

ميكام
مركز ميربان
للدراستات المتقدمة
في المنطقة المغاربية



MECAM
Merian Centre
For Advanced Studies
In The Maghreb

Fellowship Programme

Individual Fellowships

from September 2025 to April 2026

Long-term Fellowships

2023-2026



Summary

The Centre	1
Fellowship Programme	2
Organigram.....	3
THEMATIC CLUSTERS.....	4
IRF I “Aesthetics & Cultural Practices “	5
IRF II “Inequality & Mobility “	7
IRF III “Memory & Justice “	9
IRF IV “Resources & Sustainability “	11
IRF V “Identities & Beliefs “	13
Individual Fellowships 2025–2026.	15
Dr. Valentina Schiattarella	16
Dr. Dr. Imene Gannouni Khemiri	17
Dr. Omotolani Ebenezer Ekpo	18
Dr. Saniya Taher	19
Dr. Yazid Benhadda	20
Dr. Souhir Zekri	21
Dr. Justin Skye Malachowski	22
Long-term Fellowships 2023–2026.....	23
Dr. Cyrine Kortas	24
Dr. Massensen Cherbi	25
Dr. Max Ajl....	26
Partner institutions	27

The Centre

ميكام
مركز ميريان
للدراستات المتقدمة
في المنطقة المغاربية



MECAM
Merian Centre
For Advanced Studies
In The Maghreb

Imagining Futures: Dealing with Disparities

The Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb (MECAM), established in 2020, has been successful in fostering global research connections and exchanges.

During its main phase, spanning from 2023 to 2029, The centre offers fellowship programmes that enables international, intergenerational, and interdisciplinary collaborations on the Maghreb and MENA region. The centre provides a platform for scholars to discuss cultural, economic, political, and social disparities in Tunisia, the Maghreb, and beyond. Each year, MECAM offers up to 8-month individual fellowships from September to April, allowing scholars to engage in their research and contribute to advancing knowledge and understanding of the Maghreb region.

This time, MECAM extends invitations to a total of 8 individual fellowships and 3 longterm fellowships highly talented, providing them with the opportunity to immerse themselves in their respective research pursuits. Additionally, MECAM offers long-term post-doctoral fellowships (up to three years) for a maximum of six postdoctoral researchers in humanities and social sciences. Only a maximum of three long-term fellowships can be active simultaneously.

All fellows present their research designs, progress, and outcomes during the self-organized event week called "Fellow Seminar", known as "MECAM Spectrum". This seminar benefits from the valuable scientific insights contributed by Principal Investigators affiliated institutionally from both Germany and the Maghreb region. We eagerly anticipate the upcoming talented fellows and the valuable insights they will bring to the research community. With their diverse backgrounds and innovative projects, they are set to invigorate scholarly discussions within the Maghreb and beyond.

Juilius Dihstelhoff & Amel Guizani

Fellowship Programme



Dr. Julius Dihstelhoff

Philipps-Universität Marburg, Germany
MECAM Director



Dr. Amel Guizani

Université de Tunis, Tunisia
MECAM Director

MECAM Fellows

They are offered the opportunity to contribute to the organization's research agenda while working on their own individual research projects. The program provides a balance between independence and access to research facilities, as well as opportunities for collaboration and exchange with colleagues.

The fellowship programme led by MECAM's directors and its Academic Coordinator has been successfully tested and implemented during MECAM's initial funding phase within the Interdisciplinary Fellows group (IFGs), even though the on-site component in Tunis has been substituted partially by remote fellowships due to pandemic related restrictions. During the initial funding phase, MECAM has been successful with invitations of excellent scholars working on individual research projects and the formation of groups of fellows covering a broad range of research questions relating to MECAM's research agenda and a variety of disciplinary approaches.

The individual fellowships offered during MECAM's main phase are primarily targeted to promising postdoctoral researchers (junior fellows), as well as more experienced senior scholars (senior fellows). In addition, MECAM invites up to six promising postdoc long-term fellows for up to three years. A maximum of three of these three-year postdoc fellowships may run concurrently.



ORGANIGRAM OF MECAM

MECAM PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

GERMANY

PHILIPPS-UNIVERSITÄT MARBURG
UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG
FORUM TRANSREGIONALE STUDIEN
IN BERLIN
GERMAN INSTITUTE FOR GLOBAL
AND AREA STUDIES (GIGA) IN
HAMBURG

TUNISIA

UNIVERSITÉ DE TUNIS
UNIVERSITÉ DE SFAX

INTERNATIONAL

ORIENT-INSTITUT BEIRUT
UNIVERSITÉ HASSAN II DE
CASABLANCA

MEMBERS OF THE MECAM INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

DR. ISABELLE WERENFELS
PROF. DR. KARIMA DIRECHE
PROF. DR. FARID ZAHIEH
PROF. DR. MEROUAN MEKOUAR
PROF. DR. IMED MELLITI
DR. AMAL OBEIDI
PROF. DR. FATMA OUSSÉDIK
PROF. DR. FRANZISKA DÜBGEN

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

DR. AMEL GUIZANI
PROF. DR. FAOUZI ZARAI
PROF. DR. MOHAMED FAKER KLIBI
PROF. DR. FATMA AÏT MOUS
DR. ANDRÉ BANK
PROF. DR. FAIEZ GARGOURI
PROF. DR. FRIEDRIKE PANNEWICK
GEORGES KHALIL
DR. SONJA GANSEFORTH
PROF. DR. NESSIM ZNAIEM
PROF. DR. JENS HANSSEN

DR. JULIUS DIHSTELHOFF
(PHILIPPS-UNIVERSITÄT MARBURG /
UNIVERSITÉ DE TUNIS)

MECAM DIRECTOR

DR. AMEL GUIZANI
(UNIVERSITÉ DE TUNIS, TUNISIE)

MECAM DIRECTOR

MEMBERS OF MECAM COORDINATION TEAM

TUNIS

DR. LUISE FISCHER
(ACADEMIC COORDINATOR)

MOHAMED ALYANI
(OFFICE MANAGER)

HIBA MEDNINI
(PROGRAM MANAGER)

FATEN BOUCHRARA
(COORDINATOR OF THE LIAISON OFFICE)

MARBURG

BENJAMIN HEIDRICH
(PROJECT COORDINATOR GERMANY)

PIA WAGNER
(ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT)

JULIA HERRMANN
(SECRETARY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES)

DORRA TALBI
(STUDENT ASSISTANT)

LINA LEONHARDT
(STUDENT ASSISTANT)

HAMBURG

DR. MARIA JASUA
(PUBLICATION MANAGER)

DR. CLARA-AUGUSTE SÜß
(OUTREACH & TRANSFER MANAGER)

BERLIN

DR. DIANA ABBANI
(SCIENCE COMMUNICATION COORDINATOR)

RASHOF SALIH
(COORDINATOR FOR RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT)

MIRIAM HANSES
(STUDENT ASSISTANT)

Imagining Futures: Dealing with Disparities

MECAM's guiding theme "Imagining Futures: Dealing with Disparities" addresses the complex processes of (re)negotiating societal experiences into ideas for the future ("imagining futures") in the context of different forms and scales of disparity and unequal conditions ("dealing with disparities"). It explores the link between multidimensional disparities and the possibilities of constructing and negotiating future-oriented ideas and models.

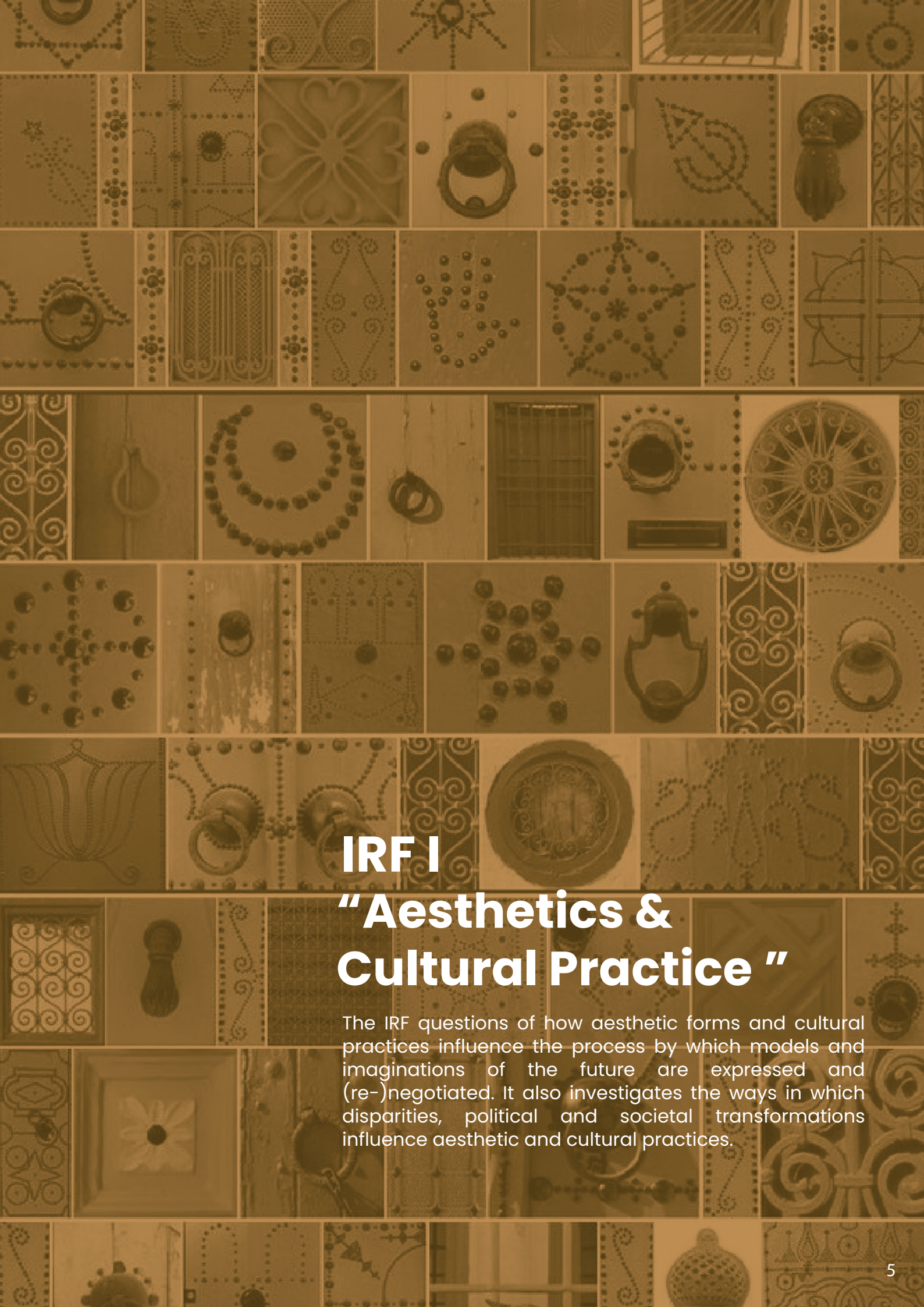
This guiding theme of MECAM is defined more specifically through two key research questions:

- *How do multidimensional disparities in Maghreb societies, often rooted in colonial rule and anticolonial resistance, shape different social spheres and life sectors?*
- *What are the effects of these specific disparities on the scope of coexisting and competing models of the future within and outside the Maghreb?*

MECAM's research programme is divided into five thematic clusters: "Aesthetics & Cultural Practices," "Inequality & Mobility," "Memory & Justice," "Resources & Sustainability," and "Identities & Beliefs." The five thematic clusters translate into five Interdisciplinary Research Fields (IRFs).

THEMATIC CLUSTERS





IRFI “Aesthetics & Cultural Practice”

The IRF questions of 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.

Cluster Principal Investigators:

Prof. Olaf Müller

*(Professor, French and Italian Literature
and Culture, Philipps-Universität Marburg
/ Germany)*

Prof. Fiederike Pannewick

*(Professor, Arabic Literature and Culture,
Philipps-Universität Marburg / Germany)*

Prof. Malte Hagener

*(Professor, French and Italian Literature
and Culture, Philipps-Universität Marburg
/ Germany)*

Prof. Samia Kassab-Charfi

*(Professor, French and Francophone
Literatures, Université de Tunis / Tunisia)*

Prof. Mohamed Ben Hamouda

*(Department of Music and Department
of Arts and Crafts, Université de Sfax / Tunisia)*

Prof. Emna Beltaief

*(Professor of French language and literature,
Université de Tunis / Tunisia)*

Georges Khalil

(Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin / Germany)

Dr. Christian Junge

(Marburg University, Marburg)

IRF II

“Inequality & Mobility”

The IRF addresses 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.

Cluster Principal Investigators:

Dr. Sonja Ganseforth

(Research Associate, Economic Geography and Labour Market Research, Universität Leipzig / Germany)

Prof. Ali Bennasr

(Professor, Geography, Université de Sfax / Tunisia)

Prof. Mourad Ben Jelloul

(Professor, Geography, Université de Tunis / Tunisia)

Prof. Ahmed Khouaja

(Professor, Historical and cultural sociology, Université de Tunis / Tunisia)

Prof. Mohamed Ali Benzina

(Professor, Demography, Université de Tunis / Tunisia)

IRF III "Memory & Justice"

The IRF discuss legacies of the past, including their legal, political and cultural perceptions and frames in relation of the present and to models and (re-) negotiations of the future. Research will shed 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.

Cluster Principal Investigators:

Prof. Susanne Buckley-Zistel

*(Professor, Peace and Conflict Studies,
Philipps-Universität Marburg / Germany)*

Prof. Anika Oettler

*(Professor, Sociology, Philipps-Universität
Marburg / Germany)*

Prof. Thorsten Bonacker

*(Professor, Peace and Conflict Studies,
Philipps-Universität Marburg / Germany)*

Prof. Khaled Kchir

*(Professor, History, Université
de Tunis / Tunisia)*

Prof. Yasmina Ghodbane

*(Professor, Philosophy,
Université de Tunis / Tunisia)*

Prof. Nessim Zenaïen

*(Professor, Postcolonial/Colonial Studies
of the Maghreb, Philipps-Universität
Marburg / Germany)*

IRF IV

“Resources & Sustainability”

The IRF 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 explicitly addressed here as these models generate particular forms of disparities and thus also interesting visions of the future.

Cluster Principal Investigators:

Prof. Rachid Ouaissa

(Professor, Middle East Politics, Center for Near and Middle East Studies (CNMS), Philipps-Universität Marburg / Germany)

Prof. Benedikt Stcuhtey

(Professor, Modern History, History and Cultural Studies, Philipps-Universität Marburg / Germany)

Prof. Eckart Conze

(Professor, Modern and Contemporary History, History and Cultural Studies, Philipps-Universität Marburg / Germany)

Prof. Nejiba Chkir Ben Jemaa

(Professor, Geography and Environment / Université de Sfax / Tunisia)

Prof. Anissa Ben Hassine

(Professor of Management, ESSECT – Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Economiques et Commerciales, Université de Tunis / Tunisia)

Dr. Héra Belkhiria

(Lecturer, Electrical Engineering, National Engineering School of Tunis (ENSIT), Université de Tunis / Tunisia)

Prof. Lamia Rouached

(Associate Professor, Quantitative Methods and Economics, Institut supérieur de gestion de Tunis, Université de Tunis / Tunisia)

Prof. Adel Karaa

(Professor in the Department of Quantitative Methods and Economics and Director of the Doctoral School at the University of Tunis – ISG Tunis / Tunisia)

Dr. Katharina Nicolai

(Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg/ Institut für Politische Wissenschaft / Germany)

ميكام

مركز ميريان
للدراسات المتقدمة
في المنطقة المغاربية



MECAM

Merian Centre
For Advanced Studies
In The Maghreb

IRF V

“Identities & Beliefs”

The IRF 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 therefore on topics such as reformational Arab-Muslim thought, the future manifestation of political Islam in the Maghreb, and the entanglements of Islamic history and its interaction with modernity.

Cluster Principal Investigators:

Dr. André Bank

*(Senior Research Fellow, Institute
for Middle East Studies, German Institute
for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) / Germany)*

Prof. Zoubir Arous

*(Professor, Sociology, University
d'Alger II / Algeria)*

Prof. Fadma Aït Mous

*(Professor, Sociology, Aïn Chock Faculty of Letters
and the Humanities, Hassan II Université de
Casablanca / Morocco)*

Dr. Sihem Chérif

*(Lecturer, Sociology, University
d'Alger II / Algeria)*

Dr. Anis Nouaïri

*(Maître de conférences en langue,
littérature et civilisation françaises
/ Université de Tunis /Tunisie)*

Dr. Jihen Souki

*(Maître-assistante en langue,
littérature et civilisation françaises
/ Université de Sousse /Tunisie)*



Individual Fellowships 2025/2026

Dr. Valentina Schiattarella

Researcher, Naples

Valentina Schiattarella is a linguist focused on describing and documenting minority languages, particularly those in the Berber/Amazigh family. She earned her PhD at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Paris) in 2015, with a dissertation on Siwi Berber. Since 2016, she has conducted postdoctoral research and teaching activities in Italy (University of Naples "L'Orientale"), Germany (Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, University of Hamburg) and France (ILARA, Paris), working on both Siwi and other Amazigh languages of Libya. Her research combines detailed linguistic analysis based on fieldwork data. She has collected an extensive corpus on anthropologically relevant cultural practices and oral traditions, such as recipes, folktales, short poems, riddles, and traditional songs, which have yielded crucial linguistic, historical, and cultural insights into the speech community. She authored *Berber Texts from Siwa* (Köppe, 2017) and is currently finalizing a comprehensive grammar of the Siwi language.



IRF I : Aesthetics & Cultural Practice

Cultural Practices and their Linguistic Representation: Documenting Food and Music in Tunisian and Libyan Amazigh Communities

The research project adopts an interdisciplinary approach combining linguistics and anthropology. It examines the relationship between language and cultural practice. Its main objective is to collect lexical material related to two key semantic domains, food and music, in selected Libyan and Tunisian Amazigh communities, focusing on their semantic denotations and

shifts (e.g., linguistic terms for tools and instruments, names of recipes, lyrics and musical genres, associated ceremonies and songs...). These domains were selected due to their particular importance in Amazigh culture, as documented in numerous historical and anthropological accounts. Moreover, both food and music practices are often adopted and adapted by different communities, making them especially valuable for studying cultural retention and innovation. Indeed, a second, long-term objective, on which this fellowship lays the foundation, is to analyze the data comparatively. Examining semantic shifts in identical terms may help identify areas of intense contact, whether between traditionally separate linguistic groups within the same language family or between languages not previously considered to be in contact. Time spent on this project will also be devoted to considering how best to present this material, with attention to ethical considerations and access policies related to their dissemination, especially via social media, and archiving. When feasible, priority will be given to local repositories.

Contact : vale.schiattarella@gmail.com

Dr. Imene Gannouni khemiri

Dr. Assistant Professor, Faculty of Letters, Arts and Humanities, Manouba

Imene Gannouni Khemiri is an Assistant Professor in the English Department at the Faculty of Letters, Arts and Humanities, University of Manouba, Tunisia. She holds a Master's degree and a Phd in cultural studies from the University of Manouba. Her doctoral research focused on the representation of Tunis in British travel writing (1815-1910). Her research interests include travel writing, migration studies, media studies and visual culture. She is the author of "Pretty as a Picture: Tunisian Landscape in the Travel Narratives of Temple (1835), Playfair (1877), and Ashbee and Graham (1887)" (2021). As a participant in the 'Migrant in Transit' program for emerging migration scholars in Tunisia, she has recently developed a strong interest in migration studies.



IRF II : Inequality & Mobility

The Politics of Migration: Framing Sub-Saharan Migrants in Tunisian Online Media

This project explores the mobility-inequality nexus through an analysis of the mediatization and politicization of the contested sub-Saharan migration and the issue of 'irregular' migration in Tunisia. The study investigates the coverage of sub-Saharan migrants in English-speaking Tunisian online media outlets between January and December 2025. It also considers how these media narratives interact with broader geopolitical dynamics, including the externalization of EU borders and the implementation of IOM-led 'voluntary return' programs. By linking media discourse to larger structures of mobility control, the project addresses how media narratives frame migration governance, border security, and humanitarian concerns and how they contribute to legitimizing -or contesting- unequal access to mobility.

Contact : imene.gannouni@flah.uma.tn

Dr. Omotolani Ebenezer Ekpo

Federal University Wukari, Nigeria

Omotolani Ekpo is an innovative ethnomusicologist, composer, and cultural sustainability advocate with a deep passion for preserving endangered African musical traditions. A native of Nigeria, she has conducted groundbreaking research on the musical practices of the Jukun people of Nigeria, focusing on how indigenous music communicates social equity, environmental stewardship, public health messages, sustains cultural identity, and fosters peace building. She is the lead author of "Documenting distinctive features of 'Keku' dance ensemble of the Jukun nation of the sub-Saharan Africa" and has presented her works at leading academic forums, including the ICTMD world conferences and Symposiums.ASAUK Conference,as well as the Pandemic Sciences Institutes Conference at the Oxford University UK among others. She is an active member of interdisciplinary research teams and professional bodies. Her creative outputs, ranging from musical compositions to visual storytelling, serve as tools for advocacy, education, and empowerment, especially among underrepresented communities.



IRF II: Inequality & Mobility

Sonic Bridges: Music Machinery for Social Mobility and Cultural Sustainability of Marginalized Ethnic Communities

This study contextualizes the functionality of music as both a cultural archive and a medium for social transformation among marginalized ethnic groups in Africa, with its case study from Nigeria and Tunisia. Drawing from existing facts about various marginalization challenges faced by indigenous African traditions, such as political neglect, and globalization, which significantly threaten its historical role in storytelling, identity reinforcement, and community cohesion. More relevant to this study are the Western musical influences and religious shifts that have further erode the traditional soundscape of African minority ethnic groups, leaving them underrepresented in academic discourse and global cultural platforms. This study explores the integration of Jukun and similar North African musical traditions like Amazigh and Gnawa into the global soundscape, analyzing cultural hybridization, political dynamics, and aesthetic debates

that shapes their evolution. While interdisciplinary studies may have brushed over the disparities of these groups despite their contribution to their countries' rich cultural mosaic, this study contributes to the global debate by examining how these indigenous musics function as a cultural mechanism for resilience, social justice, and spiritual expression. It will explore how these musical traditions (both in their indigenous and hybridized popular forms) facilitate mobility and address inequalities in cultural representation, gender roles, and resource sustainability while preserving the people's identity in the global landscape. This study adopts an interdisciplinary ethnomusicological approach, combining ethnographic fieldwork, musical analysis, and participatory action research to explore the role of indigenous music in cultural identity, politics, and sustainability. Primary data will be gathered through participant observation, interviews, oral histories, and recordings of indigenous musical performances in Nigeria and Tunisia. Secondary sources, including MECAM literature, will provide comparative insights into cultural hybridity, knowledge production, and digital documentation. Thematic and discourse analysis of this study will examine song lyrics, oral narratives, and performance contexts.

Contact : omotolaeben@gmail.com

Dr. Saniya Taher

Postdoctoral Fellow (Madness, Media, Milieus. Reconfiguring the Humanities in Postwar Europe (VolkswagenStiftung/ Bauhaus-University Weimar) /2025: Europe in the Middle East, Middle East in Europe (EUME) at the Forum Transregionale Studien/ Germany)

Saniya Taher received her PhD in Fall 2024 from the Department of Comparative Literature with a Designated Emphasis in Critical Theory at the University of California, Berkeley. Her work situates Fanon as part of the archives of Middle East and North Africa, forging a South-South intervention in contending with the question of coloniality and anti-colonialism in its particular national specificity as well as global dimension. She holds an affiliation with the research project Madness, Media, Milieus. Reconfiguring the Humanities in Postwar Europe, funded by the Freigeist Fellowship of the VolkswagenStiftung, at Bauhaus-University Weimar. Previously,

in Spring/Summer 2025, she was an affiliated post-doctoral fellow at the research program Europe in the Middle East, Middle East in Europe (EUME) in Berlin, Germany.



IRF II: Memory & Justice

Filiation and Alterity: On Frantz Fanon and Essedik Jeddi

The research project “Filiation and Alterity: On Frantz Fanon and Essedik Jeddi” stages an encounter between Martinican-Algerian psychiatrist, intellectual, and revolutionary Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) and trailblazing contemporary Tunisian psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and filmmaker Essedik Jeddi (1940). This project, which borrows the title of Jeddi’s own monograph *Filiation et Alterite* (2011), contributes to a critical engagement with Jeddi’s pioneering psychiatric, psychoanalytic, and psychotherapeutic work by tracing his inheritance, transformation, and rupture with Fanon’s sociogenic approach within the context of postcolonial Tunisia. Centering the underthought dimension of Fanon’s presence and work in Tunisia from 1956-1961, this project elaborates its imprint and afterlife on the formation of the Tunisian psychiatric and psychoanalytic field through Jeddi’s work. The project traces the ways in which Jeddi’s work reckons with the condition of raciality and coloniality as an ontological, sociohistorical, and epistemic structure that in itself inflects the hermeneutics of illness as well as cure. In turning to Jeddi’s work and its filiation and alterity with Fanon’s, the project thus seeks to analyze and elaborate how they understand the work of culture as an integral site of critical elucidation and imaginative transformation that holds the capacity to reshape individual and collective life in light of the political and economic crisis of the postcolonial moment.

Contact : staher@berkeley.edu

Dr. Yazid Benhadda

Dr, University of Exeter (UK) and University of Marburg / Germany

Yazid Benhadda holds a PhD in Politics and International Relations from the University of Exeter (UK). His research intersects critical security studies, colonial migration history, and North African studies. During his time in Exeter, he has also worked as a postgraduate teaching associate at the same university. He held a visiting research fellowship at the University of Marburg as part of the CRC138 "Dynamics of Security". His work appeared in International Political Sociology and Migration Studies.



IRF III : Memory & Justice

A colonial genealogy of the passport/visa regime in the Maghreb through the case of Morocco (1915–1956)

Passports are today a normalised document that individuals in Western societies rarely question. The passport is the most determining document that shapes and limits our rights to international mobility as humans. This document rose as the central document of the modern global mobility regime. Passports have been studied in the European and Western contexts. However, its imposition in the rest of the world through the colonial enterprise has rarely been studied. This is even more the case for the Maghreb where no study has been realised on the passport. Due to the highly racialised nature of passport/visa regimes, the passport and the mobility, or rather immobility, implications the document materialises are most felt in these (post)colonised societies, including the Maghreb. Thereby, passports occupy a central place in how many in (post)colonised societies imagine and perceive international mobility. Studying the passport in (post)colonial settings becomes a crucial endeavour in order to understand global (im)mobilities. In this context, an important part of studying this document is understanding its imposition through the colonial endeavour. This research proposes to look into the specific case of the Moroccan Sharifian passport. This document was put in place by the French authorities in

Morocco in 1931 and remained crucial throughout the colonial period in Morocco which ended in 1956. In this research, I will explore along the following questions: How could we grasp the stakes of (im)mobility and identification in a colonial situation through this one document? how did the categories of race, gender, and class shape this document? What could this tell us about the (post)colonial present passport/visa regimes? In exploring these questions, I will use archival material collected in the Diplomatic archives in Nantes, the Historical Services of the Defence Ministry, the French National Archives, and the Spanish Archivo General de la Administracion, among other sites.

Contact : yb267@exeter.ac.uk

Dr. Souhir Zekri

Assistant Professor of English Literature, Higher Institute of Digital Engineering of Tunis, University of Tunis / Tunisia

Souhir Zekri holds a PhD in English Studies from the University of Strathclyde (Glasgow, Scotland) and currently teaches at the Higher Institute of Digital Engineering of Tunis (University of Tunis). Her main research areas include life writing theory, motherhood and gender studies, the Italian Diaspora in Scotland, and spatial theory. She also writes creatively and focuses on the testimonial form in relation to the topic of the maternal. Her PhD dissertation was published as *Mapping Metabiographical Heartlands in Marina Warner's Fiction* in 2019 and her forthcoming book *Metaphors of Motherhood in Marina Warner's Fiction* will be published by Routledge in 2026.



IRF IV : Resources & Sustainability

“Machtat” of Kerkenah: An Empowering motherly continuum and cultural heritage

This project was inspired by “Echoes of Machtat,” a Tunisian documentary directed and produced by Maram Neiri who won the first prize at the 10th edition of Ciné Par’Court. The word “Machtat” or “mata” literally means “hair comb” in Arabic and is defined by André Louis, a French IBLA Père Blanc and historian/ethnographer of the Kerkennah islands, as “a hairdresser” and/or “matron”,

most importantly of an imposing social position and authority. They are both respected and feared. Associated with the most important feminine rites of passage; that is marriage and birth-giving (as midwives), these women perform many tasks and display, in Louis’ words, “multiple talents” (137). Among such tasks, one can cite dressing and ornamenting the bride (hairdo, henna, traditional dress, jewelry, etc.), supervising parties, music and singing during the various stages of wedding parties.

The first socio-cultural implication of the “Machta” in this context is the preservation and the continuous building and rebuilding of the local feminine community and its folklore, both oral and concrete. The second one is its gender empowering potential and its positive repercussions on regional and cultural inequalities. Most interestingly, these women exist in various countries, cities and regions of the Maghreb, each possessing their own name or title and their specific songs, whether they are in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco or Libya. They play equally important roles in other rites of passage such as circumcision and death by crying during funerals. A comparative study of the Machta’s roles and functions in relation to various Sahel regions (and eventually other Maghreb countries) would benefit the cultural, ethnographic and folkloric history of Kerkennah in particular, and Tunisia more generally. Neiri’s documentary will be my starting point, as my research will focus on various visual, oral and written references.

Contact : suezek80@gmail.com

Dr. Justin Skye Malachowski

Postdoctoral Scholar. Institute for Sociology and Cultural Organization,
Leuphana University

Justin Malachowski is a postdoctoral scholar at the Institute for Sociology and Cultural Organization at Leuphana University. He holds a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from the University of California, Davis. His research explores themes of art, media, urbanism, development, and family life. Malachowski has conducted over a decade of long-term ethnographic research in Tunisia, focusing on the transformation of contemporary art in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution. His current work examines cultural development in North Africa and the circulation of Global South art discourses in Europe. In addition to his academic work, Malachowski is an artist and curator. His recent publications include "Staging Arts in the Historic City: Development Funding, Social Media Images, and Tunisia's Contemporary Public Art Scene" (Journal of City and Society, 2022), and "My Cigarette Wife and Other Queer Tales of Kinship from Tunisia's Contemporary Public Art Scene" (Journal of Contemporary Ethnography).



IRF V : Identities & Beliefs

Between the Aesthetics of Democratization and the Appearance of Development: Contemporary Public Arts in Tunisia After the Revolution

As part of the MECAM Fellowship "Imagining Futures: Dealing with Disparity," Justin Malachowski will develop a book manuscript based on four years of ethnographic research on Tunisia's contemporary public art scene. The project explores how public art has emerged as a central site for imagining and enacting alternative futures in the wake of Tunisia's 2011 revolution. It traces the rapid expansion of the arts sector within a broader transformation of civil society, shaped by political liberalization, international development agendas, and shifting legal frameworks. The book examines how public art practices engage with long-standing debates around national identity, historical memory, and cultural heritage, while also responding to new challenges posed by foreign funding, political oversight, and economic precarity. Particular attention is given to how artists and cultural practitioners negotiate the competing demands of international donors, local communities, and the state. Public art, in this context, becomes both a mode of aesthetic experimentation and a field of political contestation. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted over a decade, the manuscript analyzes how artistic initiatives articulate visions of social transformation rooted in local contexts, yet deeply entangled with global discourses on development, participation, and decoloniality. It critically engages with how these dynamics have shaped both the form and content of contemporary art in Tunisia, and how they reflect broader tensions between sovereignty, cultural autonomy, and transnational influence. By situating Tunisia's public art scene within regional and global frameworks, the book contributes to interdisciplinary debates in anthropology, art history, cultural studies, and development studies. It offers a grounded analysis of how art mediates questions of futurity, identity, and governance in post-revolutionary contexts, and aims to provide new insights into the cultural politics of the Global South.

Contact : justin.malachowski@leuphana.de



Long-term Fellowships 2023/2026

Dr. Massensen Cherbi

Université Le Havre / France

Massensen Cherbi holds a doctorate in law. In December 2019 he defended a thesis at the Université Paris II Panthéon-Assas on the “limits of Algerian constitutionalism” within the

constitutional law of March 6, 2016. He moved to Algiers in January 2019 for his research, which allowed him to experience the first year of the “Hirak” protest movement **in situ** and incorporate initial developments into his thesis. He currently works on both the organization of public authorities, through themes such as citizenship, presidentialism or the constitutional role of the army, and fundamental rights and freedoms, through themes such as state religion, gender

equality, or linguistic pluralism. He also works on Algerian constitutional history, from the demands of the Algerian nationalist movement to the more recent Hirak, and more generally on comparative law, particularly with constitutions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.



IRF III: Memory & Justice

Penser l’avenir du Hirak. Entre transition démocratique et justice transitionnelle : imaginer une Algérie plurielle et respectueuse du rule of law

Imagining a plural Algeria that respects the rule of law is a research project that is part of an in-depth study of the Hirak—a peaceful protest movement experienced throughout the country between 2019 and 2021—through which it explores the themes of democratic transition and transitional justice. In order to do this, we first examine the institutional deadlocks that Algeria experienced in 2019, through a study of the constitutional provisions then in force, and their interpretation by the authorities; the crackdown on the opposition, through an analysis of the legislation that was mobilized and its interpretation by the judges; before examining the constitutional revision of 2020, through a study of the preliminary drafting and the resulting final version. This first analysis then allows us to review the various alternatives in support of a democratic transition and transitional justice, proposed by the opposition and civil society, to try to understand why they diverge, while confronting them with comparative law, through the study of legal mechanisms allowing the free expression of pluralism in a substantial **Rechtsstaat**.

Contact: massensen.cherbi@sciencespo.fr

Dr. Cyrine Kortas

University of Gabes / Tunisia

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 research interests include Lawrentian studies, comparative literature, feminist and gender studies. Recently, she has developed an interest for media studies as coordinator of the MA programme English for media studies and journalism. 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.*



IRF I: Aesthetics & Cultural Practice

The Politics and Poetics of the New Man's Body Image in the Modernist Novel: A Sufi Comparative Study of D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, Mohamed Khaldi's *Awtad*, and Abdallah Laroui's *Awraq*

Through a uniquely spiritual style that stems from the Maghreb region, both Mouhamed Khaldi and Abdallah Laroui write about the estranged modern Maghrebi man who is in constant search for his own identity in *Awtad* and *Awraq*, respectively, a concern shared with the English author D. H. Lawrence in his breakthrough novel *Women in Love*. In a comparative study interested in exploring the development of male characters within a Sufi tradition, the following project aspires to trace the role of mysticism, as a human endeavour to grasp and understand the essence of reality by shaping and reshaping the authors' understanding of the New Man in the selected novels.

Through a painful journey of self-discovery, the male characters in the selected narratives reconnect with their bodies by throwing off the social glaze, revelling instead in what Lawrence coins as "our imperative needs". Hence, the purpose of this study is: To explore the diverse mystical meanings related to the experiences of pain and pleasure materialised in the male characters' physical love stories that are enlivened by a Sufi tradition and infer the suggestions embedded in the authors' imagery of the erotic. To discuss and examine the role of the body as a paradigm of meaning, both political and cultural. To reach these objectives, the project is guided by the following research questions:

Can Sufism be considered a theory of analysis? What distinguishes Maghrebi Sufi tradition?

- What elements of Sufism can be traced in the selected novels in relation to the body?
- What is the New Man modern novel? What is the aesthetics of such a novel? How did the English novel influence the Maghrebi conceptualization of the New Man Fiction?
- What are the poetics and politics of the masculine body in the modern novel in general and in the Maghrebi one in particular?
- Contact: Kortascyrine@gmail.com

Dr. Max Ajl

(Department of Conflict and Development Studies, Ghent University, Belgium; Observatory for Food Sovereignty and the Environment, Tunis/Tunisia)

Max Ajl is a Senior Fellow at in the Department of Conflict and Development Studies at Ghent University and a researcher with the Tunisian Observatory for Food Sovereignty and the Environment. He is an editor at Agrarian South and Journal of Labor and Society, and has written for Agrarian South, the Journal of Peasant Studies, Globalizations, Review of African Political Economy, Middle East Report, and many other scholarly and popular journals, including the Guardian's Comment is Free, Boston Review, and Monthly Review. He researches climate politics, Tunisian national liberation, agrarian politics in the Arab region, and ecological planning, and Arab-North African intellectual history. He is the author of a recent book, *A People's Green New Deal*.



IRF IV: Resources & Sustainability

Development Alternatives from North Africa: Big Plans and Small Farms in the Search for Sustainability

Since the 2010–2011 Arab uprisings, rural poverty, agriculture, food import dependence, and climate change began to feature more prominently in Middle East–North African (MENA) development agendas. *Development Alternatives from North Africa: Big Plans and Small Farms in the Search for Sustainability* focuses on intellectual “paths not taken” in smallholder development. It offers an intellectual history of development practitioners, agronomists, and economists’ rupture with the industrialization/modernization paradigm in agriculture since the 1960s. These Tunisian thinkers and practitioners, in dialogue with Egyptian economists and development experts, analyzed the problems of industrialization of agriculture and the causes of underdevelopment, rethought agriculture’s role in ecologically-sound development, fused their analyses of smallholder agriculture with the “dependency school” of economics, and produced local models for self-reliant development focused on smallholder farms. This intellectual history elaborates how North African researchers analyzed the mistakes of the past, produced their novel planning framework, and examines its intellectual content. It uses archives, oral histories, and technical literature to address these questions and places them in the context of international circuits of agronomic and development-related intellectual production.

Contact: Max.ajl@gmail.com



IRF I : Aesthetics & Cultural Practice



IRF II : Inequality & Mobility



IRF III: Memory & Justice



IRF IV: Resources & Sustainability



IRF V : Identities & Beliefs



Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb (MECAM)

📍 27, rue Florian, Borj Zouara
(Bab Saadoun) Tunis, Tunisia

🌐 www.mecam.tn

✉ mecam-office@uni-marburg.de



**Universität
Marburg**



**UNIVERSITÄT
LEIPZIG**



GIGA
German Institute of Global and Area Studies
Leibniz-Institut für Globale und Regionale Studien

**Forum
Transregionale
Studien**

With funding from the:



**Federal Ministry
of Research, Technology
and Space**

Partner institutions

Forum
Transregionale
Studien



Universität
Marburg



UNIVERSITÄT
LEIPZIG

With funding from the:

G I G A

German  Institute of Global and Area Studies
Leibniz-Institut für Globale und Regionale Studien



Federal Ministry
of Research, Technology
and Space



**Universität
Marburg**



UNIVERSITÄT
LEIPZIG



G I G A
German Institute of Global and Area Studies
Leibniz-Institut für Globale und Regionale Studien

**Forum
Transregionale
Studien**

With funding from the:



Federal Ministry
of Research, Technology
and Space