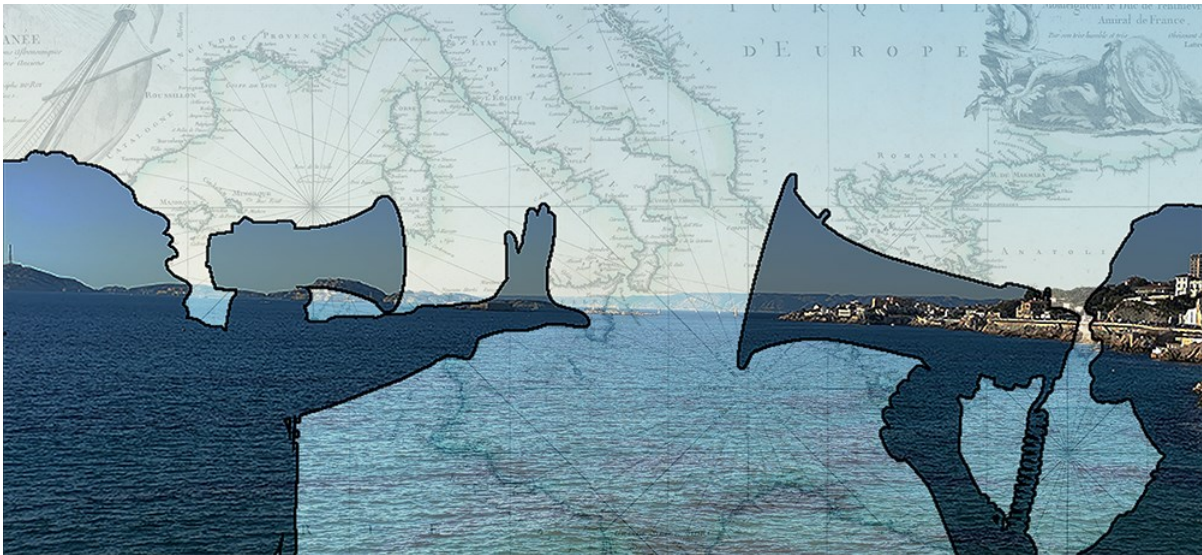# Speech, speak out, crisis

Call for papers for the first issue
of the journal *Mutations en Méditerranée* (MeM)

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The journal *Mutations en Méditerranée* (M*e*M) is a multidisciplinary digital journal in the Humanities and Social Sciences, founded by doctoral students of the Institut Sociétés en Mutation en Méditerranée (SoMuM) of Aix-Marseille Université, in collaboration with ED 355 (École Doctorale Espace Culture Sociétés) and with the support of twelve research units, CGGG, CNE, DICE, IDEMEC, IMAF, IREMAM, LEST, LPED, MESOPOLHIS, PRISM, TDMAM, TELEMMe. This peer-reviewed academic journal aims to open a publication space for young researchers (PhD students and post-doctoral fellows). It is an open access, annual publication that provides immediate access to full-text material.

For this first issue, we propose to take the different disciplinary languages of our editorial board as a starting point and to consider speech as an object of study. We propose to consider "speech" in a broad manner, thus understanding it as designating any thought expressed, and paying particular attention to who the speakers are, which mediums they employ and what their motives may be. Firstly, we consider speaking out in times of crisis, in the hopes of being heard. But does all speech have the same influence or impact? Which words are heard and heeded? We then turn to speech as it may be used to appropriate the words of another, thereby taking it from them. Speech, or rather specific forms of discourse may thus be thrown into crisis. We submit various lines of thought ranging from the Arab uprisings, whose tenth anniversary we are celebrating, to the place speech occupies in social movements. Our contemplation of this topic ranges from the hierarchy of languages to the hierarchies of discourse, to the role of scientific discussion in society and within the restitution of an interviewees or respondents spoken word within the framework of research

investigation in the humanities. This call is open to proposals from doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows hailing from all disciplines, and multidisciplinary contributions will be particularly appreciated.

1. Languages and speech: from classification to raking

A hierarchy of speech

As a complex structuring and structured system (Bourdieu 2001), language is a symbolic instrument. Naming and classifying languages also belong to a process of hierarchizing speakers, as well as speech itself. The "level" of language is used as an indicator of "social standing", and eloquence and esteemed lexicon are used to combat slang and slurs. Language, including vocabulary and accent, represent an integral component of social "cues" at play within interactions. These elements also represent a discriminating criterion in the labor market and within social life. This call for papers strives to question the ways in which society participates in this social hierarchy by reproducing it through its institutions (public authorities, legislation, schools, families…).

Today, the number of languages across all human societies varies between 5 000 and 10 000. This approximation highlights the difficulty that the scientific world encounters when attempting to define what a language is. This principle of quantification is not based on criteria intrinsic to each language, but rather on the differences between them. Among these differences, the number of speakers of a language seems to reflect its importance or influence. English, for example, is ranked as the third most important mother tongue, behind Mandarin and Hindi, and the first when the number of speakers across the globe is estimated. French is ranked fifteenth as a mother tongue and fifth as a spoken language. Arabic is the sixth most widely spoken mother tongue in the world, well ahead of French. Of these thousands of languages, only 141 are recognized as official languages (enshrined in a constitution or referenced as such in legislation). Language can thus be a valorizing or depreciating institution and these classifications change over time. This socially and culturally constructed reality invites reflection on these mechanisms, the evolution of these classifications and the consequences for populations and human relations between or within linguistic areas.

Speaking out, but in what language? If speaking is an act, the language in which it is expressed is a political and cultural issue, and the choice of language is also a political act. This is demonstrated by the debates around gender-neutral and inclusive language. Intended as a reparative solution to a process of linguistic "masculinization" carried out by the Académie Française in the 17th century, it has become a veritable political battleground. One of the many arguments is the inaudibility of the language. Spoken Norwegian distances itself from written Norwegian, which is referred to as "standards" and which is the subject of a significant struggle for legitimacy. The inevitable question that presents itself is: can a written language be accepted if it cannot also be spoken? Must a written language be a mere transcription of its oral expression? How may the two be complementary or, on the contrary, become competitors? Field studies or testimonies (biographical accounts, etc.) from around the world answer these questions and provide new ones.

Speech as a political and territorial issue

The question of linguistic identity is a significant one both within a national and international context (Barbour and Carmichael (eds.) 2002; Mekhilef 2016). It reflects a history and a belonging to linguistic territory. The desire to unite people through a common language was a challenge set by a German priest in the 1880s, Volapük, whose influence diminished with the arrival of Esperanto during the same period (de Visscher 2017). Language is not only an instrument of communication, but

also a political one. Colonization was also achieved through the imposition of a language and its culture, as was decolonization.

The history of sign language questions the political visibility of a population through its language. When, in 1880, the Congress of Milan forbade its use and teaching in schools (sometimes through violent means), it banished the deaf and mute population from society in general (Pelletier and Delaporte 2006). This historical case questions the role that language may play in integration or exclusion. Understanding each other implies hearing one another. By questioning the history of languages and their political and nationalistic uses, we can bring different mechanisms of integration or exclusion to light, both on a territorial or generational scale, as well as between social classes.

2. Speech and Social Sciences: Researchers' and respondents' language

A crisis of scientific speech

The question of speech in the humanities fosters methodological and epistemological reflection. The hypothesis of a crisis of authority in scientific discourse runs through the debates. One might consider the denial of scientific expertise by politicians, of which President Trump and Bolsonaro have become prime examples, or the distrust of scientists in civil society. Thus, in 2018, the CNRS journal Carnets de Sciences asked « La science est-elle en crise ? » (which translates to: Is science in crisis?) (Zeitoun 2018). Two years later, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institut des relations internationales et stratégiques (IRIS) titled a dossier: « Le virus du faux. Une crise de l'autorité scientifique ? » (which translates to: A virus of falsehoods. Scientific authority in crisis?) (Huyghe 2020).

Indeed, scientific discourse is now at the heart of these debates. The controversies surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic have outlined and brought into focus the antagonizing and opposing positions between the word of researchers and those of politicians or social network activists. Scientific speech is caught between its desire for autonomy from the scientific field (Bourdieu 1976), and the fact that it is "not worth an hour's effort if it is to have no more than speculative interest" (Durkheim 1893). The question « les Sciences sociales pour qui et pourquoi ? » (which translates to: the social sciences for whom and why?) thus leads to the proposal of public research as understood by Burawoy (Burawoy 2009), i.e. a science that « articule une activité de production de connaissances et une activité de diffusion de ces connaissances et de participation au débat public » (which translates to: a science that combines an activity of production of knowledge with the spreading of this know-how and a participation in public debate) (Wieviorka and Hinault 2008).

The word of researchers and the social role of science are thus questioned by society, but also at the very heart of the academic field – as demonstrated by the controversies that have shaken teaching and research over the last two years. The denunciation of the militant nature of research, outside of any scientific demonstration, reactivates the notion of neutrality in science and the confusion between opinion and knowledge. Despite commitment being fundamental to the social sciences (Higelé and Jacquot 2017), the reasons that motivate research are confused with the modalities of its production, and the results, and the communication of those results, are judged separately from the methodologies used.

This is what has motivated us to invite our colleagues to question the very notion of scientific speech. It is not so much an inquiry into the place occupied by researchers in the media, but rather the status that society attributes to their language and message. What are the social representations of scientific discourse today? What level of autonomy of knowledge is accorded and how is it

evaluated? What spaces are reserved for dissemination and production? Who speaks out? And how do we speak *as scientists*?

Scientific language *vs.* the language of those interviewed and studied

The social sciences are thus regularly under suspicion for non-neutrality, complacency, a culture of apology, or even of a lack of scientific credibility. These criticisms of researchers' commitment often question the distance between the object of study and the respondents. « Penser la distance » or reflecting on distance from or proximity to the objects of study remain two complicated elements that are nonetheless necessary, especially when investigating fields that are hostile to research, experiences that are totally exogenous to our own (socially, spatially or temporally), or even more extreme situations of domination or vulnerability that are unknown to us (Le Roulley and Uhel (eds.) 2020).

Thus, if in a historical sense the object seems distant in relationship to the amount of time that separates it from the researcher, the latter may find themselves contemporaries with words spoken centuries before (Benjamin 2017). Temporal distance does not absolve us from our choice of collected and examined words and obliges us to justify them methodologically in the manner of other social sciences, whether the medium of investigation is official government archives or complete strangers (Corbin 1998). In geography, we also know that space is not a neutral given but rather represents the projection of social relationships (Lefebvre 1974; Frémont et al. 1984). In this respect, we do not just choose a space to study, but also a set of populations. In the context of qualitative surveys in the social sciences, we therefore base our analyses and our conceptual work on the words of our respondents. The materials consist of a set of fragments of authors' words or of observations. Thus, the restitution of these words and situations, as well as their collection, occupy an important place in the research methodology. If distance from the respondents is one of the first lessons in objectification that we receive during our training, it is because Durkheim (Durkheim 1895) invited us to adopt a « attitude mentale » towards our research objects, this particular stance consists of considering the objects as things, i.e. as external to us. Conversely, and anthropology has made an important contribution in this respect, we know that if researchers construct their object, within a framework of interactions with the environment under study, they may be affected in return. Thus, some invite us to think about the ways in which the investigation and the investigator are transformed by the object of study and by the investigative relationship (Favret-Saada 1977), as well as to question what their subsequent absence transforms in the field (Fabian 2017).

What room is left for the respondents' words? How can they be adequately and faithfully reproduced all while also being interpreted? How can they be translated without appropriating the message? What role does the researcher's language play in this investigative relationship? And what does it mean to make people talk?

This line of thought invites doctoral students to take a reflexive approach to their own role in society, but also to their position regarding their subject of study

3. Spaces for speech and social protest

The year 2021 marks eleven years since Mohamed Bouazizi propelled, by means of his own immolation in Sidi Bouzid, one of the largest popular uprisings the region has seen since independence. Without yielding to the temptation to interpret all such movements through a single prism and recognizing that each of them has its own history and logic (Allal 2012; Catusse, Signoles and Siino 2015), all of these movements expressed a desire for greater freedom of speech.

Today, it is clear that each of these countries is experiencing its own post-revolutionary trajectory. In Tunisia, the departure of Ben Ali led to a change of regime and the advent of a parliamentary republic in which freedom of expression was officially enshrined (at least until the presidency of Kais Saied). In Libya, civil society is trying, as best it can, to withstand militias, war and political and territorial fragmentation. Egypt has been the scene of a profound and violent authoritarian restoration in which it has never been so dangerous to speak out. Finally, Syria has experienced the deadliest war in the region and the exile of almost half its population. Morocco, with its protests in the Rif region, and Algeria, with the « Hirak » and the departure of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, have also been theatres of major popular protests, demanding the right to freely express one's opinions in the public arena.

All speech is spatially situated. What are the Mediterranean spaces, from the regional to the local level, in which speech is expressed? What types of territories are vectors of oral expression? Tunis, Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, Benghazi, Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakech, Madrid… Since 2011, the Mediterranean metropolises have emerged as privileged spaces of protest and political demand. In Morocco, half of the protests in recent decades have taken place in the country's largest cities, with a small minority (18%) taking place in rural territories (Belguidoum, Cattedra and Iraki 2015).

Would it not be wise to analyze the existing power dynamics between inhabitants of these metropolises? Algiers, for example, the capital and largest metropolis of Algeria, has recently become a space for popular protests, thus breaking with decades of belonging to « espaces de loyauté au régime » or spaces that are understood to be loyal to the political regime (Bensaâd 2021). What situations define the taking of the floor, whether public, private, intimate, collective, artistic, scientific or journalistic in the Mediterranean (Nefissa 2007; Souhia 2020)? Through which media is speech expressed today? And which themes or topics are used to mobilize us (Catusse 2013)?

From a multiscalar perspective, what are the spaces of expression for public discourse on a sub-metropolitan or sub-urban scale? Are they central spaces? Peripheral spaces? Does the street, as a public space, favor « politicité » or any and all expression of the political experience and reality of people in society? (Hadj-Moussa and Derradji 2020). Or, conversely, are private spaces more conducive to people speaking out, as they are sheltered from view and from the risk of police and judicial repression?

In states where freedom of expression is threatened, cyberspace appears to be a category of place in which speaking out is facilitated (Grossetti 2014). The term cyber or internet activism expresses the entanglement between political activism and cyberspace. Social networks played a catalyzing role for speech surrounding the revolutionary process in Tunisia (Lecomte 2011; Touati 2012). What can be said of the situations in other Mediterranean states that have experienced popular uprisings in recent years? What roles have other types of media played today, as in the past, from radio to print, to television or correspondence?

Outside the purely Mediterranean context, the number of voices speaking out in public spaces is increasing and participates in questioning the classic methods of intervention and mobilization of political or scientific actors for the past ten years. Movements such as « Nuit Debout » and « les Gilets Jaunes » (Yellow vests protests) in France, anti-racist or conservative uprisings in the United States, and youth movements in favor of climate change are leading to new expressions of public opinion.

These avenues are not closed, and the frameworks are diverse. Nevertheless, we will favor contributions that address these themes from the perspective of social relationships (who speaks?), spaces (where is speech taking place?) or media (how is speech being broadcasted?).

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Submission requirements

Proposals for contributions should be between 2500 and 5000 characters. **They should be sent to institut-somum-redaction-mem[at]univ-amu.fr**.

Provisional calendar:

- Deadline for the submission of **article proposals**: **July 15, 2022**
- Communication of result for the article proposal selection procedure: **July 31, 2022**
- Deadline for return of reviewed articles (V1): **October 31, 2022**
- Return of author evaluations: **January 30, 2022**
- Deadline for return of reviewed articles (V2): **March 10, 2023**
- Return of author evaluations: **April 10, 2023**
- Deadline for return of final review of articles (VF): **May 08, 2023**
- Online publication of the first issue: **July 2023**