



**Centre d'études et de documentation
économiques, juridiques et sociales**

On Tuesday November 5, 2024 at 11am at CEDEJ **Ifdal El Saket** will be presenting her research:
Movie-Fans in Interwar Egypt: Towards Histories of Cinema-Going and the Audience.

In the 1920s and 30s, going to the movies was a popular leisure activity in Egypt's urban centres. Cairo and Alexandria dominated the scene, and the industry flourished as people flocked to cinema theatres to watch the latest films. In tandem with an expanding film exhibition landscape emerged a vibrant cinema fandom that found expression in the burgeoning illustrated press of the time. While we know very little about these early cinema fans, we do know that many pinned their aspirations onto the movie world, some founding amateur film clubs, entering cinema-themed competitions, and even dreaming of becoming movie stars. In this talk, I will share my ongoing research on fan cultures and audiences in Egypt in the 1920s and 1930s. With a few exceptions, the experiences of early cinema audiences in Egypt have for a long time been neglected in the scholarship of early cinema. In this talk, I will examine nascent movie fandom in Egypt from the 1920s and 1930s, shedding light on how people made sense of the cinema in their lives, contributed to the broader social formation of cinematic cultures, and pegged their aspirations and desires onto the world of cinema. I will also present some reflections on the broader question of movie-going and audience studies in the Arab world.

Ifdal Elsaket is an assistant director (Arabic and Islamic Studies and Middle East Studies) at the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo. Ifdal received her PhD in history and Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of Sydney, Australia, where she worked on the history of cinema in Egypt, 1897-1952. She continues to work on histories of the cinema in Egypt, focusing on audiences, the star system, and the off-screen dynamics of film production and exhibition. She recently edited (alongside Philippe Meers (UAntwerp) and Daniel Biltereyst (UGent) the volume *Cinema in the Arab World: New Histories, New Approaches* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023).