

Funding Gülen-inspired Good Works: Demonstrating and Generating Commitment to the Movement

by Helen Rose Ebaugh, Dogan Koc

The projects sponsored by the Gülen-inspired movement are numerous, international and costly in terms of human and financial capital. Critics of the movement often question the financing of these initiatives – with some convinced of collusion with Middle Eastern governments, others (within Turkey) suspicious that Western governments are financially backing the projects. Aware of these criticisms, in a recent comment to a group of visiting followers, Fethullah Gülen indicated greater financial transparency must become a priority for the movement.

This paper addresses the financing of Gülen-inspired projects, based on interviews with business leaders in Turkey, as well as local businessmen throughout Turkey who constitute the financial infrastructure of the movement. In addition, the paper presents data from one local Gülen movement organisation in Houston, Texas, that collects thousands of dollars annually from local members, mostly students on small educational stipends.

The paper is framed sociologically in terms of organisational theories of commitment. Beginning with Kanter (1972;1977) and including subsequent major figures in the organisational field (e.g. Reichers 1985; Meyer and Allen 1991; Hall 2002; Scott 2003), scholars have demonstrated a positive correlation between sacrifices asked of members and degree of commitment to the goals of the organisation. Using this perspective, the paper argues that the financial contributions made by members in the Gülen movement both demonstrate commitment to the ideals espoused by Fethullah Gülen and generate commitment to the movement. The paper presents empirical evidence, based on interviews with financial supporters both in Turkey and the U.S., of how financial resources are generated, the initiatives being supported and the impact of financial giving on the commitment of supporters.

Panel:
Education and Common
Values in Practice

Venue:
D202,
Clement House, LSE

27.10.07 Panels	Parellel Session 1	Parellel Session 2
9:30-11:30		Presentation: 01
13:00-15:00		
15:10-17:00		

Helen Rose Ebaugh (PhD in sociology, Columbia University, 1975): Professor, University of Houston, teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in the Sociology of World Religions. She has served as President of the National Association for the Sociology of Religion and the International Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. She helped organise and served as the first chair of the American Sociological Association's Section on Sociology of Religion. Publications: author of five books, and numerous articles in scholarly journals.

Dogan Koc (BSc in chemistry at Marmara University, Istanbul; MA in education; a second MA in sociology at University of Houston): studying for PhD in political science at University of Texas at Dallas, focusing on international relations and social movements, the Gülen movement in particular. Co-founder, and currently Secretary, of the Institute of Interfaith Dialog. He is currently teaching a course on Islam and Middle East Politics at Austin College, Sherman, Texas.

**Helen Rose
Ebaugh**

hr.ebaugh@gulenconference.org.uk

**Dogan
Koc**

d.koc@gulenconference.org.uk