ميكام
مركز ميريان
للدراسات المتقدمة
في المنطقة المغاربية

MECAM
Merian Centre
For Advanced Studies
In The Maghreb

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Individual Residential Fellowships (9/2027 - 4/2028) for Postdoctoral and Advanced Scholars

"Imagining Futures: Dealing with Disparity"

Deadline 18.01.2027; 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 2027 to April 2028.** 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 and nationalities, including Tunisia. MECAM has been established at the Université de Tunis/Tunisia in October 2020 to strengthen internationalisation, free academic research and cooperation in the Humanities and Social Sciences, in and with the Maghreb.

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 2027-2028

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, socioeconomic conflicts, or (transitional) justice.

ELIGIBILITY & MOTIVATION

Applications are welcome from postdoctoral and advanced researchers of all fields in the social sciences and humanities, all countries, nationalities, and genders. The applicant should meet the following criteria:

- The applicant is interested in advancing their research in the framework of MECAM's main theme "Imagining futures: Dealing with disparity" in conversation with colleagues from the Maghreb, the Mashrek, Europe, and other regions of the world.
- The applicant wants to engage in collaborative work, in debate and exchange with other researchers working on topics related to the five IRFs.
- The applicant wants to become part of a network of interdisciplinary, intergenerational, and interregional exchange as well as debate on disparity and the competing models for the future that co-exist in contemporary societies.
- 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 STRUCTURE

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. MECAM fellowships are residency fellowships. Therefore, fellows are expected to take up residency for eight months in Tunis, from 1 September 2027 to 30 April 2028. During the period of their residency, fellows will have the opportunity to work on their individual, self-chosen research projects and to engage in exchange with their co-fellows, colleagues from Tunisia, and from MECAM's networks. MECAM fellows can pursue their individual research projects in whichever way they choose and decide on their outputs, be it an academic article, an essay, a policy paper, a book, a report, etc. Due to the residence obligation, field work or archive research in Tunis during the fellowship is possible, but projects that rely on field or archival work outside Tunis should already be well advanced and not rely on extensive travel during the fellowship-period. Successful applicants will become *"MECAM fellows"* with all relevant rights and obligations: Travel and relocation costs will be compensated. A monthly stipend will be awarded for the duration of the fellowship according to a so called "no gain-no loss" principle.

ACTIVITIES

Fellows are expected to work regularly at the MECAM office and to participate in on-site seminars and colloquia, as well as in academic events arranged by MECAM or one of its fellows in the city of Tunis. Fellows will be invited to take responsibility in shaping formats that support collaborative work and the academic life of MECAM. While working on their own research, fellows test and develop their ideas in exchange with their co-fellows, and may explore individual or collective forms of cooperation with colleagues from Tunisian Universities. 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 organised by the fellows. During this week, they present their work and can invite external guests. With the acceptance of the fellowship, fellows commit themselves to participate regularly in the in-person colloquia, to publish a MECAM paper and to contribute to MECAM's event week ("MECAM Spectrum") where also MECAM's principal investigators working on IRFs and/or external experts are participating.

NETWORK AND EXCHANGE

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 in-person and virtual forms of exchange and debates. It also facilitates collaboration and engagement with scholars at MECAM's partner institutions, students, and the wider public.

Fellows will become part of the MECAM network, which 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 and formats. Furthermore, the exchange between fellows is facilitated through a secure digital workspace (TrafoHub) and other digital tools.

SUPPORT

The MECAM directors and coordination office in Tunis support fellows during their stay. 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.

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 18 January 2027, 12:30h CEST**.

Apply here: *https://application.trafo-berlin.de/*

Applications submitted by email will not be considered. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact MECAM's research data management coordinator, *Miriam Hanses*: *miriam.hanses@trafo-berlin.de*

Link for the FAQ

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).
- Selected candidates will be interviewed.

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 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 organisation that promotes the internationalisation 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 of 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: https://mecam.tn/?lang=en