

DESCRIPTION OF WORK

Part A: Principal Investigator

i. Curriculum Vitae : Professor Nilüfer GÖLE

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ii. Scientific Leadership Profile

My scientific leadership profile can be qualified as innovative, daring, and highly mobile. Over the years, I have worked with what Stuart Mills calls sociological imagination and intuition, which has allowed me to develop a capacity to seize social and cultural transformations at European scale, though being based on the margins of Europe. Intellectual, linguistic, and geographic displacements have facilitated me to conceive of the European public sphere from a non-Eurocentric, comparative, and highly analytical perspective. My academic teachings, publications, and public interventions have contributed to setting new horizons for the social sciences research agenda on the issues of the shape and stakes of the contemporary meeting between Europe and Islam. I have been teaching as a full time professor in leading universities and research centres in Turkey and France, and as visiting professor in the United States. Over the years, I have developed strong and highly inspiring transnational networks with intellectuals, thinkers, and public and political personae over the world. I continue to nourish these networks through participations in international academic conferences throughout Europe, the United States, and in non-Western cities such as Tokyo, Hong Kong, New Delhi, and Teheran. I am regularly invited by non-academic institutions and political formations such as the EU, UNESCO, or PEN association as a speaker.

My work has always been innovative, with a high capacity for prediction, and has over the years proved to hold a ‘glocal’ resonance. First, I have introduced new concepts and tools that have opened new horizons in my field of expertise and have had an impact on others fields of research such as migration studies, religious studies, feminist studies, anthropology, and political science. Early in my academic carrier in Turkey the 1980’s -at a time of political turmoil, extreme nationalism and secularism, left/right politics and male dominant discourses- I proposed two new sociological concepts that in the long-term proved to be ground-breaking: that of the ‘Islamic Engineers’, and later that of ‘Modern Mahrem’. At the time, in Turkey, Islam was not on the social research agenda, and my work was perceived as extravagant, provocative and somewhat anachronic. My focus on thinking Islam from a gendered perspective, going into the sacred and private domains, framed within the context of modernity and including insight on the modern Islamic self, proved to be pioneer work. Further, these concepts that I have introduced in the social science research agenda have been highly mobile. Issues and conceptual tools that I started treating and developing 20 years ago in Turkey, are today on the forefront of intellectual and political debates in Europe. In each of my research topics and agendas, I engaged and mobilized a set of theoretical concepts, tools and methodology that have shifted the established boundaries between disciplines and area studies.

My later work built on these early steps and continued to be counter current. Now situated in Europe, I witnessed the growing interest in Islam in European social sciences, particularly on the part of political scientists, security engineers, and migration experts. Resisting calls to participate in debates framed around identity politics paradigms, I focused on more visionary ways of thinking that proposed to analyse Islam in Europe in the context of European public sphere theories. While failures of Muslim migrants’ integration in Europe were being debated, I turned towards the concept of Islamic visibility and performativity as key in understanding the sometimes violent and sporadic ways in which European Muslims contributed to the shaping and making of new and original European public spheres. Over the years, I have thus elaborated a conceptual approach focused on the ways in which Islam is carried into various national public spheres by new groups and agencies. I have theorized from a comparative perspective, the Islamic veiling of women in secular Turkey and in France, and

introduced the cultural realm of private-public distinctions, gender and body issues, secular and religious conflicts in understanding contemporary Europe from an Islam perspective. We need new terminological and methodological tools to think the meeting between Europe and Islam; the affaire of caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed (2005) illustrates my purpose perfectly. It is today very clear to me that EUROPUBLICISLAM will contribute to develop much needed terminological and methodological tools and will inspire new ventures exploring Islamic visibility and cultural discord in Europe.

I hold a wide publication record, having published in diverse international academic journals and participated in edited volumes in a number of languages. My book on Islamic veiling (*Modern Mahrem*, 1991) became a pioneer work, and is today used as a classic reference by researchers working in different cultural contexts; it introduced in the studies of contemporary Islamism, the centrality of women, issues of piety, body, private-public distinctions, and religious-secular conflicts. In my last book, I shift the gaze towards Europe and introduce the notion of “Interpenetrations” (2005), to conceptualize cultural difference in spatial proximity. The edited book that came out from the project that I have carried out on Islamic visibility (N. Göle and L. Amman (eds) 2004) includes case studies from Iran, Turkey, and Europe and proposes a novel comparative perspective to understand the contemporary ways in which new Muslim actors carve out new public spaces. My last *NonWesternModernities* Project in Santralistanbul, Bilgi University, aimed to understand hybrid, intercultural habitations of modernity and provide a passage between artistic cultural productions and social sciences. It is an itinerant project (combining art exhibition, academic workshop and a public debate) that started in Istanbul and is currently at the Kusthalle in Vienna (January 2008), will be moving to Rotterdam and Berlin (2008). My monographs have all been translated into several languages. I further disseminate my work through articles in public media throughout Europe, and interventions in non-academic political and literary circles. I have participated to a series of public debates with leading intellectual and political figures on the cultural and religious dimensions of Europe as a keynote speaker (“A Soul for Europe?”, Berlin, 2006; “Discourses on Europe”, Bruxelles, 2007).

In my graduate seminar at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, I elaborate the theoretical framework for these different research agendas, with anthropological and historical interdisciplinary work on body, space and memory in order to thicken and innovate the frame of thinking for cultural and religious difference in modernity. At EHESS, where I have my permanent position, I have thirty graduate students who attend my doctorate seminar, and I supervise more than ten graduate students per year. In the last twenty years I have trained students from all over the world, from Turkey, Middle-East, Europe and the United States, to combine original theoretical thinking with innovative empirical research. In my research projects I bring my graduate students from different academic institutions and national backgrounds together in order to enhance mutual-learning and intercultural exchange. My post-graduate students have become full-time professors in the most prestigious universities in Turkey, but also in the United-States; they are leading successful research careers in European institutions, and research foundations.

My theorizations on public sphere, secularism and multiple modernities are today highly inspiring for interdisciplinary in different international settings. I have collaborated to the Social Science Research Council project on “Authority and the Public Space in Teheran” (2002-2004); currently I am part of a study group established with Japanese colleagues with whom we organized a colloquium on “multiple modernities” (Paris, mars 2008); I participate to the organization of international conferences on “comparative secularisms” (in Turkey, India and US, SSRC project); member of the study group on “religion and the public sphere” around Charles Taylor book on secular age (SSRC); all clear demonstrations that my work continue to be disseminated in international contexts and extended to different fields and disciplines. I have contributed to the displacement of Islamic studies (that were reserved to the Orientalist specialists, middle-eastern area studies, historians and political scientists) towards the centre of social scientific agenda, and to the cross-fertilizations between studies of Islam and studies on gender, private-public distinctions, and European secular modernity. This year, July 2008 I'll be addressing a plenary address to the Crossroads Conference of the Association for Cultural Studies in Jamaica.

EUROPUBLICISLAM proposes an innovative methodology that tries to respond to three major problems encountered in studying European public sphere; in other words, it avoids methodological nationalism, it relates cultural-religious difference and the public sphere, and it includes the role of conflict and confrontation in the making of a European public sphere. The research methodology combines three different models of field work, each growing into each other: 1. Mapping of public constellation-events; 2. Backstage interviews, In-dept interviews on Muslim European life-experiences with private-public distinctions; 3. Focus groups that figure controversies and debates on European values of modernity.

Mapping of public constellations:

Mapping of public constellations will innovate data collecting methods and case-studies. The three constellations, hybrid public figures, contested public spaces and controversial art forms will be subject to data collection. The mapping of these constellations will permit to represent the transnational assemblages and conflicts. The visual aspects, public figures, concrete spaces and art forms will be mapped out into constellations. They will then be given 'sociological depth' and hence provide insight on dynamics of change and resistance in different localities and national settings, within a European perspective. The mapping activities will continue throughout the project, and will depict the contemporary and dynamic aspect of the project, and allow us to work on the controversial and transnational aspect of the European public sphere leading to the formation of new forms, that is, to constellations. A written document will be produced at the end of the mapping work and will set the frame for the second-stage of the research.

Backstage interviews:

In depth-interviews (80) with Muslim Europeans will relate to the personal, subjective realm, underpinning the backstage of the public constellations. Our aim is to depict Muslim subjectivities and practices in European everyday life-experiences in different private-public intermediate spaces. European Muslim actors raise new questions in relation to learning and practicing Islam in a secular and a multi-religious social life. Interpretations of piouness dictate ways of living, praying, dietary and leisure habits that enter into conflict with the prerequisites of secular everyday work, learning or leisure activities. Praying in work places, or fasting during Ramadan, all become a source of negotiation for creating new public spaces as well as market spaces. Backstage interviews focus on the religious disciplinary body practices and daily practices of Muslims and on the formation of intermediate spaces, publics and markets.

Experimental public in focus groups:

Experimental focus group meetings aim to depict the actual, empirical sociological dynamics in the making of a European public sphere through contact zones, borrowings as well as confrontations between European Muslims and non-Muslims. Putting at the centre of my research the notion of the public sphere and public spaces, I privilege zones of contact between European non-Muslim and Muslim actors, including instances of conflicts and mutual interpenetrations, focusing on social tensions, emotional offences, political rights, and individual demands in the European sphere. The normative question on whether there is a possibility for creating commonness, and debating the cultural-religious differences will be addressed in this phase by means of focus group discussions, designed as an "experimental public sphere". In this third phase of the fieldwork, 20 focus groups will be designed and in three different European cities to examine the sites of contestation and conflict in relation to cultural values of Europe as well as to inquire the possibilities for creating a common space of mutual recognition. The transcripts of focus groups will provide the empirical discursive material for further conceptualization on the European Public Sphere.

Backstage interviews and experimental focus groups will take place during the first 18 months of the project. Based on the analysis of the transcripts of interviews and focus groups, a monograph will be written in the form of a monograph focusing on subjectivities, life-experiences of European Muslims in different intermediate spaces, private and public, secular and pious.

Colloquiums

The fourth phase of the project will involve the organization of two colloquiums with scholars working on the public sphere and Islam in Europe. The first colloquium will take place in the middle of the third year of the project and bring together international scholars from multi-disciplinary backgrounds working on the public sphere. It will be an opportunity for me to introduce and test the theoretical frame and empirical findings of the three first phases of the project. The second colloquium will take place in the middle of the last year of the project and bring scholars working on Islam in Europe and search for exchanges and cross-fertilizations between those whose study from the point of Islam and those from the point of European public sphere.

Publishing and Dissemination

In the last phase two books will be prepared for publication; an author book and an edited volume. The first book will attempt a new theoretical conceptualization of European Public Islam on the basis of the three phases of the fieldwork. The second edited volume will look for cross-fertilization between our work and the intellectual research agendas on European Public Sphere and Islam.

Time table:

Phase 1: Mapping constellations (first 3 months intensively and to continue all along the project)

Phase 2: Backstage Interviews (months 1-18)

Phase 3: Experimental Public Focus groups (months 1-18)

Phase 4: Analysis and Report on empirical research (groups and interviews) (months 18-24)

Phase 5: Colloquiums, academic meetings (months 25-42)

(Colloquium #1 on month 28, Colloquium #2 on month 41)

Phase 6: Writing of monograph, compilation of edited book (months 25-42)

Phase 7: Publishing and dissemination work (months 42-48)