ميكام
مركز ميريان
للدراسات المتقدمة
في المنطقة المغاربية

MECAM
Merian Centre
For Advanced Studies
In The Maghreb

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Individual Residential Fellowships (9/2026 - 4/2027) for Postdoctoral and Advanced Scholars

"Imagining Futures: Dealing with Disparity"

Deadline 02.03.2026; 12.30h CEST (afternoon).

The Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb (MECAM) invites applications for **eight residential fellowships for postdoctoral and advanced researchers in the humanities and social sciences for the period from September 2026 to April 2027.** 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.

Universität Marburg
UNIVERSITÉ DE TUNIS جامعة تونس
UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG
Université de Sfax TUNISIE
Forum Transregionale Studien
GIGA

With funding from the:
Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: MECAM- Fellowships 2026-2027

With this call for applications, **MECAM invites postdoc and advanced scholars in the social sciences and humanities to apply for long-term 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 in the humanities and social sciences on the processes and issues that divide and connect the Maghreb, the Middle East and Europe historically and in our time – e.g., beliefs, cultural practices, distribution of resources, migration, rule of law, socio-economic conflicts, or (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.
- This call for applications is open to researchers of all ages and genders from all countries, including Tunisia.
- Independent scholars and researchers without a current institutional affiliation are eligible to apply
- Please note that current PhD candidates (doctoral students) are not eligible to apply. The call is open to postdoctoral and advanced researchers only.

OUR OFFER

FELLOWSHIP

Six post-doctoral and two 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 2026 to 30 April 2027. During the period of their residency, Fellows of MECAM will have the opportunities to work on their self-chosen individual research projects and for exchange in and outside MECAM, with their co-fellows, with colleagues from Tunisia, and those from MECAM's networks. Fellows are expected to participate in on-site seminars and colloquia, to work regularly at MECAM offices. They will be invited to take responsibility in shaping formats that support collaborative work and are expected to participate in the academic life of MECAM. While developing their own research, fellows present their research to their co-fellows and may explore individual or collective forms of cooperation with colleagues from Tunisian Universities. 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 Fellowships are residency fellowships at MECAM in in Tunis. As field work outside Tunis will only be possible in exceptional cases, research projects must already be well advanced and not rely on extensive field research during the residency.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. A monthly stipend will be awarded for the duration of the fellowship according to the "no gain/no loss" principle.

NETWORK

Fellows will become part of the MECAM network, which will is built up by subsequent groups of fellows, 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 are the annual Study Day in early-December and the Event Week ("MECAM Spectrum") in mid-April, which are 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 Tunis, 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 at its premises, which they are expected to use primarily. 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 in **English or French** via the secure online application platform of the Forum Transregionale Studien **by 2 March 2026, 12.30h CEST.**:

Apply here: *https://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 data management coordinator, Rashof Salih: *sara@trafo-berlin.de*

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

- **Curriculum vitae including publications** (2-3 pages),
- **Research proposal**: Short abstract of your project (max. 1000 words),
- One recent **writing sample**: journal article (published or forthcoming), book or thesis chapter

In addition, during the application process you will be asked to write:

- 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,
- **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).

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** is a German University with around 25,000 students, and a research focus on 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,** founded in 1960, with some 20,000 students today, is one of the largest universities in Tunisia, with a wide-ranging research and teaching portfolio with an outstanding reputation for research excellence across the region.
- **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)** 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,** is a research organization 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, for example within the framework of Europe in the Middle East – The Middle East in Europe (EUME), one of the research programs at the Forum.
- **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 Research, Technology and Space 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

Individual MECAM-Fellowships up to 8 months 2026-2027

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Eligibility

1. Who is eligible for the long-term MECAM Fellowships?

The Fellowships are aimed at researchers from any country, at all stages of their academic career (postdocs or advanced researchers), and from any discipline of the Humanities or Social Sciences. Scholars without a current institutional affiliation are equally welcome to apply.

2. What exactly does it mean to be a "Postdoc" or an "advanced researcher"?

Postdocs, in general, completed their PhD no more than four years ago. Advanced researchers completed their PhD at least 5 years ago. Please note that current doctoral students (PhD candidates) are not eligible to apply.

3. What language skills are required for a MECAM Fellowship?

MECAM's working languages are English, French, and Arabic. Applicants should be able to communicate in at least two of these languages. Applications should be submitted in English or French.

4. Do I have to be associated with one of MECAM's partner institutions to apply?

No, an association with MECAM's partner institutions is not a precondition for application.

Application

1. Can I submit my application by e-mail?

Applications sent by e-mail will not be considered. Instead, we ask all applicants to submit their application via the secure online application platform of the Forum Transregionale Studien: https://application.trafo-berlin.de/.

2. Do I need to hand in samples of my scholarly work or recommendation letters along with my application?

It is necessary to send us at least one sample of your academic work. Letters of recommendation can be waived. However, in the application platform you will be asked to provide two references from academics who know your work.

3. Is the list of bibliographic references included in the page count of the project outline (1000 words)?

Yes. A short bibliography should be part of your project outline.

4. Are applicants expected to have published already?

Yes. You are expected to have published academic articles or books prior to your application.

5. When will I find out whether my application was successful?

All applicants will be informed in writing about the result of their application by the MECAM Coordination

Office. The application, evaluation, and invitation process will take about five months.

6. What happens if my application is successful?

Successful applicants will be informed by the coordination office and instructed on all further steps. This includes all further agreements regarding the prospective Fellowship.

Fellowship Grants

1. What are the financial conditions of the Fellowship?

MECAM concludes an individual agreement with each Fellow prior to his or her arrival, in which the specific conditions of the stay are mutually agreed upon. The Fellowship grant is the financial agreement following the principle “no gain, no loss”. It enables the invited Fellows to pursue her or his project during the Fellowship and to engage in collective activities at MECAM without loss of income.

2. What allowances can be paid to the MECAM Fellow in addition to the stipend?

In addition to the stipend, MECAM provides reimbursements and allowances under certain conditions.

- Reimbursements include travel expenses from the fellow’s place of residence to Tunis and the return journey (e.g. flight in economy class, train in 2nd class). Original receipts and boarding passes must be provided. Reimbursable costs also include relocation expenses, such as fees for extra luggage and visa fees, as well as research-related expenses.
- Allowances are paid exclusively to contribute to rental and accommodation costs in Tunis.

Further details on eligible expenses and reimbursement procedures will be shared in detail with successful applicants by the MECAM Coordination Office.

3. Does the MECAM Fellowship involve compulsory social insurance?

The MECAM-Fellowship does not establish an employment relationship. For this reason, MECAM does not make any contributions to pension and unemployment insurance.

4. Is the MECAM Fellowship tax free?

The stipend is tax-free in Germany. It is up to the Fellows to clarify whether this tax exemption is also recognized in their home country.

5. Is the release of the Fellows from other obligations at their home institution a precondition for MECAM's Fellowships?

The precondition for a MECAM Fellowship is the complete or partial release of the Fellow from other obligations at their home universities or other institutions. Which functions can be carried out further, in the sense of a partial release, is negotiated individually.

Research stay

1. How is MECAM’s Fellowship structured?

The MECAM Fellowship runs for eight months and is designed as a residential Fellowship at MECAM in Tunis/Tunisia. Each Fellow relates to at least one Interdisciplinary Research Field (IRF). The primary objective of all Fellowships is to create a high-quality and flexible environment for exchange and debate between researchers from different countries, disciplines, and at different stages of their academic careers. Therefore, virtual and personal forms of cooperation on topic- specific research questions are central to individual research projects and beyond.

2. What is expected from the MECAM Fellows?

Expectations for each Fellow are contractually defined in the document "Terms & Conditions", which is signed

with the acceptance of the Fellowship. These include, among others, to take up residence in Tunis; to work on the Fellow's individual research project and to participate regularly in MECAMs' activities and seminars she/he is associated with, including:

- weekly in-person colloquia with lectures and presentations of individual research projects in presence of other fellows and in close individual coordination with a Tunisian university;
- produce a MECAM PAPER (https://mecam.tn/mecam-papers/);
- an initial and/or concluding in-person workshop within the framework of MECAM's fellow seminar ("MECAM Spectrum") with the involvement of MECAM's Principal Investigators working on IRFs and/or external guests and/or scientists;

3. What are the residential obligations during my MECAM fellowship?

The MECAM Fellowship is designed as a residential Fellowship in Tunis, with regular presence at the MECAM site. For absences of four to six days, the Fellow is expected to inform the MECAM coordination office in advance. Longer absences (more than seven days) should be negotiated with

one of the directors of MECAM and would require the director's approval in order to avoid a reduction of the Fellowship. MECAM Fellows are not entitled to a full monthly grant instalment if they are absent for more than seven days at a time or for a total of more than 14 days. MECAM reserves the right to make corresponding reductions in the payment of the Fellowship. Participation in academic conferences, research trips and visits to archives or libraries which are essential for the implementation of the project are not considered as absences if they do not last longer than one week (uninterrupted) or 14 days in total (over the duration of the scholarship).

4. May I shorten or extend my Fellowship?

No, in principle the MECAM Fellowship can neither be shortened nor extended. At the beginning of the research stay in Tunis the Fellow is only entitled to her/his first full stipend if they arrive/start by the third working day of the first Fellowship month. Fellows who arrive after this date are not entitled to a full payment in that month. In the last Fellowship month, the Fellow is expected to be present at least until the 27th of the month. Fellows who leave Tunis before this date are not entitled to a full stipend payment of their Fellowship for that month.

5. Can you help me find accommodation during my Fellowship period?

The search for accommodation should be organised by the Fellow, but support by MECAM's Coordination Office is offered.

6. I would like to come to Tunis with my family. Do you take care of the organisation of childcare?

Childcare should be organised by the Fellow, but support by MECAM's Coordination Office can be granted.