



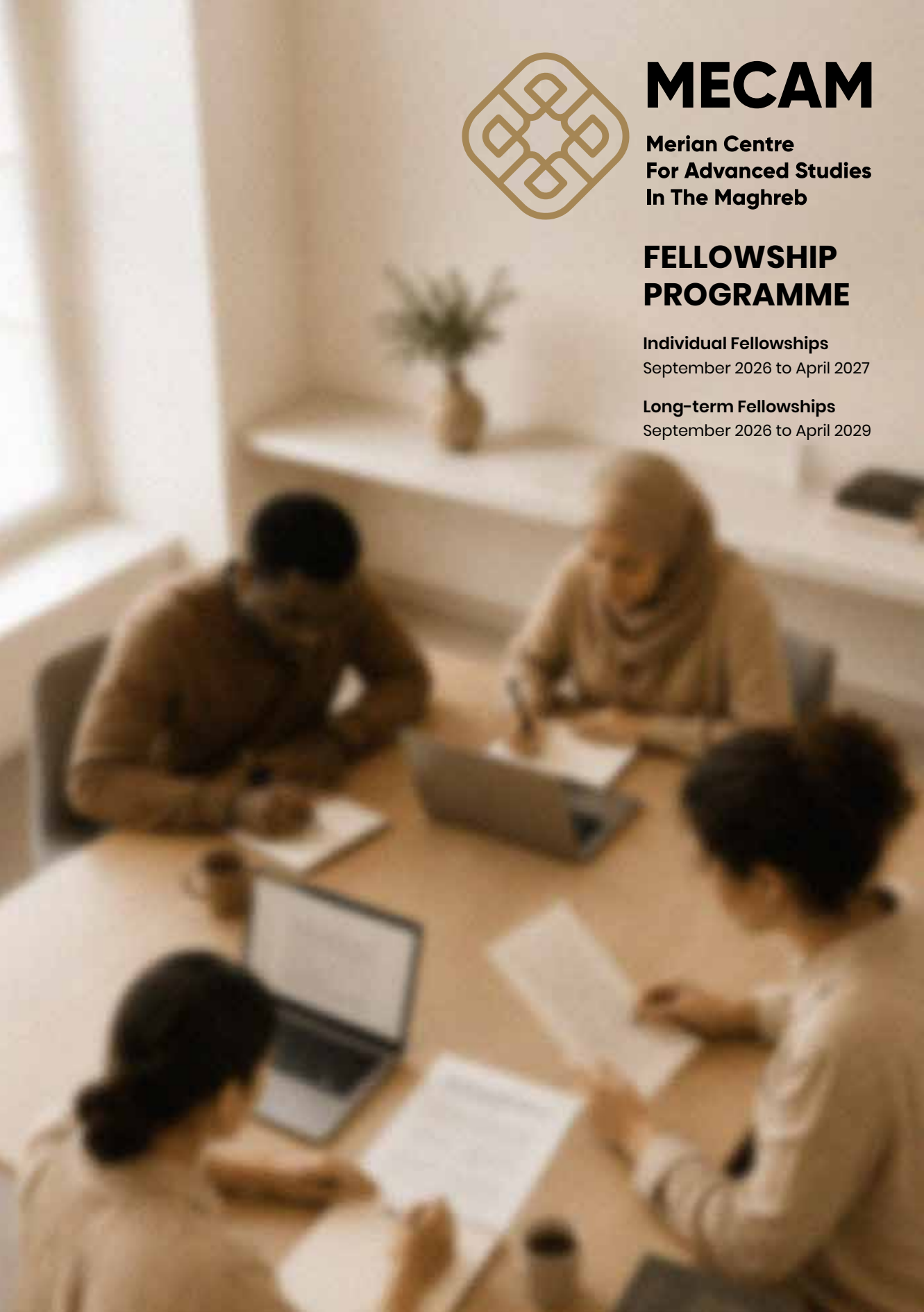
MECAM

**Merian Centre
For Advanced Studies
In The Maghreb**

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

Individual Fellowships
September 2026 to April 2027

Long-term Fellowships
September 2026 to April 2029



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FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

Dear Fellows, dear readers,

It is our great pleasure to welcome the new cohort of MECAM Fellows to Tunis and to the Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb. We are delighted to bring together a diverse group of scholars whose individual research projects engage with questions of cultural, economic, political, and social relevance to the Maghreb and the wider MENA region.

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 enable international, intergenerational, and interdisciplinary collaboration on the Maghreb and MENA region. MECAM provides a platform for scholars to pursue their individual research projects while engaging in dialogue with colleagues from different disciplinary and geographical backgrounds.

The fellowship programme, led by MECAM's Directors Julius Dihstelhoff and Emna Beltaïef and its Academic Coordinator Raoul Cyril Humpert, was successfully tested and implemented during the centre's initial funding phase within the Interdisciplinary Fellows Groups (IFGs). During this period, MECAM invited excellent scholars working on individual research projects and brought together groups of fellows covering a broad range of research questions and disciplinary approaches relating to the centre's research agenda. These experiences have shaped the fellowship programme in its current main phase and continue to inform the ways in which MECAM understands fellowship as a space for both independent research and intellectual exchange.

The individual fellowships offered during MECAM's main phase are primarily targeted at promising postdoctoral researchers (junior fellows), as well as more experienced scholars (senior fellows). Each year, MECAM offers up to eight individual fellowships from September to April, providing fellows with the opportunity to immerse themselves in their respective research pursuits while contributing to the centre's research agenda. They are offered the independence to develop their own research projects, alongside access to research facilities and opportunities for collaboration and exchange with colleagues at MECAM and beyond.



In addition, MECAM offers long-term postdoctoral fellowships of up to three years for a maximum of six (2023–2029) postdoctoral researchers in the humanities and social sciences. A maximum of three long-term fellowships can be active simultaneously. Together, these different fellowship formats allow MECAM to foster sustained international, intergenerational, and interdisciplinary encounters and to create a research environment in which individual projects can become starting points for broader scholarly conversations.

We are particularly pleased to welcome this year's fellows and to accompany them throughout their time at MECAM. Their diverse backgrounds, research interests, and innovative projects enrich the centre's intellectual community and contribute to advancing knowledge and understanding of the Maghreb region.

All fellows regularly present and discuss their work in different academic contexts, including a research colloquium, a Study Day, and the fellows' self-organized event week, MECAM Spectrum. These formats provide opportunities to discuss research designs, ongoing work, and outcomes with the wider research community and to benefit from the valuable scientific perspectives of Principal Investigators affiliated with institutions in both Germany and the Maghreb region.

We warmly welcome our new fellows to MECAM and wish them an inspiring, productive, and rewarding fellowship.

Emna Beltaïef, Julius Dihstelhoff & Raoul Cyril Humpert
Co-Directors, University of Tunis & University of Marburg & Academic Coordinator

ORGANIGRAM

MECAM PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

GERMANY

Philipps-Universität Marburg (Coordination)
Universität Leipzig
German Institute of Global and Area Studies
Forum Transregionale Studien

TUNISIA

University of Tunis (Coordination)
University of Sfax

INTERNATIONAL

Hassan II University of Casablanca
The Orient-Institut Beirut

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Dr. Julius Dinstelhoff (Germany)

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THEMATIC CLUSTERS

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 co-existing 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).

IRF I

AESTHETICS & CULTURAL PRACTICES

IRF II

INEQUALITY & MOBILITY

IRF III

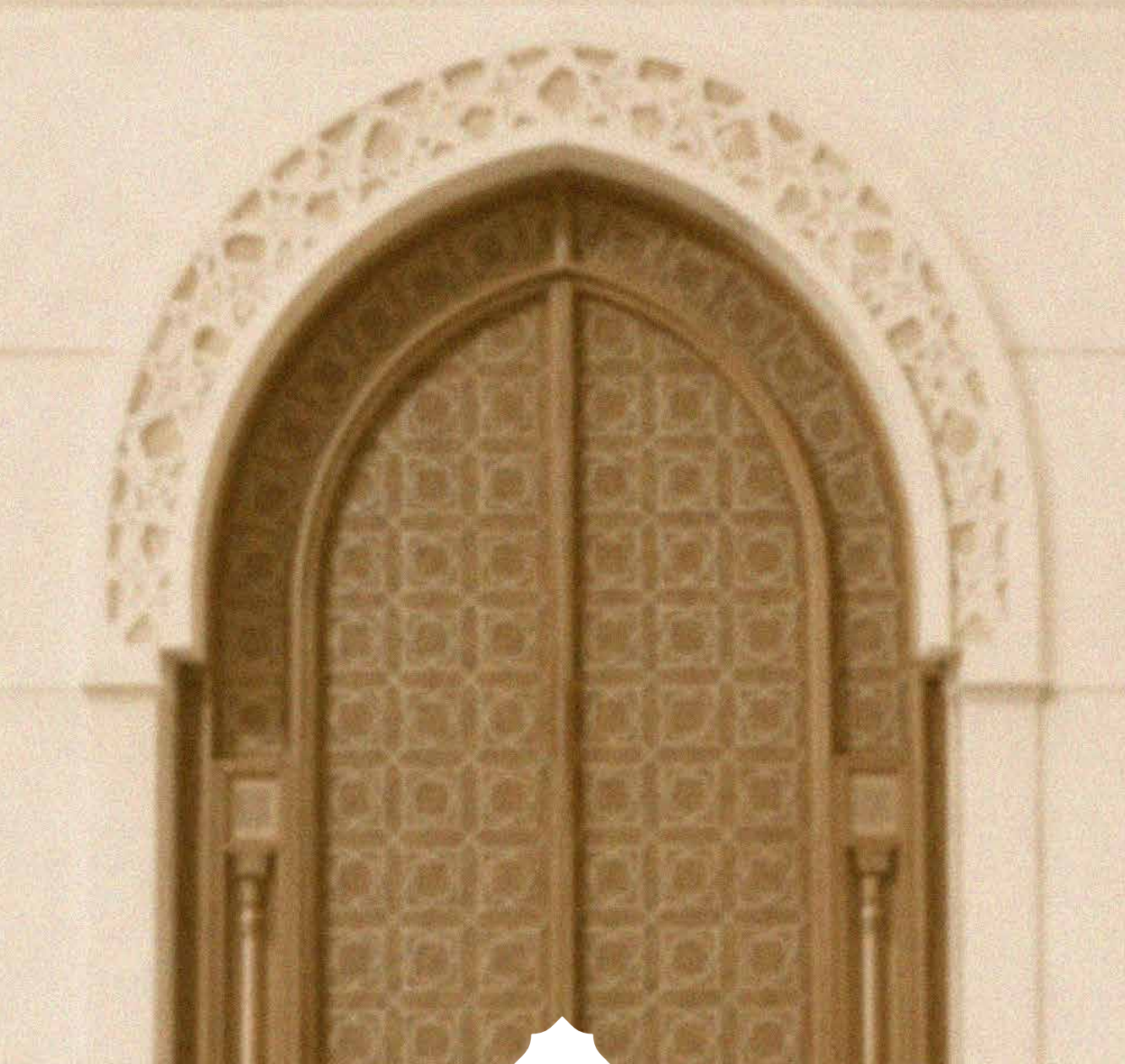
MEMORY & JUSTICE

IRF IV

RESOURCES & SUSTAINABILITY

IRF V

IDENTITIES & BELIEFS



IRF I

AESTHETICS & CULTURAL PRACTICES

The IRF addresses the 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. Malte Hagener

*Media Science
Theory and Aesthetics of Film*
Philipps-Universität Marburg



Georges Khalil

Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin



Prof. Friederike Pannewick

Arabic Studies
Philipps-Universität Marburg



Dr. Christian Junge

Middle East Studies, Arabic Literature
Philipps-Universität Marburg



Prof. Wissem Gharsallah

*Artistic Practices, Visual imagination
and Theories of Creation*
University of Tunis

Prof. Samia Kassab-Charfi

French Literature
University of Tunis



Prof. Olaf Müller

*French and Italian Literature
and Cultural Studies*
Philipps-Universität Marburg



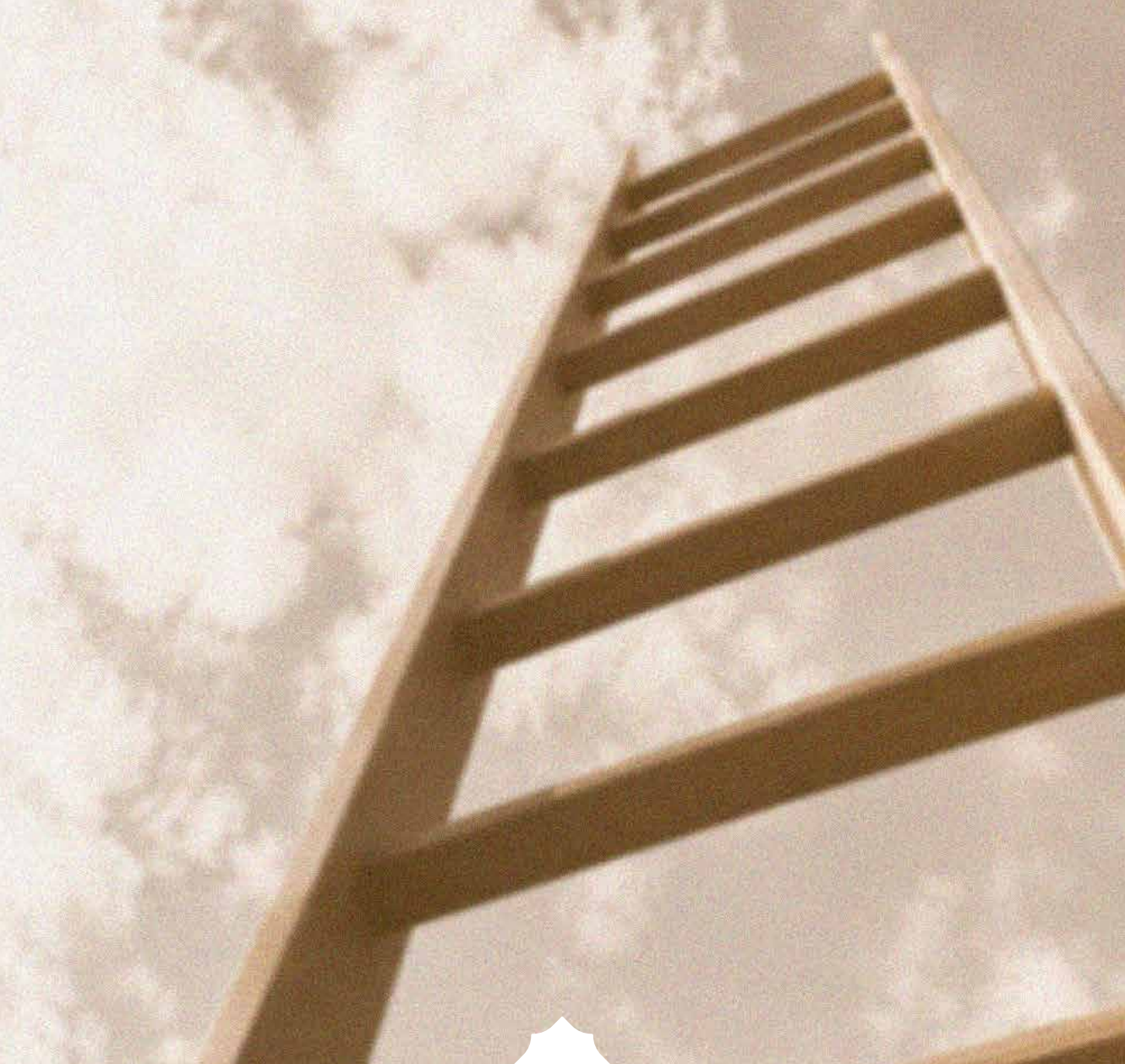
Prof. Mohamed Ben Hammouda

Music, Arts and Crafts
University of Sfax



Prof. Emna Beltaief

French language & Literature
University of Tunis



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

*Economic Geography and Labour
Market research
Universität Leipzig*



Dr. Alma Hafsi

*Psychology
University of Tunis*

Prof. Mourad Ben Jelloul

*Geography / Regionalization and Regional
and Urban Development
University of Tunis*



Prof. Ahmed Khouja

*Historical and Cultural Sociology
University of Tunis*



IRF III

MEMORY & JUSTICE

The IRF discusses legacies of the past, including their legal, political and cultural perceptions and frames in relation to 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. Thorsten Bonacker

Peace and Conflict Studies

Philipps-Universität Marburg

**Prof. Anika Oettler**

*Sociology / Social Development and
Comparative Social Structure Analysis*

Philipps-Universität Marburg

**Prof. Nessim Znaïen**

*Postcolonial / Colonial Studies of
the Maghreb*

Philipps-Universität Marburg

**Prof. Hayet Ammamou**

History

University of Tunis

**Prof. Fathi Jarray**

History

University of Tunis

Prof. Susanne Buckley-Zistel

Peace and Conflict Studies

Philipps-Universität Marburg

**Dr. Yasmina Kefi Ghodbane**

Philosophy

University of Tunis

**Dr. Achim Rohde**

History

Gedenkstättenförderung
Niedersachsen

**Prof. Esther Möller**

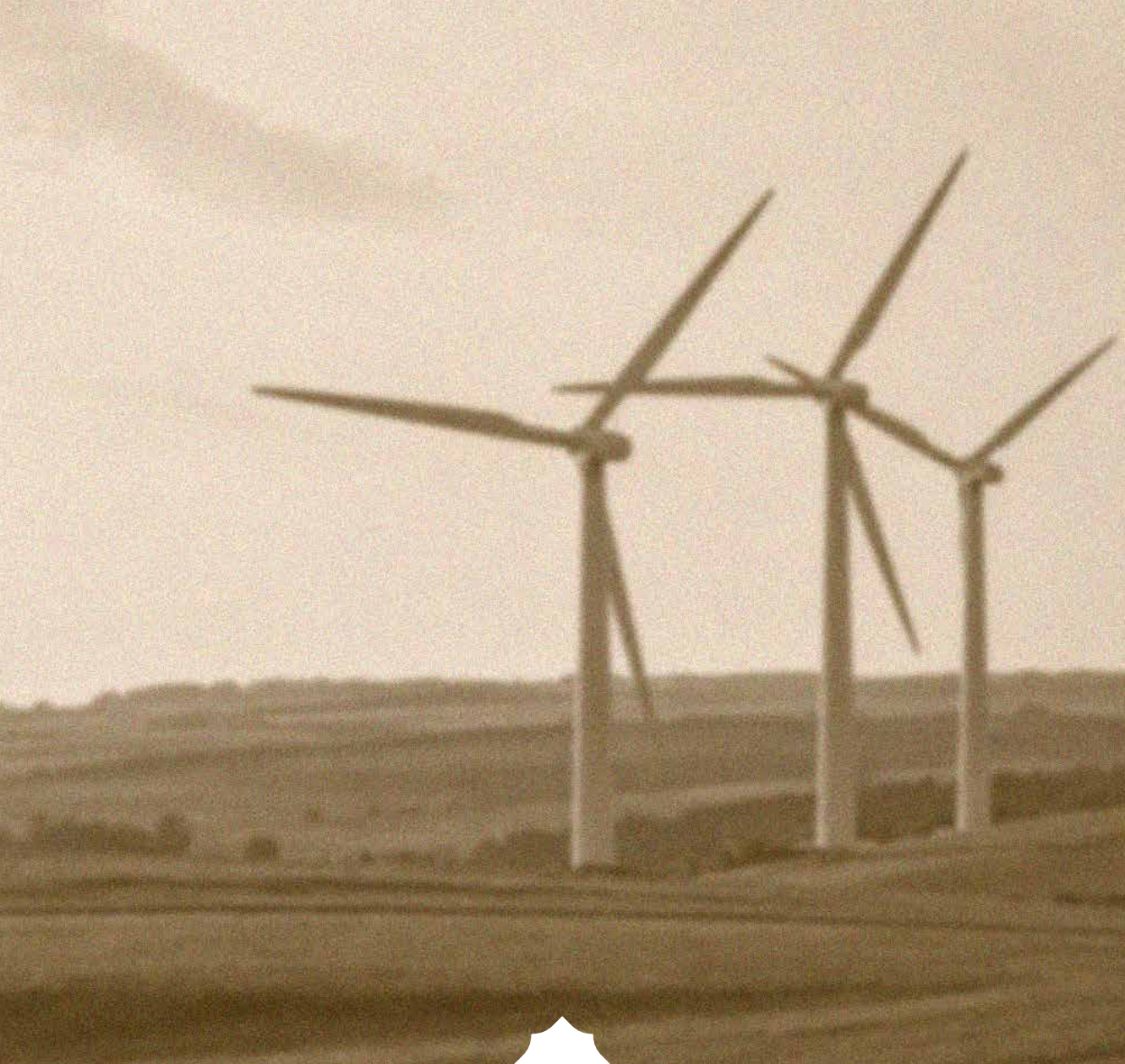
Global history

Philipps-Universität Marburg

**Dr. Mohamed Jerbi**

History

University of Sfax



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. Eckart Conze

Modern and Contemporary History

Philipps-Universität Marburg



Prof. Benedikt Stuchtey

Modern History

Philipps-Universität Marburg



Prof. Tamirace Fakhoury

*Political Science / Global Refugee
and Migration Studies*

Lebanese American University Beirut



Prof. Mohamed Faker Klibi

*Economics / Business Administration
& Accounting*

University of Tunis

Prof. Rachid Ouaisa

Politics of the Near and Middle East

Philipps-Universität Marburg



Dr. Katharina Nicolai

Middle East Politics and Society

Friedrich-Alexander-Universität



Prof. Nejiba Chkir Ben Jemaa

Geography and Environment

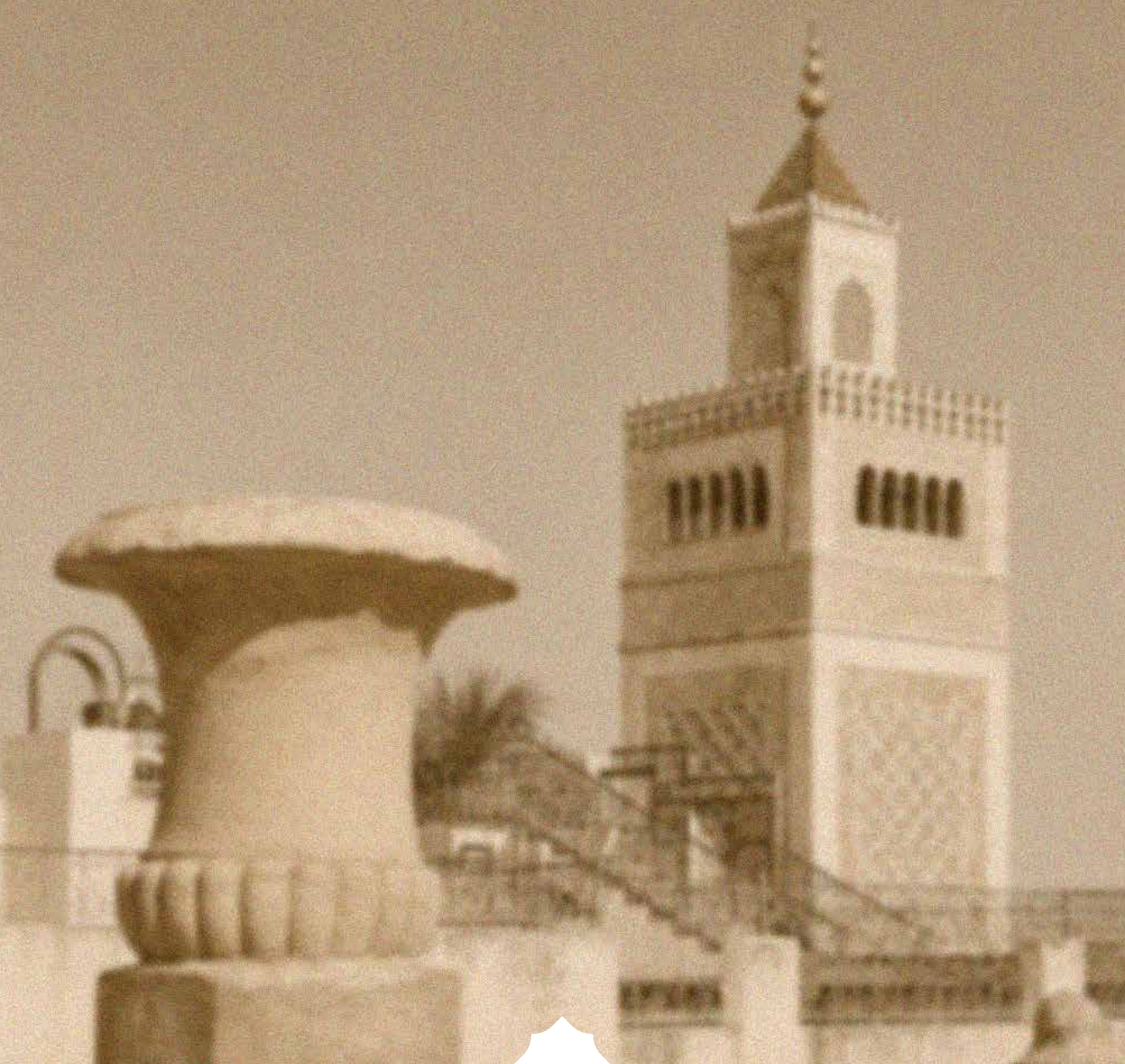
University of Sfax



Dr. Olfa Kammoun

*Economics: Innovation
and industrial Economics*

University of Tunis



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

Politics of the Middle East Studies

GIGA Hamburg, GIGA Institute
for Middle East Studies



Prof. Zoubir Arous

Sociology

Université d'Alger



Dr. Nada Ouerghi

Design image

Institut Supérieur des Beaux-Arts de Tunis

Prof. Fadma Aït Mous

Sociology/ Economic Science

Hassan II University Casablanca



Prof. Mohamed Kharrat

*Arab-Islamic language, literature
and civilization*

University of Sfax

**INDIVIDUAL
FELLOWSHIPS**

2026 – 2027



Dr. Amany Alsiefy

Independent Researcher, Berlin

Amany Alsiefy holds a PhD in Literary and Cultural Studies from Freie Universität Berlin (2022). She taught at ZTG (Humboldt Universität Berlin) as adjunct lecturer (2024–2026), twice receiving Circle U Coil grant in collaboration with University of Oslo. She also serves as section editor for Open Cultural Studies (De Gruyter Brill). Her research examines body representation in postcolonial literature & culture, focusing on gender, masculinity, secularization, and fashion. She is the author of *Modern Egyptian Women, Fashion, and Faith* (Palgrave, 2023; German ed. 2026), and co-editor of forthcoming *Matrilineal Family Saga Beyond Western Modernity* (Leiden UP, 2026).

analysis explores tensions between state authority, legal power, resistance, and social constraint. The theoretical framework combines Michael Rothberg's "implicated subject" with R.W. Connell and J. W. Messerschmidt's concept of hegemonic and protest masculinities, providing a decolonial lens that challenges Eurocentric models by foregrounding Maghrebi configurations of gender and authority. Methodologically, close reading and socio-cultural contextualization analyze narrative techniques—focalization, spatial poetics, and bodily semiotics—as mediators of gender and state power, demonstrating that literary texts actively theorize their social and gendered foundations.

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IRF I : Aesthetics & Cultural Practices

Performing Power: masculinities in Contemporary Tunisian and Algerian Fiction

This project conducts a socio-cultural analysis of literary texts, examining how masculinities are reconfigured in contemporary Tunisian and Algerian fiction under state authority and socio-economic precarity. It explores how male figures embody, negotiate, and challenge power across institutional and marginalized contexts—from police officers, inspectors, and parliamentarians to young men performing "protest masculinities" under conditions of blocked social mobility. Female characters—wives, sisters, lovers, and women in authority, such as lawyers or politicians—further complicate these dynamics, revealing their mutual constitution. The corpus focuses on Habib Selmi's *Nisā' al-Bāsātīn* (*The Women of al-Bāsātīn*) (2010) and Said Khatibi's *Nihāyat al-Sahra'* (*The End of the Sahara*) (2022), both set before Tunisia's 2011 uprising and Algeria's 1988 riots. Through representations of unemployed youth, state officials, and politically engaged women, the



Dr. Amalia Dragani

EHESS, France

Amalia Dragani is a social anthropologist with a PhD from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS). Her research focuses on the Sahara-Sahel, based on extensive fieldwork among Tuareg communities in Niger, Mali, and Algeria, as well as among their diasporas in Africa and Europe. She studies poetic creativity, intangible cultural heritage, oneiric inspiration, and intellectual, artistic, and political elites, as well as gender and mixed marriages; more recently, she has worked on Muslim-to-Christian conversion and Saharan student mobilities. She was a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the Laboratory of Political Anthropology (CNRS-EHESS), with a secondment at the University of Johannesburg (2024–2026), following a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellowship (2020–2023) involving the University of Florida and KU Leuven. She has received research funding from Sorbonne Université, the Musée du Quai Branly, and the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence (Germany). In addition to her academic work, she makes short films. She is currently General Secretary of APAD (Association for the Anthropology of Social Change and Development).

due to conflicts, poor infrastructure, and economic vulnerability compared with urban regions of the Sahara-Sahel. The MECAM project focuses on intra-African student mobilities and, in particular, on the little-known histories of Saharan graduates in Tunisia. It aims to challenge the common narrative of the Sahara as isolated and disconnected from the rest of the world, following the "mobility turn" in anthropology. Although considerable research has recently been produced on Saharan mobilities, student mobilities have received comparatively little attention. My project aims to fill this gap and address the following questions: What role do Saharan professionals trained at international universities play in their home societies, given the sometimes conflicting expectations of local communities, traditional elites, institutions, governments, companies, and foreign actors (e.g., NGOs and military forces)? How do Saharan graduate elites establish objectives and develop strategic actions aimed at meeting these expectations when they are part of diasporic communities in the Global North?

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IRF II : Inequality & Mobility

Saharan Elites & Intra-African Student Mobilities

Like other young Africans, Saharan students increasingly cross borders in search of educational opportunities in other countries, particularly in the Maghreb, in order to gain professional prospects, acquire global skills and language competencies, and increase the number of highly trained Saharan professionals. Saharan nomadic populations have historically faced difficult access to education and high dropout rates at all levels of schooling, largely



Dr. Fatma Abdelkaoui

*Mediterranean School of Business (MSB),
South Mediterranean University, Tunisia*

Fatma Abdelkaoui holds a PhD in Economic Sciences from IHEC Carthage, an MA in Economics, and a BA in Finance. She teaches at the Mediterranean School of Business (MSB), South Mediterranean University, Tunis, and recently completed a research fellowship at the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, University of Oxford. Her research spans macroeconomic dynamics, financial and Islamic economics, cryptocurrency, innovation, unemployment, and the digital economy/ICT-environment nexus, with a growing focus on inequality, labour markets, and economic integration in the MENA region.

IRF II : Inequality & Mobility

Involuntary Im/mobility and Youth Inequality in the Maghreb: Urban Peripheries in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco

This project examines how involuntary im/mobility among youth in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco reproduces and transforms socio-economic inequalities while shaping visions of the future. Focused on urban and peri-urban peripheries in Greater Tunis, Algiers, and Casablanca/Rabat, it engages with MECAM's theme, "Imagining Futures – Dealing with Disparity," and IRF II, "Inequality & Mobility." Across the Maghreb, young people face high unemployment despite increased educational attainment, uneven regional development, and segmented labour markets. International migration offers a horizon of dignity and independence, yet the externalization of European borders and restrictive visa regimes render regular migration largely inaccessible, producing "involuntary immobility": the desire to move blocked by structural barriers. The project

argues that involuntary im/mobility is not merely a consequence of inequality but a central axis structuring it, dividing young people between those able to leverage mobility for advancement and those confined to precarious local labour markets and marginalized neighborhoods. Three research questions guide the study: how spatial and socio-economic disparities shape access to mobility; how im/mobility reproduces or transforms inequality; and how young people experiencing constrained mobility imagine and act upon their futures. Methodologically, the project combines semi-structured interviews and focus groups with young people aged 18–35, interviews with institutional and civil-society actors, and spatial analysis of transport, services, and infrastructure in selected peripheral neighborhoods across the three countries. Theoretically, it bridges the literatures on youth unemployment, migration regimes, and urban injustice, foregrounding temporal inequality: how blocked mobility produces unequally distributed "waiting" and stalled life courses. Anchored at MECAM in Tunis, the project will produce a MECAM Paper, a journal article, and an outline for a book manuscript on youth futures and inequality in the region.

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Dr. Daniele Cantini

*Global Development Network (New Delhi, India, and Clermont-Ferrand, France),
affiliated with the Leibniz-Zentrum
Moderner Orient, Berlin*

Daniele Cantini is a social anthropologist, currently a Fellow at the Global Development Network and an affiliated researcher at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin. He is the author of *Youth and Education in the Middle East: Shaping Identity and Politics in Jordan* (London, 2016), editor of *Rethinking Private Higher Education: Ethnographic Perspectives* (Leiden, 2016) and *Bounded Knowledge: Doctoral Studies in Egypt* (Cairo/New York, 2021), and co-editor of *Social Anthropology in the Arab World: The Fragmented History of an Uncomfortable Discipline* (New York/Oxford, 2025). A full list of his publications is available on ORCID.

IRF II : Inequality & Mobility

Reframing Research in the Arab World: Anthropological Perspectives on Research Training and Researchers' Mobility

This ongoing project explores the relationship between scholars' mobility, research infrastructures, career paths, and knowledge production in the social sciences and humanities across the region. During the fellowship, it will focus on the Maghreb in particular. The main research question is how recently established programmes and institutions offering postgraduate training and research grants are altering the conditions of doing research, the selection of research themes and languages, and career paths in the social sciences throughout the region. While mobility has always been a key component of academic labour markets, and research training obtained abroad has become a well-established norm, it has largely contributed to a process of systemic extraversion. In recent years, attempts have emerged to rearticulate local research landscapes through the establishment of new

research training institutions and reforms of existing ones, with the aim of transforming the infrastructures of knowledge production. This development has the dual goal of countering the brain-drain effects associated with such mobility and enabling other research subjects, more attuned to local realities and often published in Arabic, to enter the research agenda. The project asks how the movement of scholars influences the kinds of knowledge they produce, and to what extent newer forms of research infrastructure, including training and support, are altering the conditions under which knowledge is produced in, on, and for the region.

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Dr. Hanene Baroumi

*Assistant Professor of English Literature,
Faculty of Human and Social Sciences
of Tunis, University of Tunis, Tunisia*

Hanene Baroumi is an Assistant Professor of English Literature at the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of Tunis, University of Tunis. She holds a PhD in English Literature from Manouba University and an MA in Cross-Cultural Poetics from the University of Carthage. Her research explores how contemporary Maghrebian literature rethinks the affective and political aftermath of the Arab uprisings through the intertwined figures of madness and animality, read through postcolonial and affect theory. She is co-editor of *The Poetics and Hermeneutics of Pain and Pleasure* and has published on Maghrebian literature and culture.

IRF III : Memory & Justice

Rotten Futures: Animality, Madness, and Post-Revolutionary Affect in Maghrebian Literary and Cultural Representations

This project examines how selected works of post-Arab Spring Maghrebian literature reimagine the aftermath of the Arab Spring through the intertwined figures of animality and madness, foregrounding the political, affective, and ethical dimensions of revolutionary experiences. Emerging from the widespread circulation of animal metaphors across political discourse, popular culture, and literary production after 2011, the study examines how literary texts from Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Libya grapple with unresolved violence, political disappointment, and fractured futures. Read together, animality and madness expose the limits of liberal humanist conceptions of political agency, opening alternative imaginaries of subjectivity in the wake of revolutionary collapse. Rather than treating the post-2011 moment as a singular historical rupture or historical wound, the project conceptualizes it

as an ongoing process of slow decomposition, which it terms Rotten Futures. To theorize this condition, the project proposes a critical framework—Rot Theory—which understands rot as a biological, temporal, and affective process through which revolutionary hope decomposes while simultaneously generating new forms of political and ethical possibility. Rot Theory shifts attention from spectacular moments of crisis to slower processes of decay, stagnation, fermentation, and transformation. Memory is understood not as restorative but as fermentative: rather than healing historical rupture, it continually reworks it, producing affects such as disgust, anger, exhaustion, irony, and uneasy hope. The project further places Sufi metaphysics in dialogue with contemporary critical theory by reading madness and animal symbolism as figures of ego-annihilation, ethical transformation, and alternative forms of political subjectivity. Combining close textual analysis, affective reading, and comparative theoretical inquiry, the study highlights how Maghrebian literature does not merely depict political disparity but actively rethinks and theorizes it. Ultimately, it argues that literature functions not simply as a record of post-revolutionary disappointment and failure but as a site of theoretical innovation, offering a new vocabulary for understanding revolutionary aftermaths, political temporality, and ethical renewal in the Maghreb and beyond.

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Dr. Fidelia Danielle Renne

*King's College London, Department
of Political Economy, University of
Oxford, Department of Politics and
International Development, UK*

Dr. Fidelia Danielle Renne is a Research Associate in Middle East Politics in the Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR) at the University of Oxford and a Lecturer at King's College London, where she teaches Social Movements and the Political Economy of the Middle East. She completed her doctorate in International Development at the Oxford Department of International Development (ODID). Her research examines social movements, community development, and civil society networks, with particular attention to associational life, friendship, identity negotiation, and political engagement in the Global South. She has conducted extensive research in Lebanon on post-war youth, identity formation, place-making, and mobilisation, and is currently undertaking research in Tunisia, as a recipient of the Hazem Ben-Gacem Research Grant, on grassroots anti-pollution movements and local resistance practices.

IRF IV : Resources & Sustainability

Between the Square and the Café: Informal Spaces, Information Exchange, and the Deliberative Politics of Anti-Pollution Mobilisation in Southern Tunisia

How do communities in resource-affected regions articulate alternative futures, navigate internal diversity, and resist the reproduction of extractive inequalities under the guise of sustainable development? While a growing body of literature examines digital activism and environmental campaigns, especially in the Global North, much less is known about the offline interactions that shape credibility, trust, and participation in localities in the Global South. This project investigates longstanding grassroots environmental activism in Gabes,

Tunisia, where European development agencies have more recently been promoting land- and water-intensive “green hydrogen” production to meet Europe’s energy needs. The local environmental movement contests green hydrogen and other industrial projects not only on distributive grounds but also by invoking claims to authority and belonging. The project investigates the movement’s rhetoric, as well as how face-to-face exchanges generate credibility, circulate information, and negotiate internal divisions in order to articulate a collective voice under authoritarian constraints. Combining participatory, visual, and survey methods, it explores the deliberative and solidarity-building capacities of place-based activism as intertwined and mutually supportive processes of resistance.

fidelia.renne@kcl.ac.uk



Dr. Sana BenAli Taga

*Faculty of Letters, Arts and Humanities
of Manouba
University of Manouba*

Sana' BenAli Taga is an Assistant Professor of English at the Higher Institute of Digital Engineering of Tunis. With fifteen years of academic experience and a PhD in English Literature, her research explores the intersections of narrative theory and cultural practices. She also publishes on ecofeminist frameworks and mythic reformulations. Her recent studies investigate the contribution that the digital humanities can make to preserving cultural heritage, such as oral folktales. She actively brings local epistemologies into conversation with transregional academic networks such as NeMLA, encouraging shared approaches to narratives of resistance and restorative memory.

IRF I : Aesthetics & Cultural Practices

Narratological adaptations, ecocriticism, and postcolonial resistance in the radio folktales of Abd Al-Aziz Al-Aroui

This project analyzes the radio-broadcast tales of Abd al-Aziz al-Aroui (1898–1971), the pioneering Tunisian storyteller, as a heteroglossic site of transition. Al-Aroui's broadcasts remediate oral folktales for mass media, thereby preserving collective memory while addressing the systemic disparities of a modernizing nation. These hybrid tales rely on processes of borrowing while maintaining an authentic aesthetic imprint that distinguishes them from the "original" narratives. My aim is to examine the structural transformation of these traditional narratives that al-Aroui adapted for national radio. Aligning with MECAM's theme of "dealing with disparity," this study specifically explores how the tales provide the postcolonial Tunisian public with epistemic tools to process socio-economic inequalities and ecological disruptions amid a shifting cultural

identity. Narrated in the local dialect (Derja), these "Tunisified" versions of global myths function as a unifying space in a culturally and geopolitically transitional setting. Al-Aroui's radio narratives can thus be understood as localized Tunisian broadcasts, regional phenomena, or democratized mass-media platforms, all intertwined with the emergence of postcolonial national consciousness. Al-Aroui's narratives also merge high and low cultures, drawing on Bakhtinian dialogism to subvert colonial hegemony, as they center on the marginalized poor (Zawali). Methodologically, I analyze al-Aroui's official audio archives at the intersection of media studies, postcolonial studies, and ecocriticism. Ecocritical paradigms shed light on critiques of extractive resource exploitation through the figure of mythical monsters. Additionally, these stories provide a sustainable continuum necessary for preserving cultural heritage across generations and adapting to geopolitical change. The resulting research maps how mediatized oral tradition can be aesthetically and politically mobilized for national cohesion.

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Dr. Yasser Rhimi

*Higher Institute of Human
Sciences of Tunis, Tunis El-Manar
University, Tunisia*

Dr. Yasser Rhimi is currently an Assistant Professor of Cultural Studies and International Relations at the Higher Institute of Human Sciences of Tunis, Tunis El-Manar University, Tunisia. His PhD from the University of Manouba, Tunisia, explored the cultural origins of our contemporary global environmental crisis. Since 2010, Rhimi has developed a special interest in ecological criticism and post-humanism, which he has applied to different research fields and areas while teaching in and participating in conferences and workshops organized by Tunisian departments of English. Today, he is working to develop his own theory and concepts of ecological awareness in the Maghreb.

IRF IV : Resources & Sustainability

In Search of 'Green Tunisia': Tunisian Environmental Imagination Between Lost Narratives and Contemporary Awareness

"In Search of 'Green Tunisia': Tunisian Environmental Imagination Between Lost Narratives and Contemporary Awareness" is an inquiry into the state of environmental awareness in post-Revolution Tunisia through ecological and cultural lenses. Primarily, the project provides an interdisciplinary examination of Tunisians' contemporary ecological awareness and imagination. By studying the character (or nature) of contemporary ecological awareness among Tunisians through selected Tunisian narratives, nature writings, and/or audiovisual materials related to water or waste management, it traces and celebrates the rise of post-Revolution (2011) ecological "awareness" and, consequently, activism, particularly among young people, against the backdrop of the extractive mode of the same socio-economic/

socio-political system, reproduced by a colonial past that has long shaped and drawn upon Tunisians' environmental imaginations. In this respect, and within the framework of the MECAM Short-Term Fellowship, this project seeks to address environmental problems such as, inter alia, water scarcity and the waste-management crisis as issues involving human and non-human rights that need to be defended. Equally, it reconsiders the validity of our current cultural perceptions and practices by retracing the root causes that fuel their continued reproduction and exacerbation. Ipso facto, the project seeks to document the history and development of these narratives and, by extension, attempts to preserve the memory of their authors, stories, and themes as part of Tunisia's cultural and ecological heritage. Finally, as part of MECAM's "Resources and Sustainability" IRF, I intend to contribute by producing an extended paper/essay carrying the same title as my project, whose academic and professional value will be of particular significance to Tunisia, as well as to the Maghreb and Mediterranean regions.

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Dr. des. Florian Keller

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Florian Keller recently defended his PhD in History at Freie Universität Berlin. His doctoral research at the Berlin-based graduate programme Global Intellectual History (GIH) examined foundational debates in postcolonial social science and sociology in Tunisia and Algeria. His research interests include intellectual history, particularly that of the Maghreb, with a focus on print culture and periodicals. In his current project, he explores the Tunisian periodical 21*15, which articulated an intellectual project that sought to formulate a theology of liberation within the framework of an “Islamic Left” in Tunisia during the 1980s.

IRF V : Identities & Beliefs

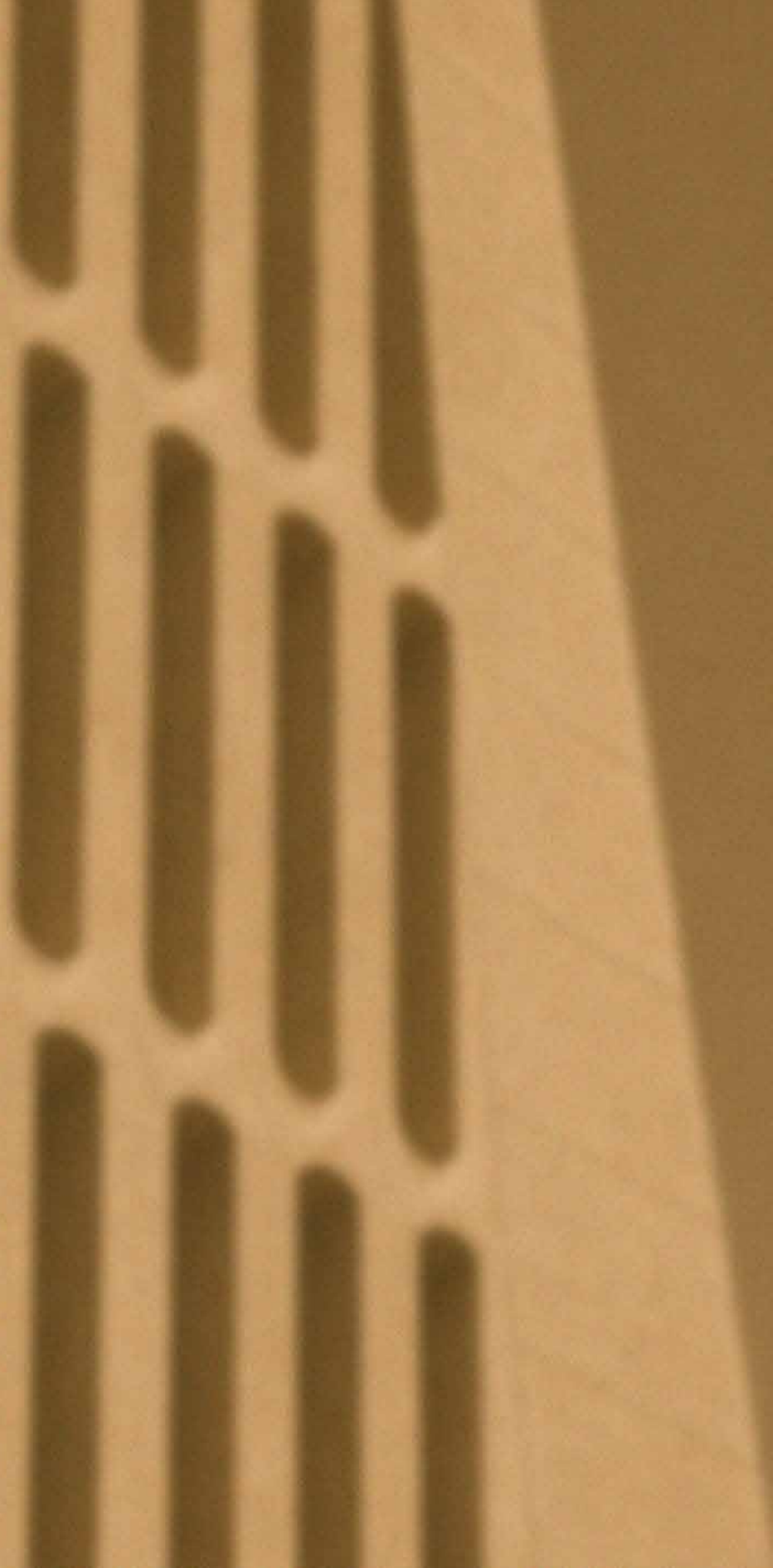
The Tunisian Cultural Journal 21/15: Between Progressive Islamism and Liberation Theology

The project examines the Tunisian cultural journal 21/15 (1982–1990) as a key site of intellectual production in the postcolonial Maghreb. Founded by the scholar Hamida Ennaifer during a period of profound political and economic crisis, 21/15 brought together intellectuals from Tunisia, the wider Arab world, and beyond to debate questions of Islam, social justice, democracy, and political emancipation. Despite having received little scholarly attention, the journal offers a unique lens through which to examine the relationship between decolonization, print culture, and the development of social and political theory. The project argues that 21*15 was more than a forum for political debate: it articulated an original intellectual project that sought to formulate a liberation theology within the framework of an “Islamic Left.” Drawing on the legacies of the nineteenth-century Nahda as well as the works of thinkers such as Hassan Hanafi and Ali Shariati,

the journal critically engaged with Western universalism, pan-Arabism, and contemporary Islamist movements while developing distinct Tunisian perspectives. Its debates also reveal important networks of South–South intellectual exchange. Based on a systematic analysis of the journal’s complete run (1982–1990), the project reconstructs the intellectual debates surrounding religion, politics, and social transformation in Tunisia during the 1980s. Particular attention is paid to how contributors positioned themselves within competing ideological traditions and negotiated the relationship between local, regional, and global frameworks of thought. By placing 21*15 at the center of the analysis, the project contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the Maghreb as a “theory-producing” area. It advances broader debates on decolonization, intellectual history, and the circulation of ideas in the Global South.

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“Imagining Futures: Dealing with Disparities”



LONG-TERM FELLOWSHIPS

2026 – 2029





Dr. Maya Ben Ayed

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Dr. Maya Ben Ayed is a researcher at the Centre d'Histoire Sociale, UMR 8058, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne / CNRS, France. She holds a PhD in Contemporary History from Aix-Marseille University and the University of Tunis. Her research focuses on animation cinema, an object largely overlooked by social and cultural history as well as by film studies. Since 2010, she has been investigating the changing relationships between art, culture, and politics in the Arab world. Her first book, *Le cinéma d'animation en Tunisie (1965-1995) : un cinéma de la marge en contexte autoritaire* (L'Harmattan, 2019), analyzed how animation became a revealer of the political and social crises of independent Tunisia. The first results of her expanded study of the entire Arab world will soon be published in the Encyclopedia of Animation Studies, in a chapter entitled "Syria and Tunisia" (Bloomsbury Publishing).

and political transformations and contributes to the construction of new narratives and transregional collective imaginaries. It approaches animation as a "total object", a holistic phenomenon, by combining film analysis, the study of artists' trajectories, and an examination of the modes of circulation and reception of works. The main expected outcome is a monograph on the history of Tunisian animation since 2000. The project will also result in scholarly outputs in the form of articles and conference presentations. More broadly, it contributes to debates on the relationship between art and power in the Arab world, on transregional and transnational circulations of expertise, aesthetic and ideological practices, and on writing grand history in the present from the margins.

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IRF I : Aesthetics & Cultural Practices

Renewal of Aesthetics and Expressions of Dissent: Tunisian Animation in the Global Era

This project proposes an in-depth study of Tunisian animation since 2000. Long considered a minor art of entertainment, animation cinema in Tunisia occupies a peripheral position that has allowed it, particularly under authoritarian regimes, to become a site of experimentation and dissent. From the mid-2000s onwards, the transformation of the media landscape through the Internet, satellite channels, and social networks has reconfigured its modes of production and circulation, while also integrating it into transregional aesthetic flows. The research examines how Tunisian animation, as a marginal aesthetic and cultural practice, reveals social



Dr. Hassan Ould Mactar

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Hassan Ould Mactar is a former lecturer in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at SOAS, University of London. His research focuses on the relationship between migration, borders, and development processes, with a regional focus on West and North Africa. He is the author of *After Border Externalization: Migration, Race, and Labour in Mauritania*, which is available in open access from Bloomsbury Publishers. His work has also appeared in academic journals such as *Environment and Planning: D, Geoforum*, and *Anthropologie et Développement*, in addition to non-academic and media outlets such as Al-Jazeera, the New Left Review blog, Jadaliyya, and Statewatch.

history interviews and archival research, this project explores how the Kadehine and associated movements viewed the relationship between migration and inequality in the country, asking whether this vision holds any lessons for today. How, for instance, was migration analysed in relation to class, race, and gender-based inequality? And how did this analysis relate to the movement's broader strategic vision for the future of the country and region? What can be learned from this vision, given the unprecedented public attention that now revolves around migration in Mauritania? In exploring these questions, this project treats the Kadehine and the broader movement from which they emerged as a source of theory in their own right.

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IRF II : Inequality & Mobility

Migration, Inequality and the Kadehine Movement in Mauritania

In recent years, the European Union (EU) has devoted unprecedented resources to containing West African migrants in Mauritania. Within certain segments of the country's 'Arab Moor' population, these efforts have stirred fears of demographic replacement. While EU external migration policy is a relatively new public question in Mauritania, this is not the first time that the relationship between migration and ethno-racial identity has figured in public debate. In the early 1970s, an underground movement in Mauritania, named the Kadehine ('the toilers' in Arabic), presented a scathing critique of dominant perspectives on West African labour migration to the country, which tended to depict Black migration as a threat to Arab Moor identity. From the perspective of the Kadehine, such divisions were part of a ruling-class strategy of dividing workers. Based on oral



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Dr. Houssein Eddine Chachia is Associate Professor of Early Modern History at the University of Tunis. His research focuses primarily on Morisco history, especially exile, diplomacy, identity formation, and the changing representations of these issues over time. His work combines social, cultural, and diplomatic history to examine the Mediterranean after the fall of al-Andalus. He is the author of several books, including *The Morisco Landscape*, winner of the 2024 Sheikh Zayed Book Award, and the founder of *The Moriscos in Tunisia* blog, launched in 2008. He has received numerous distinctions, including the 2020 Best Young Researcher in History Award from Beit al-Hikma in Tunisia. He was a Visiting Professor at Harvard University and the University of Murcia.

IRF III : Memory & Justice

Echoes of Expulsion: Contested Pasts, Living Memories, and the Morisco Question in Arab Thought

This project examines how Arab representations of the Moriscos — Spain's forcibly converted Muslims expelled in the early seventeenth century — have evolved from the aftermath of the expulsion to the present. Situated at the intersection of memory, identity, and justice, it asks how the Morisco question has been remembered, reinterpreted, and mobilized in Arab thought across different historical contexts. Building on my previous work on Spanish narratives of the expulsion, the project shifts the focus to Arab intellectual, literary, and cultural production, tracing how the Moriscos became a dynamic site of contested memory and a symbolic figure through which questions of belonging, historical accountability, and

political legitimacy were negotiated. The research combines quantitative mapping of textual production with close historical and analytical readings. It examines early modern works by authors such as al-Maqqarī, al-Hajarī, Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm, al-Ghazal, and al-Meknessi; modern historical writings and travel accounts; and contemporary novels, media productions, podcasts, documentaries, and online debates. By comparing these Arab representations with Spanish narratives, the project analyzes how different traditions have “mapped” the Morisco past as a claim to memory, justice, and identity. The project's main output will be a scholarly monograph offering the first comprehensive study of Arab representations of the Moriscos across four centuries. It will also produce articles, conference presentations, and public outreach activities. More broadly, the project contributes to memory studies, Arab intellectual history, and debates on historical justice by showing how the Morisco legacy continues to function not only as a record of past suffering but also as a living framework through which Arab societies negotiate identity, recognition, and justice in the present.

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