An Extended Meaning of the Concept of "Public Space"
A Semiotic Analysis of French "Burqa Affair"
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ABSTRACT
This paper examines the national press coverage of French "*burqa* affair" (2009-2010) from a semiotics approach within communication studies. By using theories of discourse analysis (such as enunciation, argumentation, rhetoric and pragmatic), we propose to observe how the actors that integrate these debates (among journalists, politicians, religious, experts) assignee different meanings to public spaces and places according to their interests, strategies, political projects and dominant discourse in their work or institutional field. While most academic works about French veil affairs focus on the question of Islamic increasing visibility, the aim of this study is to investigate the issue of Islamic spatiality, which remains as a blind spot for the media debate. Motivated by a spatial or geographical problematic of analysis, the objective of this paper is to retrace the discursive process between 2009 and 2010 that lead to the redefinition of the notion of "public space". More precisely, we intend to observe how the concept of "public space" is conceived, appropriated and re-signified *in* and *by* the press coverage of "burqa affair". The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how this press debate legitimated an extended meaning of the concept of "public space", bringing to light social, political, normative and affective dimensions of contemporary public spaces and places.

Keyword: Semiotics, discourse, press, "burqa affair", public space.

1.0 INTRODUCTION
This paper examines the press coverage of the "*burqa* affair" in France (2009-2010) from a semiotics approach within communication studies, centred on discourse analysis and focusing on spatial, geographical or "territorial" problems. While most academic works about French veil affairs[i] focus on the question of Islamic increasing visibility in public sphere, our propose is to investigate the issue of Islamic spatiality, which remains as a blind spot of this public debate. In the aim of filling this academic gap, our approach of analysis consists in observing how the concept of "public space" is appropriated and re-signified *in* and *by* the press debate. This discursive process is

conceived as a symbolical operation and a collective elaboration. We intend to observe how "*burqa* affair" brings to light some core dimensions of contemporary "public spaces", such as their social, political, normative and affective qualities. By this procedure, we intend to demonstrate how this press debate legitimated an extended meaning of the concept of "public space".

Some of the questions that constitute our problematic of study are: How do recent media debates about Islamic veils (scarf, *niqab, burqa, burkini*) visibility at schools (1989-2004), public way (2009-2010), nurseries (2008-2015), enterprises (2013), universities (2013-2015) and beaches (2016) stimulate critical and deep reflections about the meanings and uses of the concept of "public space"? How do these media debates spur on a redefinition of the boundaries between private and public spheres? How do political, juridical and media actors taking part at the press coverage of "*burqa* affair" participate at the semiotic construction of "public spaces"? How do these actors speak about the spaces that they contribute to configure *in* and *by* this press debate?

To answer these questions with regards to "*burqa* affair", we assert two hypothesis: (1) increasing visibility of Islamic veil in France has less to do with the return of a religiosity pressed down by modern secularism than with a new visibility construction, transformed and empowered by the media; (2) Islamic visibility covers spatial problems not yet explored within academic works.

In a previous study, we showed that "burqa affair" and 2010 law determining that "*no-one in a public space may wear an outfit intended to hide the face*" raised a different problem than the one posed by the "headscarf affair" and 2004 law banning all "*signs and dress that conspicuously show the religious affiliation of students*". The spatial problematic inaugurated by the "burqa affair" is unprecedented: it is precisely the first time in modern French history that a ban on religious signs applies outside institutional spaces, such as schools, hospitals, courts and other state public services facilities. Between 2004 and 2010, the geographic perimeter/limit of Islamic veil ban amplifies considerably. The first and the second perimeters/limits cannot be superposed, but rather they complete each other, the latest (public way) enabling to expand the former (public school). As we can see, the study of French veil affairs under a "space" problem gives evidence about a juridical and semiotic transformation concerning the relation to public spaces and places, as well as their meanings and practical values.

This paper looks into the press coverage of the "burqa affair" with the objective of retracing the discursive process between 2009 and 2010 that lead to the redefinition of the notion of "public space". We intend to analyse the concerted, yet polemical, re-signification of the concept of "public space" in the context of press debate whose dispositive favours numerous discursive disputes and rhetorical confrontations.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW
The privilege accorded to discourse analysis in this paper engages us in some theoretical considerations. Language, statements, discourses and speeches are at the heart of meaning process at different levels and degrees and constitute central elements of analysis in a semiotic approach of the "burqa affair". With regards to these notions, we should first stress that we reject a presupposition coming from philosophy of language and considering that thinking or mental categories do not exist out of the language. Instead, we consider a reciprocal presupposition of relations between discourses, perceptions and material reality. Yet, if communication exceeds verbal language, this one is still a privilege way for intelligibly elaborating thoughts. Nevertheless, it is worthy to question: which verbal languages are we talking about? Which notions are used to examine discourses in the materiality of language?

2.1. Statements and discourses
First of all, let's look into the notion of "statement". Based on Oswald Ducrot (1980, 1984, 1991) linguistic theory, we treat this concept as a unity provided with meaning, feasible by the means of language and having no equivalent to the phrase. We consider that statements differ from phrases in so far as phrases are linguistic constructions out of use that allows us to produce multiple statements

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according to a variety of contexts and communication situations. Unlike discourses, statements do not need a subject of enunciation because enunciation is more like a linguistic event than a speech act. We will then use the notion of statement when we want to highlight the problem of meaning, enunciation and subjectivity inside language.

The second key word of this study is "discourse". Following language specialists Patrick Charaudeau (1992) and Dominique Maingueneau (2002), we use this term to refer to a complete unity of meaning (regrouping one or more phrases), produced by a subject, guided in accordance to intentions and purposes (a form of action over the other), governed by norms (discourse and social laws), caught in inter-discourses and self-developing in a precise time-space that works as a condition of discourses production, circulation and reception. In this paper, we use both notions of discourse and statement, without neglecting that the term of "discourse" is more appropriate to refer to speeches or texts produced by someone under situational constraints.

2.2. Language and discourses
With regards to linguist Ferdinand Saussure's (1972) classical distinction between language (intrinsic linguistic constants) and speech (extrinsic linguistic) – that has been updated within Language, Information and Communication Sciences –, we suggest to overlook this dichotomy in order to conceive that language and discourses are inseparable. Based on Roland Barthes' semiology studies (1984, 1985) and the philosophical language semiotic theory proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1980), we reject such a distinction between language and speech, and affirm that language is an informative-representative system dependent on social and political practices. By mobilizing these authors, we deny the possibility of disentangling language and discourse in order to consider: (1) the language as a semiotic object in continuous variation, that is, as a practice among others; (2) the language as part of the "real" and not as a representation of it; and (3) the discourses of our corpus as intrinsically presenting some social, political and pragmatic dimensions.

2.3. Discourses' conditions and stakes
To complete this theoretical framework centred on the discourse issue, Michel Foucault's "The Order of Discourse" (1971) configures the third outline of the theory of this research. The philosopher conceives discourses as some regular and distinct series of events that are dependent on external conditions. Foucault stresses the importance of analysing discourses according to their condition of possibility and eventuality, instead of their source or subject of enunciation. Based on this theoretical framework, we seek, not to unveil a unique and hidden meaning behind them, but to enlighten the stakes, restrictions and conditions that make their enunciation possible and meaningful. As Foucault (1971) describes, our analysis procedure will consist "*not to go from discourses to their hidden and interior core, to the heart of a thought or of a meaning that would manifest on it, but from the very discourses, their appearance and regularity, to go towards their extern conditions of possibility, to what create a random series of this events and that set their limits*" (p.54).

3.0 DATA & METHODOLOGY
The corpus of analysis includes all press articles published in national newspapers *Le Monde, Libération, Le Figaro* between 16 June 2009 and 14 September 2010. For this data collection, we used the online databases *Factiva* and *Europresse* regrouping main newspapers worldwide and employed keyword such as "*niqab*" "*burqa*" "*tchador*" "integral veil" to look for texts covering the "burqa affair". From a total of 1701 news articles published in that period, we selected 171 of which content responds better to our problem of study, that is developing the issue of spatiality. From this pre-selected corpus, we collected for this paper only the discourses or statements that develops, in a more precise and direct way, some of the main issues of this study.

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The method of this study is based on a semiotics approach of discourse analysis (enunciation, argumentation, rhetoric and pragmatic) to examine public speeches (mostly political, juridical and journalistic) in "burqa affair" press debate. Under discourse analysis method, we propose to examine the social, political, symbolical, enunciate, argumentative and pragmatic dimensions of these public speeches.

First of all, concerning the social and symbolical dimensions of discourses, we follow Patrick Charaudeau (1997, 2005) in order to inscribe our discursive scope inside the field of public communication (mostly, media and political). In this field, the meaning of objects – like Islamic veil – is apprehended as a social construction, that is, as the result of discursive disputes concerning the legitimate order and the constitution/dissolution of social groups and political positions. In this paper, we also assume that the type of discourse interaction mediated by press devices contributes to feed symbolic systems, which update and reconfigure the social and political relations of actors-interlocutors in the media debate.

Secondly, with regard to the political dimension of public speeches, we rely on Patrick Charaudeau and Jacques Gerstlé (2008) works with the objective of analysing discourse strategies mobilized in "burqa affair" not as modes of deployment of political action but as actions themselves. Discursive practices and enunciation arrangements are inextricably imbricated to power devices.

Thirdly, referring to the enunciation dimension of public discourses, we follow linguists Emile Benveniste (1970, 1974) and Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2009) conception of enunciation as a subjectivity stake related to the positioning, the identification and the personal implication of actors. We follow as well Oswald Ducrot (1980, 1984, 1991) linguistic theory sustaining that the enunciation – more precisely, the image or the description of enunciation – constitutes the meaning of discourses in a self-reference way. The idea is that the discourses meanings (the "said") are influenced by the semantic structure of phrases that gives overall instructions, such as context, target, intentionality and interlocutors' relations to grasp the enunciation event (the "saying"). In this enunciation perspective, we move from the "said" to the "saying" in order to consider the meaning of enunciation as a kind of representation that the speaker gives of his own enunciation.

In what concerns the argumentative dimension of discourses under analysis, we rely on linguists Ruth Amossy (2006) and Oswald Ducrot (1984, 1991) whose works enable to treat argumentation in a linguistic (semantic, meaning) and rhetorical (context, interlocutors relations) sense of the term. The idea is to analyse discourse argumentation in the materiality of language and to consider the chaining of the phrases as an argumentative orientation that informs about the meaning of discourses. Sizeable in the language, argumentation is considerer as a public act.

Finally, with regard to the pragmatic dimension of discourses, we lean on linguist Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008) in order to grasp speech acts from a semiotic approach considering the senses they acquire in the "burqa affair" and the communication situation created by the press. As stressed by Kerbrat-Orecchioni, statements can only act by means of a semiotic process that is anterior to any action. Then, the problem is about knowing in which measure we can "*modify a state of things X by producing a meaning Y*" (p.30).

By means of this discursive analysis method, our objective is to observe how actors, who integrate these debates (journalists, politicians, religious, experts) assign different meanings to public spaces and places according to their interests, strategies, political projects and dominant discourse in their work or institutional field.

4.0 FINDINGS & DISCUSSION
Having presented this introductory overview, lets bend on the analysis and findings of this study highlighting an unprecedented spatial stake concerning Islamic veil's visibility in France. Our goal is to analyse the relations and meanings given to public spaces in the media and political discourses of the "burqa affair". We observe that politicians on the parliamentary scene and the law experts interviewed in the press establish a political-juridical dialogue about the notion of "public space"

that highlights the way in which the concept has been thought, appropriated and redefined in this media affair.

The lexicometric analysis of all spatial terms used in this public debate sets the following cartography: 176 texts containing the term "public space", 116 "street", 75 "territory", 47 "public way" and 29 "public institutions" (See Appendix). In this press coverage, we note that the concept of "public space" appears as an object of discursive controversies among social, political and media actors that dispute over the meaning, the legitimacy, the legality and the applicability of it.

While the centrality of the concept of "public space" serves as an evidence of this press debate, it also contrasts with a lack of precision of the notion. This is at the basis of some specific semiotic stakes, such as: the elasticity of the signifier (does this term refers to institutional settlements or to public spaces like square, street, market, beach?), the vagueness of the signified (which can refer to different quality of publics spaces, such as geographical, social, political, normative or affective) and a blurred meaning (at last, where can we situate the boundary between public and private spaces?). This semiotics performance has sustained an extensive interpretation of the concept of "public space", especially within the political and parliamentary debate covered by the national press. We observe that the semiotic stakes opened a large field for argumentative manoeuvres in favour of prohibitionist discourse. This is precisely the object of study of this paper.

4.1. Redefinition of "public space" within prohibitionist discourse: limits and meanings

By the end of 2009, when the government proposed a new law establishing that "*no-one in a public space may wear an outfit intended to hide the face*", we stated that numerous actors (politician, journalists, juridical experts) called into question the definition and the precision of some terms of this legal text. How to define the concept of "public space" and which spaces should we include under this category? Public institutions, services, hospitals, universities, transport, street, and public way: up to which limit would it be justifiable and constitutional to apply integral veil ban? Or yet: which place (physical and symbolical) is reserved to Islam inside French society? All these questions coming up from the political and parliamentary debates about the "burqa affair" are central to our study problem.

Thus, let's look into the most emblematic discourses of the prohibitionist camp that shaped the "burqa affair" through the national press. Called by president Nicolas Sarkozy's imperative question - "*one must further clarify the concept of public space, too vague. What to do with a woman dressed in a burqa that circulates on public ways inside a car, which by definition is a private domain?*" (*Le Parisien*, 2010) - the most important political actors following the prohibitionist alignment of the government, expressed their opinions immediately thereafter:

- Xavier Darcos (Minister of work, Right wing leading party): "I recommend some caution to those tempted to follow the precedent of the 2004 law banning religious signs in schools because [...] the wearing of the full veil intervenes in an indeterminate space where the expression of opinions, even religious, is a fundamental right. I decline to rule on the university, on transport or on the street because that would be subject to legal controversy. (...) I promote an uncovered face Republic." (Gabizon, 2009).

- Brice Hortefeux (Minister of Interior, Right wing leading party): "I advocate a minimum solution by applying a law that circumscribes the niqab ban to public services (post, prefectures, transport) in order to avoid the risk of unconstitutionality from Constitutional Council and European court of human rights." (Auffray & Coroller, 2009).

-Éric Besson (Minister of Immigration, Right wing leading party): "I promoted the general prohibition of the niqab in all of the public space that is to say, in public services and buildings open to the public, but also in the street. Regarding the risk of

legal constraints of a total prohibition, <u>the prohibition should be</u> on the imperative of public order." (Auffray & Coroller, 2009).

- Jean-François Copé, Nicole Ameline, François Baroin and Éric Raoult (Right wing leading party): "<u>It is clear that</u> the burqa has no place in public services and public buildings or private places open to the public, such as shops. [...] <u>Still,</u> remains the question of a general prohibition on public ways. <u>For some</u>, it would be disproportionate or being misunderstood. Some legal experts also highlight the legal obstacles. <u>The ban must so be based</u> on the need for public order." (De Malet, 2009).

- Manuel Valls, Aurélie Filipetti, Philippe Esnol (Socialist Party): "<u>We advocate</u> banning the niqab in public space and services (town halls, schools, prefectures, social security) and on all public ways. The formula "uncovered face" is an imperative of public order."(*Libération,* 2009).

By observing these emblematic statements, we note two main general trends of the prohibitionist discourse within this press debate: the strong use of enunciation markers, as well as an argumentative construction by "connectors chaining". In what concerns the enunciation dimension, we note the use of "*I*" or "*we*" personal pronouns as marks of individual or collective recognition, as well as a mode of engagement that contributes to fabricate a specific discursive "ethos" (Charaudeau, 2005, p.65) of these actors and reinforce their visibility and authority. In this sense, while in Sarkozy's question the pronoun "one" refers to an "undetermined subject of enunciation" (Benveniste, 1960, pp.12-18) that regroups together the enunciator and co-enunciator, these quotes show that political actors have taken ownership of the president's question and assumed the position of subject of the enunciation, carrying all responsibilities that it implies (coherence, sincerity, legal liability etc.). Imperative verbs such as "*recommend*", "*promote*" and "*advocate*" operates as "assertive" and "declarative" illocutionary "speech acts" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008) performing and acting by means of discourse effects. The pragmatic dimension and performativity force of these discourses refers to the fact that they carry authority and decision-making power (Charaudeau, 1997, p.184). In this sense, these discourses can be considered as political actions.

In the second prohibitionist discourse camp, we observe that the argumentative dimension of theses quotes relies on a linguistic and rhetoric procedure of two steps: (1) taking in consideration an adversary discourse (legal experts and prohibitionist camp) and showing their personal and political awareness with the constraints posed by national and international legal frameworks in order to, (2) sustain the prohibitionist discourse that intend to by-pass the secular legal framework and promote an extensive meaning of the concept of "public space". This "argumentation by chaining" (Ducrot, 1984, pp. 40-45/ Ducrot, 1991, pp.81-91) consists in advancing one "pragmatic *topoi*" – a common idea or opinion (Amossy, 2006) about legal framework concerning public spaces – that will then legitimate and support the prohibitionist discourse. Those "polyphonic statements" (Ducrot, 1984, p.169) reveal about a "co-enunciation" process (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2009, p.18) in which the subject of statement stages, in a second discourse, the prohibitionist interlocutor with the objective of preventing a "counter-discourse" and producing a "pro-discourse" (Amossy, 2006). This shows how the interlocutor works as the dynamic force of the statement, guiding and motivating the message.

The statements of our corpus regarding the idea of "public space" constitutes many ways of seeing (discriminate and classify) and judging (to assign a value) the spatiality of Islamic religion. We observe Nicolas Sarkozy judging "*too vague*" the concept of public space, while Xavier Darcos speaks in terms of an "*indeterminate space*". All other terms illustrate a discursive dispute concerning the legitimate meaning given of "public space", which reveals how the concept has been redefined, during two years, the "burqa affair" press coverage. They show multiple and extended

meanings that the concept of "public space" acquires in this debate (schools, university, post, prefecture, transport, shops, street, services and buildings open to the public, public services, public buildings, private places), as well as some of the political discourse strategies concerning the use of the notion of in terms of 2010 law.

These political statements suggest that the main legal constraints posed by a broad interpretation of the concept is based on the inclusion of "public way" and "street" under the category of "public spaces" legally controlled by national state contradicts the principle of liberty. For example, the European convention of human rights states, in its article 9, that the liberty to manifest it's own religion can't be the object of others restrictions than the ones previewed by the law. Therefore, we can observe how prohibitionist discourse circumvented legal barriers posed by secular principles (like the one establishing the neutrality of appearances of state staff) by engaging the argument of "public order" and the formula of "uncovered face" to legitimize 2010 law. In this sense, unlike the debate concerning headscarves in schools, in the "burqa affair" it is no more the "neutrality" principle, but the one of "transparency" and "public order" that defines the quality of public spaces according to republican "regime of visibility" (Deleuze, Guattari, 1980).

The report of the "Information mission on the practice of wearing the integral veil on the national territory" (2010), written by the right-wing deputy Eric Raoult and communist André Gerin, is illustrative on this matter. The question of the legitimate argument and the extensive definition of the notion of "public space" are seizable by these titles of the report summary:

B. To forbid integral veil in public space?
1. An interdiction would be possible in regards to the Constitution?
a) The laïcity, an inoperative foundation.
b) The dignity of human person, a notion with an uncertain content.
c) The Public order, the less tricky track.

These observations enable us to seize the semantic blur of the concept of "public space" as a political strategic action and a discursive performative act, which contributes to produce an extensive definition of the notion that favours prohibitionist political discourse. We observe that the new legal framework inaugurated by the mediatization of the "burqa affair" and 2010 law contributed to redefine the practical value of public spaces of relative freedom (of thought and expression). In this sense, we can affirm that this legal device determines a new social reality. It legitimates the submission of these spaces to the State grid in accordance to a Republican "regime of visibility" which prescribes the transparency of actions and the neutrality of appearances. Therefore, the meaning of "public space" is more political – a security and order matter – than social, which would suppose the social recognition of Muslim actors and a sense of togetherness. As a consequence, we argue the mediatization of "burqa affair" displaces the meaning of "public" on the side of Republican State and its power, rather than of the side of civil society, common good and interest.

As sociologist Sylvia Ostrowetsky suggested in this regard "the appropriation of public spaces means the denial of itself" (Paquot, 2009 p.104). Or yet, as proposes Thierry Paquot, "the choice for open and welcoming urban places is a political act. No more, no less"(Paquot, 2009 p.105). Following this same critical perspective, sociologist Nilüfer Göle remembers that "the empowerment of public space toward the State is considered as a condition of exit from State authoritarianism" and also that the "emergence of a Islamic subject has revealed the limits of this space and its imbrication with the Republic" (Paquot, 2009 p.115). Indeed, in the "burqa affair", we note that the 2010 law has reinforced a convergence between the public space and the Republic by implying that both are synonyms.

Legal devices are revealing about a certain type of relation between government and citizens. In this sense, the press coverage of "burqa affair" raises the question about the type of State that is under construction under V French Republic. Journalists, social and political actors taking part in this debate put into question the role of political power in regulating religious issues

and constructing a legal agenda about Islam in France. Considering that the legal instruments of political action participate at the construction of interactions, practices and social representations, we can affirm that "burqa affair" produces a specific representation about Islam and its place in French society.

We observe that by an extensive interpretation of the concept of "public space", 2010 law constructed a new representation and meaning of Islamic full-face veil that is then connoted as socially blameable and illegal. The 2010 law is at the basis of a semiotic requalification (social and symbolical) of integral veil concerning the relation between law and customs. If, before the law, integral veil is represented (by means of images and discourses) as politically suspect and religiously radical, after the law this Islamic sign is also considered as socially dangerous (public order and security). Therefore, the wearing of its sign becomes an illicit practice. In this sense, as legal device, the 2010 law delimits the spatial legal perimeter of Islamic visibility and also states the weak symbolical recognition of integral veil in France. We move from identity representations to spatial ones et vice-versa: if the stigmatization of Islamic veil legitimize 2010 law, the geographical representation (spatial disorganization) inaugurated by this law reinforces in return the identitarian representations of contemporary Islamic visibility (social disorganization). The 2010 law is then a product and a producer of identity representations that are inseparable from their spatial dimension.

The press discourses analysed in this paper show to what extent the actors inscribed in this public debate look for legitimatizing a legal agency of space property as a way of controlling the representations and the practices that are considered legitimate. In this sense, the displacement and requalification of the concept of "public space" throughout this press debate reveal more about a power stake than a power instrument. Considering that public space only exists in relation to a daily use of it and to the actors that practice them, we can assert that it is at once a social, political, economical, communicational and historical instrument of power. As it is put by phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "the space is essential and the existence is spatial" (De Certeau, 1990, p.172)

4.2. When a third space emerges within the "burqa affair"

Among all articles of our corpus, we find a title of a news item published at *Figaro* newspaper that resumes at best the spatial problematic inaugurated by the "burqa affair": "Three spaces, three rules?". In this article, journalist Cécilia Gabizon remarks that in the context of this debate, the High Council for the Integration (HCI) proposed the distinction of three spaces controlled by its own rules: (1) the public space defined by the secular principle of neutrality that concerns the staff of public service and sometimes their users; (2) the civil space that includes the public domain of circulation and private enterprises open to the public, where freedom prevails if it doesn't disturb public order; and (3) the intimate space that is for essential the one of the house, where freedom prevails. The distinction of these three spaces (public, civil and personal) in the context of "burqa affair" allowed the High Council for the Integration to preconize the reinforcement of "laïcity" inside spaces in which the public authority prevails. Which are of these spaces are submitted to political jurisdiction and control? Inside the civil space, place of recent tensions about Islamic veil, which are the boundaries between freedom and public order? What type of laïcity prevails within it?

We can observe how the experts and journalists taking part in this press debate constitutes a complex thought or discussion about the spatial problem of "burqa affair" with regards to secular principles that mark public spaces:

- Alain-Gérard Slama, (editorial writer at *Figaro*): "The problem posed by integral veil is, indeed, new. (...) The use of burqa, more and more frequent on the streets and public places of peripheral areas, exceed the competence field of 2004 law that forbids using a conspicuous sign at school, at public administrations and hospitals. At the exterior of these spheres, in the name of which criteria a secular society can it be founded to forbid the exhibition of a dress sign that claim a religious membership, for the only reason that it covers completely the face? This is a first question."

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(Slama, 2009).

- Caroline De Malet (journalist at *Libération*): "Unlike the law about conspicuous signs in schools, which was voted by a majority and which resolved the problem immediately at all schools establishments in France, the law about integral veil poses a problem that is not quite the same because its perimeter of interdiction is different." (Caroline De Malet, 2009).

- Cécilia Gabizon (journalist at *Figaro* and member of the High Council for the Integration): "The 1905 law didn't said anything about the civil space because it hasn't anticipated society mutation, the affirmation, each day more important, of particularisms on public way, such as adolescents tribes, gaudy looks or yet religious membership. The increasing power of Islam, religion of collective rites, has also shaken up a secular society. These last years, numerous affairs have burst in this juridical blur." (Gabizon, 2010).

- Rémy Schwartz (State adviser and former reporter of Stasi commission about laïcity at school): "There is a crucial difference between the rules able to be enacted in public service and the constraints that is possible to impose to citizens in public space because in this one, freedom is the principle and the restriction, without talking about the interdiction, is the exception. The government has the right to forbid officers and students from public schools to manifest conspicuously their confession. However, as State Council has stressed in a recent notice, the Parliament can't invoke laïcity to forbid women to wear integral veil on the street." (Perrault, 2010).

These press quotes highlight how the meaning of public spaces – as they can be discursively considered in their materiality – are different from the scarf and the burqa affairs. The comparative perspective putting together these two media debates is a common approach of analysis within the press coverage of "burqa affair" and the aim of this parallel is to objectify a historical process moving towards an enlarged conception of "public space". We note in the first and third quotes that the connectors "*however*" and "*unlike*" do not only enable the comparison between veil affairs, but they also perform the "argumentative force/orientation" (Ducrot, 1984, pp.27-30/ 1991, p.208) of these statements, consisting in convincing the lector about the new spatial "*problem*" posed by burqa affair, which "*is not quite the same*" or "*is, indeed, new*". These comparative connectors are also an essential element to grasp the meaning of these statements.

Based on these findings, we can argue that the journalists and experts participating in the press debate are more concerned about putting into question the spatial problem posed by the "burqa affair" than looking for a legal framework to justify or extend the State's control of public ways. Unlike political discourses, journalists and juridical experts raise more questions than answers. However that does not mean that they have no personal or political interest in the subject. On the contrary, their statements represent the institutional instance of each one of their subjects of enunciation. For journalists Alain-Gérard Slama and Caroline De Malet, it is worthwhile to create a "public problem" concerning the Islamic veil visibility (polemic content and audience matter) than following the political definition of the concept of "public space". For Cécilia Gabizon, member of the High Council for the Integration, the stake is about promoting the idea of a "third space" in accordance to the notice publish by this same institution. Finally, for Rémy Schwartz the matter is about defending the rule of law and, as so, the legitimacy of legal power in face of political decision-making. These media and expert discourses illustrate how "burqa affair" pursued for an historical update of the concept of "laïcity". Following 1905 law, secular principles distinguish only two spaces, the public – in which prevails the neutrality of public services staff and users – and the private space – in which predominate the freely expression of religious convictions. Such a binary

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segmentation characterizes the specificity of republican political organisation by shaping the "public space" as a place of State sovereignty that is defined by the negative, that is, the absence of religious distinction marks. In contrast, the private space is defined as an intimate dimension that expresses itself by means of Greek term of "aidôs", referring to the notion of modesty *"that manifests as much a reserve as a shame"*, as describes philosopher Thierry Paquot (2009, p.47). This etymological meaning illustrate the political stake that underlies the *burqa* law: religious distinction is no more legitimate, or even worthy, of public manifestation. The risk of such a social representation of Islamic headscarf concerns the consolidation of State control over public spaces, when they should defined by a "common" quality and a sense of "shareable", that is it's opening to the deployment of otherness expressions and multiple qualities.

At this point, we can argue that these extracts underline a shift from 2004 to 2010 law regarding the practical and the symbolic relation to public spaces. As suggested by the quotes of journalists and legal experts, "burqa affair" inaugurates a new discussion with regards to a third space, the civil one. These discourses give sense to this "third" or enlarged space emerging within this public debate, by defining it as a place of *"freedom"*, *"particularisms expressions"* and *"collective religious rites"*. We note that by engaging such a semantic field, these media and juridical actors promote a more liberal conception of public space than the political statements of prohibitionist actors.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The semiotic analysis of discourses constructing the press coverage of "burqa affair" shows how the secular questions posed by the "headscarf affair" have overtaken the school framework and put into question the republican concept of public places and spaces. The 20 years of media debate about Islamic veil widened the scope of religious expression interdiction, which is more and more intrudes to private spaces. The legal redefinition of the concept of "public space" operated by the 2010 law shows how French public spaces are now partly defined by reference to the Islamic visibility. Since 1989, public spaces and places are redefined, re-signified and re-qualified with regards to an increasing media visibility of Islamic signs in recent public debates.

We stress that when the meaning of "controllable public spaces" exceeds the state institutions settlements to enclose the street or public ways, we have a quantitative and a qualitative leap that is not measured in centimetres, but can be understood as a "segmentation matter" (Deleuze et Guattari, 1980, pp.254-281). In both cases, the question is about organizing and distributing religious signs in secular republican spaces and, as so, about framing Islamic religious visibility, in a politically and juridical way. This historical process moves from the free circulation of fluxes and practices towards a segmented organization (always dichotomous) of new laws that delimit religion to intimate space. In this sense, we can understand the veil affairs and the laws they generated as products of the media and legal instruments that strengthen the dichotomous distribution of space – such as public/private, male/female and religiosity/secularism – instead of a three-way distribution corresponding to the emergency of "civil space" described by journalists and legal experts.

That's not all. The spatial raster of Islamic visibility, emerging as the result of twenty-five years of public debates about Islamic veil, is still taking place today. As evidenced by the proliferation of public debates since the end of the "burqa affair" in 2010 and all the new proposals of veil ban in others public spaces (like universities), private places (like businesses enterprises) or semi-public ones (like nurseries in the so called "Baby-Loup affair"), we remark that other spatial boundary lines may be exceeded in favour of an enlarged state grabbing of private and semi-public spaces.

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(i) We should remark that the correct terms to denote the veil covering all the body, but not the eyes, are "integral veil", "full-face veil" or "niqab", while the term of "burqa" very used by the by media actors, denote the veil covering also the eyes that is not the object of the debate, neither of 2010 law. Nevertheless, we keep using the expression "burqa affair" to point out this specific media debate.

(ii) By using this term, we refer to the philosophical conception of territory as a space that is not only geographic and physic, but also psychological, mental, spiritual, so metaphysics. See: Deleuze & Guattari (1980, pp. 386-402).

(iii) Amiraux, Valérie (2014). Visibilité, transparence et commérage : de quelques conditions de possibilité de l'islamophobie… et de la citoyenneté. Sociologie n°1, vol. 5. / Tevanian, Pierre (2005). Le voile médiatique : un faux débat : "l'affaire du foulard islamique". Paris: Raisons d'agir editions. / Bouamama, Saïd (2004). L'affaire du foulard islamique : la production d'un racisme respectable. Paris: Geai ble. / Lorcerie, Françoise (2005). La politisation du voile : l'affaire en France, en Europe et dans le monde arabe. Paris: l'Harmattan. / Ferrari, Alessandro & Pastorelli,

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(iv) Arêas, Camila (2016). Quand les signes religieux font débat dans les arènes médiatiques et scientifiques. Régimes de visibilité et reconfiguration des espaces publics dans les affaires du voile en France (1989-2010). Paris II University, France. (See http://www.theses.fr/2016PA020024)

(v) When communist deputy André Gerin proposes to create a parliamentary commission of inquiry about the practice of wearing an integral veil on national territory".

(vi) When the law banning the "dissimulation of the face in public space" was approved in the Assembly.

(vii) Le Monde: 583, Figaro: 522, Libération: 354, Le Parisien: 242.

APPENDIX

Spatial cartography of "burqa affair" press coverage
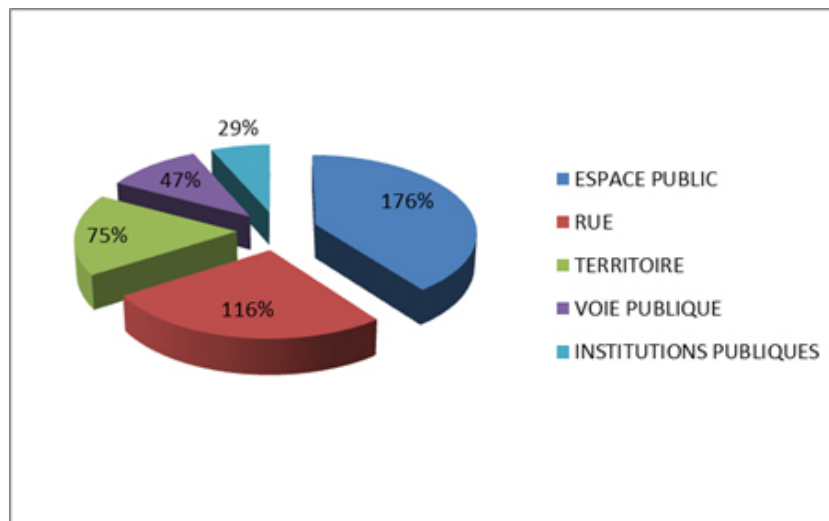
Lexicometric quantitative statistic of all geographical terms mentioned in this media debate