

MECAM Newsletter (January – May 2026)

Imagining Futures – Dealing with Disparity

From the Team

Dear MECAM Community,

The first months of 2026 have been marked by vibrant academic exchange and collaboration across Tunisia and beyond. This spring, MECAM brought together fellows, researchers, and partners through its annual Event Week in Tunis and the Traveling Academy in Gabès. MECAM created spaces for interdisciplinary conversations on culture, society, politics, and memory in the Maghreb.

Throughout the semester, our fellows continued to contribute to MECAM's academic programme through conferences, study days, publications, and public engagement activities. Their work reflects the diversity of perspectives and approaches that shape research within our community. We are deeply grateful to our fellows, partners, and colleagues whose commitment and support make these activities possible. As we celebrate these milestones, we are also thrilled to welcome our new Academic Coordinator Dr. Raoul Cyril Humpert to the MECAM team!



Highlights

MECAM Traveling Academy: Mysticism and the City

March 31 – April 2, 2026 | Gabès, Tunisia

Hosted in collaboration with the Forum Transregionale Studien and the Higher Institute of Languages (ISLG) at the University of Gabès, MECAM's Traveling Academy, convened by Cyrine Kortas and coordinated by Diana Abbani, explored the theme "Mysticism and the City: Temporality, Spatiality, Culture, and Society".

Participants explored spiritual, cultural, and political dynamics through comparative frameworks examining how mystical traditions — including, but not limited to, Sufism — shape urban life, memory, and heritage policies in the Maghreb and beyond. The academy concluded with reflections highlighting mysticism not only as a resource for memory, creativity, and solidarity, but also as a vital field of conflict, negotiation, and city-making.



MECAM Event Week

April 14–16, 2026 | MECAM, Tunis

MECAM hosted its annual Event Week under the theme "Unruly Voices, Images, and Bodies: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Maghreb". Bringing together fellows, researchers, and invited guests, the event explored questions of marginality, resistance, agency, and cultural production through a series of interdisciplinary discussions.

The programme examined a wide range of topics, including artistic practices, media representations, public space, and political participation. By fostering dialogue across disciplines and perspectives, the Event Week provided an opportunity to reflect on the social, cultural, and political transformations shaping the Maghreb today and to explore new directions for future research.



Events

Academic Activities



April 8, 2026 – Falling Walls Lab Tunisia 2026. Cité des Sciences, Tunis. Organised by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), with MECAM Director Julius Dihstelhoff serving as jury member.



April 10, 2026 – MECAM Fellows' 8th Meeting in Tunis. The final meeting of the current fellows cohort, featuring a guest lecture by Dr. Anca Maria on regional resilience to natural risks, with a comparative perspective between Romania and Tunisia.



Events

Rencontre Ibn Khaldun (RIK)



April 16, 2026 – Film, Psychiatry & Society in Postcolonial Tunisia. Screening and discussion with Dr. Essedik Jeddi. CinéMadart, Tunis. Convened by Sania Taher, organised by GIGA.



May 8, 2026 – Screening of Sh'hili (2024) de Habib Ayeub, followed by a discussion with Nessim Znaien. Cinéma Rio, Tunis, organised by GIGA.



Fellow Participation and Academic Exchange

MECAM fellows continued to engage in academic exchange across Tunisia through conferences, workshops, and study days addressing questions of migration, media, political transformation, elite formation, and social change in the Maghreb. Their participation contributed to ongoing scholarly conversations while strengthening MECAM's regional and international re-search networks.

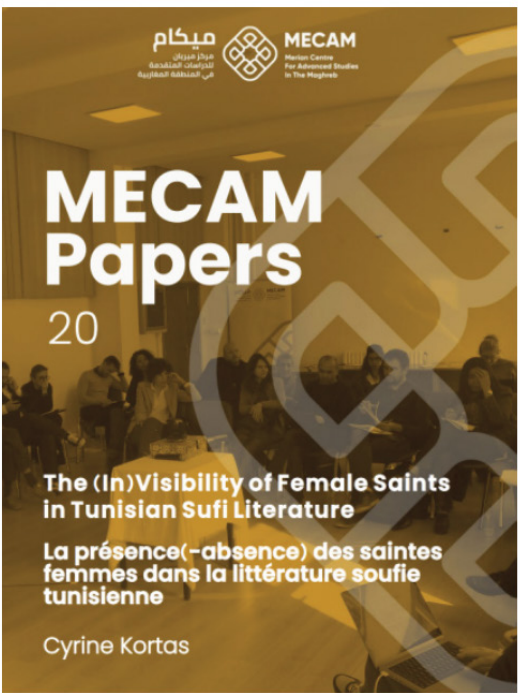
Among the highlights were contributions to the ISLG Spring Days in Gabès (featuring Cyrine Kortas, Max Ajl, Massensen Cherbi, and alumnus N. Abassi), a Study Day on Media, Migration, and Discourse in Tunis (with Imene Gannouni Khemiri and Yazid Benhadda), and the workshop “Ce qui (dé)fait les élites. Algérie / Tunisie,” organized by CRASC and IRMC, where Massensen Cherbi



MECAM Paper Series

The MECAM Papers series offers concise and well-founded analyses of the social, cultural, and political realities of the contemporary Maghreb :

- **MECAM Paper 20** — Kortas, Cyrine. *The (in)Visibility of Female Saints in Tunisian Sufi Literature*. February 3, 2026.
- **MECAM Paper 21** — Abdel Rahman, Sanabel. *Haunting and Alternative Realities in Contemporary Tunisian Film*. April 13, 2026.



Publications

Blog Series on TRAFO

MECAM Fellows continue to contribute to the TRAFO Blog for Transregional Research, offering reflections on migration, postcolonial thought, peace and conflict studies, urban space, and cultural production in the Maghreb and beyond.

- **Bartelmann, Miriam** — *García Pinzón, Viviana; and Rodríguez, Fabricio — "Re-thinking Peace and Conflict Studies in a Postcolonial World."* Published January 6, 2026.
- **Gannouni Khemiri, Imene** — *"The Politics of Migration: Framing Sub-Saharan Migrants in Tunisian Online Media."* Published March 12, 2026.
- **Souad Matoussi and Julius Dihstelhof** — *"Dancing Across Time and Space: Mysticism, the City, and the Body in Tunisia",* Published May 19, 2026.



A Selection of Further Publications by MECAM Fellows and Alumni

MECAM Fellows continue to contribute to the TRAFO Blog for Transregional Research, offering reflections on migration, postcolonial thought, peace and conflict studies, urban space, and cultural production in the Maghreb and beyond.

- **Benhadda, Yazid** — ["Unlocking Morocco: A History of Circulations To and From Contem-porary Morocco \(19th–21st Centuries\)." Special issue of Revue d'Histoire Contemporaine de l'Afrique, no. 10, ed. Yazid Benhadda, Benjamin Badier, Abdelmounaïm Fanidi, Othmane Mouyyah, and Soufiane Taïf. Geneva: RHCA, March 2026.](#)
- **Cherbi, Massensen**— ["The Algerian Hirak: From the Military High Command's Rejection of Democratic Transition to the Judicial Repression of the Movement." In North Africa in Motion: Between Popular Mobilisations and Authoritarian Restorations, ed. Emmanuel Alcaraz, Salim Chena, and Aïssa Kadri. Paris: Le Croquant, December 2025, pp. 403–452.](#)
- **Heidrich, Benjamin** — ["Sascha Ruppert-Karakas: Die Politik des Antagonismus. Zur Dynamik autoritärer Lebenswelt in Assads Syrien." Review of Die Politik des Antagonismus, by Sascha Ruppert-Karakas. Portal für Politikwissenschaft, January 2026.](#)
- **Cherbi, Massensen**— ["Le FLN, entre islam et laïcité \(1962–1963\)." In Le Religieux, gardien des institutions et des libertés, Paris : Classiques Garnier, January 2026, pp. 163–193.](#)
- **Gannouni Khemiri, Imene** — ["The Making of 'Migration Crisis': Representing Sub-Saharan Migrants in Tunisian Online Media Outlets." Crossings: Journal of Migration & Culture, vol. 16, no 1–2, 2025.](#)
- **Kortas, Cyrine, and Ajit Kumar** — ["Cultural Cinematics and Bollywood. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2025.](#)
- **Kortas, Cyrine** — ["Zeina Visibility Gained, Invisibility Defeated in a Postcolonial Feminist Text." In Contextual Confluence: Media, Text and Traditions, ed. Elisabetta Marino and Ajit Kumar. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, January 2026, pp. 43–58.](#)
- **Ouaïssa, Rachid** — ["Algérie et le problème de la rente." In GRAL \(dir.\), Situation et perspectives politiques en Algérie. Paris: L'Harmattan, pp. 95–118.](#)
- **Ouaïssa, Rachid; and Bellal, S.** — ["Is an exit from the rentier economy possible in Algeria? An analysis in terms of institutional choices." El-Bahith Review, 25\(1\), pp. 127–140.](#)

Coming Soon

Stay tuned — in September 2026, a new cohort of residential fellows will join MECAM in Tunis to begin a new academic year under the theme *Imagining Futures: Dealing with Disparity*. We look forward to welcoming researchers from across the world as they bring new perspectives and energy to our community. Further announcements on upcoming events, publications, and research activities will follow.