



Faith and Citizenship Among the Nur Community in Turkey

A Study in Islamic Socio-Political Imagination

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Abstract

Through an ethnographic study of sohbet meetings and patterns of civic and political engagement of the Nur community in Turkey, this thesis examines the processes through which Islamic socio-political imaginaries are constructed and subsequently turned into practice. The phrase 'socio-political imaginary' is used in the meaning given to it by Charles Taylor. According to the author, a social imaginary is the transformation of social theory into the profound normative notions and imagines that enable common people's practice of society. Applying this analytical tool to the study of an Islamic community allows the researcher to fill in a gap of time and space existing in the literature about Islamic movements. In terms of time, it allows the researcher to focus the investigation on a little theorized step in the process of mobilization by religious actors that is, the cognitive elaboration of a socio-political project before mobilization around that project is organized. In terms of space, it grasps the intermediate level of cognition existing between the theological elaboration on politics and society promoted by religious scholars and the masses' practical knowledge of the social realm constituted by a set of instinctive beliefs and judgments. Finally, the concept of social imaginary allows the researcher to analyse discourse and practice as mutually sustaining elements that together define a social actor's function and position in society. Unravelling this dynamic interaction means going back and forth, both temporally and cognitively, between imagination and acts and recognizing that the discourse in itself can be influenced by the social space for which it provides a map.

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Bio

Maria Concetta Tedesco was born in Naples, Italy in 1985. She obtained her B.A and M.A. in Islamic Studies from the University of Naples 'L'Orientale'. During her Master studies she became interested in the Sociology of Islam and further developed this interest in her M.A. thesis on the narratives constructed by Muslim business associations and Muslim trade unions in Turkey. Since 2010 she has been a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Political and Social Science of the European University Institute where, under the supervision of Olivier Roy, she has been working on practices of religious reasoning and patterns of social and political engagement promoted by Islamist actors in Turkey.