

The Centre d'Etudes Maghrébines a Tunis Presents:

“THE ‘BUREAUCRATIC’ DIMENSIONS OF PUBLINET'S AND
PERSONAL COMPUTING IN HAY ETTADHAMON”



BY MS. KAREM IRENE SAID

The future of the “Publinet” or internet café in popular neighborhoods in Tunis remains ambiguous, as a majority of these residents now own smart phones, tablets and laptop computers, accessing the internet from home. However, residents in the municipality of Hay Ettadhamon, the largest popular area in greater Tunis, continue to rely on local Publinets due to high rates of theft, weak internet infrastructure, failing devices, and a lack of funds for internet services. To ensure a loyal customer base, Publinets increasingly expand their services to include printing, photocopying, scanning and binding. Through such expansion into paper services, Publinets more and more serve to mediate the bureaucratic engagements of their clients. At the same time, basic computer science education in Tunisia places stress on the mastery of Microsoft Office applications, ensuring that students are familiar with the bureaucratic functions of personal computing. Treating these functions as “bureaucratic” means acknowledging that administrative practices found in offices have derived from governing techniques that likewise serve as techniques of self-governance. These local forms of computer use are significant given 1) anthropological literature on how the poor engage with government bureaucracy and 2) circulating descriptions of Hay Ettadhamon as a place with low literacy rates. This paper uses ethnographic dissertation research in Publinets, computer science classrooms, and homes in Hay Ettadhamon to evaluate the extent to which personal computing can be regarded as “bureaucratic” technology for these residents.

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THE EVENT WILL TAKE **PLACE AT CEMAT ON THURSDAY MAY 26TH,**
2016 AT 16:00. A LIGHT RECEPTION WILL FOLLOW