



NEW RELIGIOUS SOCIABILITIES IN EURO-ISLAM: THE ORGANIZATIONAL LOGICS AND RECOGNITION POLITICS OF GÜLEN MOVEMENT IN FRANCE AND GERMANY

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Abstract

This paper examines the individual and collective de-stigmatization strategies of the Gülen Movement in France and Germany. Firstly, it describes the organizational structures of the ‘neo-communitarian’ Gülen Movement in Europe. Despite the large Turkish population in western Europe, the Movement arrived relatively late, compared to other Islamic organizations – it has been present in Europe for almost 10 years. We seek to analyse particularly the educational and interfaith dialogue activities of the Movement. Secondly, by following the theoretical approaches of Erving Goffman and Charles Taylor, we examine the recognition politics and de-stigmatization strategies of Gülen Movement members. At the individual level, the search for recognition through visibility in the public sphere indicates the struggle of the members to cope with the ‘stigmatized’ image of Muslims and to compensate for this ‘public deficit’ by excelling in their occupation (at university or professional life etc.) This consciously appropriated religio-communitarian identity – paradoxically – may become in some cases a factor for integration to the global societies. Consequently, the Islamic identity is transformed from a stigma to a ‘subcultural advantage’. At the collective level, the Gülen Movement is primarily focused on the problems of the immigrant youth population in Europe. The reintegration of immigrant students into the educational system of the host societies is defined as a first goal. The total absence of religious discourse in these educational establishments constitutes the most interesting and paradoxical feature of this Movement’s strategy: by softening the visibility of their religious identification, the Movement look for recognition in the public sphere in Germany and France in order to build an educational network in these countries.

1. Introduction

This paper examines the individual and collective destigmatization strategies of the Gülen movement members in France and Germany. Firstly, we will describe the organizational structures of the “neo-communitarian” Gülen movement in Europe. Despite the large Turkish population in Western Europe, the movement took hold relatively late from other Islamic organizations and they have been present in Europe since almost 10 years. We seek to analyze particularly the educational and interfaith dialogue activities of the movement.

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Secondly, by following the theoretical approaches of Erving Goffman and Charles Taylor we examine the recognition politics and destigmatization strategies of the Gülen movement members. At the individual level, the search for recognition through visibility within public sphere actually indicates the struggle of the members to cope with the “stigmatized” image of Muslims and to compensate this “public deficit” by excelling in their occupation (at university or professional life etc.) This consciously appropriated religio-communitarian identity -paradoxically- may become in some cases an “integrator force” to the global societies. Consequently, the Islamic identity transform stigma to a “subcultural advantage.”

At the collective level, the Gülen movement is primarily focused on the problems of immigrant youth population in Europe. The reintegration of immigrant students to the educational system of the host societies is defined as a first goal. The total absence of the religious discourse in these educational establishments constitutes the most interesting and paradoxical point of this movement. By softening the visibility of their religious identification, the movement seek for recognition in the public sphere in Germany and France in order to build an educational network in these countries. This article is based on semi-directive interviews with the directors of the learning centres in Germany and France and a 6 month participative observation of Gülen-inspired-activities in Strasbourg.

2. Islamic Movements as Socialization Agents in Europe

The studies on the social organization of the Turkish immigration in Europe show that the ethnic-religious identity plays an important role amongst the Turkish Diaspora in Europe. In a recent research on Turkish immigrants in France and Germany, two Turkish scholars noticed this accentuated religious identification.⁴⁷⁸ The majority of the immigrants defined themselves as “Turkish-Muslim” (40%). This investigation indicates us that the “Turkish-Muslim” identity constitutes the majority amongst Turks of France and Germany. (61% in Germany, 56% in France)

Thus, the religious practice becomes an important identity-maker in the minority situation. Because of importance of the “Turkish-Muslim” identity, Islamic communities of Turkish origin naturally play an extremely active role amongst the Turkish immigrants. These organisations of Turkish origin shape opinions of the Turkish community and play a significant role in transmission of communitarian values to younger generations.⁴⁷⁹ Although these various Islamic associations are often regarded as centres of “Islamic fundamentalism” and also as an obstacle for ‘integration’, the Turkish immigrants who participate in these communal organisations are not generally motivated by such a commitment. These collective initiatives are not only actuated by a certain determination to preserve the ethnic-religious identity. Their reattachment to ethnic-religious organisations appears as an opportunity to establish solidarity networks. Such networks also occur as defensive structures against the everyday life experiences of the socio-economic life in Europe such as racism, social isolation, insecurity and exclusion.⁴⁸⁰ We suggest that the emergence of such institutions at the local

⁴⁷⁸ Ayhan Kaya and Ferhat Kentel, “Euro-Turks: A Bridge or a Breach between Turkey and the European Union? A Comparative Study of French-Turks and German-Turks.” CEPS EU-Turkey Working Papers No. 14, 1 January 2005

⁴⁷⁹ Manço, Ural, La question de l’émigration Turque : Une diaspora de cinquante ans en Europe occidentale et dans le reste du monde, in « La Turquie » sous la direction de Semih Vaner, Fayard-Ceri, 2005, Paris pg.567

⁴⁸⁰ Altay Manço, Turquie : vers de nouveaux horizons migratoires ?, Paris, Turin, Budapest, L’Harmattan, coll. « Compétences interculturelles », 2004, op. cit. 152



and transnational level indicates the motivation for a sub-integration⁴⁸¹ to the host society. These organisations offer a socialization opportunity to young people who do not actually have an easy access to autochthon social structures. Lastly, these associations led by Islamic mobility became active agents of socialization in the sedentarisation process of the Turkish community in Europe along with a conservative role of the Turkish-Islamic identity through the religious and ideological transmission. These associations fulfil multiple functions such as disseminating information, finding jobs, facilitating new friendships and allowing access to diverse social networks in the Turkish community.

By the valorisation of the Islamic communities, the first generation of immigrants who are poor-educated and non-speakers of the host country language (German, French etc.), commonly live in suburbs, sought to rebuild an authority on their family. They consider the Islamic associations as an alternative to “vices of the street” such as prostitution, drug consumption and urban delinquency and so on. Owing to the “legitimacy” of these associations, the young generation could meet out of the family enclosure, without concerning their parents. Moreover, the women branches of these associations promote inter-individual relations between women immigrants which constitute the most excluded group of the immigrant population. The existence of such common platforms of meeting relieves the members from social exclusion, isolation and loneliness.⁴⁸² In short, Islam is a tool for an integration which refuses assimilation, a way through which young Muslims strive for a public visibility as both a member of the global society and Muslim. Islam provides this young generation with an opportunity to be the part of the society differently, and to do this, they need to make their difference visible in the public sphere in a positive way.⁴⁸³

In spite of this fact, we observe a dilemma between two dimensions in the activity fields of these Islamic organizations: a social dimension which consists in dealing with the daily problems of migrants, and other, political activities which are particularly based on anti-western and communitarian vision. In the discourse of the mainstream Turkish Islamic movements such as Milli Görüş, Suleymanci community and the fundamentalist movements like Kaplanci community etc., the Western influence are always considered as a threat more than a resource or an enrichment. This “mistrust” also comes from historical competition between two religious universes, Christianity and Islam. The essential differentiation of the Gülen movement from the other Islamic communities occurs in this anti-western attitude.⁴⁸⁴

The social role of the Islamic associations led by various cultural, educational and sportive activities which favours a socialization (following a sub-integration to host society) were always defined as a secondary goal by disciples of these organizations. The ultimate goal was “reislamization of the society” or “reestablishment of the shariah regime in Turkey” etc; however, particularly after the “*failure of political Islam*”⁴⁸⁵ in early 1990s, the big ideological goals are replaced by more pragmatic objects. Furthermore, the Islamic associative institutionalization and bureaucratisation process gave

⁴⁸¹ The term “sub-integration” indicates an indirect integration to autochthon social structures by participating in communal organisations. The individual attempts of diaspora members to publicly affirm an identity give birth to an integration process to the host society. Muslim citizens have dialogue with society through their expressions of identity and difference.

⁴⁸² Idem, p. 152-153

⁴⁸³ Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Islam des Jeunes*

⁴⁸⁴ Nadine A Weibel, *Pour une ébauche de l'islamisme Turc en Alsace et en Allemagne*, Jund Alain, Dumont Paul, Stéphane de Tapia « Enjeux de l'immigration Turque en Europe » Harmattan, 1995, pg. 267

⁴⁸⁵ Olivier Roy, “L'echec de l'Islam politique”, Paris, Seuil, 1992



birth to an inner-secularisation amongst the members. Recently, these various socio-religious associations however witness a relative secularisation process as a result of the rejuvenation of their administrative staff. The administrative staff of these associations preoccupies more and more with the everyday life problems of Turkish immigrants who are victims of a social and economic exclusion and who suffer from a constant alienation process. As a result, the social, educational and sportive activities of these associations which were always considered as a “medium” to gain more members have become an ultimate goal.⁴⁸⁶ During the 1980s and early 1990s, the communitarian functioning of these associations generated an ideological and psychological closure amongst the younger generations. But today we witness the emergence of a new religious discourse in the Turkish Diaspora in Europe. Associations whether they refer directly to “Islam” or not, engage in a social militancy which concerns the activities such as after-school tutoring and political participation etc.

3. The Gülen Movement in Germany and France

3.1. The Settlement Process of Gülen Movement in Europe

Despite the large Turkish population in Western Europe, the movement took hold relatively late from other Islamic organizations and they have been present in Europe since almost 10 years. After a research on Fethullah Gülen’s old sermon records, we learned that Fethullah Gülen frequently visited some French and German cities at the end of 1980s. But the institutionalization process of the movement started after mid-1990s. Contrary to the other Islamic movements, the Gülen community did not follow the Turkish migratory flow. We can explain this late arrival by two essential reasons:

- 1) The appearance of the Gülen movement in Turkey is relatively recent from the other mainstream Islamic movements such Milli Görüş and Suleymanci community. When Suleymanci community and Milli Görüş started to institutionalise their European affiliation in 1970s, Gülen movement was a little religious community in Izmir, a city located in the Aegean coast of Turkey. This religious-conservative community transformed to a transnational educational movement in the early 1990s.
- 2) After the demise of Soviet Union, Fethullah Gülen gave a priority to the Turkish world in Central Asia and other Post-Soviet countries. Thus he allocated a major part of social and economic capital of the community to these regions. Especially, Central Asia, as an unoccupied region by the other Islamic movements, was more attractive than Europe. In early 1990s, the Turkish diasporic Islam scene was largely dominated by Milli Görüş (National Outlook) movement.

However, in the last years, the followers of Gülen have disseminate their ideas in the Turkish Diaspora which live in the immigrant-populated cities such as Paris, Lyon, Strasbourg, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Berlin and Köln. In fact, the movement adapted its educational strategy to the European conditions by creating learning centres. Generally, the Gülen-led associations primarily prefer to establish private schools in Central Asia, Africa and Balkan countries. But, due to the difficult administrative procedure of establishment a private school, Gülen community adapted a different settlement strategy in Europe. The first arriving members found a learning centre, and after the institutionalization period, they took initiatives to found a private school. As a result of our

⁴⁸⁶ Ahmet Kuru and Ahmet Yükleken, “Avrupa’da İslam, Demokrasi ve Laiklik:Fransa, Almanya ve Hollanda örnekleri”(Islam, Democracy, and Secularism in Europe: the cases of France, Germany, and the Netherlands), Istanbul, TESEV Yayınları, 2007, p. 59



observation, we suggest that the community considers the learning centres as a “preparative period” to reach the main goal, i.e. the private school. For instance, as we learned from the community members, the first learning centre “BIL Learning House” (Das Bildungshaus BIL) in Germany was established at Stuttgart in 1995. After the BIL learning centre gained a considerable popularity amongst Turkish families and developed good relations with the local administration, they transformed the BIL learning centre to a private school in 2003.⁴⁸⁷

3.2. Organisational Structure of the Gülen Movement in Europe

Discursive and organisational strategies of the Gülen movement differ from the other Turkish Islamic communities. Mainly, the associational organisation of Turkish Islam in Europe base on two axes: the construction and sponsoring of mosques and Quran schools. Contrary to two other settlement strategies of Islamic movements, the Gülen movement members in Europe insist on “the great importance of secular education” and they refuse to build or sponsor mosques. They also do not focus on Quran education for the youth like Suleymanci community. The mosques and Quran schools led by Turkish Islamic movements play an important role in transmission of religious and communitarian values to the new generation. Instead of trying to build mosques or Quran schools, the Gülen movement transposed the Islamic mobilisation in the educational, cultural and entrepreneurial field by forming new voluntary associations.

Gülen movement members in Europe have founded a variety of establishments which operate in the major European cities. Essentially, we observe three main types of establishments: 1) Learning centres which offer particular courses in after-school groups to the students of the primary school by the college and private schools 2) “Intercultural dialogue” associations which organise intercultural events and meetings in order to promote the cultural exchanges between the Turkish population and the native society 3) Entrepreneurial associations which assemble Turkish businessmen who financially support the movement. In this article, we especially focus on the educational activities of the movement.

Learning centres, intercultural centres, entrepreneurial establishments and high schools are typically governed by a registered association. The members of the association, typically Turkish immigrant members of the movement, choose a board of directors, generally consisting of seven members.⁴⁸⁸

These centres typically serve about a hundred students at a variety of levels from grades secondary school to college-preparatory class offering courses such as English, French, German, math, chemistry, physics and biology. In addition, the learning centres offer language courses for newcomer adults. Furthermore, the learning centres try to encounter the needs of the students primarily of Turkish background. The centres organise seminars for the student parents “to make them conscious about the importance of education”. The staff at learning centres is composed by paid French/German teachers and volunteer university students of Turkish descent. Although with some exceptions-such as the Horizon learning centre in Mulhouse, France-, the learning centres don't receive direct financial support from the state and local administrative institutions. In the last years, administrative

⁴⁸⁷ Aydın, Ali İhsan, “Dynamiques religieuses et logiques éducatives: Les Centres d'éducation du mouvement de Fethullah Gülen en France”, Unpublished M.Athesis, Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Strasbourg, Strasbourg, 2004, p.68

⁴⁸⁸ Jill Irvine, “Gülen Movement and Turkish Integration” in Robert Hunt and Yuksel Aslandogan, “Muslim Citizens of the Globalized World: Contributions of the Gülen Movement” The Light Publication, 2006. pg.59



staff of the movement in Germany established good relations with the local and national political leaders. In France, the relations with the local political authorities are in the minimum level because of the secular context of France and modest visibility of the movement in the public sphere. But we observed that learning centres in Strasbourg and Colmar have close relationship with the deputies of their region and local administrative institutions.

Gülen inspired associations possess more than 100 learning centres in Germany and 16 learning centres in France. More recently, Gülen-led associations in Germany established three private high schools in Stuttgart, Berlin and Dortmund. The private schools offer a full college-preparatory curriculum to the students primarily of Turkish origin. These schools offer the same curriculum as public college preparatory high schools with the difference that they offer Turkish as the third language choice, after German and English. The Gülen movement doesn't have any private school in France. Although the movement members express their eagerness to establish a private school in France, the community hasn't reached a tangible size to realise their purpose.⁴⁸⁹

The Islamic organizations are usually managed by a head organization in Köln, the city which became "the capital of Turkish Diaspora in Europe". Unlike the centralist organization of the other Turkish Islamic communities such as National Outlook Movement and Suleymanci community, inter-institutional relations between Gülen-led associations is loose and there is not any head organization or federation in Köln for assembling the Gülen educational associations. As a typical character of the movement, the Gülen community in Europe is highly decentralised. In Germany and France, each city or town is responsible for organising and maintaining its own schools and centres. Strasbourg Le Dialogue Learning Centre director Nihat Sarier says:

We have no official relation with the other learning centres in France. Furthermore, we don't have a common strategy. Maybe, we are all inspired by the ideas of Fethullah Gülen but we are not controlled by a top organisation which decides everything. Sometimes I discuss my problems with the directors of other centres in Paris, Metz etc. and we share our experiences. But everybody lives in a different region or country, in different social and political circumstances; so everybody works with his own method.⁴⁹⁰

Despite this decentralized structure of the movement, the movement developed a complicated network on country level, continental level and inter-continental level. Firstly, the European edition of Zaman Daily Newspaper⁴⁹¹ which is located at Offenbach, Germany plays a central role on the communication between the community members in different European countries. Every day, the journal publishes articles (particularly in the 17th page) about local activities of the Gülen-led associations, the educational achievement of private schools etc. By this way, a member of the

⁴⁸⁹ When we compare the settlement degree of movement in Belgium, Denmark and Netherlands with France, we see a relative success of the movement due to the more liberal immigration policy of these countries. The first school of the movement in Europe was founded in Copenhagen, Denmark (HAY Skolen) in 1993. There are also five private schools in Belgium and two in Netherlands.

⁴⁹⁰ Interview with Nihat Sarier, 12.05.2007

⁴⁹¹ The principal media organ of the community, Zaman (Time) daily newspaper publishes a special edition for Turkish diaspora in Europe. The European edition of Zaman is published in Offenbach (Close to Frankfurt). The newspaper is sold more than 45,000 in 12 European countries. Zaman organized a large campaign called as "Football Unites" during the World Cup 2006 in Germany. The daily newspaper made a call to the Turkish community to support the national team of Germany.



movement in Paris gets informed about the activities in other French cities, or in Germany, Netherlands, and Belgium etc. Secondly, members of the movement constantly organise touristic voyages to the other countries in Europe, and even in Asia of Africa. In these touristic voyages, they also visit the Gülen-led educational establishments. For example, the local representatives of Zaman Daily Newspaper in Metz recently organised a visit to Turkmenistan and Kirgizstan for the Turkish origin entrepreneurs who financially support the local establishments of the community. They visited also the Gülen-led schools in these countries. Thirdly, according to information given by Hüseyin Gülerce, a columnist in Zaman and Fethullah Gülen's close friend, every city or town in different European countries sponsors the Gülen inspired educational activities in the African countries.⁴⁹² As a result of these strategies, the members feel themselves not only as a participant of a local association in his city but also as a part of the worldwide educational movement.

3.3. Stigma Correction Strategies of the Gülen Movement

We will borrow Erving Goffman's concept of "stigma" to understand the normalisation strategies of Gülen movement and immigration-originated youth in the host societies. Stigma refers to an individual sign, to social information the individual transmits about himself that disqualifies him and creates an obstacle to being fully accepted by society. A stigma therefore designates an attribute that profoundly discredits the individual.⁴⁹³ But we must emphasize that the "normal" and "stigmatised" are not persons, but viewpoints. These viewpoints are socially constructed by the mainstream values of the society.⁴⁹⁴ According to Goffman, ethnic, racial, religious or national identities are also the particularities which can put a distance with the "normal". Goffman named these types of stigmas as the "tribal stigmas". The young population of the Turkish community who are separated from their peers by the denominations such as "the suburban youth", "immigration-originated youth" etc. are marginalised by the majority of the native society. They suffer from a stigmatization due to the negative image (delinquency, drug, urban violence, religious extremism etc) which sticks to the suburbs/ghettos where they live. The majority of the young generation experiences the school failure in an early age and they are oriented towards non-qualified works. Even when they have reached an adequate school level for a qualified employment, they face with discrimination because of the "tribal stigmas" which they carry.

A. Individual Destigmatization Strategies

a. Quest for the recognition of authenticity

To put it bluntly, the principal actors of the Gülen movement are Turkish origin university students. In this section, we focus on the transmission of communitarian and religious values of the Gülen movement. We are also interested in individual normalization strategies of its members.

⁴⁹² Hüseyin Gülerce, "Gönüllüler Hareketi", Zaman, 12.03.2005

⁴⁹³ Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York: Touchstone Books, 1963.

⁴⁹⁴ *ibid*, pg.61



In the imagination of Gülen, the “golden generation” must hold in her womb Islamic values and vocabulary of the community. The most leading features of this generation are worldly activism and asceticism.

The key opposition of the Gülen movement members to the Western life produces in the private space. The moralization (or islamisation) is done by creating informal networks in the Gülen movement. Through light houses and religious study circles, the community offers a pietistic life to its members. In their daily life, they avoid from alcohol, cigarette, no halal food and nightlife etc.

But in the case of Gülen movement, the moralization of daily life does not prevent its members to penetrate friendship circles at school or in professional life. Per contra, the discourse of the movement favors these kinds of relationships, because the representation (temsil) of a "good Muslim" is merely possible through the active participation to the social life. The words of the President of the Association of Intercultural Dialogue Strasbourg (ADIS) Mr Talat is interesting in this manner:

Every week, we meet with our members in our local. I often ask them these kind of questions: How many French friends do you have? How many have you met this week? Maybe, it looks like a bizarre question but it is important! I know many Turks working in qualified jobs, but they have no French descent friend. I find it normal. Because these people have a social environment quite satisfactory within the Turkish community. But we must now put an end to this conformism.

But for some members of the community in Strasbourg, it's not merely a matter of "conformism."

My relations with my friends at university are rather good. We often hang out after school. But I am not like the others. So, our friendship is therefore somewhat limited. Sometimes they invite me to go to night-club and sometimes I refuse their propositions. I attempt to explain them why I don't use alcohol. But, at the end, i think that they find me a little bit odd. But over time, they got used to this situation. Now I think everybody accept and respect each other as they are. (Mehmet, a community member at Strasbourg)

As we can see in the case of Ali, movement members are concerned about issues relating to their identities. Repeating the words of Anne Sophie Lamine, “when one asserts his/her own identity, obviously a different comprehension of one's identity becomes worrisome.”⁴⁹⁵ So, the member is motivated by a communitarian discourse which favors an active participation to the social life of the main society, which favors to try to find his/her place among the "established"⁴⁹⁶ of the main society while keeping his/her tribal stigmas⁴⁹⁷. This dilemma sends us to Charles Taylor's famous discussion about authenticity. Taylor defines authenticity as being in touch with one's inner feelings. He acknowledges that our significant others make a major impact on those “inner feelings,” and not only while the self forms, but throughout the whole life of an individual.⁴⁹⁸ At a multi-cultural and multi-modern context, the authenticity is one of the characteristics of a believer of any religion. In our case,

⁴⁹⁵ Anne Sophie Lamine, « La Cohabitation des Dieux, Pluralité Religieuse et Laïcité », Puf, Paris, 2005, p. 276

⁴⁹⁶ Selon la formule de Norbert Elias

⁴⁹⁷ Selon la formule d'Erving Goffman

⁴⁹⁸ Charles Taylor, Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition”, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992



we suggest that the Gülen movement members strives or the recognition of its authenticity. Interestingly, the community members don't create new ghettoisations, but rather encourages one to find a solution to his/her problem of recognition of authenticity in the public sphere.

b. Dar-al Hizmet: The Inclusive Discourse of Gülen in the Immigration Context

The second important actor of Gülen movement is the Turkish descent entrepreneur and working-class. In this section we will analyze normalization strategies of the movement regarding to this second type of members.

Many scholars who specialise in European Islam build their analysis on the traditional Islamic contrast between *dar al-Islam* (House of Islam) and *dar al-harb* (House of war) which presents somehow the historical antagonism of Islam toward non-Muslims. But the conflict is merely one facet of the complex relationship of Muslims with 'Western' society. Contrary, for a great part of the Muslim population in Europe *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb* distinction is not a pertinent method to define relationship to non-Muslim societies. In Germany and France, "*many religious Muslims have recently undergone a significant shift toward a more 'integrational' stance*".⁴⁹⁹ Gülen's frequently used term *dar al-hizmet* (country of service) is a new concept in this regard, which helps to his followers to develop a particular discourse for propagation in the Turkish Diaspora. According to Gülen, "If one's intention is to serve Islam by presenting a good example, then one can stay wherever one desires. Gülen stresses a Muslim who lives in a non Muslim society; he or she has to obey the *lex loci*, to respect others' rights and to be just, and has to disregard discussions of *dar al-harb* and *dar al-Islam*."⁵⁰⁰ The conceptualisation and practical use of the term *Dar al-hizmet* looks like a "practical solution" offered by Gülen, more than a new politico-legal contribution to the Islamic law.

A separate note is needed here to summarise Gülen's geostrategic vision and particularly his pro-western attitude. Gülen has always been a strong supporter of economic and political integration with the EU, while he has a sceptical attitude towards cooperation with Iran and the Arabic world. This pro-European attitude represents a differentiation in the Turkish Islamic scene. The other leading Islamic groups such as Erbakan's National Outlook Movement appropriated an essentialist anti-Europe or anti-western discourse since 1970s.⁵⁰¹ Most of the Turkish Islamic community leaders considered the EU membership as a "danger of assimilation in the Judeo-Christian world". But Gülen affirms that Europe represents no danger to the Turkish-Islamic identity:

We should be comfortable in our outreach to the world. We will not lose anything from our religion, nationality and culture because of developments like globalisation, customs union or membership in the European Union. We firmly believe that the dynamics that hold our unity are strong. Again, we also firmly believe that the Quran is based on revelation and offers solution[s] to all the

⁴⁹⁹ Heiko Henkel, "Rethinking the *dar al-harb*: social change and changing perceptions of the West in Turkish Islam." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 9/2004

⁵⁰⁰ Ihsan Yılmaz, "İjtihad and Tajdid by Conduct" in "Turkish Islam and the Secular State The Gülen Movement by M Hakan Yavuz and John L Esposito (ed), Syracuse University Press, 2003, New York

⁵⁰¹ Hasan Kösebalaban, "The Making of Enemy and Friend: Fethullah Gülen's National-Security Identity » in "Turkish Islam and the Secular State The Gülen Movement by M Hakan Yavuz and John L Esposito (ed), Syracuse University Press, 2003, New York



problems of humanity. Therefore, if there is anybody who is afraid, they should be those who persistently live away from the invigorating climate of Quran. (2003)⁵⁰²

Furthermore, in an interview in 1995, he assigns a particular task to the Turkish Diaspora in Europe:

Our people who live in Europe must come off from their old situation and become a part of the European society. Their children must be oriented to universities more than artisanal high schools. Also, they must transmit our cultural and religious richness to European society. In the future, they will constitute our lobbies which we highly need today. In the past, only the 2 percent of the Turkish immigrant population was fulfilling their religious requirements. But today, 40 or maybe 60 per cent of the young population regularly prays in the mosques. Obviously, our people didn't undergo to an assimilation process, contrary, they impressed the host societies by their conviction and culture.⁵⁰³

The essential idea of the Gülen movement regarding to the Turkish Diaspora is to become a recognized part of the main society without losing one's "Turkish-Islamic" identity. During our research, we observed that the concepts such as "dar al-hizmet" and "renewal of intention" (tashih-i niyet) are frequently used by the disciples of the Gülen community in Europe. As a matter of fact, The Turkish immigrants mainly immigrated for the economic reasons. Therefore, to gain more money may become *raison d'être* for a Turkish entrepreneur or an employee, in Europe. By these concepts, sympathizers of Gülen movement try to change the mentality regarding to main society.

A Turkish small entrepreneur Kasım A. (age 46), community member who lives in Frankfurt-Germany says: "*We all came here (Germany) with an economic motive, to gain more money and have a more comfortable life. Nobody can deny it. But after 30 years, we became the members of this society. We cannot continue to live in our small communal worlds. Fethullah Gülen advises us to renew our intentions. That means we are not here just for a more comfortable life, but also be a good example for our entourage and work for the good of this country.*" Despite the "politically correct" aspect of this declaration, it indicates a discursive change regarding the host society.

The Gülen disciples in Europe advise to followers to renew their intentions (tashih-i niyet). The term "tashih-i niyet" is partially inspired by the idea of "hegira"⁵⁰⁴. With referring to the compulsive immigration of the prophet Mohammed from Mecca to Medina, the Islamic preachers in 20th century created a universal doctrine of "hegira", by urging the Muslims to immigrate to non-Muslim countries in order to make Islamic proselytism in these societies.⁵⁰⁵ According to Bassam Tibi, this doctrine largely forms the worldviews of the preachers of Muslim Diaspora in Europe. If we return to our case,

⁵⁰² Fethullah Gülen, "Hoşgörü ve Medya." Available at: <http://www.m-fGülen.org/eser/article.php?id=442>. Accessed 18 July 2003. Cited in Hasan Kösebalaban, "The Making of Enemy and Friend: Fethullah Gülen's National-Security Identity" in "Turkish Islam and the Secular State The Gülen Movement by M Hakan Yavuz and John L Esposito (ed), Syracuse University Press, 2003, New York

⁵⁰³ Nuriye Akman, "Hoca'nın hedefi Amerika ve Almanya" (Hodja targets USA and Germany), Turkish newspaper Sabah, 28.01.1995, <http://tr.fGülen.com/content/view/7853/74/>

⁵⁰⁴ "Hegira" is an important notion in the Muslim tradition. The prophet Mohammed ordered his followers to make "hegira" i.e. to immigrate and disperse to the different regions of the world in order to propagate the Muslim faith.

⁵⁰⁵ Bassam Tibi, "Europeanizing Islam or Islamization of Europe" in Timothy Brynes, Peter Katzenstein, "Religion in Expanding Europe", Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006, op.cit 210



the reference to the « hegira » doctrine is obvious in conceptualisation of “tashih-i niyet”. But it does not contain a proselyte or missionary connotation. This concept occurs as a resource of motivation for the community members to present a “good example” in their entourage.

Consequently, the term “dar al hizmet”, by eliminating the contrast between the dar Al harb and dar Al Islam, allows especially the immigration-originated youth to express their will to be recognized individually and collectively in the host society, not only as a diasporic -passive subjects, but also as “veritable subjects”⁵⁰⁶, “*who are searching a constructive role in the host society, as the autonomous authors of their trajectory and as the producers of their own existence.*”⁵⁰⁷

B. Collective Destigmatization Strategies

A. THE LEARNING CENTRES: QUEST FOR NORMALISATION?

Different to the worldwide settlement strategy of the movement, the followers of Gülen in Europe encounter some difficulties with the establishment procedure of private schools. It's not only because of the difficult administrative procedure; but also the prejudices against Muslim immigrants and the rise of Xenophobia- Islamophobia in the old continent. The Gülen movement in Central Asia or in Balkans etc. always searched a direct contact with the host society. Differently to the other regions, the followers of Gülen in Europe meet with a sizeable Turkish population; a population who has become an object of negative characterizations and stigmatizations. Therefore, the Gülen community implements a new immigrant-oriented strategy to gain legitimacy in the host societies.

According to Goffman, stigmatised persons adopt five principal strategies to correct their stigma:⁵⁰⁸

1. To try to correct the essence of the stigma or to dissimulate the stigma signs and to deny its influence: search for assimilation
2. To show that one's difference from “normal” persons doesn't prevent him/her to be successful in society; try to excel in the society (at school, work etc.) to achieve which is difficult even for the “normal” persons
3. To perform the personality who is bound to his social, cultural or ethnic identity, as a reaction to the disreputation of normal ones.
4. Cash in on from a person's stigma; seek to instrumentalize his/her stigma;
5. To redefine your difference as reason of pride and advantage on the “normal ones”, (assertion of the negritude: i.e. Black is beautiful etc.)

The first and third strategies go through with a process of “self-devalorisation”, while the second, fourth and fifth strategies are experienced by a process of “self-valorisation”. All the strategies -except

⁵⁰⁶ For a larger explication of the term “veritable subject” see: Alaine Touraine, “Pourrons-nous vivre ensemble ? Égaux et différents”, Fayard Editions, 1997

⁵⁰⁷ Dounia Bouzar, « L'islam entre mythe et religion : le nouveau discours religieux dans les associations socio-culturelles musulmanes », Les Cahiers de la sécurité intérieure, n°54, 2003, pg. 174, www.islamlaicite.org/article235.html.

⁵⁰⁸ We borrow Lorcerie's simplified model of the stigma correction strategy classement. See at: Lorcerie Françoise., « L'Ecole et le défi ethnique : Education et intégration », Paris, ESF & INRP, 2003, op.cit., 34



the last one- can be lead to a collective action. Moreover, the first, second and fourth strategies can be perceived as manoeuvres by the “normal” persons. We can observe the practice of all these stigma correction strategies by the Turkish immigrant youth. But in our case, the young students who participate in the educational activities of the Gülen movement adapt the second strategy. They try to excel in the host society via educational success and differentiate from their friends, other stigma carriers.

It's the same case for the Gülen movement. The administrative staff of the Gülen inspired institutions, frequently complain about the host society's perception of the learning centres as an “Islamic association”, a “communitarian association”, or an “ethnic association” etc. During an interview with a responsible of the movement in France noted:

We did not come to Europe merely for the Turkish immigrants. We want to serve to the French society. But when we talk about our private school project with the local administrative responsible or politicians, they maintain a sceptical attitude to this idea because of the negative image of the Turkish community in France. They evoke the poor situation of Turkish students at the school. It is really very saddening! So, firstly we will focus on the educational problems of our children. If we achieve to break this negative image, we will have a chance to start a dialogue between equals and we can realise our private school project.⁵⁰⁹

The community members think that they are victims of a “racialisation” as a result of juxtaposition of the Turkish community in France and Turkey-originated movement. In spite of the fact that the Gülen-inspired associations which we observed are largely dominated by Turkish origin volunteers, they complain frequently of their “Turkish association” image. For the director of Paris EtudePlus learning centre director, these associations do not target merely the Turkish population, but the whole Parisians. The faith-based movement try to break this accentuated ethnic-racial image of the movement by organising intercultural activities. But because of the particular problems of the Turkish population, the followers of Gülen privilege the problems of Turkish population in Europe. The reintegration of immigrant students to the educational system of the host societies is defined as a “first” goal. So, we observe a double strategy of normalisation: On the one hand, the immigrant youth appropriates the communitarian values of Gülen community which legitimates the second correction strategy. On the other hand, the administrative staff who is disturbed by “stigmatisation” by host society is in a search of success and excellence in their occupation i.e. the educational activities. The movement also adapts the second correction strategy during the settlement process in Europe.

b. The invisible religion: Towards secularisation in public sphere

During our observation period at the learning centres in France and in Germany, we did not observe any religious propaganda or a visible proselytism in these establishments. This secular education policy in Europe is a by product of the worldwide strategy of the Gülen movement. According to Bayram Balcı who performed a survey at the Gülen-led schools in Central Asia, the school curricula are prepared in accordance with the instructions of the national education of each country and they

⁵⁰⁹ Interview at the coulisses of Etude Plus learning center in Paris, 12.04.2007.



are totally secular and scientific. Even the Muslim students, who demand a place to practice their prayers in the school, are not authorized to do it.⁵¹⁰ Elizabeth Özdalga notes that:

*The main objective [of the education provided in these schools] is to give the students a good education, without prompting any specific ideological orientation. One basic idea of Gülen's followers is that ethical values are not transmitted openly through persuasion and lessons but through providing good examples in daily conduct.*⁵¹¹

The total absence of the religious discourse in these educational establishments constitutes the most interesting and paradoxical point of this movement. By borrowing the concept of Pierre Bourdieu, we suggest that the religious manner constitutes the “doxic” experience of the movement. Doxa is the fundamental and unthought beliefs that inform an agent’s actions and thoughts within a particular field.⁵¹² A doxic experience is one in which members of a society share a common perspective that is transmitted by a series of implicit assumptions and values that appear as a matter of fact, us a truth.⁵¹³ Through the concept of “Hizmet”⁵¹⁴, Gülen sacralise the secular education. What is essential in this “faith-based social movement” exists implicitly in the body of the community.⁵¹⁵

Despite the relatively weak religious visibility of Gülen inspired activities, the followers of Gülen in Europe do not encounter a big difficulty to multiply their members due to their conceptualisation of *hizmet* (service). Gülen disseminates knowledge to his community as the most effective way to serve the religious cause ensuring the highest religious recompensation.⁵¹⁶ For instance, we observed that some student parents in Strasbourg influenced by the idea of “hizmet” and believing the secular education in Gülen-led establishments will help their children to be successful not only in life but also in thereafter. Hizmet promotes the appropriation of individual piety and Islamic ethic (adab) values in private sphere and a militant participation to the modern secularised world in the public sphere. Apparently, this *softened* religious image of the Gülen-inspired institutions facilitates the emergence and expansion of the movement in the public sphere. However, as a consequence of these strategies, the movement voluntarily or “involuntarily” revalorises a secularisation process amongst the members. They offer a new communitarian identity to the Turkish community by appropriating the secular codes in public sphere and appropriating the religious codes in the private sphere. Consequently, we suggest that the followers and sympathizers of the movement develop a syncretic

⁵¹⁰ Bayram Balci, *Missionnaires de l'Islam en Asie centrale : Les écoles turques de Fethullah Gülen*, Maisonneuve & Larose, 2003

⁵¹¹ Elisabeth Özdalga, "Entrepreneurs with a Mission: Turkish Islamists Building Schools along the Silk Road," Paper delivered at the Annual Conference of the North American Middle East Studies Association, Washington, D. C., November 19-22, 1999. Published in Turkish: "İslamcılığın Türkiye Seyri", İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2007

⁵¹² Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Meditations Pascaliennes*, Paris, Folio Editions, 2003, pg. 22

⁵¹³ Pierre Bourdieu and Passeron, Jean Claude, *La reproduction: Elements pour une theorie du systeme d'enseignement*, Paris, 1970 cited in Nilüfer Göle, "Islamic visibilities and public sphere" in *Islam in Public: Turkey, Iran and Europe*, İstanbul, 2006, Bilgi University Press

⁵¹⁴ Movement members use the term 'hizmet' to refer to all educational, social, civil engagements of the Gülen community. From an essentialist point of view, Hizmet can be described as any volunteer service or work done for the community.

⁵¹⁵ Uğur Kömeçoğlu, "A Sociologically Interpretative Approach to the Fethullah Gülen Community Movement" Unpublished thesis, Directed by Nilüfer Göle, Bogazici University, 1997

⁵¹⁶ Bekim Agai, "The discursive and organizational strategies of the Gülen movement" Paper submitted in Rice University, USA, 12-13 November 2005



attitude towards the modern-secularised world in the public sphere. By adopting an attitude as we call “religio-secular” (an expression of Martin E. Marty), they “*blur, mesh, meld, and muddle together elements of the secular and the religious, the worldly and the otherworldly*”.⁵¹⁷

But the Gülen movement must not forget that Islam for the European Muslims was largely considered as a “*clannish*”⁵¹⁸ reinvestment.⁵¹⁹ As a characteristic of the Diasporic Islam, “Religion and ethnicity march hand in hand in Europe because they construct the compensatory refoundation of an “us” lost in the difficulties and reversals of immigration.”⁵²⁰ The associative institutionalisation of Islam in Europe fulfils many complementary functions such as a wish for identity, a community-centred life and fidelity to the ethnic group. Therefore, Islam in Europe is “more culture (than faith) and more tradition than belief.”⁵²¹ Although there is an accentuation of Turkish identity and patriotism in Gülen movement, Fethullah Gülen’s conception of Islam is more close to the Universalist orientation of Islam more than this “culturalised” form of Islam. The movement in France and in Germany, “*seeks to find a “middle way” between the cultural devastation implied by assimilation and the “ghettoization” of a minority group living apart from the host society culture*”⁵²² But in this search of a “middle way”, the community confronts a risk to lose the “fine balance” between the Diaspora’s community-oriented conception of Islam and the movement’s more universalist Islam and its integrationist stance. This balance is menaced by two main factors:

- a. In spite of its relative success in expansion, Gülen movement’s relatively liberal interpretation of Islam causes some criticisms from its members. For instance, Director of Le Dialogue Learning Centre Nihat Sarier tells that parents of secondary school students severely object to mixed education in the learning centre: “*When I talk about the importance and necessity of mixed education at class, the parents says (No, This is a Turkish association. We don’t want a mixed education here)*”⁵²³ Another example, the visit of *Plateforme de Paris*, Gülen inspired intercultural dialogue association in Paris, to a catholic church evoked the critics of some community members.⁵²⁴ These micro-level tensions within the Gülen community reflect rightly the inner confrontation between the members who interiorised the “culturalised” and “universalist” conception of Islam. During our observation in Strasbourg, we noted that the transposition of community values and “know-how” of the movement realises through the intermediary of Turkey-originated graduate students. These students whom have already an experience in the associations and schools of the movement in Turkey play a vertical role at the expansion of the movement. We observed –*in our particular research area*– that these students’

⁵¹⁷ Martin E. Marty, “Our religio-secular world”, *Daedalus* (Special issue on secularism and religion), June 2003

⁵¹⁸ “Clannish” is the approximative translation for the French adjective “communautariste” which refers to a society whose organization tends to consider the affiliation to a specific community (such as religion, foreign origin etc.) as important as the affiliation to the French nation or the “European citizenship” etc.

⁵¹⁹ Jocelyne Cesari, *Etre musulman en France aujourd’hui*, Hachette, 1997, Paris, pg. 26

⁵²⁰ Albert Bastenier, “L’incidence du facteur religieux dans la conscience ethnique des immigrants marocains en Belgique”, *Social Compass*, 45 (2), 1998, pg. 197

⁵²¹ Abdessamad Dialmy, “Belonging and Institution in Islam”, *Social Compass*, 54 (1), 2007, pg. 70-71

⁵²² Jill Irvine, pg. 56

⁵²³ Interview with Nihat Sarier, Director of Le Dialogue Learning Center, 12.05.2007

⁵²⁴ Erkan Toguslu, “Le difficile équilibre dedans-dehors : les activités culturelles d’un centre musulman comme stratégie d’intégration dans l’espace public et les critiques au projet au sein de leur communauté » Paper submitted in Colloquy « La Religion de l’Autre » 5-6 February 2007, Paris



looks like more tolerant towards a fully secular mixed education or interfaith dialogue meetings at churches etc. This tolerant/pluralistic attitude causes some tensions between them and the immigrant members. (Especially with the members of elder generation) Turkey originated students try to adopt a socio-cultural representation relating to the logic of the French/German associational structure. The elder members of the movement follow an inward-looking life strategy.

- b. Although a relative retrogression of the community-oriented Islamic movements such as Suleymanci community or fundamentalist movements like Kaplanci community, a large variety of Sunni Islamic associations constitutes a veritable “religious market” in Turkish Diaspora. These associations which maintained their own clientalist networks criticise integrationist, less community-oriented and liberal discourse of Gülen movement. For instance, The Milli Görüş community harshly criticises the interfaith dialogue activities of the Gülen movement in Europe. While the *Alevi* community and the nationalist groups such as *Ulkucus* strictly opposes to the Gülen model of integration.

4. Concluding Remarks

Consequently, the socio-political problems and economic vulnerability of the Turkish Diaspora in Europe transform the strategies of the Gülen movement. If we consider the schools in Central Asia, in the Balkan countries or in Africa, we can assume that the settlement strategy of the movement is not dependent on the Turkish immigration waves throughout the world. In different regions, the disciples of the movement always seek to contact with the host societies. Differently to evolution of the movement in Central Asia or Balkans etc., the movement does not focus on the host societies in Turk-populated Western European countries. As a result of our qualitative research, we observed that the members of the Gülen community acts in two different trajectories. On the one hand, as a neo-communitarian religious community, they strive to have a larger share -more members- within the religious market of Turkish Diaspora by producing a fresh religious discourse and new organisational strategies, as they did in Turkey. The followers of Gülen inculcate Islamic values and norms in society through sohbetes (religious study circles). So, the clientalist perspective and the search for an ethno-religious reference of the community members are not neglected by the Gülen movement. On the other hand, by interiorising the modern-secular codes and by organising around the non-religious, cultural and non-profit associations, they seek to gain legitimacy in the public space in Germany and France in order to build an educational network in these countries, as they did in Central Asia or in Balkan region. In these two different trajectories, the Turkish population appears both as a backing population and as an obstacle. As a result of the synthesis of these trajectories; a reinvented and reinvigorated community took place in Europe. Therefore, the “*fine balance*”, is procured by a *reciprocal compromise* between the ethno-religious attachment of the Turkish Diaspora and integrationist stance of the movement. This is why the Gülen community became a neo-communitarian movement in Europe.

At individual level, the key opposition of the Gülen movement members to the Western life produces in the private space. The member is motivated by a communitarian discourse which favors the moralization of daily life and the active participation to the social life of the main society in order to find his/her place among the “establisheds” of the main society while keeping his/her tribal stigmas. The community members don’t create new ghettoisations, but rather encourages one to find a



solution to his/her problem of recognition of authenticity in the public sphere. The members instrumentalize some Gülenian concepts such as “dar al-hizmet” and “renewal of intention” (tashih-i niyet) to develop a fresh discourse for the elder members of the community. At the collective level, Gülen inspired establishments are in a search of success and excellence in their occupation i.e. the educational activities. Apparently, this *softened* religious image of the Gülen-inspired institutions facilitates the emergence and expansion of the movement in the public sphere.