

“A Movement in Counter-Point: The
Significance of the Fethullah Gulen
Movement as a Global Educational and Inter-
Religious Model of Social and Religious
Change - a UK Perspective”

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ABSTRACT

Initially, I would contend that just as Gülen’s discourse and the movement associated with his name have been and are instrumental in empowering the periphery in Turkey, their present is having a similar effect in the wider world and amongst the global *ummah*...

Fethullah Gülen simultaneously embraces and represents several aspects of both traditional and also innovative Islamic thought and practice. This combination of characteristics, abilities and qualifications, some of which have hitherto seemed mutually exclusive, marks him out from other scholars and reformers and has provided him with a transformative edge.

Bulac [2006] draws attention to Gülen’s intellectual-*alim* credentials and its importance, stating that Gülen is the most recent reviver of the *Ulama* Tradition. *Alim* (singular for *Ulama*) is an Arabic title provided only to the most knowledgeable Islamic scholars who have an impeccable command of the traditional Islamic sources, sciences and methodologies. However, Bulac argues that being merely an *alim* renders one insufficient, a mere conveyor. To be effective and relevant one has to be a

janahayn (the dual wing), in other words an intellectual versed in western sciences and thought as well. Gülen often quotes the Qur'anic verse, "We created you in different tribes and nations so that you may know one another". [Surah 49.13]

Thus, for Gülen, universal peace and the will of God can only be achieved in an inclusive civilization that merges the values and strengths of the East and West. Therefore, in Gülen's estimation both are as important as each other. Put differently, this is about the bringing together of peoples of faith and the western civilization, which is Muslim in the sense that it follows God's laws of cause and effect in achieving worldly success and development and Muslim civilization, which has retained its spiritual dynamics.

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1. INTRODUCTION

My interest in the writings and work of the Hojaeffendi Fethullah Gulen [b.1938] originated some ten years ago by encountering members of the communities and circles, the schools and universities, and the inter-religious dialogue inspired by him both in his native Turkey as well as wider afield.

During the past nine years I have participated in and presented papers at academic conferences focused on the "Gülen Movement" as a contemporary Islamic renewalist expression, visited schools and universities founded by the movement's adherents and researched their motivations, objectives and socio-religious foundation in Muslim belief and practice. In addition, I have met and interviewed journalists and writers involved in the print and TV media who relate to the Gulen ideology both within and outside Turkey. A further and significant dimension of Fethullah Gulen's influence is in inter-religious dialogue between Muslim, Christian and Jewish traditions, and his attempts to enter the Arab Muslim sphere as a counter-balance to exclusivist streams.

My engagement with this area of research and awareness is further activated as I come from and live within the socially, reli-

giously and politically plural context of the UK, a member state of the European Union and one whose civil society and order are marked by a policies of integration between religion and state, and an acceptance of visible religious symbolics in both personal and public spheres. Yet the main experience and impact of Islam in the UK both as a structured religion and in expressions of spirituality, service and ethical conduct has been from South Asian traditions by migration, settlement and incorporation into British society. Thus, the meeting with another manifestation of a recognisable Islam but in European dress, articulate in contemporary empirical sciences, and able to discourse as an equal with other faith and intellectual strands has been rewarding and transformative.

This “non-movement” movement is both mobile and able by its adherence to Qur’anic certainties to counter rival and hostile ideologies with grace and reason.

Fethullah Gulen simultaneously embraces and represents several aspects of both traditional and also innovative Islamic thought and practice. This combination of characteristics, abilities and qualifications, some of which have hitherto seemed mutually exclusive, marks him out from other scholars and reformers and has provided him with a transformative edge. Fethullah Gulen is an *alim*, a peace activist, an intellectual, a civil-faith-based movement leader, a social reformist, mentor, poet and writer. He has motivated and inspired a generation of Muslims in Turkey and abroad into a multi-ethnic, socio-religious movement which he himself coins as a ‘Community of Volunteers’.

Bulac [2006. 100-102] draws attention to Gulen’s intellectual-*alim* credentials and their importance, stating that Gulen is the most recent reviver of the *Ulema* Tradition. *Alim* (singular for *Ulema*), an Arabic title provided only to the most knowledgeable Islamic scholars who have an impeccable command of the traditional Islamic sources, sciences and methodologies. However, Bulac argues that being merely an *alim* renders one insufficient, a mere conveyor of tradition. To be effective and relevant one has to be a *janahayn* (the

dual wing), in other words an intellectual versed in western sciences and thought as well.

Of few contenders, Gulen is perhaps a foremost representative of *janahayn*. His outlook has several key features: a profound understanding of Islamic sciences; a deep knowledge of biography (*ilm al-rijal*) in Hadith narration; and a thorough understanding of Islamic methodology (*usul*). His book, "Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism" is an important work in terms of thought and Sufi tradition. Gulen's most important characteristic however, is that he analyses contemporary issues and brings forth solutions using the traditional methodology of Islamic jurisprudence and Hadith.

The Gulen synthesis is significant. It seeks to empower and enable people through education and dialogue, which challenge cultural perceptions and religious dogmas. It seeks to mobilise the individual and society towards achieving to become *insan-i kamil* which can only progress in a free, fair and just society. Since Gulen's goals and teachings are justified in traditional Islamic sources, they should have no problem of legitimacy or authenticity. Just as Gulen's and the movements' efforts have helped strengthen the periphery in Turkey, my contention is that this will be replicated in the wider Muslim world. The pace of this influence naturally depends on the movement's presence the wider world. .

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Thus, for Gulen, universal peace and the will of God can only be achieved in an inclusive civilisation that merges the values and strengths of the East and West. Therefore, in Gulen's estimation both are as important as each other. Put differently, this is about the bringing together of peoples of faith and the western civilisation, which is Muslim in the sense that it follows God's laws of cause and effect in achieving worldly success and development and Muslim civilisation, which has retained its spiritual dynamics. At this level of reasoning,

Gulen is against the categorisation of Muslim and non-Muslim, East and West. Each must be a part of the future inclusive civilisation to achieve balance in the world and universal peace.

2. A RELIGIO-SOCIAL MOVEMENT: “HARD OR SOFT POWER”?

Amongst scholars it is agreed that there is no agreed definition of collective action and social movements that would satisfy the different approaches dominant in any epoch or fit well the different realities being studied. Contemporary accounts of what a social movement is are likewise subject to contextual influences. They focus on selected concrete features of a movement; they vary with the frame of reference, the relative weight of the levels of analysis, and their various relations, combinations and overlaps. The following list will give some sense of the range of conceptualizations of social movements suggested in recent years:

a social movement is *a purposive and collective attempt of a number of people to change individuals or societal institutions and structures*; [Zald & Ash, 1966:44, 329]

social movements are 1) *informal networks, based (2) on shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize about (3) conflictual issues, through (4) the frequent use of various forms of protest*; [Della Porta & Diani 1999. 16]

the concept of a social movement comprises *three analytical dimensions: the mobilization of a collective actor (i) defined by specific solidarity, (ii) engaged in a conflict with an adversary for the appropriation and control of resources valued by both of them, (iii) and whose action entails a breach of the limits of compatibility of the system within which the action itself takes place*; [Melucci 1999, 29-30]

In these definitions there are common themes of confronting and challenging vested power-holders, seeking structural reforms, using extra-institutional methods which may include the transgression of accepted legal and constitutional norms. Such models derive from a specific wave of collective movements and theoretical

approaches to social change in Western Europe, North and South America actions from the late 1960s and afterwards. Whilst these models of action are still advanced and deployed they do contain significant weaknesses so much so that fresh representations of contemporary religio-social movements in particular are desirable.

They are too rigid to include all or most social movements, and too broad to distinguish between different types of movements. Equally, they do not adequately describe the continuity between the structural location of the actor and the cultural and intellectual world within which it is identified and serves, The sociology of collective actors in addition, is now dealing increasingly with movements that cannot be referred only to one sole specific social condition. Social movements are increasingly global in context and work within poly-form societies and their needs. There are differences between movements in terms of their emphases and purposes. As such, much social movement literature has either searched for generalisations across movements at different times and places, or focused upon single movements at one particular time and place. Either way it has sought to create uniform analyses. The concepts draw far too much upon contexts in which *oppositional* or protest movements are rooted, indicating the explicit perspectives of social theorists, who drew their paradigms of collective phenomena from socio-political and religio-political activities from the latter part of the 20th c ce.

Moreover, such perceptions fail to notice the presence of non-political elements in new movements, and disregard themes such as philanthropy, altruism and voluntarism, which help explain the dynamics of participation in activities that do not directly profit those taking part. Finally, the conceptualisations fail to address the motivations of a religious faith, in this instance Sunni Islam sanctions and gives power to individuals and groups to generate positive social change with concord.

There is a sharp discontinuity between contemporary issues and events and those of the past [Melucci 1999; 113]. Whereas there are inequalities or changes that are economic and political in

origin there are changes and meanings that arise and gain prominence from situations where religious, moral and cultural values are concerned. There are movements which stress factors, including the values of equality, freedom, dignity, altruism, ecology and morality [Edwards & McCarthy, 2004:120]. There are in addition needs and issues which basic human rights, ethics and culture legitimate but the socio-political structure fails to implement.

Earl notes: 'Many leading theorists have argued that NSMs [New Social Movements] are less directed toward policy outcomes and instead are more concerned with contesting cultural values and beliefs [Earl 2004.513]. Another social theorist Koopmans [2004.25] affirms that some movements 'by incorporating such innovations in their established repertoires...not only introduce an element of novelty in their interactions...but may also, if successful, establish a new recombination of identities, tactics, and demands that can in turn inspire other movements', and then proceeds to consider the Gülen Movement's intercultural or educational repertoires of civil society, pluralist participatory democracy and their compatibility with Islam, and its trans-cultural practice of service [*bizmet*].

Consequently, there are contemporary social movements that are not focussed upon anticipating a conflictual situation as inevitable. Nor do they propose divergence beyond the limits of the system of social relationships within which the action is located by subverting a social order. Such movements, which share the characteristic of being non-conflictual, may arise out of various religious or secular traditions but they are not necessarily secular, ahistorical and amorphous. Nor are they to be identified as class-based, materialistic and litigious. At this point we are drawing attention to the sources of such movements, which are not temporal but spiritual inheritors of traditions reworked for the current order. Thus, the notion of such a movement is presumptive of its use of collaborative "soft" rather than adversarial "hard" power.

2.1 THE GULEN MOVEMENT AND “SOFT POWER”.

Many descriptions have been applied to the Gulen inspired initiatives, civil, cultural, political, confrontational, conflictual, reactionary, regressive, exclusivist, sectarian, alienating, competitive, Islamist, mediating, reconciliatory, pluralist, democratic, altruistic and peaceful [White 2002. 112].

In using social movement theories how may one define this association? Is it a civil society movement; a reaction to a crisis, a Sufi *tariqa* or order, a political movement; or an altruistic collective action?

2.1.1 There is clear evidence from both my own fieldwork and the observations of others that the Gülen Movement is notable for its unrelenting contribution to the potential of students and people in positions of influence to pursue and implement new goals and life changing decisions. It has encouraged voluntary participation and service in a network of global schools and universities, developed trusting relationships between faith leaders and communities through inter-faith dialogue, creating shared objectives for their respective societies [Gulen 2000. 21].

A “civil society” type of group covers a spectrum of organisations that are essentially outside the institutional structures of government. They are also distinct from business organisations and therefore are not primarily commercial ventures set up principally to distribute profits to their directors or owners. They are self-governing and people are free to join or support them voluntarily [Zald & McCarthy 1998. 226]. Hefner offers a definition that a civil society is a ‘...voluntary association beyond the household but outside the state...and providing citizens with opportunities to learn the democratic habits of free assembly, non-coercive dialogue, and socioeconomic initiative.’ [Hefner 2004. 10].

Weller [2005.272] stresses that ‘...although often overlooked in the social and political constructs of modernity’, faith-based movements ‘...form a substantial part of civic society and ...con-

tribute significantly to the preservation and development of both bonding and bridging social capital' in a democratic and civil society. The voluntary aspect of association with it is an important dimension of the Gülen Movement. Individuals freely join associations and services of their choice, and they are also free to exit, without cost. Whether the underlying motivation for such voluntary participation is self-fulfilment, self-expression, self-development or expression of faith it is significant in the autonomic ideals of civil society.

The approach of the movement especially through its educational "agencies" is from the grass roots upwards. It is the transformation of individuals through education to facilitate the establishment of a harmonious and inclusive society based upon a liberal public sphere. This is the rationale for Gülen's emphasis on the primacy of 'education' among the Movement's commitments regardless of whether it is a paralyzed social and political system or one that operates like clockwork', [Gulen 2004. 199].

While the Movement's origin and services arise from a civil-society-based faith initiative, its discourse and practice in its schools for example affirm the idea that religion and state may be separated in Islam. This need not threaten faith and may well inhibit its exploitation and indeed subtle control by the state. Thus, we meet a movement which proffers transformation of the individual, a consequent conversion of society into a "moral society", and thence a convergent society as dialogue and respect is enjoined. We may indeed therefore, discern the characteristics of a civil movement within the activities of individuals and groups inspired by the Hojaeffendi and the sources he draws upon.

2.1.2 Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 the nation has faced a series of crises in its development towards becoming a truly democratic civil society. Ahmad traces these steps in relation to Turkey's foreign policies and thus its outlook to the wider world [Ahmad 2004. 9].

In conflicts the adversaries dispute over opposed definitions of the objectives, relations, and for example, the means for the creation of a civil society. Whereas a hostile conflict manifests as a clash over control and allocation of resources deemed crucial by the concerned parties, a crisis provokes a subsequent reaction on the part of those who seek to correct the imbalance that has happened in the system. The difference between a crisis and an antagonistic conflict is a significant one. The question may be posed therefore as to whether the Gülen Movement is a contentious, intransigent, collective of actors or otherwise.

Some civil movements within and from a religious context do as Zald & McCarthy [1998. 28] discuss arise in reaction to moral crises as perceived by interest groups. These may range from “Right to Life” perspectives, Nuclear Disarmament, Anti-War Coalitions, Asylum Seekers’ Support Groups, to issues focussed on wealth, power and poverty as analysed for example by Latin American Liberation Theology.

Historical observation however, would indicate that the Hojaeffendi did not so much create a movement in reaction to crises and conflicts [an endemic feature of Turkish society since 1950] but tapped deeply into an underground reservoir of yearning, ideals and hopes for a renewed national identity and potentially a transformed global order. If the economic and political liberalisation initiatives of Turgut Ozal, who dominated such aspects of the Turkish national scene from 1983 – 1993, allowed fresh social movements to emerge, the ‘volunteer’ movement stimulated by Fethullah Gulen was not conceived in that decade *de novo*.

Social movements take time to evolve and do not emerge fully formed from a broken eggshell. Koopmans argues [2004. 3] that the availability of political opportunities does not automatically and promptly translate into increased action and is insufficient to account for the emergence of a collective of reformers. For a network of enthused actors as numerous as the ‘volunteers’ in this movement there has to be in existence a numbers of participants,

financial supporters, and potential members with the necessary intellectual and professional skills, and the readiness to serve prior to the occasion of service.

Della Porta and Diani [1999. 57] note the place of invisible networks before a movement emerges into the public domain differentiating between the discovery of the movement by the media and its actual origins. Consequently, it is arguable that there have been hidden embryonic and then evident phases in the formation of the Gülen Movement. Indeed, it is only in the past two years that English language journals have taken serious account of the impact of the thinking and activities of the volunteers. Through all of this there are the explicit statements of the Hojaeffendi himself that he is not the author of a 'movement' preferring the term 'volunteers service' [Gulen 2004. 210-214] because this does not suggest confrontational activity nor political isolation. He insists that the service offered by the volunteers does not and must not involve conflict; as an alternative characterisation of the network Gulen proposes that it is a '...,movement originating its own models..' [ibid]. As a result the volunteers' service must be offered within a framework of constant positive action that leaves no room for confusion, fighting, and anarchy; an absence of worldly and material expectations in return for service; moral commitment that builds trust and confidence; inclusive practices that draw human beings together; consistent patience; and a positive pro-active seeking of the common good. Offered in this spirit, Gülen says, volunteer services can be said to be seeking only God's approval. He encourages all individuals in sympathy with his opinions to serve their communities and humanity in accord with this peaceful, consistently non-confrontational and apolitical stance [Gulen 2004. 200 – 201].

Whilst critics may wish to cast the 'movement' as threatening to a status quo within Turkey itself there is evidence that whether within the borders of the republic or globally the Gülen Movement promotes an apolitical, highly tolerant and open regeneration of individuals and thus of societies. The 'movement' draws upon the

Islamic creedal statement and the example of the Prophet Muhammad as mediated through the traditions of Anatolian Sufism. It is also modernist in tone and in the sphere of education emphatic on achievement within the empirical sciences as they are an international language. If implicit, then the heritage of the Prophet and the Qur'an are the streams of inspiration for the place of the schools, universities, medical provision, and inter-religious dialogue initiatives of the 'movement'.

2.1.3 Integral to the history of Islam is a narrative of tension between formal scholarly traditions and those of the charismatic teacher; at different historical moments these roles and identities have been blended and from the resulting synthesis a renewal of faith and practice has evolved..

In the establishment of the Turkish Republic however, the perception that charismatic led Sufi orders [*tariqat*] represented obscurantist and reactionary Islam and thus were impediments to the development of a modern nation state was adopted as axiomatic. In essence therefore, Sufi orders do not exist in Turkey by constitutional declaration which engendered a spiritual and moral vacuum. Yavuz and Esposito [2003. xii] argue that 'the sharp division between moral community and the political sphere is the source of many problems in Turkey. As the Turkish political domain does not provide an ethical charter, the moral emptiness turned the political domain into a space of dirty tricks, duplicity and the source of corruption'.

Education is the Movement's priority. In Gülen's view it is not only the establishment of justice that is hindered by the lack of well-rounded education, but also the recognition of human rights and attitudes of acceptance and tolerance toward others. He writes '...if you wish to keep the masses under control, simply starve them in the area of knowledge. They can escape such tyranny only through education. The road to social justice is paved with adequate, universal education, for only this will give people sufficient understanding and tolerance to respect the rights of others'. [Unal & Williams 2000.

22-23]. As I have observed in four national contexts the schools are focussed on creating literate, independent thinkers who will be agents of change for equality, inclusiveness and social justice.

The 'spirituality' evident in Gülen's writings as observed by Michel [2006. 110] include not only directly Qur'anic and Sunnah based teachings, but also ethics, logic, psychological and emotional health. Key terms are 'compassion' and 'tolerance'. Gülen believes that 'non-quantifiable' qualities need to be instilled in students alongside training in the 'exact' disciplines. Equally, there is no one conformist curriculum for the schools as they adopt the prescribed curriculum of the state within which they are placed. This leads towards an inclusive openness that is an attribute of the many expressions of the movement if coupled with an optimistic idealism about the future of humanity and the construction of a new social order. Unal and Williams [2000. 277] cite Gulen:

Gigantic developments in transportation and telecommunication technology have made the world into a big village. In these circumstances, all the peoples of the world must learn to share this village among them and live together in peace and mutual helping. We believe that peoples, no matter of what faith, culture, civilization, race, colour and country, have more to compel them to come together than what separates them. If we encourage those elements which oblige them to live together in peace and awaken them to the lethal dangers of warring and conflicts, the world may be better than it is today

If the movement is termed a *tariqat* it is only so to the extent in which the volunteers adopt and follow their *din* and fulfil their *dawah* in a manner that is universally Qur'anic, based on the *sunnah* of the Prophet, and centred upon seeking the state of *insan i-kamil*.

2.1.4 A notable feature of the movement is that participants acknowledge and abide by the political customs and structures of the national context in which they are set. Outside as much as within the Turkish milieu volunteers function in a spirit of accountability to the legal and political establishment.

In Turkey it might be assumed that the movement would be overtly supportive of the AK Party as it forms the current government. Indeed, the moral agenda of change espoused by the AK Party does resonate with the ideals expounded by the Hojaeffendi but the movement has not tied itself with any established political party, which has allowed it to function freely [Yilmaz 2005. 397]. It sees that Islam does not need a state or political party to survive but rather with financial supporters can be a transformative means in education for social empowerment and amelioration and the formation of fully democratic societies.

Rather than see Turkey as a hermetically closed society, Gülen has supported initiatives for a democratic, pluralistic and free society [Unal & Williams 2000. 38]. In a comparative theological exercise the place of individual morality is pivotal in this perspective to build, strengthen, and maintain a just political order as in Christian Reformed Spirituality. Similarly the Turkish overtures to enter the European Union have been supported by the Hojaeffendi on the basis that Turkish society has much to gain from the achievements of European empirically based sciences whereas many from both the Islamist circles and the dominant secularist elite have been opposed to such rapprochement. [Yilmaz 2000. 399]. To them, the European Union is a Christian Club and a menace to both Turkish national and also to Muslim identity whereas a logical outcome of Gülen's emphases on dialogue and tolerance and thus affiliation with the EU would bring the rewards of amity and dialogue with ethno-religious minorities within the Turkish state and between nations as an integral part of Islam and Turkish Muslim character.

Curiously, this is redolent of positions adopted by faith-based social movements in the European context and leadership in mainstream Christian ecclesial structures, which does not advocate one political party at the expense of another. Gülen is 'critical of the instrumentalisation of religion in politics', and has constantly opposed direct participation in party politics because the modern world exists in a 'pluralistic experience rather than within an assumed

homogeneity of truth'. He is against those who have created 'a negative image of Islam by reducing Islam to an ideology'. [Yilmaz 2005. 397; Unal & Williams 2000. 36] Through words and deeds he underlines the distinction between Islam and Islamism. As one commentator states,

Hodjaefendi [Gülen] opposes the use of Islam as a political ideology and a party philosophy, and polarizing society into believers and nonbelievers. He calls for those who believe and think differently to respect and tolerate each other, and supports peace and reconciliation. In my opinion, Hodjaefendi's efforts will help us put religion in its rightful place. [Unal & Williams 2000. 158]

In Gulen's view the Qur'an addresses the whole of society and assigns it almost all the duties entrusted to modern democratic systems, that people ought to co-operate by sharing these duties and establishing the essential foundations necessary to discharge them, and that the government is composed of all of these basic elements.

Islam recommends a government based on a social contract. People elect the administrators and establish a council to debate common issues. Also, the society as a whole participates in auditing the administration. [Gulen 2004. 223].

The Hojaeffendi seeks answers to the questions all people living in complex modern societies face: 'how to develop humane qualities, good behaviour, love for others, enthusiasm for self-improvement, and an active desire to serve others, make a difference in the world, and to persevere in this desire in the face of setbacks and failures [Michel 2005. 354]. It therefore assumes a role as a mediator of demands. It invites and allows society to take responsibility for its own actions within the legal boundaries. It helps to create common public spaces in which an agreement can be reached to share the responsibility for a social field, beyond party interests or positions.

This generates innovative energies, keeps the system open, produces innovation and new movements, develops elites, brings into the area of the decidable that which has been excluded, and

illuminates the problematic areas for the healthy functioning of an open democratic society.

2.1.5 Selfless, voluntary service is endemic and a key moral ethic in any social movement not least in those inspired by religious ideals. We need to recall that the Hojaeffendi effectively began his work in a period of Turkish history marked by artificial divisions between people, and extremist and ideological issues were dominant in society. Tensions, conflicts and separation were features of social life undermining security and stability [Cetin 2006. 21].

The remedy for this dire situation Gülen affirmed lay in education as the centre of social, economic and political modernisation, progress and welfare. Individuals and society can only be respectful to the supremacy and rule of law, democratic and human rights, and diversity and cultures if they receive sound education. Equity, social justice and peace in one's own society and in the world in general, can only be achieved by enlightened people with sound morality through altruistic activism. Therefore, education is the supreme remedy for the ills afflicting Turkish society and humanity in general [Gulen 2000. 4].

The educational paradigm as it evolved from Izmir in 1984 presented solutions to areas with ethnic-territorial problems. It accepted differences and rendered them valuable, rich and negotiable. It invited students and other people to coexist peacefully in diversity. It called for dialogue between different spheres of society and different ethnic and religious traditions in the world, peace and love. Students sponsored by supportive entrepreneurs work to achieve these objectives in some ninety countries [Aslandoğan & Çetin, 2007:46-59].

A feature of selfless commitment is that it requires some form of organisation for its effective performance [Melucci 1999. 167]. Its ends can be better achieved by informal, diffused, polyform, permeable networks of friends, business associates or philanthropically like-minded people gathered around a single project, as in the case of the movement. than by centralised authorities. Altruistic action invites us to seek change and to assume responsibility. It gives individuals a

voice in society and a means to bring issues to light; it enables individual and public to accommodate a space for difference and to reinforce solidarity for societal peace and cohesion.

The nature of the movement is one of selflessness, socially orientated for the enrichment of humanity, purposive and collective, with volunteers who are not pursuing personal, material and political ambitions. It has a social concern, because interactions are built on social relations, and defined by the interdependence and the symbolic exchanges that tie people together. It is purposive, because individuals and groups act collectively to construct expressions of civil society. It is collective because people define in intellectual as much as in emotional and spiritual terms the field of possibilities and limits in human aspirations. It seeks simultaneously to bring to life resources and relationships to create meanings and identity from common values and behaviour.

Essentially, this movement is both a civic initiative, and also a civil society movement. It is not contentious, oppositional, conflictual or political. It is began as a faith-initiated model of service, tantalisingly akin to Sufi *tariqa* with family resemblances but not formally such a project. It is an apolitical, social, altruistic movement of volunteers based on the individual, individual change and the education of the individual. Part of this schooling is also focused on raising consciousness about legality, lawfulness, human rights and one's constitutionally defined rights. It also works for the consolidation, therefore, of a pluralist, participatory democracy and equal gender rights.

In addition to its success as a provider of educational services, it has been positively acknowledged for its intercultural and inter-faith services and organizations. Therefore, the collective action of the movement is the result of the combination of its meanings, values, intentions, objectives, actions and outcomes. It presents itself to and interacts with the wider public, and working within limits and constraints, it has shown temporal continuity maintaining a 'soft power' trajectory within a cohesive, peaceful identity inside and outside the country of its origin.

3. MOBILISATION: IN THE PUBLIC ARENA

Movements with overt political strategies seek primarily to change external realities of a society and often have defined material objectives; they tend to focus on change in particular governmental or economic relations, or particular policy directions and outcomes. Faith based movements tend to look to an interior transformation as a means and objective of change in value systems; aiming to preserve or restore and renew a society by focussing on ideas and beliefs, on values, norms and identities [Melucci 1999. 156].

In his writings and presentations Gulen attempts to mobilise the universal spiritual elements within the [Islamic / Sufi] traditions, codes and idioms of the past to advance new symbolic systems that can, in important ways, stand out as guideposts for the future. Intriguingly, this approach is inclusivist in nature and not bound to one national culture, heritage and identity.

Originating in Turkey but becoming increasingly transnational, the Movement represents novel approaches to the relationship between faith and reason, peaceful coexistence in liberal democracies with religious diversity, education and spirituality. [Aslandođan 2007. vii]

Thus, there is a form of ‘invitational-confrontation’ in that the movement models to secular nationalist ideologies and economic globalisation processes an Islamic spirituality and world view which can transform political and economic structures. These are not inimical forces bound to oppositional postures.

The movement has systematically avoided contentious political or direct action, preferring to remain, in principle and practice, non-adversarial. It has, instead, in order to form and inform the public space, and to consolidate and revitalise democratic processes, exerted itself to bring together antagonistic individuals and groups to collaborate in a common spirit of service. A prominent example of these efforts is its establishment in Turkey of the ‘Journalists and Writers Foundation’, which brings together academics, scholars,

statesmen, and journalists who hold different, even conflicting perspectives in *Abant* platforms, dinners and conferences.

The platforms continue to bring urgent matters to the fore to be engaged with in a constructive spirit. They lead the public space in starting negotiations on issues that have caused tensions and clashes for decades. The '*Abant* Platforms' in particular have been widely appreciated as an effective forum for airing dilemmas that many people in Turkish society longed to have openly discussed and resolved. The movement has thus contributed to the training of a potential for coexistence, for a common sense of citizenship, without the need to clash and with the hope of mutual respect and compromise.

Moreover, since the issues aired enter the public space they are presented to decision-making, which transforms the initiatives into possibilities for social change without confrontation and abusive argument. As spaces for speech and spaces for *naming*, these initiatives permit new words to be spoken and heard, different from the words that dominant power groups in Turkey want to impose, and coming out of a rationale different from theirs. This is not naively to ignore the tendency of powerful interest groups to assert hegemonic control over political mechanisms and processes; rather, it is seen, from within the movement and outside, as teaching wisely and by example the proper role of social institutions, and thereby helping to define what participatory democracy in the country could become [Weller 2007. 86].

The complexity of the Turkish Republic's history and the interaction of 'state' and 'religion' offer a paradoxically rich environment for this movement to emerge from and to work within. It has had to develop a range of stratagems combining pro-activity and patience, service and persistence of faith. Viewing the recent history of Turkey in regard to the issue of faith Bulaç [2007:120] detects that it is '...a history of tension between people of faith, who would like to have a voice in the civil area, and the state society, which would like to transform the rest of the society in an authoritarian way.'

Social movements, as Melucci comments [1999. 258], by revealing the negligence of powerful elites whether misuse of office, authority and resources enable people to take responsibility for alternative *modus vivendi publico*. Movements strive symbolically to name new codes and languages in order to redefine personal and public civic realities. They reverse the representation of the world proffered by secularist models, refusing the latter's claim to uniqueness; and they offer, through social practices and lived experiences, alternatives to replace the predominant codes and values. Thus, social movements, of which the Gülen Movement is one example, introduce a new paradigm, a redefinition of public space, for norms of perception and production of reality beyond what is prescribed by the current hegemonic discourse. Such social movements possess an invariably articulate discourse but it is premised upon the significance of dialogue both religious and political between hitherto estranged social actors.

Nonetheless, this as with other social movements of mobilisation has provoked suspicion and hostility from existing power groups both in Turkey and outside. Any collective mobilisation not only or particularly the Gülen Movement not initiated by the power establishment is viewed with disfavour by that establishment because it tends to regard any independent collective action as a potential threat to itself as the very establishment and embodiment of civil power. If an independent collective mobilisation proves its success or efficacy, the power establishment assembles against it because it encroaches upon territory that the vested interests groups need to monopolise in order to pursue particular projects and schemes and to retain their hold on authority.

The core of the Movement however, is an educational ideal which addresses relations between people, the self, and the depths of individual behaviour. Its rationale therefore does not promote aggressive change, whether in Turkey or anywhere else.

Nevertheless, in the public arena the Hojaeffendi encourages people to serve humanity both through education and in the course

of intercultural and interfaith activities and institutions. The goal is to bridge the gaps between peoples and to establish connections for the common good and peace. He has explained that society's three greatest enemies are ignorance, poverty, and internal schism, which knowledge, work-capital, and unification can eliminate. Ignorance is the most serious problem, and it is defeated through education, which has always been the most important way of serving others. It is the most effective vehicle for change – regardless of whether it is in Turkey or abroad, and whether or not people have systems working or failing – as the solution of every problem in human life ultimately depends on the initiative and capacities of human beings themselves. Poverty is mitigated through work and the possession of capital, justly deployed in the service of others; and internal schism and separatism are vanquished by striving, through forbearance, tolerance and dialogue, for unity [Unal & Williams 2000, 305-331]. These principles apply equally outside Turkey as within it.

4. CONCLUSION

Through discourse and action, the movement alerts a collective consciousness to the radical nature of social, cultural and spiritual needs that politics ignores, or which it mishandles by reducing them to arenas of contention between antagonistic factions.

By putting into practice constructive alternatives to the secularist political approach to social problems, this faith based service orientated movement introduces to the public space a new paradigm, a redefinition of norms of perception and production of reality beyond the control of any hegemonic discourse. For this movement of volunteers is not only facing such structures in the Turkish context but notably in other global situations of strife, division and poverty.

As collective cultural actors, volunteers symbolically seek to reverse the meanings inscribed in that discourse, and demonstrate the arbitrariness of those meanings and of the hegemony by which they are projected. Its success in seeing and shaping reality through

different perspectives has led to erosion of the elite's monopoly of power over reality. That, in turn, has opened up new channels of representation, steadily reforming the decision-making processes and rules, with further effects on the forms of political democracy, distributive justice and segmentation.

While the service-projects, the collective action, of the Movement do not constitute a challenge to the status quo, the movement has been faced by the measures from the prevailing power interests because it challenges and reverses the logic of their rationale. Both to hold on to the status quo, and to hide their failures in the service areas where the movement is conspicuously successful, the antagonists open up new problems and new areas of conflict. They counter-mobilise in particular because the value of non-contentious civil society action, the efficiency of voluntary altruistic service and its role in modernising institutions, in both developing the attitudes and mechanisms needed to build participatory democracy and motivating the people to become alert, active, law-abiding citizens (without whom a healthy democracy cannot be sustained) emerges from a faith-based initiative inspired by a Muslim preacher, an Islamic scholar.

The dispersed, polyform structure of the movement, while offering many advantages, such as flexibility and rapid responsiveness, can be seen as a weakness in some respects. Since there is no centre which regulates the flow of information, people at dispersed networks may understand differently what Gülen says, or a speech may be interpreted differently at local relational and project networks. So, decentralization may cause different understandings and practice at local levels. This is worthy of note as this amongst other Qur'anically inspired renewal movements progress.

Although Gülen protests that he is not the leader, his influence on the Movement participants cannot be denied. Questions about his role usually centre around what will happen after his death. Who will succeed him? Will there be many leaders of different factions? Who will be able to exercise the same moral, spiritual and scholarly influence?

The answer to such potential difficulties will rest in the professionalism, the clarity of goals, and the collective ownership of projects, which are sources of stability. The movement's Qur'anic based understanding and established norms of practice, not least the well-established use of collective reasoning *isma* and *ijtihad* and consultation, should prevent any sudden changes of direction. In addition it is instructive to consider that within Islam's history the narrative of faith-based and altruistic initiatives, such as those associated with Jalal ud-Din Rumi, Imam al-Ghazali, or Said Bediuzzaman Nursi did not cease rapidly, decay or weaken over time into divisiveness.

In this conference we, and in this paper I am offering an image-in-time of a continuous journey another *hijrah* on which Muslim people have constantly been engaged since the Prophet undertook in hazardous circumstances the prototype *hijrah* to a city yet to be claimed for Islam. This original *hijrah* was a service movement in answer to an invitation. It is also an image-in-time of the true *jihad* the struggle spiritually within and with spiritual powers of political and vested collective egotism. It is a narrative of eschatological dimensions and codes. It also a commentary on the Qur'anic ideal of the Prophet *insan i-kamil*, for all who regard him with honour seek also to be as he was a 'mercy for the worlds' [Surah 28.46].

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