

Cities in the Arab Imagination: Fiction, Reality, and Futurescapes

MECAM Transregional Workshop | Tunis, 24-25 June 2025

Convenor: Teresa Pepe (University of Oslo/MECAM Fellow 2021)

Organisation: Diana Abbani (MECAM/Forum Transregionale Studien)

Venue: MECAM, 27, rue Florian, Borj Zouara | 1029 Tunis.

Program

Tuesday, 24 June 2025

- 09:00-09:30 **Arrival of participants & Opening Remarks**
Amel Guizani (MECAM Director/University of Tunis)
- 9.30-11.00 **Panel 1 | Speculative Futures and Urban Dystopias**
Chair: Diana Abbani (MECAM/Forum Transregionale Studien)
Teresa Pepe (University of Oslo/MECAM Fellow 2021) – *Cities of the Future in the Arab Literary Imagination*
Rasha Chatta (Freie Universität Berlin/MECAM Fellow 2021) – *Fragments of Tomorrow: the Speculative Cartographies of Beirut in Comics*
- 11:00-11:30 *Coffee Break*
- 11.30-13.00 **Panel 2 | Urban Memory and Gendered Topographies**
Chair: Rached Khalifa (University of Tunis El Manar)
Hanan Natour (Freie Universität Berlin/ EUME fellow) – *Cities and the Construction of Memory in the Novels of Tunisian Women Writers*
Hager Ben Driss (University of Tunis) – *Wounded Cities: Autogeography and Urban Imagination in Fay Afaf Kanafani's Nadia, Captive of Hope*
- 13:00-14:00 *Lunch Break*
- 14.00-16.00 **Panel 3 | Liminal Tunis: Emotion, Sacredness, and Silence**
Chair: Rim Triki (University of Tunis El Manar)
Douja Mamelouk (Southern Mediterranean University Tunis) – *The City of Tunis: A Landscape of Trauma and Silence*
Cyrine Kortas (MECAM Fellow/University of Gabes) – *A Tavern in the Old Medina: A Liminal Space Reconciling the Profane and Sacred in El-Khaldi's Awtad*
Vanessa Barish (Philipps University Marburg) – *The Carthage Film Festival and the Dream City Festival: Decolonial cultural practice in Tunis*
- 16:00-16:30 *Coffee Break*
- 16:30-17:30 **Keynote Lecture**
Chair: Anis Ben Amor (University of Tunis El Manar)
Samia Kassab-Charfi (University of Tunis) – *Migrations and Symbolic Reconstructions: Testour and the Making of a Morisco Imaginary*
- 18:30 Dinner on a voluntary basis

Wednesday, 25 June 2025

- 9.30-11.00 **Panel 4 | Urban Nostalgia and the Moral City**
Chair: Samira Mechri (University of Tunis El Manar)
Nermin Elsherif (Utrecht University) – *Against the City of Today: Virtue, Morality, and the Geographies of al-zamān al-gamīl*
Diana Abbani (MECAM/Forum Transregionale Studien) – *Singing the City: Satire, Family, and the Urban Imagination in Bilad al-Sham under the Mandate Period (1920s–1940s)*
- 11:00-11:30 *Coffee Break*
- 11.30-13.00 **Panel 5 | Resonant Geographies: Memory, Violence, and the Poetics of Places**
Chair: Faten Bouchrara (MECAM/University of La Manouba)
Haikel Al-Hazgui (Writer) – *The City: Its Violence, Voices, and Music (Using Tunis as a Case Study) (in Arabic)*
Rached Khalifa (University of Tunis El Manar) – *The Village as Mythopoetics of History: The Case of Ksibet in Maher Abderrahman's The Ghosts of the Vestibule?*
- 13:00-14:00 *Lunch Break*
- 14.00-15.30 **Panel 6 | Translating the City: Language, Belonging, and Representations of Urban Space in Arabic Literature (in Arabic)**
Messaouda Ben Boubaker (Writer) and **Walid Souleiman** (Writer) in conversation with **Moncef Ben Abdeljelil** (Beit Al-Hikma)
- 15:30-16:00 *Coffee Break*
- 16:00-16:30 **Closing Remarks**