resulting in pluralistic ways of (re-)negotiating imaginations and models of the future. Possible research foci are on different identities (religious, ethnic, national(ist), local(ist)), diverse political ideologies, and belief systems.

The Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb (MECAM), based in Tunis, promotes interdisciplinary, interregional, and intergenerational research. As a centre for Advanced Study, it is dedicated to free academic exchange with a focus on the social and political processes and issues that divide and connect the Maghreb, the Middle East and Europe historically and in our time – e.g. beliefs, distribution of resources, migration, rule of law, socio-economic conflicts, and (transitional) justice.



ELIGIBILITY & MOTIVATION

Applications are welcome from postdoc and advanced researchers of all fields in the social sciences and humanities if

- You are interested in discussing your research in the framework of MECAM's main theme "Imagining futures: Dealing with disparity" with colleagues from the Maghreb, the Middle East, Europe, and other regions of the world.
- You want to engage in collaborative work, in debate and exchange with other researches working on topics related to the five IRFs.
- You are interested in revisiting your research from a different vantage point.
- You want to become part of a network of interdisciplinary, intergenerational, and transregional exchange and debate on disparity and the competing models for the future that co-exist in the societies of the contemporary Maghreb, Europe, and other parts of the world.

OUR OFFER

FELLOWSHIP

Six post-doctoral and three advanced researchers will be invited as MECAM Fellows on the basis of an evaluation of the quality and originality of their research proposal. Projects should address one or more of the themes sketched out in the IRFs. Fellows are expected to take up residency for up to 8 months in Tunis, from 1 September 2025 to 31 April 2026. During the period of their residency, Fellows of MECAM gain the freedom to work on their self-chosen individual research projects and the opportunities for exchange in and outside MECAM, with their co-fellows, and colleagues from Tunisia and from MECAM's networks. Fellows participate in on-site seminars and are expected to work regularly at MECAM offices. They will be invited to formats that support collaborative work and to participate in the academic life of MECAM. While developing their own research present their work to their co-fellows and in close individual coordination with a Tunisian University. Moreover, fellows commit to participating at weekly in-person colloquia, to contribute a MECAM paper (<https://mecam.tn/mecam-papers/>) and to mainly organize two in-person workshops within the framework of MECAM's event week ("MECAM Spectrum") with the involvement of MECAM's Principal Investigators working on IRFs and/or external experts. MECAM will host the selected fellows in Tunis. Successful applicants will become 'MECAM fellows' with all relevant rights and obligations: Travel and relocation costs will be compensated according to a "no gain/no loss" principle. Furthermore, proven research costs can be reimbursed up to an amount of 1000 EUR. A monthly stipend will be awarded for the duration of the fellowship according to the same "no gain/no loss" principle.

NETWORK

MECAM Fellows will become part of a network, which will be built up by subsequent groups of fellows over the next years, and by the scholars of the institutions that are involved in the institutional framework. MECAM and its partner institutions offer networking and publication opportunities via specific networks, formats and support.

EXCHANGE AND DEBATE

The primary aim of MECAM is to create a high-quality and flexible setting for peer-to-peer exchange and debate between researchers from different countries, disciplines, and in different phases of their academic career: The fellowship combines virtual and in-person forms of exchange and debate, and facilitates collaboration and engagement with scholars at MECAM partner institutions, students, and the wider public. The MECAM directors and coordination office in Tunis support fellows during their stay. A key part of academic life is the biannual Event Week ("MECAM Spectrum") in mid-November and mid-April, which is mainly coordinated and organized by the fellows. During this week, they present their work and invite external guests. MECAM's partner institutions also offer opportunities for publication and academic exchange.

FLEXIBILITY

MECAM fellows can pursue their individual research projects in the form they choose, be it an academic article, an essay, a policy paper, a book, a report, etc. Projects can have particular components of field or archive research (in Tunisia, and/or a neighbouring state in the Maghreb if the duration does not conflict in principle with the obligation for residence).

SUPPORT

MECAM provides its fellows with shared office workspaces, which they are expected to use primarily in the MECAM offices. It also offers publication facilities for open-access and peer-reviewed formats of publication through the infrastructures of MECAM and its partners. Logistical support with travel, accommodation, and field research in Tunisia is provided. Furthermore, the exchange between fellows is facilitated through a secure digital workspace (TrafoHub) and other digital tools.

YOUR APPLICATION

MECAM assigns its partner institution, Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin, with the processing of personal application data. Therefore, we kindly ask you to submit your application via the secure online application platform of the Forum Transregionale Studien **by 10 March 2025, 12.30h CEST.**
application.trafo-berlin.de

Applications by email will not be considered. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact MECAM's research knowledge coordinator, Ahmad Gharbeia: gharbeia@trafo-berlin.de

As part of your application, you will be asked to prepare and upload:

- **Curriculum vitae including publications** (2-3 pages),
- A **motivation letter** outlining a detailed explanation of how your research proposal is connected to the Maghreb region and aligns with MECAM's guiding theme "Imagining Futures - Dealing with Disparity" and at least one of its IRFs (1-2 pages), including a clear statement of how you intend to engage with MECAM during your fellowship, highlighting its significance for your academic career development, and what specific goals you aim to accomplish during your fellowship,
- **Research proposal:** Short abstract of your project (max. 1000 words),
- **Names and contact details of two referees** (university faculty members or practitioners in a field relevant to the applicant's project; no letters of recommendation required),
- One recent **writing sample:** journal article (published or forthcoming), book or thesis chapter.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK – WHAT IS MECAM?

The “Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb” (MECAM) was founded as an international centre for interdisciplinary research and academic exchange. It is located at the Université de Tunis/Tunisia. MECAM is a joint endeavour of a consortium of renowned Tunisian and German research institutions: It is coordinated by the Philipps-Universität Marburg and the Université de Tunis and supported by the Universität Leipzig, the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) in Hamburg/Germany, the Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin/Germany and the University of Sfax/Tunisia.

MECAM's partner institutions:

- **Philipps-Universität Marburg, Marburg:** Philipps-Universität Marburg, Marburg: The Philipps-Universität Marburg, with its 25,000 students, has a research focus on the Area Studies, which is reflected for instance in the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (CNMS). The CNMS is involved in MECAM, alongside other interdisciplinary institutions and departments, including the Centre for Conflict Studies, the Department of History and Cultural Studies, the Institutes of Media Studies and Romance Philology, and the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science.
- **Université de Tunis, Tunis:** The Université de Tunis was founded in 1960 and is today, with some 20,000 students, one of the largest universities in Tunisia, boasting a wide-ranging research and teaching portfolio with an outstanding reputation for research excellence across the region.
- **Universität Leipzig, Leipzig:** The Universität Leipzig is a German university with around 30.000 students. Within the MECAM institutional structure the University is represented by the Institute of Geography, the Institute for Oriental Studies, and the Small Enterprise Training Program (SEPT). The Institute of Geography's regional focus is the Mediterranean region.
- **German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburg:** GIGA is an independent research institute based in Hamburg, Germany, which conducts research on politics, economics, and society in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East as well as on global issues. Within MECAM, the GIGA Institute for Middle East Studies (IMES) is particularly involved.
- **Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin:** The Forum Transregionale Studien is a platform that promotes the internationalization of research in the humanities and social sciences. It enables collaboration among researchers with different disciplinary backgrounds and awards fellowships to researchers from all over the world.
- **Université de Sfax, Sfax:** The Université de Sfax is located in Tunisia's second largest city and important economic centre in the south of the country. It is attended by 35,000 students.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany supports and funds the establishment of the international centre for research in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The Université de Tunis provides the infrastructure for the installation of MECAM in Tunis, including the premises and complementary resources, within the Higher Institute of Digital Engineering (HIDE).

For further information on MECAM, please visit: www.mecam.tn