



A Conversation with Gülden

About (dismantling) securitization, pacification and common sense

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ABSTRACT

Panel Honouring late Dr. Gülden Özcan, University of Lethbridge, Women Scholars' Speaker Series

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A CONVERSATION WITH GÜLDEN ABOUT (DISMANTLING) SECURITIZATION, PACIFICATION AND COMMON SENSE

In February of 2022, Gülden received the Excellence in Equity Award by the Support Network for Academic of Colour Plus (SNAC+). This was a virtual ceremony where colleagues, students and professors had the opportunity to share some of our personal stories we had lived with her. The event turned into some kind of long and open conversation with Gülden about the paths that we had shared and the way they impacted different moments of our life. Even under the difficult circumstances surrounding the ceremony, the event was a celebration: of her work, life and friendship.

Today, we find ourselves forced to find different means to continue this conversation without her being around physically. Fortunately, we have more than our stories with her; we have her ideas, discussions, and confrontations: we have her voice in each paper she wrote, every class she taught, and every memory with her that we hold. In this sense, I feel very grateful with this panel organized by Dr. Suzanne Lenon, Dr. Kristine Alexander, and Dr. Athena Elafros as part of the Women Scholars' Speaker Series, which gives us another opportunity to talk about Gülden, not only as a friend (and in my case, a supervisor), but as an author and a thinker: the opportunity to engage with her ideas, analyses, questions, critiques, and fights. That is my only objective at today's panel, to continue, with everyone here, those long and rich conversations I used to hold with Gülden not that long ago.

For this talk I want to focus on two pieces of her work from which we could draw some ideas to think about the theme of this year's Women Scholars Speaker Series, "The University and its Worlds". First, an article titled *Revisiting national security discourse in Turkey with a view to pacification: from military power to police power onto orchestration of labour power*, which was published in 2014, while Gülden was doing her PhD in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University. The second text is a chapter titled *Neoliberalism, national security and academic knowledge production in Turkey*, that appeared in the book *The University and Social Justice: Struggles across the Globe*, published in 2020 and edited by Aziz Choudry and Salim Vally.

One of my frequent topics of conversation with Gülden was the similarity between our two countries, Mexico and Turkey. I admit that I didn't always fully understand some of these relations until later after approaching her work. However, what it became clear back then and even more today, was that Gülden's work emerged from a necessity to understand, share and question the political experiences that marked her close reality. In other words, what we can find in her papers is a political thinking. Not only in the traditional academic sense of specific types of theories and concepts used, but also because of its closeness to the collective experiences of struggle and resistance, and their role in the process of transforming a society. Continuing this logic, we are here today bringing her words and ideas to think about one of these close realities: the university institution.

The discussions addressed in both articles are situated in the political and social history of Turkey, mainly focusing on the events occurred through the military coup of 1980, the later arise of the Justice and Development party (AKP) in 2002, and the failed attempt of another coup in 2016. Based on the first article, I will explore the relation between pacification and security and its role in the construction of a neoliberal order and an imposed common sense. Following the second article, I will talk about the way such processes are reflected in the organization of universities. Both of her texts will allow us to raise questions related to resistance and transformation.

In the first article mentioned before, Gülden (2014) approaches to the notion of *security*, and its process of *securitization*, as a term that reflects "both monopoly of violence and consent creating aspects of

the state" (p. 38) by the ruling class. The same class that has used it against opposition, and as a way to secure a foundation for capital accumulation, cheap wage labour and an easy flow of goods and services in the free market. As Gülden notices, securitization, since 9/11, has turned into an ideology that allows to justify and incentivise policy-making processes and rights-based claims on every single aspect of our lives, which we can see through the terms of national security, social security, food security, job security, workplace security, supply chain security, environmental security, and so on. It is also important to notice that this has become a central piece in the structuration of a neoliberal order that has placed the responsibility of security on the people and institutions as part of a self-care mandate. Under this context, it becomes necessary to address such a notion from a counter-hegemonic perspective that allows us to see its functioning beyond the system we are embedded in; this perspective is the one of *pacification*.

Gülden tracks down the concept of pacification to the sixteenth century, where it appeared in relation to the idea of *conquest*, and as a new war strategy that intended to establish cooperation with lords and nobles, gathering information about the communities that were being conquered, seeking friendship, showing love, and keeping their children as hostages under the pretext of teaching them. The concern of pacification was not about the territorial gain, but about the population: gaining their "hearts and minds".

The development of a police science around the same time is significant as the police itself grew to become a central mechanism for the processes of pacification by reifying a particular social order in societies. As Gülden mentions in regard to the relation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the police "helped foster the hegemony of the new mode of governance along with the capitalist ideals while at the same time informing, training, civilizing and orchestrating people" (p. 42). Every process of pacification already implies a process of securitization. The relation between both notions consists in a dual function of "building a civilized society and political order while destroying old values and those allegedly opposed to the new order" (p. 43).

This way, to pacify becomes a synonym of local and international colonization by creating productive and docile subjects that secure the conditions for capital accumulation and the circulation of goods while reproducing the bourgeoisie order and eliminating their insecurities. Finally, we can see the success of pacification tactics when they become part of our everyday practices and make of an ideology a common sense "without referring or naming that specific ideology, and politiciz(ing) daily activities within the seemingly depoliticized and/or apolitical spheres of action" (p. 51).

In the chapter, *Neoliberalism, national security and academic knowledge production in Turkey*, Gülden (2020) presents clear examples of such tactics of pacification/securitization through the changes that the university as an institution has gone through in Turkey as a response to new political structures that included an alignment to the neoliberal order.

In 1981, after the military coup, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) was established as a way of centralising the university system. Its control was justified on the grounds that a new system able to coordinate higher education institutions and regulate the degree of politicisation in the system of instruction was needed. According to Gülden, the Council "has served to infuse a business mentality into universities via the practices of standardisation and the discourse of high efficiency, coupled with disciplinary regulations including bans on political activism on campuses" (p. 62). Under the same logic, universities' primary objectives were redefined at the same time that curriculums were changed in order to benefit a market-oriented perspective.

A Conversation with Gülden

A similar scenario was presented, now under the AKP Party, a few years later with the incorporation of the Bologna Process, as a site that, as Gülden notices, matched the YÖK's authoritarianism with the neoliberal requisites, while aiming for a standardization based on European higher education policies. Some of the outcomes of these changes consisted in the opening of a large amount of private universities, as well as "the further precarisation of academic labour and unpaid overtime of those in relatively secure academic positions" (p. 64).

One more example of the pacification/security tactics can be found after the attempted coup in 2016 where a major purge in the universities was conducted under the claim of national security. Groups such as Academics for Peace, who presented a peace statement "calling on the Turkish government to end the violence in Kurdish provinces" (p. 64) were some of the most striking groups to be dismissed. The transformation of the universities within the two-year state of emergency announced after the attempted coup made more visible the AKP government's repressive policies, while ensuring the docility of the remaining academics.

A significant aspect about both of Gülden's articles is the discussion presented in the final section, just before the conclusions. Both articles end discussing cases of resistance of such processes of pacification and securitization. In the first article, we can see the description of the strike driven by the workers of the Alcohol and Tobacco Monopoly of Turkey in 2010 (Özcan, 2014). The event represented for Gülden a stand up against the imposition of a hegemonic common sense built on neoliberal values. In the second article, we are presented with cases of resistance in the context of universities, such as the *Petition of Intellectuals* in 1984, *Bread and Rights petition* in 1986, the *Ekin-BILAR Incorporation*, or in the post-2016 period, the group *Solidarity Academies*, or *Scholars at Risk* (Ozcan, 2020).

Following the same structure as Gülden, I would like to finish with a brief comment about and a case of resistance. In terms of understanding the idea of resisting, I find in the Foucauldian approach an appealing definition from which an argument can be drawn. Resistance is already part of every relation of power, embedded in all of the discursive dynamics we dwell daily. That shouldn't be read, however, as a passive position regarding our scope of action. On the contrary, I believe it compels us to adopt an active position by acknowledging and embracing the diverse and daily acts that go against an imposed common sense, while revealing that there are alternative logics that are still present among us.

While writing this, I'm thinking of a post on Facebook that Gülden did on February 10th of this year:

"U of L faculty is officially on strike!" (can be read at the beginning of the post, to later finish saying) "I am so glad that I have a union that negotiated all the extended health benefits so that I could afford expensive cancer treatments and side effect treatments and while doing so enjoy the privileges of having been on medical leave. #ulethisworthfightingfor #workingconditionsarelearningconditions #universitiesworkbecausewedowork #equity #parity #respect."

I see in her post an act of resistance against an ongoing order, a neoliberal order, that imposes itself by pushing us to forget that every new policy, cuts of fundings, restructuring, modification of contents, elimination of contents, addition of contents, and so on, are not only about labour conditions, academic conditions or even knowledge conditions, but also about life conditions. I see in Gülden's post, and in her work in general, a reminder of this, of an alternative common sense with an alternative logic that claims for solidarity and support; I see the same resistance in both of the papers I have talked about; and I keep seeing the same resistance in this panel made in her honour. From the recognition of these acts, our questions can emerge, questions regarding the processes of pacification and securitization, not only as ways of encountering the practices and meanings that have sneaked into our daily life and institutions, but also as openings for other practices and meanings that either are already around us or waiting to be built.

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