



CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

International Conference

A Decolonial Mediterranean? Disparities, Imaginations, Power Relations

(November 4-8, 2024, Tunis)

Submissions are possible until April 30, 2024 (12:30 pm CEST)

Is the Mediterranean a dead concept - or does it still have potential for dialogue among equal partners, as Mohammad Arkoun argued. The international conference "A Decolonial Mediterranean? Disparities, Imaginations, Power Relations" invites scholars in the humanities and social sciences from the north, south, east or west of the Mediterranean to explore the question of a decolonial Mediterranean from the viewpoint of Tunis and the Maghreb, and through the five interrelated 'Interdisciplinary Research Fields' that constitute the research agenda of the Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb (MECAM): **Aesthetics & Cultural Practice, Inequality & Mobility, Memory & Justice, Resources & Sustainability, and Identities & Beliefs**. Following Walter Dignolo and others, decoloniality is understood as an epistemological project of "undoing and redoing". We therefore would like to discuss the colonial conditions and legacies of the western-European invention and intervention of and in the Mediterranean in relation to alternative de- and postcolonial imaginations, practices and relations of a Mediterranean region, space or concept.

in cooperation with

The Mediterranean region as a natural and cultural entity is an “imagined geography” (Edward Said) and in particular a western-European invention that contributed to the colonisation of the Maghreb, and other regions of the world, to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and other dynasties or states. Since the age of decolonisation after World War II, the regions in the south or east of the Mediterranean have been increasingly influenced by processes, ideas, and stakeholders from other (non-Western-European) regions, such as the USA and the USSR, or the postcolonial Arab, African or Asian states and movements during the period of the Cold War, and more recently by states like China, Russia, the Gulf states or Turkey. Geopolitical considerations will be addressed and linked to questions of representations, mobilities, connectivities, and disparities of and in the Mediterranean that emerged in colonial, postcolonial or recent times. The conference will contrast the imperial age (1800-1950) and contemporary history and politics in order to address the relations and disparities between time periods and spatial imaginations, but also between different actors and their discourses and practices.

By “decolonizing the Mediterranean” (Proglia 2017), the conference aims at critically investigating the legacies of European colonialism in the subsequent states around this maritime space and at addressing different or complementary representations of the Mediterranean within the Maghreb or other regions of the world, such as the interconnections between “White”, “Red” and “Black” Sea, put forward by intellectuals and politicians of the Ottoman Empire, or other spatial imaginations, historical legacies, ideas and practices, that order, divide and connect space, time or societies such as the desert, the rivers, the languages, or cultural and aesthetic practices.

The conference will explore the question of a Decolonial Mediterranean through five threads that constitute the research fields of MECAM:

Aesthetics & Cultural Practice addresses how aesthetic forms and cultural practices influence the process by which models and imaginations of the Mediterranean are expressed and (re-)negotiated. It also investigates the ways in which disparities, political and societal transformations influence aesthetic and cultural practices;

Inequality & Mobility focusses on social and economic inequalities, the resulting sense of insecurity, and their role in the (re-)negotiation of visions and models of the Mediterranean. How are distinct forms of disparity (incl. concrete policy decisions) drive or restrain mobility and how in turn, mobility can exacerbate or mitigate inequality;

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 Mediterranean;

Resources & Sustainability investigates how societies in general and political decision-makers in particular deal with burgeoning socio-economic disparities and growing environmental problems. Especially rentier and extractivist economic models in the Maghreb/Middle East are addressed here as they generate particular forms of disparities and thus also visions of a future Mediterranean;

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 Mediterranean.

Applicants are invited to relate their proposal in one or more of the five threads and problematize its link to the idea of a decolonial Mediterranean. Papers may thus address questions of (forced) migration across the Mediterranean, (post)colonial economic and (geo)political relations about and within the Mediterranean region, representations of the Mediterranean in historiography, in textbooks, novels, films or other artistic creations, environmental issues concerning the Mediterranean and individual and communal processes of identifying or refusing being identified as Mediterranean.

DISCIPLINES AND POSSIBLE TOPICS

We invite early career and established scholars to submit contributions from the humanities and social sciences, including experts on the Mediterranean, but also on other maritime spaces with a comparative dimension to the Mediterranean. We particularly encourage academics from the “Global South” to apply. Possible topics may include geopolitical and economic dynamics, migration and refugee movements, ecological challenges as well as political, philosophical and artistic imaginations.

PRACTICAL DETAILS

The Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien, one of MECAM’s partner institutions will process the application-process. Therefore, we kindly ask you to submit your application (a title and an abstract of your contribution (up to one page) and a short academic CV (up to two pages) via the secure online application platform of the Forum Transregionale Studien by **April 30 2024, 12.30h CEST.:** application.trafo-berlin.de (applications by email will not be considered). If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact MECAM’s science communication coordinator, Dr. Diana Abbani (diab@trafo-berlin.de)

The extended organization committee will select the conference participants. Applicants will be informed about the evaluation decision by June 1, 2024. The invited participants accept to send a summary of their contribution by October 1, 2024 and subsequently to write a contribution to the MECAM Series on the TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research (<https://trafo.hypotheses.org/>).

Candidates whose contributions will be selected, will receive funding for visa, transport and accommodation for a total of five days (incl. arrival and departure day).

ORGANIZERS

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The “Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb” (MECAM) was founded 2020 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. During a three-year preliminary phase (2020-2023), this consortium is entrusted with the institutional development of MECAM and the preparation of the project’s main phase (2023-2029). The Federal Ministry of Education and Research 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 Institute Supérieur des Etudes Appliquées en Humanités (ISEAHT) de Tunis.

For further information on MECAM, please visit: www.mecam.tn