FEMINISM AS NEW “META-POLITICS”: WOMEN’S MOVEMENT IN TÜRKİYE BEYOND ALL IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL DISPOSITIONS

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submitted by ÖZGE KONURALP in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science and Public Administration, the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University by,

Prof. Dr. Sadettin KİRÄZCI
Dean
Graduate School of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. H. Tank ŞENGÜL
Head of Department
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Prof. Dr. Ayşe AYATA
Supervisor
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Examing Committee Members:

Prof. Dr. Berrin Koyuncu LORASDAĞI (Head of the Examining Committee)
Hacettepe University
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Prof. Dr. Ayşe AYATA (Supervisor)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aslı Çıtrakman DEVECİ
Middle East Technical University
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Prof. Dr. Dilek CİNDOĞLU
Kadir Has University
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ayşe İdil AYBARS
Middle East Technical University
Department of Sociology
I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last Name: Özge KONURALP

Signature:
This dissertation aims to investigate the general condition of women’s movement which proves its great potential to overcome the prevailing historical ideological and political cleavages among different women’s groups and put women’s rights and gender equality onto the political agenda of Türkiye. Women’s movement, not only in Türkiye but worldwide, has been standing as one of the strongest movements, which is evident in the achievements that the movement gained throughout centuries. Given the fact that women’s movement is not fully independent from the historical ideological and political cleavages among women’s organizations, the main research question of this dissertation was designated as, whether women’s organizations and women’s movement, who claim to address “all women”, aims to and can achieve to overcome the ideological cleavages among themselves. By taking into consideration women’s movements’ important potential to build up an overarching public sphere including all different identities, this dissertation also investigates women’s organizations diverse standing towards “feminism” and different point of views among women representing different generations.
To this end, this dissertation is based upon the in-depth semi-structured interviews held with 56 representatives of 25 different women’s organizations with diverse political standings (including secular, liberal, feminist/reformist, socialist, Kemalist and Islamic women’s organizations) in Türkiye between 2020-2021. What has been discovered that, women’s movement does not only have a great potential to overcome the ideological and political cleavages among different women’s groups but also has the great potential to offer a new understanding of “meta-politics” through extending the limits of “feminism”.

**Keywords:** Women’s Movement, Women’s Organizations, Feminism, Meta-politics, Interaction
ÖZ

YENİ “SİYASET ÜSTÜ” OLARAK FEMİNİZM: TÜM İDEOLOJİK VE SIYASİ EĞİLİMLERİN ÖTESİNDE TÜRKİYE’DE KADIN HAREKETİ

KONURALP, Özge
Doktora, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü
Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Ayşe AYATA

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Bu tez, farklı kadın grupları arasında süregelen tarihsel ideolojik ve politik ayrılıkları aşma ve kadın hakları ile toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini Türkiye’nin siyasi gündemine taşıma konusunda büyük potansiyele sahip olduğunu kanıtlayan kadın hareketinin genel durumunu incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Kadın hareketi sadece Türkiye’de değil, dünya çapında en güçlü hareketlerden biri olarak varlığını sürdürmektedir ve bu, hareketin yüzyıllar boyunca kazandığı başarılarda da açıkça görülürmektedir. Bununla birlikte, kadın hareketinin, kadın örgütleri arasındaki tarihsel ideolojik ve politik ayrımlarından tam olarak bağımsız olmadığı gerçeği göz önüne alındığında, bu tezin temel araştırma sorusu, “tüm kadınlara” hitap etme iddiasında olan kadın örgütlerinin ve kadın hareketinin, kendi aralarındaki ideolojik uçurumları aşmayı isteyip istemediği ya da bunu ne kadar başarabildiğidir. Bu tez, kadın hareketinin tüm farklı kimlikleri kapsayan kapsayıcı bir kamusal alan oluşturma konusundaki önemli potansiyelini de dikkate alarak, kadın örgütlerinin “feminizm”e yönelik farklı duruşlarını ve farklı kuşakları temsil eden kadınlar arasındaki farklı bakış açılarını da incelemektedir.
Bu amaçla, bu tez, Türkiye'deki farklı politik duruşlara sahip (sekiller, liberal, feminist/reformist, sosyalist, Kemalist ve İslami kadın örgütleri dahil) 25 farklı kadın örgütünün 56 temsilcisiyle, 2020-2021 yılları arasında gerçekleştirilen, derinlemesine, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelere dayanmaktadır. Farklı kadın örgütleri ile yapılan görüşmeler sonunda ortaya çıkan sonuç gösteriyor ki, kadın hareketi, farklı kadın grupları arasındaki ideolojik ve politik ayrımları aşma konusunda büyük bir potansiyele sahip olduğu gibi, aynı zamanda “feminizmin” sınırlarını genişleterek yeni bir “siyaset üstü” anlayışı sunma potansiyeline de sahiptir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın Hareketi, Kadın Örgütleri, Feminizm, Siyaset Üstü, Etkileşim
To all women,
in Türkiye and around the world, who, day and night, struggle for gender equality and work to make the world a better place...
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Women’s movement, not only in Türkiye but worldwide, has a long-lasting history, full of struggles, achievements and failures in ensuring equality between women and men and more generally, gender equality. Evolving together with the Enlightenment principles like *individualism, liberty, rational thinking* and *equality*, women’s movement – or feminist movement – has always been the bearers of the Enlightenment principles, but also became the source that uncover the fact that the Enlightenment principles first and foremost address “men’s rights” as the “equal citizens”, while overlooking the freedoms and rights of women. Since the 18th century, by posing challenges against declarations such as the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen and American Declaration of Independence, feminists ask for equal opportunities and equal civil, social, economic and political rights with men. Throughout its historical process, women’s movement – or feminist movement, not only struggles with and poses a challenge against unequal identification of freedoms and rights, but also harbours internal debates deriving from the increasing diversity within the movement together with the inclusion of women with different identities. While it was the civil rights of women in the first wave of feminism and the differences and different needs of women from men in the second wave of feminism, “who is the “subject” of the feminist movement?” is one of the heated debates of the third wave of feminism, which coincide with the second half of the 20th century, that paves the way for questioning the dominant position of upper, middle-class, white, Western women and challenging the universal assumption of identity categories, such as “woman”. Thus, the third wave of feminism is an important turning point concerning the transformation of women’s movement – or feminist movement – with the influence of post-modernist, post-structuralist and post-colonial theories, which challenge all essentialist, normative and unified categories of identity and power relations both outside and inside of the
women’s movement – or feminist movement. In this respect, the third wave of feminism brought a broader perspective in terms of the understanding of the agents of the women’s movement – or feminist movement through not only questioning the essentialist, normative and binary definition of gender identity but also questioning the inequalities based upon gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, politics, economics, etc. Hence, standing as “the most enduring and successful of all social movements of the modern period”\(^1\), the women’s movement – or feminist movement – deserves a meticulous analysis of its potential to overcome all ideological and political cleavages among its participants. Deriving from this point of view, the women’s movement in Türkiye, which bears similar challenges as the women’s movement – or feminist movement – worldwide and has a similar historical evolution that includes both significant successes and internal cleavages, was designated the main focus of this dissertation. In order to have an overview of the state of the women’s movement in Türkiye, the main research question of the dissertation was identified as the general condition of the women’s movement in Türkiye, which harbours a remarkable success in terms of putting women’s rights and gender equality onto the political agenda of Türkiye, however on the other hand, witness particular prevailing historical ideological and political cleavages among women’s organizations which stands as a challenge in front of the women’s movement. Keeping in mind that the ever-existing contingency among women’s organizations does not necessarily refer to a disruptive process, but can be considered as a constructive process to overcome hegemonic structures (Mouffe, 2013), within the scope of this dissertation, I aimed to understand how women’s organizations in Türkiye with diverse ideological and political standings communicate and cooperate with each other and to what extent women’s organizations would like to or can achieve to overcome the ideological cleavages among themselves. This idea is basically grounded on the assumption that women’s organizations aim to address “all women” with diverse ideological/political standings and from diverse socio-economic and socio-political backgrounds, and aim to establish a long-term collaboration with strong political elements. Hence, the subsequent research questions were identified as to what extent women’s

\(^{1}\) (Ferre and Mueller, in Snow, D. A. et.al., 2004:576)
organizations/coalitions/platforms aim to adopt “inclusive” structures and approaches in their organizations; are there prevailing political/ideological cleavages among women’s organizations? and what are the structural obstacles that prevent them from collaborating with other women's organizations?

Although the profound history of the women’s movement in Türkiye dates back to the Ottoman Empire, within the scope of this dissertation and in the analysis of the interaction among women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings in Türkiye, I focused on the period after the 1980s and particularly the period after the 2000s under the rule of Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP (Justice and Development Party). The period after the 2000s has a peculiar importance for the women’s movement, where they have found an opportunity to extend the limits of women’s rights with the reformist “conservative democratic” policies during the first period of AKP (which corresponds with the period since 2002 until the 2010s), however, then witnessed a significant shrinking space and polarization due to the neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies of AKP during the second period of AKP starting from the 2010s.

In order to analyse the research questions, I conducted 55 in-depth interviews with the representatives of 24 different women’s organizations, both the legal entities and non-legal entities (women’s organizations, women’s platforms/coalitions and digital platforms) with diverse political standings (including secular, liberal, feminist/reformist, socialist, Kemalist and Islamic women’s organizations) in Türkiye between 2020-2021, considering the fact that women are not only organized in institutionalized legal entities but also have diverse forms of organizations including platforms/coalitions and digital platforms. In addition to the 24 interviewed women’s organizations, Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği - KADEM (Women and Democracy Association) also participated in the dissertation by sharing their answers to the questionnaire in writing.

In the questionnaire that I prepared for the interviews with women from diverse women’s organizations, first, I focused on the history of the women’s organization from the point of view of the interviewees; second, I tried to understand their
organizational structure whether they are inclusive and participatory; third, I looked at their financial resources to understand the availability of sufficient financial resources for their effective functioning; fourth, I tried to understand women's organizations’ distance to “feminism” by asking specific questions regarding how do they describe the concept “feminism”, whether they describe their organization as a “feminist” organization and how do they describe the conceptual difference between “women's rights” and “feminism”; fifth, I tried to understand to what extent they cooperate with other women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings; sixth, I looked at their level of cooperation with public institutions; seventh I looked at their level of cooperation with political parties; and eighth; I asked their general overview of women’s movement and how do they interpret the future of women’s movement in Türkiye.

One of the most critical issues that I took into account before conducting the research with women’s organizations was defining “the subject of inquiry”, which I identified in this dissertation as “women’s movement”, and clarifying its connection and distinction with “feminism” and “feminist movement”. As evident in the profound literature on the worldwide women’s movement and feminism, due to the fact that there is no one unique definition of feminism but diverse definitions of feminism depending on the diverse subject positions, it is essential to reconsider the “taken for granted” concepts such as “feminism” in order to understand better how women from different women’s organizations perceive and position themselves against the normative definitions of concepts. As one can easily realize, in many studies on women’s or feminist movements, the concepts “women’s movement/women’s rights activism” and “feminism/feminist movement” are quite intertwined and used arbitrarily, which makes it difficult to distinguish who is the subject of women’s movement and feminist movement and how can we make a distinction between these two concepts – or should we? During the literature review on women’s movement/women’s rights activism and feminism/feminist movement, I realized that these two concepts have different meanings, different participants and different objectives, which are both mutually exclusive and inclusive depending on the social and political context of a particular society or movement. However, I intentionally took “women’s movement” and “women’s organizations” (within the binary
definition of sexes) as the subject of inquiry of this dissertation depending on the fact that women’s rights, women’s movement and gender equality are still among the heated debates and field of struggle in which women and women’s organizations have been fighting throughout centuries. Although the LGBTI+ movement is also an important integral part of the feminist movement, I deliberately took into account women’s movement into the focus, considering the fact that actual conditions of modernity and already formed gender identities (within the binary definition of sexes) still prevail and still form the basis of discrimination in the modern social, economic and political structures (Howie and Tauchert, 2004).

Within the scope of the interviews held with women from different women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings, I tried to understand, beyond conducting a feminist policy, to what extent women’s organizations/coalitions/platforms aim to – or could achieve to - adopt the principles of non-hierarchy, collectivity, participation, diversity and inclusion which are listed among the principles of “feminism” and could achieve to establish an organizational structure in line with these principles. Moreover, I aimed to look at the intergenerational difference between the “older” and “younger” generation of women within the women’s movement – or feminist movement in order to understand whether there is a difference between ideologies, approaches and the form of organizations of “older” and “younger” generation of women. Being aware of the fact that it is not always the principles adopted by civil society organizations but also the structural obstacles that restrict women’s organizations from establishing an organizational structure in line with their principles, I also investigated the conducive legal and financial framework that ought to provide the freedom to civil society organizations to act in line with their principles and objectives. In the conclusion part of both the interviews and the dissertation, I focused on the question of how women from different women’s organizations see the future of the women’s movement – or feminist movement and how we can interpret the way in which women describe the future of women’s movement – or feminist movement.

What I discovered at the end of the interviews with women from different women’s organizations is, not only the way in which women’s organizations communicate and
cooperate with each other but also the way in which they define and deconstruct all identities they adopt and attributed to them – such as doing feminist politics or being a “feminist” - is beyond all existing theoretical frameworks or all existing traditional and contemporary definitions of politics – and meta-politics as well. Women’s organizations not only deconstruct the “taken for granted” concepts such as “politics” and “feminism” but also offer and create a new understanding and form of politics – which is beyond the existing traditional and contemporary understandings of politics.

1.1. The Outline of the Dissertation

The research question and the sub research questions explained above will be analysed in ten chapters, including literature review, research methodology, analysis of the data collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and the conclusion chapter.

I believe that before scrutinizing the dynamics behind communication and cooperation between women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings, it is important to discuss who is the “subject” of the women’s movement by taking into consideration the fact that there is no one single “woman” category; however, there are diverse identities that constitute a subject category. Besides, the conceptual difference between feminism/feminist movement and women’s movement/women’s rights activism is one of the most controversial issues that needs to be discussed to clearly identify this dissertation's subject of inquiry. Hence, In Chapter 2, I will first discuss the emergence of feminism, which initially started as women’s rights activism, deriving from the word femme (which is the French word for woman) and refers to a social movement, and in a broader understanding to an ideology, that envisage gender equality and women’s worldwide demand for social, economic and political equality. Within the well-known wave narrative, one of the most significant turning points for feminism and the feminist movement is the moment when second wave feminism was challenged by post-structuralist theories and critique of normative, heterosexist and essentialist identity categories, which also address the “woman” category. The deconstruction of “subject” and gender identity by the post-structuralist theorists also paved the way for questioning “who is the
“subject” of the feminist movement?” and led to a broader discussion on the feminist movement regarding its agents\(^2\), objectives and methodologies as well as its diverse understanding in Western and non-Western societies. In order to provide the theoretical background for the discussions on the agents, methodologies and the way of organization of the women’s movement – or feminist movement, and to clarify different understandings and conceptualization of “identity”, I will focus on new social movements theories, post-structuralist theories, sociocultural linguistic approach, theorists of feminist intersectional perspective as well as feminist political theorists. The reason why I took “women’s movement” as the subject of inquiry of this dissertation resides in the response of feminist intellectuals and theorists of feminist intersectional perspective to post-structuralist theorists who disregard the prevailing modern identity categories, such as the binary definition of sexes, and the possibility of subjective entity which is not essentialist and normative. Finally, deriving from the complex conceptualization of subject categories, diverse forms of organizational structures and objectives adopted – and continuously questioned - by the women’s movement and the feminist movement, I will review the theories on “agonistic politics” and meta-politics, which are crucial to understanding the prevailing antagonism within the women’s movement – or feminist movement – and its potential to offer a new understanding of meta-politics.

Chapter 3 aims to shed light on the profound history of the women’s movement in Türkiye, beginning from the Ottoman Empire and still standing as one of the most robust social movements. Interrupted by military coups, the women’s movement in Türkiye experienced the same discontinuity as all political movements. In this respect, the women’s movement in Türkiye, which both dispose a similar historicity of the feminist wave narrative but also has a diverse periodization depending on the political developments peculiar to Türkiye, will be analysed within the framework of its historical process. Trying to evolve within the centralized and authoritarian

\(^2\) Throughout the dissertation, I used the concept “agents”, not in a discursive manner, but deliberately, as being aware of the limitations of identity politics and discussions on “subject”. Thus, here by using the concept “agents” I aim to refer all individuals who do not identify themselves as “feminist” or do not necessarily participate into feminist movement, but by any means are associated with feminism.
configuration of gender policies – which is conceptualized as “state feminism”\(^3\) – since the foundation of the Turkish Republic, women’s movement have been struggling on different fronts including both secular, Republican and modernist discourse which have a conflicting relation with identity claims of religious individuals and ethnic movements, and authoritarian, conservative and populist discourses adopted especially after the 2000s during the rule of Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP (Justice and Development Party). Together with the increasing heterogeneity and institutionalization among women’s organizations, the women’s movement has a growing diversity and success in terms of the pullback of conservative and repressive government policies. Besides, the women’s movement has been facing prevailing challenges deriving from the identity politics that emerged together with the Kurdish movement, Islamist movement and LGBTI+ movement since the 1990s. On the other hand, the profound history of the women’s movement in Türkiye proves that the women’s movement has considerable potential in terms of overcoming the ideological and political cleavages among women and forming diverse forms of organizations and strategies which can hardly be explained with both traditional and contemporary political theories.

In Chapter 4, I will review the theoretical framework of the research methodology and will clarify the reason why I preferred to conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews within the scope of this dissertation. In a research that focuses on understanding the dynamics behind cooperation between women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings, the particularities among the interviewed women can only be understood by giving the freedom to the interviewees to express themselves in a semi-structured conversation and by considering the interviewees as the “agents” of the research subject instead of treating them as the “objects of the research”. Second, the conceptual difference between feminism/feminist movement and women’s movement/women’s rights activism is one of the most contradictory issues that has been widely discussed by many theorists and also feeds one of the prominent research questions of this dissertation regarding women’s organizations’ distance to feminism/feminist

\(^3\) Tekeli, 2010
movement. Thus, in Chapter 4, I will clarify the conceptual difference between feminism/feminist movement and women’s movement/women’s rights activism, which provided the ground for further discussions held by the interviewed women in terms of their interpretation of feminism/feminist movement and women’s movement/women’s rights activism. Besides, different accounts on solidarity and coalition building that aim to challenge the normative accounts of “sisterhood” that were introduced during the second wave of feminism will be reviewed in order to provide a framework for the discussions on cooperation and coalition building practices among women’s organizations. Moreover, the intergenerational difference between the interviewed women is one of the most significant findings of the dissertation, which not only addresses a shift in the approach and understanding of gender equality, women’s movement and feminist movement between generations, but also led to a broader understanding of the “subject” and “politics” deriving from feminism. In this respect, I will briefly explain the theoretical framework for social generation as a theoretical tool and “youth” as a social category.

Chapter 5 reveals the analysis of the interviews with women from different women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings and focuses on the structural aspect of women’s organizations, including their diverse organizational structures, their attempt to establish “feminist” organizational models and structural obstacles against them varying from the legal framework for civil society organizations and available financial resources for women’s organizations. In order to better understand their ideological and political standing towards the state institutions and political parties and to better understand to what extent they can be able to affect public policies, their level of cooperation with public institutions and political parties was also scrutinized.

Chapter 6 focuses on the analysis of women’s organizations’ interpretation of “feminism” and their distance towards feminism in order to understand how they conceptualize feminism and make a distinction between feminism/feminist movement and women’s movement/women’s rights activism. The way they conceptualize “feminism” is quite important in order to understand to what extent women challenge the presumption of universal conceptualization of feminism, which
is considered overarching and applies to all women worldwide. Besides, it is not only about how women conceptualize feminism, but it is also about the generally accepted “image of feminists”, which causes women to distance themselves from feminism. This aspect of feminism will also be discussed under the section “Feminism as an “Assigned Identity”. It is important to note that, the way in which many interviewed women interpret “feminism” provides a broader understanding of feminism than it was widely discussed in the literature on women’s movement and feminist movement. Thus, this section of the dissertation is of great importance for the concluding remarks regarding the future of the women’s movement – or feminist movement – that will be discussed in Chapter 9.

In Chapter 7, I will discuss the findings of interviews with women from different women’s organizations in terms of their diverse positions in the women’s movement and cooperation practices with women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings. In this respect, the prevailing hegemonic feminism and the problem of identifying a feminist “we” within the women’s movement, the need for organizing in women’s own “habitus”, lack of intersectionality, lack of a shared agenda in women’s movement, issue-based activism, professionalization and the problem of “localization” and socio-economic differences among women will be discussed under this chapter.

Depending on the interviews with women from different women’s organizations, it is evident that one of the significant cleavages among women’s groups is seen among the secular/republican and Islamic women. The historical cleavage between secular/republican and Islamic women is mainly based upon the republican interpretation of secularism and state policies that take modernization efforts, particularly in dress code, as one of the priorities. This basically resulted in the exclusion of many veiled women from public and educational institutions and Islamic women’s politicization, especially after the 1980s. Besides, the prevailing presumption within the women’s movement – or feminist movement - that “Islam” and “feminism” are “irreconcilable”, stand as one of the most controversial issues between secular and religious that have broader repercussions not only in Türkiye but worldwide particularly among Islamic women who claim their cultural and
religious rights and put an additional adjective before the concept “feminism” in order to challenge the dominant white, secular, Western discourse in women’s movement – or feminist movement. In this respect, in Chapter 8, I will discuss the way in which Islamic women articulate their demands and ideological standings and how secular women within the women’s movement in Türkiye interpret the concept of “Islamic feminism” and the efforts of Islamic women to claim their identity rights.

One of the most significant findings of the research conducted with women from different women’s organizations and representing different generations, is the intergenerational difference between the “older” and “younger” generations of women in terms of their interpretation of women’s movement – or feminist movement, feminism, intersectionality and gender identity. In this respect, in Chapter 9, first I will discuss the intergenerational difference between the “older” and “younger” generations of women by putting an emphasis not only on how young women interpret women’s movement – or feminist movement, feminism, intersectionality and gender identity, but how “older” generation women interpret the way in which young women approach to women’s movement – or feminist movement and the way in which they prefer to organize. I believe that the way in which young women interpret women’s movement – or feminist movement, feminism, intersectionality and gender identity brings a new dimension to feminism and the feminist movement, which leads me to discuss the prevailing contingency among women and women’s organizations and lead me to think about the possibility of a totally different form of politics, which I conceptualized in this dissertation as “meta-politics”. Thus, in the following two sections of Chapter 9, I will discuss how the prevailing antagonism paves the way for “agonism”, which is not disruptive but constructive within women’s movement – or feminist movement, and the future of women’s movement and the reinterpretation of “feminism” as “meta politics”.

Finally, Chapter 10 provides a concluding analysis regarding the collaboration practices of women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings, which was held within the framework of the historical development of the women’s movement, discussions on “identity” politics and the question of “who is the subject of women’s movement – or feminist movement, structural and ideological obstacles
that prevent women’s organizations from establishing an overarching public sphere including all different identities, women’s organizations diverse standing towards “feminism”, and intergenerational difference among women which I believe brings a new understanding of women’s movement, gender equality and feminism. The way in which the interviewed women describe their own objectives, their own organizations, women’s movement and feminism provides a new understanding of “meta-politics” beyond the existing contemporary political theories and theories on meta-politics.
CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF WOMEN’S MOVEMENT IN LINE WITH THE DEBATES ON FEMINISM, NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND IDENTITY

2.1. Historical Background of Feminism and Feminist Movement

The philosophical roots of the feminism, particularly the movement originated in the West, sprang from within the philosophical and political debates of the century that provide ground for the Enlightenment. In its very common and early definition the concept refers acting, speaking, writing, and advocating on behalf of women's issues and rights and identifying injustice to females in the social status quo. It is an important fact that feminism, as a philosophy, has evolved together with the rising principles of Enlightenment, namely individualism, liberty, rational thinking and equality, while women of the era have begun to articulate a new reformist rhetoric deriving from the principles of individualism, liberty and equality. On the other hand, even though the age of Enlightenment which is an intellectual movement that brings forth the notions of liberty, equality and natural rights has failed when it comes to liberty and equality for women. The Swiss-born French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, portrayed women as silly and frivolous creatures, born to be subordinate to men. In addition to that, the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which defined French citizenship after the revolution of 1789, pointedly failed to address the legal status of women.

The modern Western history is full of restrictions where women were confined to the domestic sphere and excluded from the public life and political institutions. In medieval Europe, women had not have the same rights with men such as right to property, right to study, right to participate in public life. Even in the early 20th century, there were also certain limitations for women to exercise their rights, for
instance, women could neither vote nor hold elective office in Europe and in most of the United States, women were prevented from conducting business without a male representative and married women could not exercise control over their own children without the permission of their husbands. Given that, feminist intellectuals of the era tried to highlight the hidden colonial and patriarchal notions within the dominant political philosophy of the era.

Although the first systematic and organized feminist movements were seen in the 19th century, since the 17th century, women intellectuals of the era have begun to question all contradictions and inconsistencies inherent in “Enlightenment” by giving reference to the patriarchal notions embedded in articulated liberal ideals. For instance, one of the prominent female intellectuals of the 17th century, Mary Astell (1666 – 1731), criticized the patriarchal notions embedded in Lockean liberalism which envisage material emancipation from the political authority, however confine women in a subordinate position in the private sphere. There are many women intellectuals of their era, especially in the 17th century, who have both influenced by the famous philosophers of their era such as Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and have made important contributions to their work by criticizing the inconsistencies in their theories along with the hidden patriarchy in their thesis, despite the fact that majority of them emphasize building up an “equal” society which is respectful to the mutual rights. The majority of these women, such as Margaret Cavendish, Mary Astell, Damaris Masham, Catharine Trotter Cockburn, rarely were given reference in the historical and intellectual accounts of the early modern period (Broad, 2002).

The intellectual contributions of women in the 17th and 18th centuries, particularly to the existing patriarchal discourses, paved the way for a more systematized feminist movement in the following centuries. Hence, the literature on feminism usually dates back to the 19th century when a group of female intellectuals of the Enlightenment who were capable of involving and challenging the reformist rhetoric articulated by the Enlightenment thinkers came to the stage and started to question the traditionally assigned roles to women, social inequalities as well as the inequalities existing in the legal codes such as equal access to education and equal right to vote. By pointing out
the lack of inclusivity and the limited scope of reformist rhetoric adopted by the male philosophers of the Enlightenment, female intellectuals published declarations which criticize the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen as considering only men as the equal citizens and overseeing equal rights for women. Olympe de Gouges, who is a French activist advocated for rights of women and children and abolitionism, published “Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen” in 1791, declaring that women need to be given equal responsibility under the law. By giving reference to the natural rights doctrine, Olympe de Gouges emphasized that women and women's rights are not adequately addressed in the American Declaration of Independence and in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen and started to demand equality in the social and political spheres. The following year Mary Wollstonecraft published “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman” in 1792, which asks equal opportunities in education, work, and politics for women. She advocated of educational and social equality of women and called for the betterment of women’s status through such political change as the radical reform of national educational systems. The earliest attempt to adapt the fundamental doctrine of natural rights to women is accepted as “Declaration of Sentiments” which was written by Elisabeth Cady Stanton and published on 19-20 July 1848 in Seneca Fall, New York. The statement takes attention to the fact that all men and women are created with equal and unquestionable rights given by the creator, and these rights include freedom, right to life, consent and administrative rights.

The history of the modern Western feminist movement is divided into well-known multiple "waves". In the 19th century, during the first wave of feminist movement, multiple declarations and works containing demands such as right to life and freedom of women, right to vote, right to take part in the administration, and right to equal opportunities in education were put forward. In the beginning of the 20th century right to vote still remained problematic for women and different social groups while only the wives of men who held important positions in Europe has the right to vote. Similarly, in America, blacks and women did not have the right to vote. While after black men were granted right to vote, suffrage movements have burst out claiming the right to vote for white and black women in America. In addition to that women who engaged in the first wave of feminist movement not only advocated for
social and political rights of women but also fight against racism. In the 19th century, in the United States and across Europe, feminist activism spread among women who were politicized against slavery which also triggered white to women to involve among black female abolitionists. The idea of freedom and equality further were applied to women’s struggle for equal rights and freedom as well as improvement of women’s social and political status.

While the first wave of feminism was highly influenced by the abolition movement the second wave of feminism is mainly originated on the civil rights of women which focuses on the legal inequalities concerning sexuality, family, domesticity, the workplace and reproductive rights. As Sancar (2013) argues the second wave of feminism in the world focused on the double burden that both the middle class and the working-class women face. Apart from claiming equal rights with men, the second wave of feminism underlined the “differences” and different needs of women from men. In this period, women's groups also criticized patriarchal structures and the continuing unequal roles in the family and in domestic sphere and opposed to the identification of the domestic sphere as "private sphere" and put forward the slogan “the personal is political”. During the second wave of feminism women demanded their reproductive rights, particularly contraception and the right to abortion, and claimed distinguishing between sexuality and fertility. On the other hand, a similar contradiction between the liberal and emancipatory ideals of the Enlightenment and the patriarchal and masculine notions embedded in the predominant political philosophy of the era is also visible within the feminist movement itself. While the earliest rights claim for women mainly addressed middle-class demands for suffrage and property rights, neglects speaking about working women’s rights concerning living wage and job security. Including the prominent figures of early feminism, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, women are criticized by writing only about the lives of middle-class or elite women and overseeing the needs of women who do not have leisure time for education or servants to help them in domestic affairs while advocating for equal opportunities in education, work, arts, science and politics for women.

The third wave of feminism coincide with the emergence of post-structuralist theories particularly those focus on “identity” and “micro-politics” and brought up a
reaction and criticism against the universal perception of femininity and reducing feminism to the rights and liberties of upper, middle-class white women. Not only posing a challenge to universal categorization of “woman” and middle-class white women domination within the feminist movement, but postmodernists also question the “taken for granted” notions of *truth, knowledge, power, the self, and language* that provides the ground for legitimation of the modern political theories and modern Western culture (Flax, 1987). Thus, postmodernist theorists (such as Foucault) aimed to deconstruct the metanarratives behind the progressive idea of modern “civilization” and question the grand institutions of Western civilization (Donovan, 2006: 213). This also paved the way for feminists to not only questioning gender inequality and the universal category of “woman”, but also “power” and “patriarchy” embedded in the existing traditional and modern political theories and modern states that are ignorant of difference. Given that, the third wave of feminism based upon the differences among not only women, but also among its agents from different race, ethnicity, class, nationality, religion, sexual orientation or sexual identity etc. On the main agenda of the third wave of feminism there was certain issues varying from gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationalism, politics, economics, etc. which were discussed and reconsidered by feminists from a feminist perspective. The impact of postmodernist, post-structuralist and feminist postcolonial theory on the third wave of feminism also reveals itself in the understanding of the “subject” of feminism, which cannot be confined within the limits of the binary definition of sexes and which challenges the common experience of being a woman and universal idea of womanhood (Butler, 1990; Coleman, 2009; Mohanty, 1991).

In fact, the journey of the concept of “feminism” is not a smooth and gradually evolving process, on the contrary, it hosts a lot of conflicts, ambiguities and challenges due to the inclusion of actors with different socio-economic backgrounds and identities into the movement throughout the history. Similar to the diversities of actors those were involved into the movement, the concept “feminism” has been identified and conceptualised in different forms, more precisely, as an “approach”, as an “ideology”, as a “belief”, as a “power”, as a “movement”, as an “identity” and so on. For instance, Mary Talbot (2010), who researches language and gender and the construction of gender in teenage magazines, defines feminism as “a form of politics
dedicated to bringing about social changes, and ultimately to arresting the reproduction of systematic inequalities between men and women” (p. 17). In another definition Mary Bucholtz (2014) defines feminism as “a diverse and sometimes conflicting set of theoretical, methodological, and political perspectives that have in common a commitment to understanding and challenging social inequalities related to gender and sexuality” (p. 23). On the other hand, Bell Hooks identifies feminism as a social movement for ending up sexism or sexist exploitation and says that "Feminism is for Everybody Passionate Politics" while J. Mitchel defines feminism as a power that cannot be reduced to a biological perspective between men and women. What is apparent is that it is not easy and simple to make a straightforward definition of “feminism” depending on the fact that it has different meanings and different identifications according to the different actors who – in a way – engage in feminism.

Deriving from its complex historical evolution, its complex definition and its complex attachment to gender identity and gender equality, feminism has always been at the center of criticisms. Some of the most critical questions that have been raised by the critics are about: 1) is there common identity called “woman” and is it possible to raise voice in the name of all women? 2) who is the “subject” of women’s movement – or feminist movement? 3) who constitute the “agents” of women’s movement – or feminist movement? In order to provide an overview on the discussions as a response to these questions, I will reveal the theoretical background regarding the discussions on women’s movement, its agents, its objectives, different ways/forms of organizations within the movement and its objectives in comparison with different accounts of new social movements theorists, post-structuralist theorists, theorists of feminist intersectional perspective as well as feminist political theorists.

First, I will begin with explaining the discussions on identity politics introduced by new social movements theorists. Then I will continue with discussing different accounts on “identity” offered by post-structuralist theorists, sociocultural linguistic approach and new social movements theorists. In response to the questions who is the “subject” of women’s movement – or feminist movement and the possibility of
collective action, I will review the discussions on the notion of “sisterhood”, “Islamic feminism” and “intersectionality”. On the contrary of the post-structuralist theorists who rejects the possibility of “subject”, I will discuss the possibility of subjective entity and prevailing importance of binary definition of sexes by giving reference to the theorists of feminist intersectional perspective and political theorists. Finally, I will discuss the existing accounts on “meta-politics” in order to provide the ground for further discussions on feminism that I believe goes beyond feminist challenge to the existing traditional and contemporary political theories and feminist politics.

2.2. New Social Movement Theories and Identity Politics

The twentieth century post-structuralist thinkers have a quite crucial role in terms of the reconstruction of the concept “power” and “politics” which has been predominantly correlated with the notion of “state” and “political authority” and put more emphasis on social movements, cultural politics and identity politics those are mainly explained by the new social movement theories which questions the “legitimacy” of state power and the notion of political authority. The changing focus of “politics” together with the emergence of new social movements as well as rising cultural politics and rights-claim movements, such as civil rights movement, student movements of the 1960s, women’s movement, gay liberation movement and environmental movements is an important turning point for research in political sociology. The new social movements, which are considered as a departure from the old forms of politics and old forms of class-based movements, are organised around non-material values and life-styles distinct from mere class conflict and do not particularly aim to affect the political processes or address formal political institutions but targets to challenge the thresholds of the system and to lead the transformation of society. This contemporary understanding of identity politics refers a theoretical framework which is distinct from functionalist and Marxist understanding of class struggle as well as interest-oriented approach and refers to contemporary movements derived from collective realities those have been conceived by autonomous actors of the movements.

Although there is a considerable shift in the understanding of “the political” and their relation with state, it does not necessarily mean that new social movements do not address formal political institutions. On the contrary, “new social movements” are not only oriented on identity and cultural politics, but also have certain claims in terms of civil rights, extending citizenship rights, social policy and law changes. However, main objectives of the social movements are not simply limited with addressing political institutions and changing the public policies, but also include creating a broader cultural transformation, such as dissolution of traditional gender roles in the society.

According to many scholars, new social movements are the result of penetration of state control and capitalist production into every aspect of social life with a tendency of standardization and “massification” of society in the post-industrial society (D’Anieri et.al., 1990; Mouffe, 2000; Williams, 2008). Contrary to the industrial phase of capitalism, in post-industrial societies state control diffused into every sphere of social life, including, consumption, services and social relations and new social movements are mainly considered as a response to this tendency in order to recapture control over personal and collective sense of identity (D’Anieri et.al., 1990). Thus, beyond struggling against the class domination as it was in the old forms of social movements, the democratic discourse adopted by the new social movements question all forms of inequality and subordination (Mouffe, 2000).

In this respect, new social movements, distinct from labour movements, can be considered as non-institutionalized, not state centered movements which are, to a certain extent, avoid hierarchy and bureaucracy, and suspicious towards centralized bureaucratic structures. Throughout the evolution process of the social movements, the old social movement of proletarian revolution concluded with the marginalization of earlier forms of social movements (feminist movement, nationalist movement, religious movement etc.) as having no instrumental demands (Buechler, 1995). It is based upon the reductionist Marxist explanations of collective action which privilege proletarian revolution and underestimate different forms of social movements whose main concern is not production (Buechler, 1995). On the other hand, new social movements should be considered as a departure from the norms of old politics and
can be considered as a new form of politics that completely changes of emphasis. It is not wrong to articulate that identity, new lifestyle, equal judgment claims of new social movements have shifted the focus on formal politics to cultural politics. As some scholars argue, it is ideological rather than ethnic, religious, or class-based concerns that mobilizes the participants of the new social movements (Buechler, 1995; Pichardo, 1997). The driving points of these movements are mainly based upon issues more about politics and culture such as racial equality, feminism, peace, environment, and local issues, subordination of the cultural sphere to economics and being opposed to state domination and the status-quo (Rose, 1997; Williams, 2008).

Another very crucial aspect of the new social movements is their participants which also signifies a shift from the participants of the old social movements who are mainly class based, interest seeking groups. Scholars, who put forward theories regarding the common characteristics of the participants of new social movements, take attention to the fact that, although there is no complete detachment from the previous economic and political concerns of old social movements, new social movements mainly composed of the members of middle-class or new middle class which refers to people who have certain level of skills and education and who may work in public service, educational, and artistic sectors of the economy (Pichardo, 1997; Williams, 2008).

It is largely argued that what caused this transformation in the social movements is based upon the welfare state regulations of the post World War II era implemented through economic expansion of the 1950s and 1960s and new forms of post-Fordist economic and social regulations (D’Anieri et.al., 1990). This shift in the economic and social regulations transformed the dependency relation between citizens and transformed the class identity and class action (Castells, 1977; Melucci 1980). The participants of the new social movements are not necessarily class-based but mainly consists of people who adopt middle-class values such as democracy, anti-bureaucracy, nonviolence, non-hierarchy etc. and who are organized around participatory and inclusive organizations such as consciousness raising groups and decentralised organizational structures (Johnston and Gusfield, 1994; Pichardo, 1997). This brought both certain opportunities and challenges to new social movements, such as women’s movement and LGBTI+ movement, in terms of
strengthening movements together with certain values and ideas, while on the other hand, remain restricted as a middle-class movement who have the capability to spare time, energy and expertise on the issues of their concerns. This aspect and structural limitations of the new social movements and its effects on women’s movement – or feminist movement – will be further elaborated in the following sections entitled “Hegemony of Middle-Class, White, Educated, [Western] Women within the Women’s Movement – or Feminist Movement: The Way Towards Questioning the Notion of “Sisterhood”.

Emergence of new social movements entailed the reconsideration of “identity” formation processes and meaning of “collective action” which paved the way for questioning the possibility of “subject” positions and possibility of collective actions distinct from class and interest oriented movements and organized around non-essentialist identities. The discussions on identity and possibility of “subject” are quite fundamental in terms of answering the questions “who is the “subject” of women’s movement, or feminist movement” and “is it possible to talk about a “collective identity” behind the “collective action” established within the scope of women’s movement, or feminist movement”. In order to discuss the shift in the form of politics and clarify different aspects of identity formation processes, first, I will begin with the definition of identity and will continue with presenting three different perspectives on identity formation, namely, post-structuralist theorists who assert that identity formation is a consequence of power relations, theorists of sociocultural linguistic approach who introduces both “active” and “passive” construction of identity, and new social movements theorists who argue that identity formation is an “autonomous” process practiced by individuals.

2.3. Identity, Collective Identity and the Possibility of “Subject”

The definition of identity can be elaborated under two main headings: 1) “Passive” definition of identity which is mainly articulated by both modernist theorists, which introduces “identity” as a social category, a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristic features or attributes (Fearon, 1999:3). 2) “Active” construction of identity – or identity politics
- is mainly introduced by new social movement theorists who basically considers human beings as “autonomous individuals” and so to speak as subjects⁵.

In terms of the very common passive definition of “identity”, which is basically conceptualized by social theories as “social identity”, refers to a socially constructed phenomenon that consists of both collective and individual representation of social categories such as, religion, class, gender, age, ethnicity etc. According to this modern conceptualization, “identity” is formed in two different ways, those are “ascribed” and “achieved” identities. With respect to the very basic definition of “ascribed” and “achieved” identities, while “ascribed identity” refers identity that is given by society such as, social class, ethnicity, nationality, gender etc., “achieved identity” refers identity that is chosen or achieved by individuals like social status, religious belief, family role, relationship status etc. Apart from this passive conceptualization of “identity”, contemporary social theories such as new social movement theory, introduces a more dynamic and active – or “autonomous” – definition of identity which predominantly manifest itself as “collective identity” and which is not restricted with “ascribed” identities such as, social class, ethnicity, nationality, gender etc. New social movements mainly correspond with identity politics, which is conceptualized within contemporary theoretical framework and in which certain cultural groups aim to challenge the existing authority and extend their cultural and/or social group rights. This contemporary understanding of identity politics refers to a theoretical framework which is distinct from functionalist and Marxist understanding of class struggle as well as interest-oriented approach and refers contemporary movements derived from collective realities those have been conceived by autonomous actors of the movements⁶.

On the contrary of this active conceptualization of “identity” – or “identity politics” - primarily offered by the new social movement theorists who conceives cultural

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⁵ It is important to note that the discussions on “identity” are also deeply connected with the discussions on the possibility of “subject” who has autonomy over the decisions about themselves. These discussions on “subject” will mainly be elaborated under the section of “feminism as meta politics”.

and/or social groups as autonomous actors of their rights, there are two main critiques directed to active construction of identity: The first one is done by post-structuralist theorists who asserts that identity is a product of the process of “subjectivity”. And the second one is done by post-structuralist feminists who criticize identity politics, as being normative, essentialist and exclusionary. First, according to some post-structuralist theorists, among which there are prominent thinkers such as Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault, “identity” is a consequence of “subjectivity” and “human subjectivity is constructed through different means, such as, ideology, language or discourse; and any action performed by that subject is also - to a certain extent - a consequence of those things”. Among these prominent thinkers, Foucault defines “subjectivity” and “identity” as being two different concepts. Besides, Foucault asserts that the “identity categories are one of the effects of power where identity is restrictive and limiting, as it is formed through the regulatory apparatus that defines and subjects individuals” (Foucault, 1982). The term “subjectivity”, then, forms the identity (Mackay and Dallaire, 2014: 562). In addition to that, Foucault also sees social movements, which derive from the existing identity formations as the only way to oppose power, however he also asserts that in most of the times they result with the reestablishment of power as well as continuous reproduction of the identities. Second, according to post-structuralist feminists, “gender identity” is not a biologically determined phenomenon, but is a socially constructed phenomenon which is established as an outcome of patriarchy. On the other hand, establishing a feminist collective action which derives from an “ascribed identity” such as being a “woman” is problematic based on the fact that it includes a normative and essentialist understanding of gender category. Many post-structuralist feminists, such as Judith Butler (1990), basically criticize modernist feminists with being quite successful in identifying the link between biologically determined sex and culturally constructed gender, however, on the other hand, stuck within the essentialist mode of modernist thinking which is based upon a powerful, self-conscious and rational subject with a fixed, consistent and unitary identity and which assumed necessary for the politicization of gender within the scope of modernist mobilizations. Another very important perspective on “identity” is introduced by sociocultural linguistic approach which also paves the way for the conceptualization of “identity” as a social construction – and not restricted with predefined – or
“ascribed” – social identity categories. One of the comprehensive studies based upon the *sociocultural linguistic approach* is introduced by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) who analyse “identity” under two main categories: 1) The first one asserts that identity is an emergent product through social interaction and social actions, instead of a pre-existing source of linguistics and other semiotic practices, and thus, it is a social and cultural phenomenon (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, 587). Thus, it is also *performative*, as introduced by Judith Butler (1990). In other words, “identity” is a process of “self-identification” through social and cultural interaction, which is a continuous process. 2) The second one suggests that identities may be indexed through labels, implicatures, stances, styles, or linguistic structures and systems. Consequently, the first one asserts a “subject” who consciously construct an identity and position themselves towards “others”, while the second one implies the passive construction of “identity” which is done by “others”. In addition to that, they also acknowledge the limits and constraints of individual consciousness and intentionality in the process of identity construction although they put an important emphasis on the deliberate social action that plays an important role in producing “identity”. This classification of “identity” which has been done within the framework of *sociocultural linguistic approach* will inform the discussions on how feminist identity is constructed by general public through the creation of “*the image of* ... 

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7 Bucholtz and Hall (2005:587) who make their analysis through a sociocultural linguistic approach, describe their framework of “identity” under five different categories: (1) identity is the product rather than the source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore is a social and cultural rather than primarily internal psychological phenomenon; (2) identities encompass macro-level demographic categories, temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles, and local, ethnographically emergent cultural positions; (3) identities may be linguistically indexed through labels, implicatures, stances, styles, or linguistic structures and systems; (4) identities are relationally constructed through several, often overlapping, aspects of the relationship between self and other, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice and authority/delegitimacy; and (5) identity may be in part intentional, in part habitual and less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation, in part a construct of others’ perceptions and representations, and in part an outcome of larger ideological processes and structures (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, 587). According to them the first and second principles challenge narrowly psychological and static views of identity that have circulated widely in the social sciences. The third principle inventories the types of linguistic resources whereby interactants indexically position themselves and the other in discourse. The heart of the model is described in the fourth principle, which highlights the relational foundation of identity. Finally, the fifth principle considers the limits and constraints on individual intentionality in the process of identity construction, while acknowledging the important role that deliberate social action may play in producing identity.

8 A more detailed analysis of Judith Butler’s performative theory will be introduced in the section “the Category of “Woman” and Fluidity of Sex”.
feminism” as also introduced by feminist scholars in the section “Feminism as an Assigned Identity”.

Different from post-structuralist theorists who sees collective actions and identity politics as – not a product – but a “consequence” of power relations, new social movements theories indicate a new understanding of politics which aims to challenge the thresholds of the system, lead the transformation of society, is established by “autonomous” individuals who are organized around post-material values, and bears the possibility of establishing collective actions based upon collective ideas. The new social movements theories are well known with their emphasis on collective actions particularly based on identity-based movements which represent post-material values as the products of post-industrial society (Touraine, 1981). New social movements theories, which are mainly referred as the “cultural turn”, different from old forms of social movements are no longer identified as institutionalized, sustainable, rational and power-seeking movements, but differ from the old forms of movements in terms of their orientation and organization as well as values and lifestyles. With regards to that, “identity politics” which is mainly echoed by the new social movements theories, implies a new understanding and stage of “politics”, which is based upon the articulation of the unified claims of social groups organized around their common needs and claims. According to the new social movements theorists the homogeneity of an action is not based on the common interest of the actors, but is based on a collective idea that is developed as a consequence of debates held by different actors of movement. Thus, this collective idea does not necessarily imply a one static identity that describes the actors of the movement. For instance, Melucci (1985) articulates that the unity of a collective action is a “given” as a result of exchanges, negotiations, decisions and conflicts that the actors continually bring about. Hence, Melucci criticizes both the supporters and the critics of the ‘new social movements’ who sees contemporary movements as unified empirical object and disregards various diverse components of the movements such as types of relationship, orientations and meanings. According to Melucci, social movements are socially constructed collective realities rather than being an empirical object referring to a homogeneous group of people with common interests. He does not see an essentialist unity based on an agreement or an agreed common interest of its actors, but a
contingent social action organised around a collective idea without any necessary agreement and without any predefined essentialist identity. Similarly, Offe (1985) avoids a deterministic explanation of contemporary movements and draws a more complex picture of the actors of social movements which does not entirely exclude socio-economic bases for the identification of its actors, but coming from diverse social, economic and cultural origins and organized around certain issues such as gender, age, locality etc. In this respect, although social movements acquire a homogenous appearance, they do not necessarily refer to certain group of people from the same socio-economic origins (working/middle class, urban/rural population etc.) or political orientations (like left/right or liberal/conservative etc.). In addition to that, new social movements theorists describe the actors of social movements as “autonomous” individuals – as a consequence of the shift from material goods to informational and symbolic systems -, who are not only organized around political concerns but also cultural values, and do not have material interests, but motivated with challenging existing structures to promote post-industrial values (Inglehart, 1977; Offe, 1985).

It is important to note that, this abjunction of the collective action and new social movements from the socio-economic backgrounds (such as being a mere working class movement) do not completely release a social movements to have certain socio-economic characteristics due to some structural reasons. As argued by McBride and Mazur, although the main basis of women’s movement is ideas, there is no movement without the collective actors – or the actors are collective - who present a common discourse in social and public life (2008:229). On the other hand, Yuval Davis (1997) argues that “identity politics” tend not only to homogenize and naturalize social categories and groupings, but also to deny shifting boundaries of identities and internal power differences and conflicts of interest...”. She also adds that the main problem behind the “identity politics” caused of being restricted with the hegemonic experiences of white, middle class, Western women; and thus being static. Similarly, Ferree and Tripp underline the fact that in the studies of “feminism” the middle-class, white, Western bias can be observed as a result of narrow and static definition of “feminism”. It is also emphasized that depending on the historical process of “feminism”, there is a dominant unintentional connotation with Western
activists who neglects local women’s own perspectives and needs to be addressed within the feminist movement. This fact will also be discussed in the following sections entitled “Feminist Movement and Identity Politics” and “Hegemony of Middle-Class, White, Educated, [Western] Women within the Women’s Movement – or Feminist Movement: The Way Towards Questioning the Notion of “Sisterhood”, where I will discuss the inevitable link between new social movements and feminist movement, and the new middle class. Before that, it is important to discuss one of the strongest post-structuralist arguments on the “unified” category of “woman” which was put forward by Judith Butler in her post-structuralist performative theory and critique of identity and which fed feminist movement worldwide to reconsider the “subject” of the feminist movement and the category of “woman”.

2.4. The Category of “Woman” and Fluidity of Sex

By introducing a strong challenge to cultural and biologic determinism behind the construction of sex and gender, Butler in her famous study Gender Trouble (1990) criticizes the “universal” conceptualization of sex and gender which refers to a fixed and essentialist identity. Butler mainly criticizes all normative approaches, which defines gender over two different sexes and as a concept that has been culturally constructed. Posing a challenge to certain forms of feminist approach, Butler argues that all normative approaches, which defines gender over two different sexes as well as certain practices of feminism, which - not always intentionally - remains restricted within traditional understanding of femininity and masculinity attributed to men and women, should be criticized and reconsidered. According to her, sex is not a static or predefined category that can simply be distinguished as women and men, and “women” do not only represent, as a standing alone concept, female sex; however, represents everything that is not masculine. In terms of the performative theory of Butler, gender is not about “being”, but is about “acting” – or “performing” and acquire their meaning only through certain gender coded ways of behaviour. Thus, for her, there is no difference between sex and gender due to the fact that both of them are socially constructed and based upon performance. Her main criticism is based upon the idea of “representation” while she argues that it is important to be careful during political representation practices of feminism, which has been done in
the name of all women. She believes that this attribution -in a way- reproduces or sustains the masculine hegemony by recognising its legitimacy and reproduces the dominant heterosexual frame during creation of gendered identities. Butler proposes that “woman” category should be released from essentialist notions and feminism should be careful about not reproducing overdetermined subject categories. As there is no sex and gender identity prior to social and linguistic influences, woman category is a “fiction” and the effects of multiple discourses, practices and institutions. According to Butler, any attempt to define woman would result in normative requirements and exclusions based on the fact that identity categories are always normative and exclusionary (1990:9). Therefore, the ultimate goal of feminism should be struggling with normative categorisation of identities, which are heterosexual, white, etc., and abolishing power relations inherent in all social and political institutions. Butler’s post-structuralist formulation of gender category apparently implies deconstructing everything and avoids any kind of social construction.

The challenge brought by Butler to the modernist definition of identity, her deconstruction of gender identity and performative theory provided the ground for third wave of feminism to question the universal and unified categorization of “woman” who have similar experiences proposed during the second wave of feminism and introduce not only a new way out from the static understanding of sex and gender, but also introduce a new way of political struggle that goes beyond struggle for equality between women and men.

On the other hand, Butler’s theory that rejects all kinds of identity construction due to its normative and exclusionary potential, was criticised by some theorists of feminist intersectional perspective and political theorists on the grounds that 1) it is important not to underestimate women’s (within the framework of binary definition of sexes) universal subordinate position because of male hegemony in society, in the market and in political institutions, and 2) “subjective entity” might be possible in collective actions through coalition building between intersectional identities and avoiding all kinds of essentialism. These critics of the theorists of feminist intersectional perspective and political theorists will be discussed in the following
sections entitled “Possibility of Subjective Entity: Prevailing Importance of Binary Definition of Sexes”.

2.5. Feminist Movement and Identity Politics

A similar departure from the old forms of politics to cultural politics that is expressed by the new social movements theories, is also seen within women’s movement – or feminist movement - which has transformed into a movement that consists of women with different identities and political standings and targets transforming society instead of merely addressing political institutions with the concerns of extending civil and political rights. The third wave of feminism, which corresponds with the second half of the 20th century, coincides with the emergence of identity politics and new social movements organized in a non-hierarchical, non-materialistic, decentralized and non-essentialist organizations who do not have the main objective to offer an alternative politics, but question the existing power configurations and authority of the formal political institutions as well as question the essentialist notions and universal perception behind identity categories. Besides, the effect of post-modernist, post-structuralist and post-colonial theories that question the notion of “subject” and unified universal conception of identity categories also brought a new perspective to women’s movement – or feminist movement – in terms of questioning the inclusivity of the organizations and movements established by their agents.

Mainly addressing women’s political and civil rights, first wave of feminism tried to ensure equality between women and men by claiming equal opportunities in education, right to vote, right to property etc. Although the identification of “women” as a universal category was problematized and articulated during the third wave of feminism, in the 19th century similar demands for equal rights and opportunities for women with diverse identities (such as black women) were also seen in the first wave of feminism. During the second wave of feminism, women started to put more emphasis on their “difference” from men, that should be taken into consideration in the policy making processes in order to ensure gender equality. Adopting the motto “the personal is political” women echoed worldwide their subordinate role that is
confined into the domestic sphere and violence against women which is not “private” or “personal”. Articulating the problems of women that are considered common and shared by all women has been in the main target of the third wave of feminism. Having criticised the hegemony of middle-class, white, educated, urban and heterosexual women in women’s movement – or feminist movement, third wave of feminism started to push the borders of women’s movement – or feminist movement that was drawn by women who own the necessary resources to engage in activism and who could afford to mobilize their resources to voice their demands. Having in mind the question of “who is the subject of women’s movement – or feminist movement?” third wave of feminism posed an important challenge to the universal idea of womanhood and expanded the limits of identity politics that was adopted during the second wave of feminism (Coleman, 2009; Mohanty, 1991). On the other hand, this progressive narrative regarding the evolution of women’s movement – or feminist movement – worldwide still miss an important component which is the structural limitations that women’s movement – or feminist movement or any social movement inevitably has. As being largely criticised by the third wave of feminism, middle-class, white, educated, urban and heterosexual women hegemony is not a deliberate choice of women – or the agents of feminism – but an inevitable consequence of the structural limitations that only allows middle-class women to engage in activism. In the following section, the reasons and consequences of the inevitable middle-class hegemony in women’s movement – or feminist movement will be discussed in detail by questioning the notion of “sisterhood” which refers to a universal solidarity among all women.

2.5.1. Hegemony of Middle-Class, White, Educated, [Western] Women within the Women’s Movement – or Feminist Movement: The Way Towards Questioning the Notion of “Sisterhood”

As largely been discussed by new social movements theorists, such as Inglehart (1977) and Offe (1985)⁹, the social structure of the actors of social movements

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⁹ Offe (1985) offers three main categories that identifies the social structure of the actors of social movements: 1) new middle class, especially who work in the human service profession and/or public sector, 2) elements of the old middle class and 3) people outside of the labour market (such as students, unemployed workers, housewives etc.).
mainly composed of new middle class who have certain values and skills acquired as a consequence of the system-level changes that affect the change in skills and values of individuals. Here, the system-level changes basically refer rising level of education; technological innovation both fosters the productivity and educational opportunities; enhanced contemporary mass media; changes in occupational structure based upon the increase in knowledge industry and increases in geographic mobility which leads the individuals to have sufficient skills to cope with politics. Bell (1973) argues that, increase in knowledge industry and level of professionalization also results with new stratification system and increase in the ranks of the middle class which also effect their lifestyles and political orientations. In advanced industrial societies, while the ranks of the middle class are greatly increased by growth in the number of people in managerial, technical, clerical and sales occupations, their lifestyle relatively has become closer to conventional middle-class standards and they become more radical (Inglehart, 1977:14). In addition to that, while level of professionalization increases among different social groups, members of an organization that is composed of professionals, has become more sensitive towards external issues and become more eager to establish their own group norms and behaviours those based upon more universalistic concerns instead of particularistic concerns. On the other hand, it is important to emphasize that adopting more universalistic concerns and allocating time, energy, values and capabilities could only be possible by increase in the level of income and increase in the amount of leisure time of individuals who now constitute new middle class. By putting emphasis on the class culture, values and lifestyles brought forward by the middle-class as the driving force behind the social transformation and change in society, Rose (1997) argues that middle-class raise a degree of judgement and apply their expertise on the issues that they would like to transform through raising consciousness and affecting lifestyles together with their ideas and beliefs. By not only having necessary skills and resources but also having necessary social capital they also have the chance to access to public institutions whose members are belong to the same class. As Webb argues, each and every epistemic agent occupies a position in one or more social groups deriving from their class, gender, and racial background (1995, in Sharma and Dwivedi, 2017:80). Depending on their diverse positions and social status in society, the line of thinking and standpoint of privileged
individuals and disadvantaged social groups might differ. What puts values, degree of judgement and perspectives of middle-class individuals in a dominant position is owning necessary skills, knowledge, time and resources – which makes them hegemonic\textsuperscript{10} if their epistemic privileges would not be challenged by ‘other’ individuals who are not middle-class, privileged, educated etc.

Although, new social movements theorists argues that the actors of social movements do not necessarily refer empirical objects composed of a homogeneous group of people with common interests, and thus, do not imply an essentialist or unitary movement, the third wave of feminism, who questioned the “subject” of feminism as being highly affected by post-structuralist perspective, directed three crucial criticisms to the second wave feminist movement against the universal conceptualization of “woman” category, overlooking the needs of lower class women and being restricted with the demands of upper, middle-class, white women, and not taking into consideration “differences” among women such as race, ethnicity, class, nationality and religion.

Thus, the notion of “sisterhood” that was adopted by the participants of the second wave of feminism has been at the target during the third wave of feminism due to its homogeneous account and assumption that women are exposed to the same oppression in the same way. The concept “sisterhood” basically refers to the solidarity between women against oppression which is assumed experienced by women in the same way. The use of the term “sisterhood” dates back to the first wave of feminism and the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, when the term was first used among the abolitionists, both women and men, in the white and Black club movements, among women in the labour movement, and at woman’s rights congresses (Zaytoun and Ezekiel, 2016:198). The slogan “Sisterhood Is Powerful!” was first used by Kathy Sarachild, a member of New York Radical Women in the call for the first demonstration of the group in 1968. From then on, the concept started to be used both in the United States and France to name the solidarity among women and activities organized around consciousness-raising groups. As many argue, sisterhood

\textsuperscript{10} Reyes and Mulinari, 2020
should go beyond being aware of women’s diverse oppression and solidarity among women in the form of friendship, and should be reorganized as a political process (Zaytoun and Ezekiel, 2016). Hooks argues that, feminist movement should confront its limitations in terms of identifying and embracing diversities among women and should renew its commitment to political struggle through strengthening solidarity. Apparently, the term ‘common oppression’ is not the right platform to unveil women’s diverse and complex social reality, where the idea of common oppression was predominantly echoed by bourgeois white women, from both liberal and radical ideological backgrounds. What needs to be done is to take into consideration the fact that women are divided by sexist attitudes, racism, class privilege, and by other prejudices, and build up allies and take necessary steps to eliminated them (Hooks, 1986; Zaytoun and Ezekiel, 2016).

As Naghibi argues, what makes feminist movement a resilient action is its awareness about the need for creation of “discursive representations about “other” women”, who moves away from the hierarchical model of compulsory sisterhood and makes room for disagreement and dissent (2007:107). It is also important to emphasize that each and every “movement”, “organization” or “action” is – inevitably – collective, based on the fact that it - at least - reflects a common point or a common problem which points out a group of people that establish a collective action, although it includes conflict and disagreement in itself (McBride and Mazur, 2008:229). And this collectivity also bears the question who is the “subject” of that particular “movement”, “organization” or “action” and is there a common “identity” adopted by or attributed to a certain group of people who are recognised or identify themselves with a particular identity.

Many research studies particularly held with young women shows that beyond the importance of taking into consideration the diversity and diverse experiences of women, it is also about the image or assumed homogeneity of the collective identity adopted by a certain group of people, such as feminists, that makes people to be part of or stay away from that group or identity. In the following section I will discuss how feminism or “feminist” identity is perceived and conceptualized by young women as presented in diverse studies on social identity.
2.5.2. “I am not a feminist, but...”

The assumption that was inherent in the second wave of feminism that all women have similar experiences and can unite under one universal category of “woman” or “feminist” has been challenged not only during the third wave of feminism but also by the researches which reveal that not all women are volunteer to identify themselves as “feminist” without any doubt or feel like they belong to a universal “woman” category. This inclination has several reasons. First, the hegemonic tendencies of a group of privileged women who are described as ‘privileged minority’ and who possess a dominant discourse and definition of “feminism” paved the way for the emergence of different feminisms against the universal understanding of global feminist sisterhood which is deemed hypothetical (Hooks, 1986; Naghibi, 2007; Moi, 2006; Vargas, 2003). As many scholars argue, in most of the UN led conferences and in other international platforms women – or feminists - from developing countries started to raise their voice against the dominance of Western and imperial feminism on the grounds that they reproduce similar patriarchal power relations among women that oppress and exploit women (Gonzalez, 2013; Grami, 2013; Vargas, 2003).

Vargas (2003) argues that, there is an apparent need for the articulation of alternative proposals of globalization that is more flexible and inclusive and does not include hegemonic contents which might reproduce fragmentation and particularization. Second, various studies and researches on the construction of social identity of young women reveals that there is a resistance among some young women against using “feminist” label and although they believe in many principles of feminism, such as, freedom, equality, and justice for women, they feel the necessity to start the sentence with “I am not a feminist, but...” and refrain from identifying themselves as “feminist” due to variety of reasons.

First of all, many studies show that young women refrain from being labelled as “radical feminists” who are mainly illustrated as socialists, supporters of anti-family ideology, domineering, aggressive, and intolerant. Thinking that they do not comply with this illusionary “image of feminism” they stay reluctant to identify themselves as “feminists”. Some scholars argue that this tendency is more common among young women who adopt a more mainstream heterosexual lifestyle and afraid of
being associated with feminism that might be considered as equivalent to lesbianism (Hogeland, 1998). Second, there might be some cognitive reasons behind young women’s unwillingness to label themselves as feminist due to its negative perception in society and in order to eliminate the risk of ‘social ostracism’ (Williams and Wittig, 1997). Third, cultural rights claims and cultural expectations of certain women groups might prevent them to associate themselves with some hegemonic [Western and/or Anglo-American] feminists since they do not feel themselves belong to those groups. For instance, American women of colour do not always relate themselves with Anglo-American feminists due to their experience of enslaved labour and some women groups in Middle East countries do not associate themselves with feminism due to the idealized Western feminism that is imposed on women in Muslim societies (Grami, 2013). Besides, the debates on “post-feminism”, which were first echoed in the 1980s and developed in the Anglo-American scholarship, asserts that feminism is no longer relevant and necessary since women already gained a powerful place in the public and private sphere and there is a decline in the earlier forms of women’s movement (Braithwaite, 2002; Henry, 2004). It is widely emphasized that the conventional strategies of resistance and negotiation cannot effectively incorporate within the linear chronology of social change and stand distinctive to the contemporary postfeminist culture which define feminism as “no longer needed” (McRobbie, 1994). As many scholars underline, feminism should go beyond the old paradigms, renew its commitment to political struggle, strengthen solidarity and become more committed to be liberatory (Hooks, 1986; Moi, 2006). Another important challenge to conventional feminism has been done by women’s rights activists – or Islamic feminists – particularly in Middle East countries who question the dominant secular and Western discourse in feminism and tries to prove that being a Muslim or wearing headscarf is not something in conflict with the principles of feminism or being a feminist. In the following section I will briefly summarize the historical evolution of Islamic feminism and will provide an overview on the “post-secular society” theory introduced by Jürgen Habermas.

2.6. Islamic Feminism

Within the feminist literature, Islamic feminism stands as one of the most controversial concepts trying to combine the principles of “feminism” and “Islam”
which at first sight seems irreconcilable. In its most common definition, Islamic feminism refers to a cross-border movement that brings together all Muslim women who raise their voice against the conservative reading of Islam by Islamist movements (Grami, 2013). In another definition Badran argues that Islamic feminism appeared in countries where patriarchal Islamism was predominant and provided a new intellectual fuel necessary to push forward feminist goals in Muslim societies in Africa, Asia and in Muslim communities in the West, mainly by using Qur’anic hermeneutic work and articulating an Islamic doctrine in order to explain and advocate for full equality of women and men across the public/private spectrum (2006). Although it is not the first time women’s rights activism – or feminist activism – was seen in Muslim societies in Africa and Asia while women’s rights activism dates back to the nineteenth century, the concept Islamic feminism became evident in the late twentieth century and appeared mainly in Muslim-majority societies with plural religions and/or multiple ethnicities and is expressed through religiously grounded discourse taking the Qur'an as its central text (Badran, 2005:6).

Many scholars argue that the definition of Islamic feminism is as controversial as the definition of “feminism” and the use of the concept Islamic feminism have various dimensions. There are four main reasons why women put an additional adjective before “feminism”. First, although the first feminist movements in the Middle East countries dates back to nineteenth century¹¹, the term Islamic feminism, first seen in the 1990s, and first and foremost was invented by Muslim scholars such as, Leila Ahmed, Fatima Mernissi, Amina Wadud and Margot Badran to bring feminist analysis into Islamic thought in order to explain women’s movement in early Muslim societies and contemporary Muslim practice in Asia, Africa and Middle Eastern countries in the decline of Muslim women’s status and to converge Islam and feminism. Thus, Islamic feminism is a concept that is used by Muslim scholars in order to explain women’s movement in Asia, Africa and Middle Eastern countries. Second, deriving from the dominant ideology and hegemonic identity in feminism – which is predominantly Western, white, middle class and secular - there is a strong

¹¹ The first women’s movement in Middle East countries dates back to the 19th century and manifested itself through books of poetry and prose, biographical dictionaries, and articles and essays in 1870s and 1880s (Badran, 1995).
need highlighted by Muslim women or women living in Muslim communities to go beyond and challenge the secular discourse and tools used by mainstream women’s liberation movement which falls short to address the rights and promote the status of women living in Muslim communities. Given that, some Muslim women identify themselves as Islamic feminists - or use the concept Islamic feminism - in order to describe their critical standing against hegemonic feminism and to put an additional emphasis on their Muslim identity which is presumed “irreconcilable” with feminism. Third, there is also a strong need articulated by Muslim women or women living in Muslim communities to develop arguments to challenge Islamic notions and religious doctrines which are mainly described as “male interpretation” as well as to resist religious fundamentalism and uncover injustice and discrimination against women in conventional historical social settings and in Muslim communities. Moreover, the need of pious women to speak from within Islam mainly derives from the idea that that Islam is not – by nature – in conflict with the principle of human rights of women and to show that what is in conflict with the principle of human rights of women is the “male interpretation” of Islamic texts (Badran, 2005; Grami, 2013; Saleh, 2002). Fourth, the efforts of pious women’s rights activists do not simply contain proving or advocating that Islam is not in conflict with women’s rights and gender equality or challenging the hegemonic practices embedded in mainstream feminism, but contains a need to address their own pious communities to advocate for women’s rights and gender equality by adopting a religious discourse of equality.

In many Muslim majority countries, women’s rights activism has evolved in line with the nationalist and independence movements, mainly against colonialist rules. Many Muslim women took part during nationalist struggles against colonialism, independence wars and the rise of progressive Islam and have an important role for promoting Islamic parties for instance in Kuwait, Egypt and Iran. In Kuwait, in 1961, the anti-colonial independence movement against Britain led to the emergence of an independent national identity which covers both women and men from all backgrounds and provides new opportunities for women in terms of education and employment which also influenced their increasing presence in the public sphere. In addition to that, in 1990 during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, women have made a
remarkable contribution to the struggle against Iraqi forces which opened up the doors for women to become involved in the national politics. Similarly in Egypt, women took active part during the 1919 revolution alongside men in their demands for the liberation of Egypt from colonial practices. In Iran, women involved in the 1979 Islamic revolution and demonstrated for the abolition of the monarchy and for the establishment of an Islamic republic, particularly to get rid of the monarchical policy that took away women’s right to have a say over their bodies and officially deprived women of their right to choose (wearing or not wearing veil) during the era of Reza Shah Pahlavi. What is common in terms of politics in each and every country, not only in Africa, Asia and in Muslim communities, but also in the Western countries, is attributing an important role to women in politics in order to mobilize women, overcome the turbulent times and to achieve national independence. However, in each time the story ended up with men granted the political leadership and overlook social, economic and political rights of women (Sorbera, 2014; Badran, 2005). In Kuwait, after the 1990 Iraqi invasion and the liberation of Kuwait, what was expected is the involvement of women in the political scene, however what happened even 17 years after the liberation was women were not allowed to involve into politics and did not have the right to vote (Gonzalez, 2013). In Iran, although women involved in the 1979 Islamic revolution and believed that an Islamic republic would give them total equality, the Islamic regime established after the revolution under the leadership of Khomeini completely overlooked women’s agenda and dramatically subverted their rights (Ahmadi, 2006). In Egypt, after the national independence in 1922 and even after adoption of a new constitution, the new nationalist discourse was deprived of a feminist dimension and disregard to promote women’s rights, particularly their formal political rights of citizenship. While in some countries where civil society organizations were co-opted by the government, women have been fighting against policies developed under the state control as a part of the policies refer “state-feminism” such as Egypt, in some other countries that are ruled by Sharia such as Malaysia and Iran, women have been struggling for their basic rights and freedoms.

12 The 1979 revolution brought out the masses of Iranian women who were demonstrating for the abolition of the monarchy and for an Islamic republic.
As many scholars argue, Türkiye stands in a distinct position among Middle East and Muslim majority countries as being the only country adopting a fully secular constitution which separates state affairs and religion, and adopting laicism as one of the fundamental principles of the Turkish state. Thus, the main concerns of the Islamic women’s rights activists – or Islamic feminists – in Türkiye focus on 1) identity rights based upon their cultural and religious rights, 2) interpretation and implementation of laicism by the Turkish state which causes the exclusion of many veiled women from public and educational institutions, and 3) secular nationalist ideology adopted by certain women groups in women’s movement which disregard the needs and demands of Islamic women’s rights activists – or Islamic feminists, and 4) male interpretation of religious doctrines which provides the ground for the establishment of a patriarchal Muslim society within which women are put in a subordinate position. The Islamic women’s movement in Türkiye will also be discussed in the following chapter “History of Women’s Movement in Türkiye” under the section “Political Islam and Islamic women’s movement since 1980s”.

Based on the fact that Islamic women have been struggling in various fronts, one of the fundamental theories which tries to both understand and find out a solution to the prevailing cleavage between religious and secular citizens is introduced by Jürgen Habermas, namely, the “communicative action” and “translation” theory that questions the limits of liberal democracies and tries to overcome the obstacles behind deliberation between religious and secular citizens through formal and informal translation. In the following section “communicative action” and “translation” theories of Habermas will be discussed together with the critiques towards the normative and universal understanding of reason and systematic normative democracy and feminist critiques towards Habermas’ conceptualization of public sphere as unitary and single sphere which includes all diversities.

2.6.1. Habermasian “Post-secular” Society, Communicative Action and Translation Proviso

The clash between religion and in particular Islam and [Western] modern liberal democracies lie at the heart of the discussions on multiculturalism and “post-secular
society” which aim to provide explanations and prescriptions to the historical conflict between Western and non-Western societies. One of the most prominent theories introduced by Jürgen Habermas, who put a considerable effort into finding out solutions to reconcile Western secular societies and the rise of worldwide religious fundamentalism and revitalization of religious communities, and introduce the theory of “communicative action” and the need for “translation” in reverse (2008).

As many scholars argue, the idea of “the universalization of liberal democracy” which is considered as the utmost point of the ideological evolution of [hu]mankind and human government and regarded as “The End of History”¹³ is in trouble with the rise of worldwide civil war, ethnic genocide and unexpected revitalization of religious fundamentalism. It is widely considered as a sign of the fact that “universalization of liberal democracy” is far from complete and there is a need for the creation of new politics for the recognition of collective identity forms and reconsideration of Western civilization and European secular public life which deem Islamic signs, symbols and lifestyle as “anachronic” (Benhabib, 1996; Göle, 2011; Habermas, 2008). In response to these rising conflicts, Habermasian theory of “communicative action” and “translation” proviso between religious and secular citizens provides a ground for opportunity to solve the problem of mutual recognition and understanding between all citizens in the society – both religious and secular (Habermas, 2008).

Habermas argues that secularism has evolved from Western civilization/modernity values and has always followed a linear path in line with cultural and social transformation peculiar to Western rationalization. Habermas also argues that religious orthodoxies also has been transformed and secularized together with the historical, social, scientific and economic evolution of Western societies. While political theory that evolves from Western countries foresee the normative foundations and the functional preconditions of the democratic constitutional state, even world’s oldest democracies found themselves in clash with religious norms and debated on for instance, human embryo research, abortion etc. Thus, it seems like the

¹³ Fukuyama (1992)
liberal assumptions of Enlightenment has always been in challenge with religious and spiritual notions due to the reason that Western modernization process fell behind to understand and interpret the social and political evolution of non-Western societies. In this respect, the controversies not only seen in academic field but also have become visible within societies as well as across the world through political and social movements. On the other hand, Habermas emphasizes that the normative character of rule-guided operations that are peculiar to Western societies and naturalization of mind together with the spread of naturalistic worldview has recently been challenged with unexpected revitalization of religious communities and social movements at global level.

In line with discussions on contemporary religious movements that challenge Western modernization process as well as secularism in societies, Habermas takes our attention to the ethos of liberal citizenship demands that both sides (pious and secular) should determine the limits of faith and knowledge in a reflexive manner. He believes that the constitutional state should be sensitive towards both sides (religious and non-religious citizens) and should guarantee their cultural and political rights. What is needed in a society is mutual recognition of religious and secular citizens and their will to listen each other. On the other hand, the distinction between religious and secular citizens should not be considered as a mere social or cognitive problem but should also be considered as a serious distinction and disintegration in the level of constitution.

He believes that the distinction between religious and secular citizens is caused of Western modernization process, which usually excludes religious signs from public sphere, however mainly caused of cognitive attitudes that based on historical learning process. He strictly underlines that mutual recognition should be both ensured on the level constitution as well as in society. He emphasizes that temporary reconciliation in the level of constitution has never been sufficient, but all segments of society should believe in and should be willing to live in a peaceful society that is grounded on a systematic normative democracy. In this respect, the concept “communicative rationality” introduced by Habermas refer to intersubjective communication and a non-coercive, unifying, consensus-building public sphere.
within which all subjective views are left out and all individuals are committed to reach out a rationally motivated agreement (Habermas 1987). He articulates that secular citizens should respect to the religious arguments of pious citizens, since he believes that there is an epistemological similarity between the evolution process of secular thinking and reflection of religious conscious in modern era. Moreover, according to Habermas, it is not possible to force religious citizens to conclude with rational arguments distinct from their religious beliefs; however, on the other hand, their arguments should also be comprehensible for every citizen in the society and that’s why should, in a sense, correspond with rational thinking to meet with the needs of democracy in a contemporary society. Thus, what is needed is the communicative action that should both take place in parliamentary bodies and informal public sphere and should develop through widely expanded and differentiated public spheres as well as through legally institutionalized procedures of democratic deliberation and decision-making (Habermas, 1994). In other words, translation proviso should be fulfilled both between religious and secular citizens in the informal public sphere and by the legal institutions of decision making through transforming the debates in the informal public sphere to “administrative power”.

Although Habermasian “communicative action” and “translation” theories are one of the founding theories for reconciling faith and reason and Western and non-Western societies, many feminist scholars argue that Habermasian understanding of unitary public sphere that is released from power relations is illusionary on the grounds that it misses the power dimension inherent in public deliberation and between different individuals with diverse ideologies, and assume that public debates are accessible for everyone. On the contrary, feminist critique to Habermas argues that there is no one single and monolithic public sphere but there are various “subaltern counter publics” established by the members of subordinated social groups (Fraser, 1990). As Fraser argues, the modern conception of public sphere is not gender neutral and not entails the equal participation of different genders (1990). Second, she also argues that the idea behind Habermasian public sphere overlooks power mechanisms, different social statuses and complexity of individuals. Behind Habermasian conception of public sphere, there is an implicit presumption that communicative action take place between different social groups (such as religious
and secular) which are homogenous within themselves. Fraser and Flyvbjerg underlines that, while creating a theory on public deliberation, it is important to take into consideration the existing power relations within society, between different social groups and within the same social group as well who are not equal in terms of their social statuses (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Fraser, 1990). Flyvbjerg also argues that the “communicative rationality” cannot go beyond of being a utopia unless it considers critical relations of power in the social and political world and discrepancy between formal rationality and real rationality in modern democracies.

Another very important contribution to the debates on post-secular societies and communicative action is done by Seyla Benhabib (2002), who put emphasis on the importance of not being mistaken by the cultural holism while trying to create multicultural spaces to foster communication between citizens and women’s distinct position who are usually considered as the annexation of their own religious conservative communities or political Islam. In this respect, she argues that it is quite crucial to think about the creation of deliberative discursive multicultural spaces which is also sensitive towards women’s ‘autonomous’ struggles for their cultural and religious identity rights both within liberal-democratic societies and their own religious patriarchal communities. On the other hand, she underlines that multiculturalism should be intensely scrutinized particularly for such cases based on gender discrimination and patriarchy. In terms of multiculturalism she articulates that we should reconsider women’s (and children as well) special position towards moral and political compromises those were implemented usually in the name of secularization, however by resulting with the exclusion of women from public sphere. Moreover, Benhabib argues that the discussions around feminism and multiculturalism could easily polarize, while little attention is paid particularly to the patriarchal structure of certain cultures and differentiated citizenship claims of women within liberal-democratic societies.

However, this does not mean that we are at the end of feminism or there is no possibility of uniting under common goals and identities which are not essential. One of the important contributions in terms of renewing the strategies and ideology behind feminism is done by the theorists of feminist intersectional perspective and
political theorists who argue that a “new and totalizing theory of identity” is possible which involve multiple identities of individuals such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class.

2.7. Intersectionality

Questioning different forms of oppression and exploitation mainly due to intersecting identities, intersectionality mainly refers to multiple faces of discrimination due to diverse positions of different identities against power or in power relations. The term has a significant importance in the history of women’s movement – or feminist movement - in terms of challenging the normative understanding of the “subject” and the woman category, and providing an analytical framework for feminist scholars to take into consideration the intersectionality of structural identities of race, class, gender, and sexuality (Brah and Phoenix, 2004; Cooper, 2015). The term “intersectionality” first introduced by the scholar and civil rights advocate Kimberle Crenshaw, in 1989, in order to addresses identities, such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class which represent interlocking systems of oppression that form a "matrix of domination" (Collins [1990] 2000). Feeling the need of theorizing the multiple faces of identities and multiple discrimination that one might face due to bearing multiple identities within a particular social framework and mainly against power, Crenshaw contributed to the feminist literature by challenging the static conception of identity and arguing that the diverse identities, socio-economic conditions and lived experience of individuals make difference in terms of their position within power relations. By introducing the multidimensionality of Black women’s experiences, Crenshaw argues that intersectionality should not be taken as “some new, totalizing theory of identity” that takes into account both structural and political conditions that intersecting identities confront (1991). One of the concrete examples of this was mentioned by Crenshaw as policies that address domestic violence. She argues that, any policy that aim to eliminate domestic violence would be limited if it does not take into consideration the different obstacles that women face due to race and class.

As argued by the theorists of intersectionality, although intersectionality theory emphasizes women’s different positions in power relations, this idea does not
exclude the possibility of coalition building among different identities and being organized in a group who adopt a certain identity does not necessarily make them essentialist or exclusionary. The critiques raised by the intersectionality theorists against post-structuralist theorist who consider “identity politics” essentialist, normative and exclusionary will be further elaborated in the following section on the possibility of subjective entity and the importance of taking into consideration binary definition of sexes.

2.8. Possibility of Subjective Entity: Prevailing Importance of Binary Definition of Sexes

A very important question against the post-structuralist critique of the subject and identity politics is raised by Alcoff (2006:143) who asks “if gender identity is simply a social construct…. what can we demand in the name of women if women do not exist…. and how can we speak against sexism if the category is a fiction?”. Against the post-structuralist perspective, which totally ignores the possibility of subject and agency, consider each and every subject category as a product of signification and language and deconstruct everything and refuse to construct anything, some feminist thinkers argue that it is not possible to realize an effective feminism by adopting a negative feminist approach that aims to deconstruct every subject and identity category and just consider negations or rejections (Alcoff, 2006; Young, 1994).

A very important feminist response to the critiques of “identity politics" is given by the theorists of “intersectionality approach”, who see the discussions on “identity politics" – which has been described as normative, essentialist and narrowly concerned with group interests – as limited and reductive and asserts that identity politics does not have to be essentialist, however can be strategic and inclusionary (Bernstein 1997; Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 2013; Collins, [1990] 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). They argue that the overlapping systems of oppression presents itself in multiple forms of identities such as, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class and being aware of the complex relationship between identities and how the system of oppression works in different forms over these identities might be enough to wither the critiques on “identity politics". Thus, being organized
around accepted group identities does not necessarily make them exclusionary, normative and divisive as long as they do not overlook the intersectionality between different identities.

As widely discussed by contemporary feminist thinkers, the notion of “intersectionality” has a crucial place in both feminist movement and literature on feminism which enables feminism to become a dynamic and ever growing movement which did not mislead essentialism. Taking into account “feminism” – or feminist – as an identity, contemporary feminist thinkers and feminists who speak from the perspective of “intersectional feminism” asserts that identity politics does not necessarily have to be homogeneous, normative and essentialist, but can strategically focus on certain political issues and can build alliances between multiple actors who are identified with different identities under the system of oppression that applies different groups in different ways (Benhabib, 1995; Crenshaw, 1991; Collins ([1990] 2000). Many feminist thinkers also acknowledge the transformative power of collective actions which are comprised of political identities. As Benhabib argues in her critique against Butler, it must be possible to stop the “performance” – in Butler’s terms - for a while, to pull the curtain down, and let it rise only if one can have a say in the production of the play itself (Benhabib et al. 1995:21). Besides, Weir articulates that – again in her critique against Butler - there is a need for differentiating between repressive and non-repressive, exclusive and inclusive, metaphysical and socially constructed forms of identities and not to overlook the empowering impact of political identities upon participants of marginalized social groups such as feminists, gays and lesbians or ethnic minorities (Weir, 1996:129). Other scholars also argue that feminist discursive framework is not a production of repression, thus not passive, rather it is “productive and constitutive of subjectivities” (Bilge, 2010:23).

Although some recent feminist scholarship as well as post-structuralist definitions of gender identity reject Marxian methodology (Folbre, 1994; Barrett, 1991, 1992), overlooking women’s subordinate position in capitalism and patriarchal state structure, apparently would leave any study on feminism and women’s movement incomplete and would entail to a remarkable gap in terms of the analysis of relations
of domination. As largely argued in the feminist literature, the conventional and traditional gender roles universally position and confine women primarily within the domestic/private sphere and commodify women’s unpaid labour and sexual productivity (Davis, 1998; Pateman, 1988). This modern form of identification of gender roles, which is defined by Carole Pateman (1988) as modern patriarchy, sustained in all social relations, become invisible and embedded in both private and public sphere and in all modern modes of productions\textsuperscript{14}. Unequal social and economic positions of women and men is largely originated on women universally excluded from – or subordinated in – public (political) sphere. Thus, another relevant question might be “how women can demand abortions, adequate child care, or wages based on comparable worth without invoking the concept of ‘women’?” as asked by Alcoff (2006:143).

In addition to that, from the perspective of “representation” within the structural limitations of representative democracy, Philips (1994) searches for answers to the questions how democracy can be practiced without excluding multiple identities and how representation of different identities could be possible within a deliberative democracy without mistaken by essentialism? According to her, although there is a considerable risk of advocating for equal representation of different groups in parliamentary democracy, certain groups – those who are excluded from the political sphere and who do not have equal access to decision making mechanisms – should be represented within – or against – public and political institutions\textsuperscript{15} without being lodged in the discussions on the fluidity of sex\textsuperscript{16} and over fragmentation of identities, and as required by the specific political and social conjuncture of a particular time period. She argues that it is always important to be critical against the risk of rigid

\textsuperscript{14} Carole Pateman (1988) explains this phenomenon as the division of private and public sphere which is based on the reduction of women to the domestic sphere by men and the hidden sex rights of men over women through a sexual contract.

\textsuperscript{15} Anne Philips explains the need for representation of different groups in parliamentary democracy with the concept “politics of presence” and gives an example to the representation of different groups in a parliamentary democracy, such as, implementing a quota system to achieve gender parity or redrawing boundaries around black-majority regions to increase black politicians elected in order to overcome the representation problem in the parliament.

\textsuperscript{16} Butler, J. (1990)
definitions of identities. On the other hand, she also articulates her concern that that complex understanding of multiple identities or group interests are always in progress and changing over time and according to the political context. She also adds that these concerns do not always lead to the development of essentialism and argues that the contestation and mutual challenge within the groups will always be present to resist against prior identity classifications.

Beyond the limited scope provided by post-structuralist theories, new social movement theories, identity politics and normative understanding of public deliberation and communicative action which are widely challenged by feminist scholars, feminism offers a broader perspective than ensuring communication among citizens through deliberative democracy and struggling for gender equality which would begin in the public sphere and conclude with its translation by formal rationality. Women’s movement – or feminist movement – which goes beyond the limits of traditional and contemporary political theories and identity politics provide a solid ground for us to rethink “politics”, “the political” and paves the way for reconsideration and deconstruction of the existing theories on meta-politics. Women’s movement – or feminist movement – which always question the normative understanding of subject categories and always harbour contingency within itself, involves many components of “agonistic politics” which was introduced by Chantal Mouffe and have the potential to offer a new understanding of meta-politics different from the existing theoretical framework on meta-politics. Thus, in the following section, I will review the theoretical framework on agonistic politics and existing accounts on meta-politics which will inform the subsequent discussions regarding the future of women’s movement – or feminist movement in Chapter 8.

2.9. Feminism as “Meta Politics”: Beyond a Feminist Challenge to the Existing Traditional and Contemporary Political Theories

While the earliest rights claim of women mainly addressed social and political rights of women, such as suffrage and property rights and right to education, following waves of feminism advocated against the limited scope of these rights claims, which remains restricted particularly with the rights of middle-class women and neglects
diverse needs of women from different socio-economic background (Freedman, 2003:3-4). This limited scope of rights-based advocacy of women was extended and challenged by the inclusion of women from different socio-economic background and identities into the feminist movement. As a consequence, feminist movement gained a different perspective which acknowledges that 1) gender equality is not only limited with legal rights but also related with traditional gender roles which needs to be challenged not only in the legal field, but also at the social level, and 2) feminism not only deals with or question the gender inequalities embedded in social, economic and political life, but also adopts a distinct and broader understanding of “power” and “government” by questioning the modern political theory itself which provides a certain legitimacy to the patriarchal power - and the government of women by men - from the perspective of orthodox political understanding (Pateman, 1989:2-3). One of the prominent discussions that was held on the inadequacy of confining the discussions concerning feminism into “rights” or “women’s rights” was introduced by Carole Pateman who questions the hidden patriarchal background in the existing social contract theories. According to Pateman, feminism is not only concerned with democracy and citizenship, but also with freedom, justice, equality and consent. As a dominant idea behind the modern political theory, there is a common assumption that, even though feminism makes a remarkable contribution to the political theory as well as liberal theories, the improvement of liberal conception of “rights” together with the interventions made by women/feminists still stays stunted unless it challenges the profound inequality and patriarchy that is implicit in all modern societies and the modern political theory as well. According to Pateman, the problem lies at the heart of the liberal theory itself - which is ‘gender blind’, and which is based upon the distinction between political and private spheres (Pateman, 1989:26). Thus, the contemporary – and continuously evolving - definition of “feminism” not only deals with inequality at legal level but also has concerns about the hidden patriarchy – which is conceptualized by Carole Pateman as “sexual contract” - between men and women (Pateman, 1988).

This fundamental premise raised by Pateman, which shed light on the fact that the main concern of feminism is not only ensuring gender equality but also questioning the traditional understanding of “power” and “government”, leads me to ask the
question whether feminism have the potential to go further to the existing traditional and contemporary political theories and provide us a ground to imagine and create a world that is released from not only gender inequality but also all inequalities existing in political institutions and society, and to go beyond the existing theories on “politics”, “the political” and even “meta-politics”. It is evident that, the historical tools and strategies that were used by women’s rights activists and feminists throughout the history of women’s movement – or feminist movement - to ensure gender equality are not only limited with addressing public policies and political institutions, using traditional tactics such as lobbying, and developing alternative mechanisms and methodologies, but also includes ensuring a holistic transformation in society and within the movement itself by adopting diverse internal mode of action and ideology which are considered as decentralized, not essentialist and non-hierarchical. The way in which women’s movement organize, advocate, transform and question itself has an important potential to challenge the existing traditional and contemporary political frameworks and offer a new understanding of “meta-politics”. In the following section I will review the theoretical framework of “politics” and the contemporary political theories which aim to question the traditional political theories and introduce a theoretical and philosophical distinction between “politics” and “the political”. First, I will begin with the “agonistic politics” theory that is introduced by Chantal Mouffe, which provides a useful explanation to understand the prevailing cleavages and contingency within women’s movement – or feminist movement, and challenges the classical understanding of “politics” that is primarily owned by the political institutions. Second, I will continue with the already existing theoretical framework of “meta-politics” which offers a more radical conceptualization of “the subject” and “subjectivity” distinct from the post-structuralist theories and new social movements theorists and brings a more philosophical understanding of “the political” by analysing the theories introduced by Alain Badiou and Jacques Ranciere. I believe that the way Badiou and Ranciere introduce their theory on “subject” provides a very crucial philosophical ground in terms of discussing “who is the “subject” of women’s movement – or feminist movement, which is not limited with the binary definition of sexes – but also cover it – taking into consideration gender identity but not stuck within it.
2.9.1. Women’s Movement as a Movement That Includes “Agonistic Politics”

The ideological and conceptual difference between “politics” and “the political” has been introduced by many post-Marxist and/or post-structural theorists who emphasize the fact that “power” is not something that is primarily and inevitably owned by the political institutions within the structural framework of a state. On the contrary, it has been largely articulated that power is no longer considered as something central or centrally owned by a sovereign, however dispersed within different social institutions and embedded in all social relations. One of the most important theories which explicitly reflects the difference between “politics” and “the political” was introduced by Chantal Mouffe, who is one of the prominent theorists of ‘radical democracy’ and who has made a profound contribution to the debates on “politics” by redefining Leftist politics and by introducing the concept of “agonism” which explains the prevalent conflict that is inherent in all social institutions. She emphasized the importance of *contingency* that is always present in the society and underlines that all forms of social order include a hegemonic nature. According to her, every social institution and social order is established by “hegemonic practices”, which she explains as ‘temporary and precarious articulation of practices’, and by nature is contingent. In many times she articulates the impossibility of the establishment of a “consensus” within every segments of the society and in these terms it is not possible to realize full totalization of the society. In this respect, she underlines the necessity of acknowledging the ever-present possibility of *radical negativity*, which manifests itself in *ever-present possibility of antagonism* (Mouffe, 2013). Her distinction between “the political” and “politics” is quite fundamental in terms of articulating her theory of “agonism”. What she mentions by “the political” refers to antagonism that is prevalent in every social relation. “Agonism”, on the other hand, refers to a model of democracy, different from liberalism, which does not exclude (ever-present) antagonism. In relation to that, “politics” refers practices, discourses as well as institutions that represents and consists of a certain order and organize human relations, while “the political” refers to the conflict and antagonism that always exists in the society. This distinct articulation of “the political” and “agonism” as a model of democracy, to a certain extent, complies with the prevailing antagonism between the agents of women’s
movement – or feminist movement and illustrates the unique nature of women’s movement as a movement. It is also important to underline that, the conceptual framework of agonism includes a criticism to liberal thought for putting more emphasis on the individual liberties and excluding some collective identities. It also implies and envisages a struggle not only in the form of contestation over issues or identities, but also in the form of hegemonic articulations that challenges existing hegemony and constructing a counter-hegemony.

2.9.2. Theories of “Meta-Politics”

One of the distinct positions concerning “the political” belongs to Alain Badiou (2009), who is a militant Marxist and whose political ontology rejects any kind of totalizing idea which come to surface as oneness and any kind of final truths which attempt to describe how the social world should be ordered. Badiou explicitly distance himself from all traditional political theories which assumes – and asserts – the possibility of ensuring social order through an “accurate” political theory and practice. According to him the only truth is the historical events which attempt for the destruction of the old order and ideally concluded with the dictatorship of the proletariat. “Event” for Badiou, is May 68’, Paris Commune and Cultural Revolution in China. Not only from the traditional political theories but also his political ontology is distant from new social movement theories, which are considered as a “cultural turn” and presume a new understanding of politics as well as new way of life which do not particularly aim for the annulment of political processes and political institutions but targets to 1) challenge the thresholds of the existing system 2) to lead the transformation of society through mainly developing new “cultural politics”. Badiou disagrees with all theories built upon identity politics and assumptions that articulate a shift in politics from formal political institutions to the society, mainly exercised through new social movements and/or agonistic political relations. He also disagrees with conceptualizing the subject as an illusion, or as a social construction as it is offered by post-structural theories, but believes in the incarnation of the subject in a historical event. According to him, the subject, is not something that was proposed by modernist understanding of the individual or post-structuralist understanding of subject as illusion; not something that is confined
within the limits of the definition of new middle-class; but it is something else that comes into the stage within truth procedures and events. On the other hand, what he understands from the subject is the proletariat in a bourgeois society and what he envisages as the annulment of the existing splace – which he considered as bourgeois society – is a ‘democratic revolution’ that would end up with the realization of the communist society. Badiou’s understanding of politics mainly derive from the metaphysical framework that he established through his philosophical works - and which he conceptualized as “meta-politics”. So to say, he considers politics not as an art of governing a state or as a means of power which is owned by a sovereign neither as new social movements or agonistic political relations. For him, politics is a “condition” which constitute human subjectivity and which appears within the context of a historical event.

In addition to that, Jacques Ranciere (2010) argues that politics is not a political regime, but the way individuals oppose to the police-state and all descriptive attempts for politics is a kind of unification which excludes the empty - or invisible - part of the demos. According to him politics is the way of making invisible visible-“take part of the ones who have no-part” in public sphere.

His political philosophy based upon a radical perspective of politics which cannot be reduced to state or to a specific way of living, but should be considered as the “part-taking of subjects in the political arena” who are not “visible” in the traditional politics. His conceptualization of the subject derives from Aristotelian doctrine which defines the subject (polites) as both the agent itself and the object upon whom politics is exercised. By rejecting the conventional logic behind the exercise of power, he argues that politics should not be considered as an exercise between ruled and the ruler that needs to be properly held within the limitations of laws, but should be associated with political subjectivity and the participation of “others” who are not considered competent to exercise politics.

This line of thinking introduced by Alain Badiou and Jacques Ranciere provide a broader and distinct understanding of “the subject” and “the political” beyond all traditional and contemporary political theories and provide a suitable ground to
analyse the cooperation practices between women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings, which I think goes beyond all theories on identity and politics. In Chapter 9, I will discuss how I related the interviews with women from different women’s organizations with these existing accounts on meta-politics and how women’s movement – or feminist movement have the potential to introduce a new understanding of meta-politics which the existing accounts on meta-politics could not achieve to foresee.
CHAPTER 3

HISTORY OF WOMEN’S MOVEMENT IN TÜRKİYE

Similar to their counterparts worldwide the history of women’s movement in Türkiye dates back to the 19th century, to Ottoman Empire, and since those times has been standing as one of the “most enduring” social movements in the history of Türkiye. Even though many scholars acknowledge the period after the 1980 military coup as one of the critical turning points in terms of the emergence of women’s movement as an autonomous movement independent from other political and social movements, the studies published in the 1990s by the scholars who are able to examine Ottoman resources, uncover the history of women’s rights struggle since Ottoman Empire reveals that women’s movement in Türkiye has always been a powerful voice which affects the legal reforms and political agenda of Türkiye (Bora, 2020).

According to the literature on women’s movement, there are two different approaches introduced by different scholars in the analysis of historical development of women’s movement in Türkiye. The first approach mainly focuses on an evolutionary perspective and divides the historical evolution of women’s movement into three stages. The first stage starts in the nineteenth century with the emergence of women’s organizations previously among upper strata of society. In this stage the activities of those organizations were limited with charity activities, mainly focus on schooling of women and continued until the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The second stage, which is described as the period between the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 until the 1980s, is identified as the period when women’s movement and women’s organizations had been integrated into the nationalist movement and nation-state building started with the foundation of the Republic. This period basically described with “state feminism” which refers to

17 (Ferre & Mueller, 2004:576)
colonization of women’s movement together with the nation-state building process (Tekeli, 1986; Sirman, 1989). The third stage, which corresponds with the period after the 1980s is marked by the emergence of independent feminist movements and platforms, which mainly have rights-based approach and aim to promote and sustain women rights in Türkiye. On the other hand, the second approach introduced by Yaraman (2001), divides women’s movement in Türkiye into two phases. In this respect, while the first phase is described as the period when women’s movement “demand equality with men regardless of differences”, the second phase is described as the period when women’s movement has begun to demand “equality despite differences”.

In the following sections, the profound history of women’s movement in Türkiye will be elaborated since its early appearance in Ottoman Empire and in its continuous existence in all stages of the Turkish Republic. By putting emphasis on the diverse characteristics of each period, the brief history of women’s movement will be discussed under separate sections, entitled: 1) women’s movement in Ottoman Empire, 2) women’s movement in the early years of Turkish Republic, 3) women’s movement in 1980s and 1990s, and 4) women’s movement in 2000s and 2010s.

3.1. Women’s Movement in Ottoman Empire

Thanks to the feminist intellectuals both in academic and non-academic feminist circles who uncovered the existence of women’s movement during the Ottoman Empire, they revealed the fact that women’s consciousness and women’s organized struggle for emancipation dates long before the foundation of the Turkish Republic (Çakır, 2007). The discovery of the women’s movement in the imperial period was named by feminists as “Ottoman feminism” which brought a new perspective to the feminist political discourse (Çakır, 1996).

Many studies on women’s movement in the Ottoman Empire reveals that women had quite actively been using different platforms, such as journals and associations to articulate their demands for equal rights and status in the society while taking attention to their rights in terms of equal access to education and employment as well as their place in the private sphere. It was mainly women and men activists who
represent the Westernised bureaucratic urban classes and who had their education in the upper class schools of the Tanzimant period, started to debate women’s status in the society and established many organizations varying from charity organizations, organizations whose main objective is to promote cultural and educational activities and political organizations who tried to support the army during World War I (Çakır, 1993: 988-989). It is an important fact that the early women’s journals were initiated by men, who were highly influenced by the Enlightenment ideas, while there was limited participation of women in the social and political spheres (Çakır, 2007).18

The journals published by men with female contributors, reflects the ideological and social characteristics of the era and the modernist views of the male intellectuals of the period. For instance, Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete (The ladies’ journal), which was published between 1895 – 1908, very well illustrates that men of the era were highly influenced by the Enlightenment ideas. While the goal of the journal was expressed by the male authors as “contributing to increasing the breadth of ladies” knowledge and to be the mirror reflecting the opinions of women poets and writers”, it shows how men were volunteer to instrumentalize themselves to make women’s voice heard in the public similar to their counterparts in the West. Another important fact regarding the female intellectuals and columnists of the journals is that, although they underlined the need for women to be aware of the history and to have a certain level of consciousness of their own, they stick to the dominant nationalist and modernist ideology which confines the demands for women into the traditional roles of women in the domestic sphere. Given that, the female intellectuals contributing to the journals such as İnci (Pearl), emphasized that women should comply with the needs of the modern era, be a good mother, provide a clean and cosy home and bring up her children according to the needs of the modern era (Çakır, 2007). It is not a coincidence that women in the Ottoman era followed the same path of their Western predecessor and early feminists, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, who put emphasis on

18 Çakır (2007) notes that, some of the women’s journals published by men in the Ottoman period are Aile (Family) which was published by Şemseddin Sami in 1880 and Demet (Bunch) which was published by Celal Sahir in 1908. In addition to that, Terakki-i Muhaderat (The progress of Muslim women), which was published in 1869 and Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete (The ladies’ journal), which was published by man with female contributors, were some of the journals dedicated to women’s issues.
equality between women and men, however her rights claims for women addressed their role as mothers in the family to be “sensible mothers” and rational wives (Freedman, 2003). It is obviously seen that early women’s rights activists and feminists in the 18th and 19th century both raised voice for equal rights for women and improvement of women’s status in the society, however, on the other hand, women were considered as the prominent actors for ‘cultivating’ and ‘raising the children of’ the modern society. For instance, the journal İnci (Pearl) consists of many articles published in fields of art, literature, history and fashion which contributes to the transition process from Ottoman Empire to the Republic and transition to a modern society.

Unlike the journals jointly published by men and women that mainly put emphasis on women's movements in the world and creation of new and modern image of women in Ottoman society, the organization established by women, namely, Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti (Ottoman Association for the Defence of Women’s Rights) and the journal Kadınlar Dünyası (Women’s World) that was published between 1913 and 1921, had a more radical standing than the journals advice women how to be more compatible with the modern society, and is considered as an example of an independent women’s movement in the Ottoman era. In the journal Kadınlar Dünyası, women explicitly adopted a more radical discourse in terms of claiming their rights and articulated that they would like to create an independent journal without the involvement of men until the rights of women and women’s struggle for equality are recognized in the public law, and women have equal status in the society and in every profession with men. Different from other journals jointly published by men and women, Kadınlar Dünyası also addressed issues like domestic violence, children’s education, women’s participation in the public sphere etc. (Çakır, 1999). Besides, different the journals whose authors consists of elite male and female intellectuals of the era, Kadınlar Dünyası, had wider audience from different segments of the society and had an editorial board consists of only women (Çakır, 2007)

Çakır (2007) also takes attention that long before the publication of Kadınlar Dünyası, there were early attempts of women to publish journals, entitled Şüküfezar (Garden of Flowers) which was
*Kadınlar Dünyası* also includes advices to women to have a modern outlook, since the “new woman” both ideologically and in her appearance should comply with the modern society, however, on the other hand, had been more radical in its discourse and claims for equality by having the courage standing alone without men.

It is evident that, similar to their Western counterparts, Ottoman women struggled for the creation of a new modern social structure with its all different aspects including intra-personal relations, lifestyle, outlook and values and creation of “modern” women who is active in all social structures. Moreover, they adopted similar discourses and claims as their Western counterparts, adopted the word “feminism” instead of using the concepts “womanhood”, fought for “liberty” and pose a gender-conscious response against the official discourse adopted for celebrating 1908 Constitution by calling it “National Day of Men”. Although Ottoman women from time to time were accused of “imitating” Western women’s movement, they took attention to the universality of women’s problems which resulted with similar claims raised by women in different places in the world (Çakır, 2007).

The discovery of Ottoman women’s movement led to a remarkable shift in women’s movement in Türkiye, especially after the 1980s. Women’s movement provided with their own profound history which dates back long before the foundation of the Republic has become equipped with evidence that women’s rights were not granted to women by men but is a consequence of a long struggle of women since Ottoman Empire. The activist legacy of Ottoman women can also be seen in the activities of women during the foundation of the Turkish Republic, however very successfully been suppressed and co-opted by the official ideology which took women as an integral part of the modernization project but not as autonomous agents of their own fate. In the following section, women’s movement in the early Republican Period will be elaborated in detail.

Published only four issues in 1886 and whose authors consists only of women. In the mission statement of the journal, women declared that they would prove that they are not inferior to men, but they are in the equal capacity with men.
3.2. Women’s Movement in the Early Years of Turkish Republic

The official historicity adopted in the foundation of the Turkish Republic has always embraced the nationalist Republican rhetoric which tries to create a *truth* asserting that thanks to the Republic, women were granted with their civil rights. It is evident that various national freedom stories following anti-colonial movements or independence wars resulted in the building up a nation state canonized with myths and nationalist ideologies which usually address women as the prominent supporters and protectors of this victory (Badran, 2005; Çakır, 2007; Diner and Tokaş, 2010; Kadıoğlu, 1998; Sirman, 1989). In each and every story concerning the modernization process of a country a similar path has been followed by the republican regimes that takes the presence and visibility of women as a prerequisite of the modernization leap. However, once the same story scrutinized with a gender-lens, the hidden authoritarian and patriarchal aspects of the modern republican ideology easily become visible. As many study studies on the history of women’s movement in Türkiye do, in this part of the dissertation the evolution of women’s rights and women’s status during the Republican era will be analysed by holding a gender-lens on to the important developments of the early period of the Republic.

Transition from Ottoman Empire to the Republican era is marked by certain fundamental principles, including the adoption of laicism, separation of state and religious affairs, nationalism and adoption of Civil Code. It is an important fact that Turkish Republic is one of the prominent countries which granted women with their rights soon after its establishment in 1923. The Republican Regime, which is embodied in Mustafa Kemal Atatürk who is the founder and the first president of the Turkish Republic, brought many reforms which facilitate women’s participation into social, economic and political sphere and changes in women’s status. Some of the most important reforms in term of the improvement of women’s status were the Civil Code that was adopted in 1926 and the right to vote for women that was adopted in 1934. The adoption of the Civil Code in 1926 was one of the most significant improvements in women’s status due to the fact that a secular discourse was adopted together with the Civil Code, polygamy was prohibited and gender equality in marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance were secured. In 1935, 18 women
representatives were elected to the National Assembly which accounted for 4.5% of all the seats in the Assembly and was one of the highest proportions in the world at that time (Tekeli, 2010).

In addition to the reforms and legal developments that granted women with their basic civil rights and improve their status in the society, there are four important facts that should be highlighted regarding the ideological background of the reforms and regulations adopted in the early stage of the Republic. 1) The official androcentric discourse fed the truth construction process which placed Kemalist Regime as the sole emancipator of women in Türkiye, asserting that it is the Republican Regime that grant women with their rights without making them fought for their rights (Çakır, 2007:62). 2) Women only allowed to establish women’s organizations which are deemed appropriate with the Republican ideals and which also promoted the development of “state feminism”. 3) The modernization project adopted since the very foundation of the Republic, fell short to diffuse to lower-class women and change women’s social status which paved the way for ideological cleavages between women who feel grateful to the Republic and became the prominent supporters of the Republic and secularism, and women who could not make up with the modernization, Westernization and nationalization efforts of the Republican Regime (Çağatay, 2018; Tekeli, 2010). 4) Different from studies that acknowledge the 1980s as the beginning of women’s movement in Türkiye, it is evident that women’s movement has a profound history dates back to Ottoman Empire and witness a vibrant women’s activism in the early years of the Republic.

Many studies on the history of women’s movement in Ottoman Empire and in Turkish Republic shows that since the very foundation of the Republic women had been following the legacy of their predecessors and quite actively taking part in the society and politics as well. Contrary to the official discourse asserting that thanks to the Republic, women’s public participation was enabled, many studies take attention that women tried to establish Kadınlar Halk Fırkasi (Women’s People Party), on 15 June 1923, months before the foundation of the Turkish Republic and the Republican People’s Party, however their demand was rejected by the government on the grounds that the Constitution only granted men with the right to vote (Zinhnioğlu,
Those women who were looking for the ways to establish a political party, were advised to establish an “association” in order to continue to their activities instead of a political party. Thus, Türk Kadınlar Birliği (Turkish Women’s Union) was established by the same group of women who tried to establish Kadınlar Halk Fırkası. According to some scholars, the demands of women in terms of getting organized under a political party was rejected on the grounds that a women’s party would be “divisive” and would undermine the activities of Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası (Republican People’s Party) (Toprak, 1988; Zihnioğlu, 2003).

As Serpil Çakır argues, Ottoman and Turkish reformers stick to the same ideology that was followed by French Jacobins, who were centralist, authoritarian, and steadfast in terms of realising the ideals of the Enlightenment. (Çakır, 2007:62). This authoritarian approach consists of fundamental features in terms of women’s social, economic and political participation: 1) Women’s visibility in politics and society is considered necessary in terms of the minimum requirements of the modernizations project (Diner and Tokaş, 2010). In this respect, myths are created that women were given their rights by the Republic and should be grateful to the Republic and the modernization project that save women from darkness (Diner and Tokaş, 2010). 2) Women are positioned as the “supporters” of the Republican ideals, who should devote themselves to improve their education and skills to be better wives and mothers (Arat, 1994). Similar to this authoritarian approach, the Republican regime was successful in terms of disregarding women’s long standing struggle for their rights and freedoms since Ottoman Empire and creating the myth that women were granted with their rights thanks to the Republic. In this respect, first in 1930 women were granted with the right to vote in municipal elections and in 1934 right to vote in general elections. Based on that, Turkish Women’s Union was asked to shut down on the grounds that women were already given their rights and there is no longer a reason for women’s organizations (Diner and Tokaş, 2010; Tekeli, 2010). This is considered as the end of the first wave of feminism in Türkiye. Turkish Women’s Union, as one of the most significant women’s organizations in the history of Türkiye, repealed itself in 1935, however reformed in 1949 and since then continue to its activities. Different from studies that acknowledge the 1980s as the beginning of women’s movement in Türkiye, Turkish Women’s Union is the evident that
women’s movement has a profound history dates back to Ottoman Empire and witness a vibrant women’s activism in the early years of the Republic.

As Deniz Kandiyoti (1987) summarizes the state of women in Türkiye as “emancipated, but not liberated”, women have always been considered as an integral part of the modernization project and Kemalist nationalism instead of equal partners of the nation-building process. Thus, this approach not only granted women with their basic civil rights, but also granted them with the role of “enlightened mothers” (Arat, 1994). The gender policy adopted during the early Republican era is described as “state feminism”20 which refers to co-optation of all policies and civil society organizations concerning women by the state and enforcement of state driven reforms from above related to the fields of family, education, clothing and political rights (Esim and Cindoğlu, 1999; Tekeli, 1986). Although the state feminism adopted by the Republican regime has many positive effects in terms of the improvement of women’s status, it also has implicit negative effects in terms of restricting the development of an autonomous women’s movement (Tekeli, 1986). Indeed, the abolishment of Turkish Women’s Union by the government with the assertion that there is no need for women’s organizations since the rights of women were already secured by the state and their mission was already fulfilled is one of the significant proofs that state feminism had been intolerant towards the existence of independent and autonomous women’s organizations who has a distinct voice different from the official ideology of the early Republican era. In addition to that, women’s organizations were not the only ones who were banned by the government, however in the 1920s and 1930s, the government also abolished many other civil society organizations including workers’ organizations and cultural organizations who might have the potential to challenge the authority and nationalist and secular ideology of the Republic (Toprak, 1986).

20 The term “state feminism” mainly refers to development of women’s status through state-based mechanisms and policies usually as a part of the national state policy (Goertz and Mazur, 2010). The term first introduced by Helga Hernes (1987) in terms of discussing the government-supported gender equality policies of the Nordic countries – and in particular Norway - which had a tradition of government-supported liberal feminism dating back to the 1880s. On the other hand, as Badran (2009) argues, many feminists consider the notion of “state feminism” as oxymoron due to the fact that in many states “state feminism” refers to prescription of government’s own form of gender equality policy, while prohibiting and restricting women’s organizations from developing their own.
The women’s organizations that were established in the 1940s and 1950s after the removal of the ban on civil society organizations in the second half of the 1940s and transition to the multi-party system, very well illustrates the dominant official ideology on women and women’s organization and how state feminism continued to function through women’s organizations established in the 1940s. Some of the women’s organizations founded in the 1940s and 1950s, such as Kadının Sosyal Hayatını Tetkik Kurumu Derneği (The Association of the Research Institution on the Social Life of Women), Türk Üniversitesi Kadınlar Derneği (Turkish University Women’s Association), Türk Anneler Derneği (Turkish Mother’s Association), Soroptimist Kulüpleri Birliği (The Federation of Soroptimist Clubs), adopted the main objective of protecting the rights granted by the Kemalist regime and protecting secularism against Islamist oppositions. It is evident that the Kemalist government primarily allowed women’s organization who keep up with the Republican ideals and do not pose a challenge to patriarchy which is considered legitimate in order to protect Kemalist nationalism. It is also important to note that the social and political structure of Ottoman Empire that allowed the establishment of women’s organizations of various ethnic backgrounds has been transformed into a unified national identity, namely Turkish identity, while the multicultural social structure of Ottoman Empire started to be dominated by Turkish nationalism (Çakır, 1993).

Another important fact regarding the Kemalist modernization project is that, the modernization attempts and reforms brought by the Kemalist regime remained limited with the urban bourgeoisie women and was not successful in terms of improvement of the social status of lower-class women. The reforms brought in order to improve women’s social, economic and political participation in the early years of the Republic could not reach out to the rural areas and lower-class women and thus were restricted with the advantages granted to urban upper and middle class women

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21 Some of the examples of the women’s organizations established during the Ottoman Empire are, Beyoğlu Rum Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nissaniyesi (Beyoğlu Greek Beneficial Association of Women), Türk ve Ermeni Kadınlar İttihat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi (Beneficial Union of Turkish and Armenian Women), Kürt Kadınları Teali Cemiyeti (Association for the Elevation of Kurdish Women), and the Çerkes Kadınları Teavın Cemiyeti (Association for Mutual Co-operation Amongst Circassian Women) (Çakır, 1993).
in terms of women’s education and women to be recruited into remunerated professions (Kandiyoti, 1987). This has resulted with widening cleavages between middle-class, urban, educated women and women of lower-class living in the periphery of the city centers and rural areas which has also been observed in the women’s movement. According to Çağatay (2018) the women of lower class and Islamic communities were regarded as oppressed by the “backward” traditions and “reactionary” interpretations of Islam and laicism that was inherently linked to modernism/Westernism and Turkish nationalism would release these men and women from darkness. Besides, the same idea was visible in the approach of middle-class, urban, educated women who aim to “enlighten” and “emancipate” lower class women as they were “emancipated” by the Republican ideals.

Interrupted with the military coups, ongoing political instability and economic changes, the evolution of civil society organizations in the political history of Türkiye never had a smooth path and rarely had continuity until the 1980s. On the other hand, following the adoption of the 1961 constitution after the 1960 military coup and rise of anti-imperialist and leftist movements especially in the 1970s, women’s groups started to ask for the improvement of their rights and started to establish women’s organizations close to the anti-imperialist and leftist ideologies, such as Devrimci Kadınlar Derneği (Revolutionary Women’s Association), İleri Kadınlar Derneği (The Progressive Women’s Association), Ankara Kadınlar Derneği (The Association of Women of Ankara), Demokratik Kadınlar Birliği (The Federation of Democratic Women) and Emekçi Kadınlar Birliği (The Federation of Women Workers). However, these women’s organizations were abolished under the martial law after the 1980 military coup.

As many studies acknowledge, women’s movement in Türkiye entered into a new period after the 1980 military coup. The legacy of the women’s movement those were highly involved in socialist parties before the 1980s, made an important contribution to the women’s movement after 1980 in terms of becoming critical towards patriarchal and hierarchical state and party structures. On the other hand, the ban of political parties and labour unions after the 1980 military coup brought a new opportunity for women’s movement to become self-reflexive and autonomous organizations independent from leftist and socialist organizations.
3.3. Women’s Movement in 1980s and 1990s

While the second wave of feminism corresponds with the 1960s in the West, the second wave of feminism in Türkiye corresponds with the 1980s due to the fact that before 1980, women’s rights activism was highly engaged in left-wing movement and the political agenda of Türkiye was significantly occupied by the political polarization. There are four important characteristics that identifies the period of the 1980s and 1990s in terms of the historical evolution of women’s movement in Türkiye: 1) The period after the 1980 military coup is an important turning point not only for women’s movement but all political/ideological movements against authoritarian regime who question the existing mode of democracy and seek for new modes of democracy and political participation after a period of ban of all political organizations from politics. 2) The period after the 1980 military coup has also a peculiar importance in terms of the emergence of women’s movement as an autonomous movement detached from previous conventional left opposition groups. 3) 1990s was marked by a crucial period when women discovered that women’s movement in Türkiye has a profound history, not simply accelerated in the 1980s, but dates back to Ottoman Empire when women demanded their rights and explicitly raised their voice against patriarchal policies. 4) The period of the 1980s and 1990s is of great importance in terms of increase in the number of women’s platforms and informal groups; establishment of digital platforms to reach out a wider audience; organization of awareness raising activities to widen the impact of women’s movement; change and improvement of the laws and regulations concerning women and gender equality; and women started to organize massive campaigns and raised their voice against patriarchal policies. 5) 1990s was also marked by the emergence of many heterogenous women organizations, increase in the number of institutionalized women’s organizations, increase in the international funding opportunities for CSOs especially together with European Accession process and women’s organization became more involved in international gender agenda and international organizations.

In the following section, women’s movement in the 1980s and 1990s will be elaborated in line with these five important developments that deeply affects the historical evolution of women’s movement in Türkiye.
3.3.1. The Period After 1980 Military Coup

In the political history of Türkiye, the 1980 military coup is one of the most critical turning points, when army gained a strong political autonomy and positioned itself in an extremely dominant role among state institutions to reinstall status quo after long years of political instability and deep social cleavages (Sakallıoğlu-Cizre, 1997). First, all the political parties and labour unions existed before 1980 were banned, along with their leaders so as to restrict them to play an active role in politics. Second, the electoral law was changed and a new electoral threshold (10%) was enacted which undermined the plurality and representation of small political parties in the Parliament. This situation paved the way for 1) dissolution of all conventional political parties and mainstream political organizations, 2) emergence of new opposition political/ideological movements who seek to reinstall democracy and the new ways of political participation (Sirman, 1989:15), 3) women’s movement has entered into a new period that it started to detach from previous political organizations and ideological attachments and gained its own autonomy and ideological disposition.

As many scholars acknowledge there are two important facts affected the evolution of women’s movement so as to be an autonomous movement released from its previous attachments with other mixed political organizations. First, the ban of all political organizations from politics after the 1980 military coup caused previous political organizations to restructure and try to organize in different ways, and paved the way for the formation of an independent women's organization. Second, women’s movement started to be highly influenced by the Western experience and Western feminism in terms of the establishment of non-hierarchical, independent organizations and ad hoc committees as well as establishment of consciousness-raising groups as a way of advocating for women’s rights and gender equality (Sirman, 1989:19). Sirman argues that the reason why feminism and feminist movement did not stand alone apart from other political and ideological movements is because the highly dominant position of left-wing ideologies in the anti-state domain especially in the 1960s and 1970s. The anti-state Marxist left ideology which mainly based upon humanitarianism and egalitarianism, predominantly focused on class issue that dominate and subordinate all other ideologies - such as women’s
rights - for the sake of the great cause of leftist ideals, namely the defeat of the class domination (Sirman, 1989:16). Thus, the ban of mainstream political organizations caused two important results: 1) reorganization of political groups under new forms of organizations and ideological groups 2) emergence of women’s movement as a movement on its own in the public sphere. As many scholars argue, in the early 1980s women were mainly engaged in left-wing political movement, in particular to the socialist movement, however the ban of the all political activities of political parties after the 1980 military coup, led women’s groups to establish feminist groups, question their previous role and participation into the left-wing political movement which was deemed as “bourgeois deviations” by left-wing organizations (Berktay, 1990:317; Esim and Cindoğlu, 1999:181; Sirman, 1989:20). After the dissolution of all previous forms of political organizations, women get started to organize in feminist circles and have begun to create their own voice against patriarchy. Besides, 1980s are also marked by the times when women’s movement has begun to engage with other social movements, such as environmental movements. In the 1980s women’s organizations gradually started to engage with other social movements, not with the concern of reinterpreting environmental issues or environmental exploitation through a feminist approach, but because of advocating for the urban rights that affect the quality of women’s life (Sirman, 1989:17).

There are other important facts that deeply affect the transformation of women’s movement in Türkiye in the 1980s and 1990s. The increasing engagement with international feminist movement and feminist organizations considerably transformed the way in which women’s organizations get organized through non-hierarchical, non-formal, independent organizations. The newly established women’s organizations (both in the form of legal entities and in the form of non-legal entities, such as women’s coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives) had been fighting in two fronts: 1) directly addressing the Parliament for legislative changes and calling the Parliament to fulfil the requirements of the international treaties that Türkiye is a signatory, such as United Nations Declaration of Women’s Rights, 2) addressing general public to raise awareness through public meetings, publications, magazines, novels (one of the famous is “Kadının Adı Yok”) and translation of European feminists into Turkish.
Although it was not the first time women has taken to the streets marching for their rights, Dayğa Karşı Yürüyüş (Solidarity March Against Bullying) in 1987 is considered as the first time when women had voiced demands specific to their conditions of existence as women in Turkish society. In the 1980s and 1990s, many periodicals and magazines started to be published by various women’s groups which aim to address different needs and issues of women from different religious, ethnic or ideological backgrounds. “Feminist” Magazine which was first published in 1987, “Eksik Etek” Magazine which was first published in 1994 and the periodical “Pazartesi” which was first published in 1995 are some of the examples of periodicals and magazines which provided women a ground to express and discuss political issues concerning women and political discontent (Arat, 2004). In addition to that, Mor İğne (Purple Needle) campaign that was initiated by women to raise their voice against physical and sexual abuse on public transportation and 8 March Women’s Platform which was formed in 1997 are some of the examples of women’s crucial efforts to reach out a wider audience. The Solidarity March Against Bullying that was organized in 1987 is considered as a turning point due to the fact that it was the first time women took on the streets to struggle for the elimination of violence and raise their voice for women’s rights (Diner and Tokaş, 2010:45). What caused women to organize a massive demonstration as such, was the decision given by a judge named Mustafa Durmuş in Çankırı rejected the case of a woman who wanted to divorce because of being beaten by her husband, saying, “women needed to be beaten in order to be controlled”. Following the decision which exemplifies how male violence is legitimatized in society, women started to organize massive campaigns and addressed courthouses to filed lawsuits. Besides, in terms of the legal framework feminist women questioned the family arrangements of the 1926 Civil Code which were not “egalitarian”. As per the 1926 Civil Code, married woman lost equal status, lost their name and their freedom to work without the permission of the husband, while the husband recognised as the “head” of the household (Tekeli, 2010). Thus, women launched campaigns from 1985 onwards for the amendment of the Civil Code and succeeded the amendment in 2001.

1980s and 1990s were echoed by the slogan worldwide “the personal is political” which puts “private” matters at the hearth of the political agenda by uncovering
domestic violence against women (Gupta, 2015; Lee, 2007). The slogan *the personal is political* first echoed by feminist Carol Hanisch, who published an article titled “The Personal is Political” in 1970 and highlight the political dimension of the private life and take attention to the power relations that shape the private sphere which is regulated with the social institution of marriage. The newly adopted approach by feminists, namely, *the personal is political*, paves the way for the systematic development of “feminist policy” by feminist groups which target the existing public policies and political institutions and aims to improve the public policies so as to be sensitive to the issue of gender equality. Furthermore, feminist policy not only aimed at improving the existing public policies, but also aimed at developing new methodologies and structures to ensure women’s participation into decision making mechanisms and eliminate any kind of discrimination and violence against women. One of the explicit examples of feminist policy developed by women’s organizations in Türkiye is Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation which was established in 1990 by a group of feminists in order to combat violence against women and has been managing a solidarity center and women’s shelter where women who exposed to violence can find shelter and get free support including social, psychological and legal support. Moreover, Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation initiated the establishment of "Women's Shelters 1st Congress" in 1998, in the context of the 25 November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which took the name of “Assembly of Women’s Shelters and Solidarity Centers” in the 5th meeting of the assembly.

### 3.3.2. Women Finding Out Their Own (Her)story

Another important factor in the independence of women from the orthodox left political view is the contribution of women who had access to the pre-Republican history of women’s movement by scanning Ottoman sources and who shed light on the fact that women's rights are not a “blessing” presented to women with the foundation of the Republic, but a result of women's long-standing struggles long before the establishment of the Republic (Bora, 2020; Çakır, 2007; Sirman, 1989). *Osmanlı Kadınlarının Hayat Hakı Arayışının Bir Hikayesi / A Story of Ottoman Women's Quest for the Right to Life* published by Aynur Demirdirek and Osmanlı
Kadın Hareketi / Ottoman Women's Movement published by Serpil Çakır are some of the most important works describing the women's movement during the Ottoman Empire. Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi (Women's Works Library), on the other hand, is one of the most important attempts of feminists, in the 1990s, to compile the literary works on women and women’s movement and to demonstrate the profound scholarly and literary works of feminists which serve for the institutionalization of women’s movements in Türkiye (Diner and Tokaş, 2010:46). Moreover, many prominent universities in Türkiye started to establish departments of women’s studies and research centres on women’s issues at the graduate level. Some of the examples of those universities are Istanbul University and Marmara University in Istanbul, Ankara University and Middle East Technical University in Ankara, 9 Eylül University in Izmir and Çukurova University in Adana.

As many scholars discuss, women's discovery of their own profound history has two important consequences. First, women’s movement during the period between end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century was mainly regarded as an annexation of modernization process - and hence received support or reaction. The review of the Ottoman sources revealed that women not only engaged in modernization process or nationalism movement, but also question and challenge patriarchy embedded in modernization and nationalism ideals which subordinate women to men, to nation and to the dominant ideology (Bora, 2020; Çakır, 1994; Demirdirek, 1993). Through the critical reviewing of the Turkish modernization process and Kemalist regime, women not only discovered the authoritarian aspects of the official ideological discourse of Kemalism, but also established an independent feminist discourse different from the leftist discourse and left-wing movements (Çakır, 2007). Second, this discovery also poses a challenge to the widely acknowledged “wave” narrative of feminist movement by revealing that even in the times when women asked for their legal rights, they were also advocating for their distinct position as being a “woman” and highlight the importance of gender equality. Thus, it is possible to argue that the progressive wave narrative of Western historicity of feminism is quite intertwined in the history of women’s movement in Türkiye. As Bora (2020) underlines, the discovery of the history of women’s movement dates back to Ottoman Empire, created a significant impact in terms of the
shift in the idea behind the continuity of waves of feminism and proves that more than one wave can exist in the same historical period.

3.3.3. Women’s Movement in 1990s: In Between Increasing Institutionalization, Internationalization and Identity Politics

As one of the most significant features of the 1990s, increasing institutionalization among women’s organizations both have certain opportunities and constraints. First, while the 1990s and the following two decades witnessed an increase in institutionalism and foundation of heterogeneous and rooted women’s organizations which have the capacity to access national and international funding opportunities as well as have the capacity to engage with international feminist movement and feminist organizations. The same time period also coincides with the emergence of massive women’s movements which have been particularly organized around a specific issue such as Turkish Penal Code reform, abortion or gender-quota. 1990s witnessed a considerable increase in the number of women’s organizations who are more fragmented in their constituencies, more diverged in their thematic areas and more institutionalized in their organizational structure (Arat, 2006; Coşar and Onbaşi, 2008; Esim and Cindoğlu, 1999; Kardam and Ertürk, 1999). Given that, the organizational structure of many women’s organizations founded in the 1990s can be summarized under two different categories: 1) women’s organizations who have more institutionalized structures and adopt long-term activism on particular issues such as struggling with violence against women, 2) short-scaled, short-termed, ad-hoc and issue-based activism which emerge in the form of massive campaigns and demonstrations particularly focus on certain issues concerning women’s rights and gender equality and aim to achieve draw backs in the repressive policies of the government.

It is evident that, especially in the 1990s women’s organizations got specialized on certain issues, such as struggling with violence against women and conduct long-term activities, including awareness raising activities, public campaigns, cooperation with public institutions for the improvement of legal framework and running women’s shelters to protect women from violence. In their cooperation with public
institutions, women’s organizations also provided expertise and training programmes for the improvement of the capacities of public officials. Kardam and Ertürk (1999) emphasize that throughout the 1980s feminists perceived a negative attitude towards the state due to considering it as the main guardian of the patriarchy. However, throughout the 1990s there was an increased dialogue with the state based upon a constructive relationship. This changing attitude has resulted with the establishment of many heterogeneous women organizations who are still active in the public sphere.

Second, apparently, this level of institutionalization requires access to sufficient financial resources, certain level of capacity that only middle-class and educated women can afford and a certain level of professionalization in order to keep up with the recent political developments and fulfil the requirements of funding organizations. This engendered certain problems among women’s organizations such as becoming “fund dependent”, being restricted with project-based activism and “project feminism”22, becoming more fragmented and issue-based which jeopardize the strength and solidarity within women’s movement. Due to the fact that institutionalization requires more structured and focused work, this hamper women representing different women’s organizations and who have different identities and concerns, to come together in certain platforms and discuss the fundamental issues of women’s rights activism, gender equality and feminism.

Third, while many massive women’s movements achieved to draw back certain laws that limits women’s freedom and let the participation of feminists with different political standings; short-scaled, short-termed, ad-hoc and issue-based activism also limits the development of a more long-term, sustainable movement that have strong political elements (Çağatay, 2018; Diner and Tokaş, 2010; Somersan, 2019).

Fourth, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, with the impact of postmodern and postcolonial era that paved the way for adoption of new epistemological vision by women which widen the limits of white, middle class, Western feminism and

22 (Arat, 2006; Göral, 2007; Bora and Günal, 2002).
together with the resurrection of feminist movement, various women’s organizations which have different political standings were established. Different from its counterparts in the West, the impact of postmodernism/poststructuralism on women’s movement and the rise of identity politics in Türkiye mainly was mainly seen in the 1990s, instead of the 1980s, due to the fact that freedom of association has come late after the 1980 military coup. Beginning from the 1980s and accelerated in the 1990s, identity politics was on the agenda of feminism both in West and East. As Diner and Tokaş argue, while Western feminism started to be considerably affected by the rise of different perspectives of black, LGBTI+ and/or non-Western women, feminists in Türkiye encountered the challenge of different conceptualizations of the woman question and politics of identity/difference (2010:42). The three most significant challenges that women’s movement have faced with the rise of identity politics in the 1990s emerged together with the Kurdish movement, Islamist movement and LGBTI+ movement especially in the 1990s which pose different stands of feminism apart from the mainstream (secular and nationalist) feminism. It is largely agreed that the period beginning with the 1980 military coup paved way for the resurgence of Islam and politicization of Islamic women. Besides ‘Islamic feminism’, ‘Kurdish nationalist feminism’ also became visible in the public sphere together with the rising feminist movements in the political arena. In the following part, I will continue with the brief history of “Kurdish question” in the political history of Türkiye and will discuss the rise of Islamic movement after the 1980s and the politicization of Islamic women thereafter in a separate section entitled “Islamic Feminism”.

3.3.3.1. Kurdish Question and Kurdish Women’s Movement

Kurdish question and rise of Kurdish nationalist movement in Türkiye has a long history date back to the 1980s, when the ethno-centric and exclusionary policies of the Turkish government started to create unrest among the Kurds and paved the way for insurgence of Kurdish people against discriminatory policies of state official ideology. Due to the fact that the 1990s witnessed the rise of identity politics against unitary and nationalistic official state ideological in Türkiye, the state has encountered with the rise of Kurdish nationalism both in the form of armed conflict
and civilian insurgence. From then on Kurdish identity has become one of the most significant socio-political problems that pose a challenge against unitary and nationalistic rhetoric of the state and which Türkiye could not be able to find a solution to reconcile.

The main cleavage between Kurds and the Turkish government was experienced in the 1980s when the Kurdish Worker’s Party (PKK) attacked on the military installations in South-eastern Turkey. In the 1990s the armed conflict between PKK and military has been extended to the public sphere together with the increase in the number of civilian protestors and street protests against the repressive and ethnocentric policies. The Kurdish conflict has predominantly tried to be resolved through the military intervention instead of civilian political options which went further to the extent that many Kurdish member of parliaments and Kurdish political elite were detained while the political parties addressing civil, cultural and political rights of Kurdish people were closed down. Similar to the political parties, civil society organizations established by the Kurdish citizens have always been in the tight confinement of the Turkish government and security forces allege their potential affiliation with the “terrorist organizations”.

Although women have always been considered as the active participants of the Kurdish movement and Kurdish political parties and involved into the struggle for claiming civil, political and cultural rights of the Kurdish people, they have never position themselves and have never been positioned as the annexation of the Kurdish movement. As Çağlayan (2007) argues, different from other anti-colonial movements seen in the beginning of the 20th century, women have never been considered as the protectors of “authentic national self” and were not forced to confine themselves in

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23 It is important to note that, on the contrary of the official rhetoric that describes PKK as a terrorist organization and supporters of PKK as “terrorists”, it is an important fact that PKK is considered by a certain part of the Kurdish population as the party representing the Kurdish people. In 1990s due to the fact the conflict has extended to the civil sphere and the civilian protests has increased, it resulted with the evacuation of many villages and the inhabitants were forced to migration those who were associated with PKK and were considered as the supporters of PKK (Kirişçi and Winrow, 1997). Although the Turkish state agreed to pay the villagers compensation due to forced migration, the ethnic conflict and the tension between the Turkish state and Kurdish citizens has always been present.
the domestic sphere to fulfill their traditional gender roles in the Kurdish movement. On the other hand, Kurdish women’s groups point out the multiple discrimination that they face due to patriarchal tribal culture dominant in Kurdish society and the dominant Turkish nationalist discourse in state official ideology. Thus, Kurdish women’s movement, which is separate from Kurdish movement in terms of its organization and in terms of its objectives has been fighting in two fronts. It both poses challenge to the patriarchal structures exist within the Kurdish movement and unitary conception of womanhood and dominant “Turkish” character in women’s movement in Türkiye (Çağlayan, 2007; Diner and Tokaş, 2010). Based on the fact that identity politics have diverse dimensions not limited with the ethnic, racial and/or class consciousness but also include consciousness on gender identity and gender equality, Kurdish women’s movement has always been successful in terms of uncovering and changing the dominant patriarchal structures and discourses in Kurdish society and Kurdish movement. Besides, unlike the grand discourses adopted by the Republican modernization project that tried to subordinate women’s identity into the macro social and political ideals dedicated to the establishment of a modern Turkish state, Kurdish women’s movement challenged the similar dominant and unitary approach and discourse adopted by women in women’s movement in Türkiye (Durakbaşa, 1998; Kandiyoti, 1988; Kadıoğlu, 1998). It is important to note that similar to the closure of the political parties advocating for the civil, cultural and political rights of Kurdish people in the 1990s, many civil society organizations and Kurdish women’s organizations were closed down in the 2010s. The important turning point in terms of the oppressive policies of the government on women’s organizations is the period of State of Emergency declared after the military coup attempt in 2015. Within the scope of the State of Emergency, more than 300 civil society organizations, including women’s organizations, were closed down with decree laws which restricts their lawful activities in the eastern and south-eastern region. Among the women’s organizations who were closed down there are Free Women's Congress (Kongreya Jinên Azad (KJA), Adıyaman Kadın Yaşam Derneği (Adıyaman Women's Life Association), Anka Kadın Araştırmaları Derneği (Anka Women's Research Association), Ceren Kadın Derneği (Ceren Women's Association), Gökkuşağı Kadın Derneği (Gökkuşağı Women's Association), Muş Kadın Çatısı Derneği (Muş Women's Shelter Association), Muş Kadın Derneği (Muş
Women's Association), Selis Kadın Derneği (Selis Women's Association), Van Kadın Derneği (Van Women's Association). Besides, in 2021, many members of Rosa Women’s Association were detained in Diyarbakır, allege “being a member of an armed terrorist organization” and “making propaganda for a terrorist organization”, which also resulted with the growing solidarity among women’s organizations both in eastern and western cities of Türkiye against unlawful actions of law enforcement forces and joint statements of women’s organizations calling the state authorities to stop repression against women organizations who have been working to prevent violence and eliminate all kinds of discrimination against women.

In the 1990s, the increase in the number of Kurdish women’s organizations and increasing interaction between Turkish and Kurdish women’s organizations had two different results. First, women’s movement became more aware of the identity claims of Kurdish people and started to take side with the identity struggle of Kurdish people against the ethno-centric and repressive policies of the Turkish state. It is evident in the journals such as “Pazartesi” and “Amargî” that state’s repressive and exclusionary policies in the eastern and south-eastern regions are acknowledged by women’s movement and addressed in these journals with many articles (Diner and Tokaş, 2010). On the other hand, some other women’s groups have chosen to stick to status quo and continue to offer nationalist solutions to the Kurdish question and Kurdish women’s struggle. This has resulted with an ongoing clash and tension between Turkish and Kurdish women’s organizations which makes it difficult for women’s organizations to act together from time to time. Despite the prevailing cleavage between women’s organizations who support the official nationalist state ideology and Kurdish women’s organizations, as it was seen in the joint statements published by women’s organizations in western cities of Türkiye against the repressive policies of the state authorities, there is a significant change in the approach and perception of women’s organizations towards the identity struggle of Kurdish women which falls into the feminist ideals of “struggle with all political, social and other power arrangements of domination and subordination” and power and patriarchy embedded in the social and state configurations that are ignorant of difference.
3.3.3.2. Political Islam and Islamic Women’s Movement Since 1980s

Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, laicism has been placed as one of the fundamental principles of the Turkish state. The interpretation and implementation of laicism does not refer to a simple separation between the state and religion but has a greater meaning that refers to national sovereignty against religious authority and a scientific approach that enabled modern social organization (Çelik, 2006). One of the significant reforms and legal developments that was adopted in the early years of the Republic in terms of consolidating laicism as one of the fundamental principles of the state, is the dress code adopted in 1934 which implicitly banned headscarf and Islamic dress for women24, in order to ensure a modernist outlook of women that is considered as one of the prerequisites of the modernization project. The implementation of laicism, as one of the fundamental principles of the Turkish state, has always been problematic in terms of the exclusion of religious symbols from political and educational institutions, and more specifically bringing certain limitations for women’s social and political participation. This has resulted with the exclusion of many veiled women from public and educational institutions and disintegration of women who could not comply with the ‘necessities’ of modernization and nationalization efforts of the Republican regime (Çağatay, 2018).

Second, another significant development which paved the way for the rise of political Islam in Turkey – and globally in the 1980s – is marked by the post 1980 period, when Turkish–Islamic synthesis was adopted by the military cadre as the official discourse and the Turkish state embraced an approach that reinterpret and administer religion instead of completely removing it the political and social sphere. This period witnessed to the establishment of right-wing and centre-right parties and the rise of political Islam which provided an important opportunity for mobilization of pious women within the scope of political party campaigns and involvement of many

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24 The clothing reform that was regulated by the law enacted in 1934, prescribed a dress code for civil servants that should be compatible with the contemporary clothing. With this regard, although it was not explicitly mentioned in the law and regulations, as a part of Atatürk's revolutions, women were encouraged to wear "contemporary clothes" but no legal regulation was made regarding women's clothing.
educated, middle/upper-middle class, urban, Islamist women into the policy development processes of right-wing/Islamist parties (Arat, 2005; Akman, 2008; Diner and Tokaş, 2010). One of the prominent political right-wing/Islamist, national-vision parties that encouraged mobilization of Islamist women is Refah Partisi (Welfare Party) that was founded in 1983, when freedom to form a political party was given to all political parties after the 1980 military coup. Many scholars argue that Refah Party could be considered as an opportunity for many religious women to engage in political activities and can also be considered as the main domain in terms of the politicization of Islamist women particularly referring that time period (Arat, 2005; Akman, 2008; Diner and Tokaş, 2010). Beyond its proximity to national-vision, one of the most distinguishing features of Refah Party can be regarded as the critical role that they attributed to women’s organizations in terms of bringing the party into power. According to Arat (2005) these organizations played a crucial role both in bringing the party to power and engaging a large female constituency in politics. On the other hand, although the party has recruited large numbers of women into politics and created a significant female constituency for the party, related with the dominant patriarchal attitude women did not have remarkable place in the decision-making organs of the party. It is also important to note that this fact was not only relevant for Refah Party, but for all other political parties who were active in Turkish politics in the same timeframe. Obviously, Refah Party played a significant role for defining the role of women in mobilizing masses to support party politics which has later on inherited to Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP (Justice and Development Party) that came into power in 2002 elections. Not only women auxillaries of political parties, but also many religious civil society organizations were founded in those years. Based on the fact that political Islam mainly targets cultural, economic and political imperialism of USA and European countries, Islamists came into stage with their demand for more religious freedom, in which many pious women found a chance to complement feminist politics with their Islamist identity and values. Beyond the discussions which considers Islamic women as passive/symbolic actors of the ideals of political Islam, it is a fact that the Islamic women movement should be considered as a challenge to Kemalist-laicist-passive image of women that was put forward through modernization ideals of the Republic (Akman, 2008).
Another important point regarding the politicization of Islamist women especially since the 1980s is the fact that, women’s active participation into the campaigns and policy development processes of right-wing/Islamist political parties, led to the women's struggle for wearing headscarf, which began in the 1980s, to be seen as a side activity and the means of legitimizing political Islam. The rise of identity politics in the 1980s brought challenges to Turkish politics and changed the actors who adopted diverse rhetoric other than the official discourse (Diner and Tokaş, 2010). Besides the rise of Kurdish nationalism, another significant challenge that Turkish politics encountered is the rise of political Islam in Türkiye, which mobilized considerable number of constituencies around the recently established right-wing/Islamist political parties after the 1980 military coup. The secular-religious conservative dichotomy - or Islamic-modern dichotomy – has always been among the heated topics of Turkish politics based on the fact that Islam and Islamic organizations have always been considered as one of the biggest ‘threats’ against secularism and modernization project of the Republic. Thus, the political history of Türkiye, which have been interrupted with military coups, witnessed a lot of back and forth in terms of the establishment of right-wing/Islamist political parties. Although the rise of political Islam in Türkiye dates back to the late 1960s, almost all political parties with right-wing/Islamist tendencies were closed down by the Constitutional Court with the reason of violating the Republican principle of secularism until the establishment of Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP (Justice and Development Party) in the 2000s (Diner and Tokaş, 2010).

Coming back to the political stage in 1980, right-wing/Islamist political parties have gained a remarkable support from Islamist segments of the society in terms of challenging the illiberal aspects of Kemalist secular ideology and demanding more religious freedom (Diner and Tokaş, 2010). As mentioned before, this has been succeeded with the significant support of Islamist women who reached out every neighbourhood in order to voice party propaganda and distribute Islamic populist

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25 It is also important to note that, although many times interrupted by the military coups and with the close down of the political parties with the decision of the Constitutional Court, unlike Kurdish movement, political Islam has been involved into parliamentary politics until the 2000s. It is only after the 2000s that the political parties advocating for civil, cultural and political rights of Kurdish people entered into parliamentary politics within the framework of competitive party politics.
rhetoric of the Welfare Party (Çakır, 2000; Esim and Cindoğlu, 1999). On the other hand, it would be misleading to consider Islamist women as a homogeneous group and argue that women have always taken part on the side of Islamist men and fully agree with the Islamist party politics mainly adopted by men. Among the Islamist women groups, some Islamic26 women not only fight against the orthodox secularist Republican approach, but also started to question the male dominance in Islamist politics that subordinate women into their patriarchal policies. Thus, the activism of Islamic women is not important in terms of challenging the existing Republican and nationalist discourse adopted by secular women, but also challenging male hegemony and patriarchal structure established with the right-wing/Islamist political parties and Muslim communities (Berktay, 2001).

The multicultural claims and identity politics that have accelerated in the post-1980 period in Türkiye had also a significant impact on Islamist women who demand freedom for wearing headscarf. One of the significant turning points in terms of the mobilization of veiled women to claim their cultural and religious rights, is the decision taken by the Council of Ministers in 1981, right after the 1980 military coup, in terms of the prohibition of the headscarf in the educational institutions and enforcement of this decision in universities by the Council of Higher Education (Güneş-Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008). Following this, the headscarf debate has become one of the important issues of Turkish politics that constantly occupies the agenda. The debates on wearing headscarf have always been held in between the axis whether it is an individual right, an expression of freedom of religion and conscience, or a ‘threat’ to secularism and modernization of Türkiye27. The political struggles of

26 Here, it is important to take attention to the discursive use of the concepts “Islamist” and “Islamic”. In this part of the dissertation and in the following chapters I deliberately use the concept “Islamic” while talking about Islamic women in order to make a distinction between the reference for “political Islam” and “Islamist policies” which refers to conservative and patriarchal Islamist policies mainly adopted by male Islamists, and Muslim women’s activism which is not necessarily associated with conservative Islamist policies or political parties but refers to the identity struggles of Islamic women from within religious discourses and beyond political Islam.

27 As many scholars argue, the rising identity claims of urban, well-educated, veiled women signifies detachment from the traditional Muslim women’s use of headscarf and a challenge toward the idea of modernization which has been embodied on the female body. The contemporary understanding of veiling mainly refers to the autonomous political demands of Islamic intellectual women who differentiate themselves from traditional and uneducated women (Göle, 1991; Özdalga, 1998 and Saktanber, 2002).
veiled women have come to the stage in the public sphere and in universities in the 1980s while veiled women have become actively challenging the dominant “modern women” image that was pushed forward by the modernization project and have become visible in the intellectual arena in the 1990s (Çınar, 2005). Islamic women have been struggling for their freedom to wear headscarf in between two fronts. First, women have been trying to challenge the orthodox Republican secularism that draws the modernist picture of the Republic through woman body and “modern woman” image that rejects traditional and religious clothing. Second, headscarf is not only acknowledged as the symbol of fighting against Islamist policies by the orthodox secularist Republican approach but also used by the right-wing/Islamist political parties as an arena to fight against the Republican interpretation of secularism. Thus, Islamic women continue their struggle against the male domination in religious discourses and patriarchy prevailing in the right-wing/Islamist political parties.

It is important to note that Islamic women's organizations did not evolve into women's branches of political parties or as women's organizations that emerged with the strengthening of political parties. Beyond the women’s organizations and women's branches those were incorporated in or closely associated with right-wing/Islamist political parties, various Islamic women’s associations, foundations and groups were established in the 1990s and 2010s (Akman, 2008, Kerestecioğlu, 2004). Among these organizations, Ayrımcılığa Karşı Kadın Hakları Derneği – AKDER (Women Rights Association Against Discrimination) that was established in 1999, is considered as one of the most radical organizations in terms of struggling with discrimination against veiled women, forming public opinion about the grievances experienced due to the headscarf ban and providing legal consultancy to veiled women for demanding their rights. On the other hand, the 2000s and 2010s witnessed the emergence of contemporary Islamic women’s organizations who have more similarities and connection with the Islamic feminist movement in Middle East countries and who aim to challenge the male domination in the religious discourses and practices. In this respect, Kadına Şiddete Karşı Müslümanlar İnisiyatifi (Muslims’ Initiative Against Violence Against Women), Kadınlar Camilerde İnisiyatifi (Women Are in Mosques Initiative), Reçel Blog (Jam Blog) and Havle Kadın Derneği (Havle Women’s Association) are some of the women’s
organizations who have the main objective of challenging the patriarchal interpretation of religious discourses and contributing to feminist discussions from within their own religious doctrines. For instance, Kadınlar Camilerde İnisiyatifi (Women Are in Mosques Initiative) is one of the explicit examples of women’s struggle for their rights in the worship places against the discriminatory practices that put place for women, such as creating separate sections for women in the mosques. Moreover, Islamic women not only raise their issues in women’s organizations but also reached out to a wider public through journals, namely, *Kadın ve Aile* (Woman and Family), *Mektup* (Letter), *Bizim Aile* (Our Family) in the late and *Sena* (Sky) and *Kadın Kimliği* (Woman’s Identity) in the 1990s (Acar, 1991).28

Beside the Islamic women’s organizations those were established in the 1990s and 2010s, “post-modern coup” in 1997, which is known as “28 February” and is resulted with the prohibition of wearing headscarf in the public institutions and higher education, can be considered as an important turning in terms of the solidarity and cooperation between secular and religious women’s groups. Birbirimize Sahip Çıkıyoruz İnisiyatifi (We Protect Each Other Initiative) that was established by women from different ethnic, ideological and religious backgrounds is one of the important examples of solidarity among different women’s organizations from diverse ideological backgrounds. In this respect, Birbirimize Sahip Çıkıyoruz İnisiyatifi was the first time women unite in a common platform to advocate against headscarf ban and exclusion of veiled women from public institutions and higher education as well as struggling against violence against women. Although not fully accomplished, women started to release from their prejudices against Islamic women and take side of their rights demands. On the other hand, there are still prevailing cleavages between Islamic women and women who are critical against women who do not comply with the modernist Republican ideals (Diner and Tokaş, 2010).

### 3.4. Women’s Movement in 2000s and 2010s

There are two important features that distinguishes 2000s and 2010s from 1980s and 1990s. First, 2000s witnessed an increasing coalition building and cooperation

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28 Islamic women’s organizations those were established in 1990s and 2010s will be further explained in detail in the “Research Methodology” and “Perspectives on Islam and Feminism” chapters.
between women's organizations from diverse political and ideological standings. Second, additional challenges to the women’s movement were brought by neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies of Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP (Justice and Development Party) which has been in power since 2002. As many scholars argue, the rule of Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP (Justice and Development Party) can be analysed in two different periods. The first period, which corresponds with the period since 2002 until 2010s, can be summarized with the reformist “conservative democra[tic]” policies adopted by AKP, when European Union accession process and globalization attempts were in the top agenda of the government. Different from the previous Islamist parties, AKP distanced itself from the anti-Western discourse and declared loyalty to the European integration of the country, while on the other hand, adopted the discourse of protection of the family and traditional values (Çağatay, 2018; Güneş-Ayata and Tütüncü, 2008). In line with the requirements of the European Union accession process, AKP enabled many legal amendments in the Constitution, in the Penal Code and Labour Code, established the Equal Opportunity Commission in the Parliament in 2009 and built up close cooperation with women’s organizations by ensuring their participation into the policy development processes (Aldıkaçtı Marshall, 2013; Göksel and Güneş, 2009; Müftüler Baç, 2012). One of the positive developments in terms of women’s rights and gender equality was the Istanbul Convention (The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence) that was ratified by Turkish Parliament in 2011. Istanbul Convention is considered as one of the comprehensive legal instruments in terms eliminating all kinds of violence against women including psychological and physical abuse, sexual harassment, rape, crimes committed in the name of so-called “honour”, stalking, and forced marriage.

This positive reformist and democratic narrative adopted by AKP in the first period of its rule, has turned out to be an authoritarian-populist approach fostered through Muslim nationalism in the second period of the rule of AKP corresponds with the 2010s (Alaranta, 2015; Çağatay, 2018). By adopting anti-elitist and populist rhetoric,

29 In 2002, the religiously oriented Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP (Justice and Development Party) came to power with a significant victory that could not be achieved by any previous coalition governments.
AKP started to make his way through directly targeting secular republican elites and the top-down policies of modernization for repressing the weak society (Alaranta, 2015; Kandiyoti and Emanet, 2017). This emancipatory rhetoric adopted by AKP is also combined with a highly patriarchal discourse that disregard gender equality, unlike its first term of government. Discrediting women’s rights, adopting a conservative discourse and associating women with their traditional gender roles as mothers, wives, and daughters AKP both started to foster conservative values in the society and also changed its public policies through anonymising woman identity. One of the most significant signs of this changing public policies can be considered as the replacement of the State Ministry responsible for Women and the Family with the Ministry of Family and Social Policy in 2011 (Ministry of Labour, Social Services and Family as of June 2018 and Ministry of Family and Social Services as of 2021). Not only women are at the target of the authoritarian-populist and conservative approach adopted by AKP but LGBTI+ people have also been systematically suppressed, discriminated and exposed to hate speech. In 2010, the State Minister responsible for Women and the Family, Aliye Kavaf, declared that she believes homosexuality is a biological disorder that requires treatment. Beginning with 2010, AKP government continued its discriminatory policies and gradually increased its hate speech against LGBTI+ people. In March 2021, Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention together with the presidential decree in a very controversial way due to the fact that the decision was taken by the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan without consulting to the Turkish Parliament.

During the first term of their rule, AKP adopted a positive approach towards the social and political participation of women and established nationwide women’s auxiliaries consisting of both veiled and unveiled women which seems promising in terms of the reconciliation of secular and religious groups. A similar approach and discourse were also adopted by women’s auxiliaries of AKP who placed themselves in an intermediary position in between the political discourses, including Westernism, feminism, liberalism and Islamism. However, it was not easy for women’s auxiliaries which is highly attached with the Islamic populist discourse and policies of AKP and struggling in between the insincere dedication of the party for women’s political participation and obtaining their political autonomy (Güneş-Ayata
and Tütüncü, 2008). In the first period of AKP government, the EU accession process that AKP stick to, not only led to the establishment a strategic alliance between women’s organizations and AKP government, but also entailed to the development of transnational cooperation between women’s organizations worldwide (Göksel and Güneş, 2009; Kardam and Ertürk, 1999). This also resulted with women’s organizations to develop their own discourse against the authoritarian-populist approach of AKP government and the establishment of massive campaigns organized by various women’s organizations with diverse ideological standing. Among the prominent examples of coalition-building and joint campaigns of women’s organizations there are Türk Ceza Kanunu Kadın Platformu (Turkish Penal Code Women Platform), Kıyafetime Karışma! Kampanyası (Don’t Mess with My Outfit! Campaign), Kadınlar Birlikte Güçlü Kampanyası (Women Are Strong Together Campaign), Eşitlik, Adalet, Kadın Platformu (Equality, Justice, Woman Platform) and Kadın Koalisyonu (Women’s Coalition). These organizations posed an important challenge against the conservative policies of AKP and led to a long term coalition building and cooperation between women’s organizations. What is crucial regarding the initial attempts of coalition building between women’s organizations is that, they took as a priority to avoid the use of the concept “feminism” in order to include women who do not identify themselves as “feminist” into women’s coalitions ( Çağatay, 2018).

2000s and 2010s also witnessed the establishment of pro-government organizations which has close connection with the AKP government. One of the prominent pro-government women’s organizations can be considered as Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği – KADEM (Women and Democracy Association) which was founded in 2013 and whose vice president is Sümeyye Erdoğan, the daughter of the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The establishment of pro-government women’s organizations both deepened the cleavages between women’s organizations and fostered ‘state-sponsored’ polarization in the society. There are two significant reasons of deepening cleavages between women’s organizations and pro-government women’s organizations in Türkiye. First, the inequal treatment of the governmental institutions towards women’s organizations, lack of sufficient and transparent public funding for civil society organizations, non-transparent distribution of public funding
and lack of accountability and transparency in the public institutions paved the way for decreasing trust to public institutions and increasing polarization between women’s organizations. Second, the discriminatory discourse adopted by the government has also been replicated by the pro-government women’s organizations, who avoid using the concept “gender-equality” and prefer to use “gender justice” instead. It is also important to note that, a similar approach of the government towards LGBTI+ people is explicit in the discourse adopted by the pro-government women’s organizations who consider LGBTI+ people as a threat against "the family and the continuity of generations". For instance, although in 2020, KADEM declared their support to Istanbul Convention against the decision taken for withdrawal from the convention, in another statement they also mentioned that their support for Istanbul Convention does not mean that they support “homosexual movements” and their struggle against this “immoral movement” will continue\(^\text{30}\). In the last two decades after 2000 (and particularly in the 2010s) there are two radically different edges of Islamic women movement. The first group directly links with the pro-government women organization (Women and Democracy Association- KADEM) which gets direct support from the governmental organizations and follows the same ideological line with the neo-conservative policies of the ruling party, and on the other side there are newly emerging women organizations who tries to reconcile Islamic paradigm with their feminist claims. As Aybars and Güneş-Ayata (2019) argues pro-government women’s organizations such as KADEM plays an important role in terms of the “civilization” of the governmental policies which primarily defines the role of women within family in a traditional context, while radicalizing the acts and policies of independent women’s organizations by excluding them from policy-making processes. Moreover, while women organizations which are close to the ruling party can easily make use of the public funds, many independent women organizations were excluded from benefitting these fund and face with difficulty in creating different funding opportunities.

Highly fragmented nature of the social structure, rapidly changing political agenda and authoritarian and patriarchal policies of the government always provide the

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30 https://m.bianet.org/english/women/228422-association-close-to-erdogan-s-family-announces-support-for-istanbul-convention
ground for ongoing challenges against the development of women’s movement and prevailing cleavages among women’s organizations with diverse political and ideological standings. Struggling with the ideological cleavages inside and authoritarian-populist, conservative and patriarchal policies of the government outside, women’s movement harbours significant achievement in terms of bringing up the women’s issue onto the agenda throughout centuries, while at the same time facing with failure in achieving retreat on patriarchal policies.

Some of the widely articulated problems concerning the women’s movement in Türkiye take attention to three main shortcomings. First, it is widely articulated that prevailing dominant position of white, middle-class, urban, educated women in women’s movement and the dominant secular-Republican, secular-nationalist ideology prevents women’s movement to challenge the authoritarian aspects of Turkish modernization and nationalization. It is also argued that, these prevailing cleavages that prevent women’s organizations to unite against the authoritarian-populist and conservative policies of AKP government are among the most significant shortcomings that hinders women’s movement to widen its own borders and to reach out women from different segments of the society. Second, changing form of women’s organizations which reveals itself as issue-based ad hoc committees, non-hierarchical and independent organizations and consciousness-raising groups, both have positive outcomes in terms of achieving rapid drawbacks in the conservative policies of the government and raising awareness of women regarding their rights, but also bear some negative consequences, such as falling short to identify a shared agenda of women’s movement which could pose a strong challenge to patriarchal social and political structures (Sirman, 1989). Third, being limited with right claims of middle-class, urban and educated women, lower-class women could hardly engage in women’s rights activism, get organized among themselves – in labour unions or women’s organizations – which causes women's movement to stay limited as a middle-class women's movement.

On the other hand, women’s movement is in a continuous transformation in terms of its form of organization, strategies, agenda, heterogeneity and diversity. Women are not only organized in conventional civil society organizations but are also active in
women’s platforms and coalitions as well as in digital platforms thanks to the technological developments. Taking into consideration its vibrant existence despite all regressions in state policies and governmental programmes in terms of gender equality, women’s movement – both in Türkiye and worldwide – deserve to be the subject of inquiry that questions the dynamics behind and potential diverse forms of politics.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research Question and the Method of the Study

4.1.1. Research Question

Dates back to Ottoman Empire, women’s movement has gained a remarkable success in bringing up the women’s issue onto the agenda throughout decades, while at the same time facing with failure in achieving retreat on patriarchal policies. Depending on the highly fragmented nature of the social structure in Türkiye, women and women’s organizations have a similar fragmentation among themselves due to their diverse identities, socio-economic backgrounds and political standings. Given that, the main idea of this study was derived from the question about the dynamics behind collaboration/cleavages among woman’s organizations having different ideological and political standings. In order to contribute to the debates on women’s movement in Türkiye and in order to trace back the changing dynamics among different women’s organizations with diverse political/ideological belongings in terms of their way of collaboration and coalition building, this study aims to look beyond the discussions on ideological and historical cleavages between women’s organizations and focus on the ways in which women’s organizations interact with each other as well as the structural obstacles that prevent them from collaborating with other women's organizations. To this end, I identified four main research questions: 1) to what extent women’s organizations cooperate with other women’s organizations with different political/ideological standings, 2) to what extent women’s organizations/coalitions/platforms aim to adopt an “inclusive” approach in their organizations, and 3) are there prevailing political/ideological cleavages among women’s organizations? 4) what are the structural obstacles that prevent them from collaborating with other women's organizations?
It is important to note that, I took “women’s movement” and “women’s organizations” (within the binary definition of sexes) as the subject of inquiry of this dissertation, by taking into consideration women’s distinct position within all social and political institutions who are universally put in a subordinate position in society, excluded from political power and develop a more strategic position in their relation with state and society. In this respect, I will further discuss the conceptual difference between “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s movement/women’s rights activism” in the following sections of research methodology chapter.

Although within the scope of this dissertation the analysis of the women’s movement in Türkiye covers all periods of the movement since Ottoman Empire, during the interviews I particularly focused on the period after the 1980s when women’s movement gained a certain level of autonomy from conventional left opposition groups and met with their own profound history dates back to Ottoman Empire. Besides, the period after 2000s is of great importance for women’s movement under the rule of Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP (Justice and Development Party), where women’s organizations have been struggling with the neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies of AKP who particularly has changed their policies regressively concerning gender equality especially during the second period of their rule (Kandiyoti, 2016, 2019; Güneş-Ayata and Doğangün, 2017). For this reason, I believe that it is important to look at the changing dynamics of women’s movement, who have been dealing with both increasing political polarization, and increasing conservative, authoritarian and patriarchal policies of AKP.

The analysis of women’s organizations and women’s movement based upon the assumption that women’s organizations aim to establish a more structured, long-term collaboration that has strong political elements. This assumption based-upon the empirical evidence acquired by recent qualitative researches on women’s initiatives who claim addressing “all women” varying in their political framing (Çağatay, 2018; Somersan, 2019) as well as declarations of women’s organizations in their web sites indicating their aim as “bringing women from all sections of society” as well as “promoting dialogue among women’s organizations”.

31 Başkent Kadın Platformu (Capital City Women’s Platform)
Moreover, I aimed at to look beyond the conventional discussion on political/ideological cleavages and collaboration practices among women’s organizations and deconstruct “taken for granted” concepts such as “feminism” or “Islamic feminism” in order to better understand how women from different women’s organizations perceive or conceptualize these terms in different ways.

In addition to the main research questions, in order to uncover the dynamics behind the cooperation practices between women’s organizations/coalitions/platforms, I also took into consideration the following sub-research questions, which might illuminate the hidden ideological and structural aspects of collaboration/cleavages among woman’s organizations/coalitions/platforms: To what extent women’s organizations/coalitions/commissions/platforms are willing to develop an autonomous feminist discourse independent from all prevailing ideological belongings such as socialism, religious ideology or Kemalism etc.? Does availability of sufficient financial resources as well as women’s organizations’ access to sufficient financial resources decisive regarding their efficient functioning and cooperation among women’s organizations/coalitions/platforms? To what extent women’s organizations/coalitions/commissions/platforms could achieve to reflect the needs of different women groups deriving from their diverse socio-economic and class belonging. How do they distance themselves to the ruling party as well as state organizations and what kind of relations do they develop with the state organizations and local governments? What are the possible acquisitions of reconciling Islam and feminism in terms of developing a more comprehensive feminist discourse and inclusion of women who belong to lower and lower-middle class? To what extent it is possible to achieve a “communicative action” between Islamic and secular organizations, which requires translation between Islamic paradigm and secular language?

In addition to this structural inquiry, at the top of the discussions regarding women’s movement in Türkiye, there is a question of whether women’s organizations with diverse political standings would like to overcome political and ideological

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32 Uçan Süpürge Vakfı (Flying Broom Foundation)

33 By giving reference to “post-secular society” discussions of Jürgen Habermas
polarization and build up strong cooperation among themselves and how the interviewed women from different women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings see the future of women’s movement.

4.1.2. Method of the Study

Within the scope of this dissertation qualitative techniques were used in order to analyse both structural and political aspects of the organizations. In terms of the quantitative data, organizational structure (hierarchical/horizontal, national/local, legal entity/platform-initiative etc.), financial capacity as well as financial resources of the women organizations will be investigated. On the other hand, in terms of the qualitative data, the main research questions and the sub questions were directed to the representatives of the women organizations/coalitions/commissions/platforms through semi-structured in-depth interviews. While holding the in-depth interviews, depending on the organizational structure of the women’s organizations/coalitions/commissions/platforms, I tried to hold more than one interview with different representatives of women’s organizations.

4.1.2.1. Semi Structured In-depth Interviews

For a study which aims to investigate the dynamics behind collaboration and cleavages between women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings, their principal preferences in terms of the organizational structure and financial resources and structural opportunities or obstacles (such as, highly fragmented nature of the social structure in Türkiye, available funding opportunities for women’s organizations, conducive legal framework that enables civil society organizations to work in line with their objectives etc.) one of the most relevant research technique is semi-structured in-depth interviews which gives the researcher the opportunity to analyse in detail different aspects of prevailing cleavages among women’s organizations. Since 1970s and 1980s feminist researchers started to prefer face-to-face, qualitative and interactive methods which put emphasis on the women’s personal experiences and emotional aspects of existence on the contrary of the marginalized ‘subjective knowledge’ (Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002). Thanks to
semi-structured interview, it gives the freedom and flexibility to the researcher to ask further questions related to the issue in order to more deeply elaborate the topic and to better understand the diverse point of views of the interviewees. Using qualitative techniques and in particular semi-structured in-depth interviews also provides the ground for challenging the taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the prevailing ideological and political cleavages between women’s organizations and how women define feminism. As Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002) argue, decisions about methodology are particularly powerful in the politics and practices of knowledge production. Beyond the conventional mode of production of knowledge, feminist debate about research is dynamic and ongoing, and challenge the silences in mainstream research by producing knowledge through the narrations of the participants. As many scholars argue, what is critical is to keep in mind that – as post-structuralists suggest – there is no one single privileged truth, however there a variety of contradictory and conflicting standpoints (Abbott and Wallace 1997; Flax, 1987; Millen, 1997). On the other, the uncertainty about the “subject” does not mean that politics in impossible since demonstrating how women are represented and constructed in and by language is itself a “political act” (Zalewski, 2000:130). In this respect, feminist research through semi-structured in-depth interviews not only allows the participants to deconstruct the truth but also allows the researcher to grasp the political aspect of the knowledge production process (Letherby, 2003). Moreover, as Rubin and Rubin emphasize while identifying their approach to in-depth interviews as responsive interviewing, it is quite crucial to treat interviewees as “partners” [of the knowledge production] instead of “objects of the research” (1995). Thus, I preferred to use semi-structured in-depth interviews to better understand the line of thinking of the interviewees and which allows a spontaneous exchange for a more comprehensive analysis beyond the initially designated purpose of the study.

4.2. Interview Questions and Interviews with Women from Different Women’s Organizations

4.2.1. Interview Questions

Within the scope of the interviews held with women from different women’s organizations, first I prepared three different interview questionnaires for 1) women’s
organizations, 2) women’s coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives and 3) digital platforms, due to their diverse organizational models and structures. Although these three questionnaires are not completely different from each other and consists of similar questions, preparing different questionnaires allowed me to ask particular questions to women’s coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives and digital platforms different from women’s organizations. I mainly followed the order of the questionnaire and asked the same questions to all participants in order to be able to compare and contrast different responses. On the other hand, where necessary, I asked additional questions to better understand the point of view of the interviewed women and by taking into consideration their diverse political/ideological standings and differences among interviewed women.

In this respect, I have divided interview questions into eight parts, entitled: 1) history of the women’s organization, 2) organizational structure, 3) financial resources, 4) women's organizations’ distance to “feminism”, 5) collaboration with other women's organizations, 6) cooperation with public institutions, 7) cooperation with political parties, 8) general overview of women’s movement in Türkiye.

My main intention of asking very detailed questions varying from the founding history of the women’s organizations to the participants’ overviews of women’s movement in Türkiye is to lead the interviewed women first to think about their own organizations, organizational structures, structural obstacles, political/ideological standings and the way in which they collaborate with other women’s organizations and then have their general overview about women's movement in Türkiye.

In the first part of the interviews, entitled, “history of the women’s organization”, I tried to have a general overview on the organizational history of women’s organizations from the point of view of the interviewed women. I asked questions about their positions in the organization, how many years they have been actively involved in a civil society organization, what is the main focus of their organization and what kind of activities have been undertaken in their organization, what are their planned activities in the near future and is there any issue that they prioritize, and do
they have any activity that you consider “successful” in terms of defending women's rights?

In the second part of the interviews, entitled, “organizational structure” of the women’s organizations, I asked questions about their organizational structure in order to understand to what extent women’s organizations have democratic structures, which are non-patriarchal, non-hierarchical and participatory, as they expected to be. In this respect, I asked several questions including how decisions are taken in their organization, which method do they use while taking decisions – (majority or consensus?), and whether they think that enough space is given to different ideas while taking decisions. In addition to that, in order to understand to what extent they can include women from different generations, I also asked the age distribution within their organizations and whether young women take an active part in their work.

In the third part of the interviews, entitled, “financial resources” of the women’s organizations, I asked questions about their main financial resources and to what extent available financial resources for women’s organizations are sufficient to let them conduct their activities. In this respect, I scrutinized which financial resource do they use most (European Union funds, international institutions, public funds, individual donations, corporate donations, in-kind supports, etc.), whether they think that they have access to sufficient financial resources to continue their activities and whether they encounter with any obstacle while accessing financial resources. In addition to the questions related to their own organizations, I also asked what kind of financial support would best fit into women’s organizations in order to carry out strong/adequate activities and advocacy activities.

Making a definition of “feminism” and making a distinction between “feminism” and “women’s rights” is one of the most challenging issues that women and women’s organizations encounter due to the fact that 1) “feminism” does not have a one single definition, however has diverse definitions made by different groups, 2) “feminism” is associated with “feminists” who are mainly considered urban, middle-class, white, Western women, which results in some women and women’s organizations
distancing themselves from “feminism”. Thus, in the fourth part of the interviews, entitled, “women's organizations’ distance to “feminism”, I asked, how they understand and describe “feminism” and together with the definition they make, would they describe their organization as a “feminist” organization. On the other hand, I also scrutinized how do they describe the conceptual difference between “women's rights” and “feminism” and whether they distinguish these concepts from each other.

In the fifth part of the interviews, entitled, “collaboration with other women's organizations”, I tried to understand the collaboration practices between women’s organizations and whether women’s organization have certain “red lines” in terms of their communication and collaboration with other women’s organizations. In this respect, I asked questions regarding whether they cooperate with other women's organizations, the form of their cooperation (such as, project partnership, solidarity, mentoring, guidance, experience sharing etc.) and whether they describe their cooperation with other women’s organizations as sustainable. I also tried to understand whether they have certain criteria while determining women’s organizations that they will cooperate with and are there groups they think that – intentionally or unintentionally - they left out.

In the sixth and seventh part of the interviews, entitled, “cooperation with public institutions” and “cooperation with political parties”, I tried to understand women’s organizations’ level of cooperation with public institutions and political parties and which public institutions (central or local) and political parties do they cooperate with. In addition to that, I asked two specific questions regarding the participation mechanisms of public institutions and the role of political parties in terms of women’s political participation. Thus, I asked whether they think that public institutions have sufficient infrastructure and necessary participation mechanisms to cooperate with women’s organizations and what is missing in political parties in terms of ensuring women’s political participation and nomination of women candidates in Türkiye.

In the eight part of the interviews, entitled, “general overview of women’s movement in Türkiye”, I tried to understand how the interviewed women from different
women’s organizations describe women’s movement in Türkiye - strong or weak? Thus, I asked the strengths and weaknesses of women's movement in Türkiye and are there situations where they think that women's movement has failed. In order to better understand interviewed women’s approach to women’s movement and the most fundamental problem of women’s movement from their point of view, I asked whether they are involved in any women's coalition/commission/network/platform/initiative, whether they deem women's coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives as strong organizations who advocate effectively. I also tried to understand to what extent cleavages among women with different ethnic and religious identities and from different socio-economic backgrounds are decisive in the success or failure of women’s movement in Türkiye. As being one of the most heated debates in women’s movement, I particularly scrutinized secular-Islamic dichotomy and asked a specific question on how interviewed women describe and interpret “Islamic feminism”. Finally, I asked their vision of future and tried to understand how they see the future of women’s movement in Türkiye.

In addition to the questions those were asked particularly to women’s organizations, I also asked some additional questions to women’s coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives, which mainly consists of different women’s organizations or women from different women’s organizations, related to their organizational structure and objectives. In this respect, within the interview questionnaire for women’s coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives, under the second part of the interviews, entitled, “organizational structure”, I specifically asked how often do they come together as a coalition/commission/network/platform/initiative, which women's organizations are represented in the coalition/commission/network/platform/initiative, whether participation into the coalition/commission/network/platform/initiative open to all women's organizations, how do they determine which women’s organizations will be included in the organization and are there any groups they think that they left out. Moreover, under the eight part of the interviews, entitled, “general overview of women’s movement in Türkiye” and as relevant to the questions regarding whether they deem women's
coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives as strong organizations who advocate effectively, since the interviewed women are from women’s coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives I tried to get their self-assessment as a women’s coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives, in addition to their overall evaluation of women’s movement.

When it comes to digital platforms, in addition to the questions those were asked particularly to women’s organizations, I also asked some additional questions under the second part of the interviews, entitled, “organizational structure”. Depending on the fact that some digital platforms also has been organizing periodical physical events/gatherings, I asked what kind of activities are undertaken within the digital platform in terms of both online activities and physical meetings and how do they decide on which issues they will prioritize concerning women or struggle for women's rights? In addition to that, in order to better understand the profile of their audience, I also specifically asked whether they keep statistics on who visit their website most and whether they think that their website can appeal to women from different groups, such as, young women, conservative women, women from different ethnic groups etc.

4.2.2. Research Participants

Within the scope of the research conducted with women’s organizations, beyond conventional organizations, digital platforms and non-legal entities (such as women's coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives) were also included into the research in order not to miss changing organizational behaviour of movements and women organizations. In this respect, I conducted 55 in-depth interviews with the representatives of 24 different women’s organizations, women’s platforms/coalitions and digital platforms with diverse political standings (including secular, liberal, feminist/reformist, socialist, Kemalist and Islamic women’s organizations) in Türkiye between 2020-2021. In addition to that, although I asked to conduct in-depth interviews with the representatives of KADEM, upon their request I shared the interview questionnaire with Women and Democracy Association (Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği (KADEM) and received their answers in written. Within the
scope of the interviews with women’s organizations, women’s platforms/coalitions and digital platforms, I tried to interview with at least three representatives of the same women’s organization³⁴ who have different positions/roles in the organizations and who represent different generations in order to understand 1) is there any difference in the view of women from the same women's organization, 2) is intergenerational difference between the “older” and “younger” generation of women a factor in the way women interpret their own organization, other women’s organizations and women's movement as well as gender equality and “feminism”. In this respect, I tried to interview - if possible - with a board member, an employee and a young woman, depending on the organizational structure of the women’s organization. In cases where there is no board or paid staff - such as women’s platforms and digital platforms - I requested to interview with at least three people, one of whom preferably be a young woman. Each and every time I conducted an interview with one of the representatives of women’s organizations, I asked them to help me to reach out other representatives of their organization and if possible, young women who are below the age of 30, volunteering or recently started to work as an employee in their organization. In this respect, I relied on the guidance of the interviewed women in terms of reaching out other members of their organizations and refrained from taking subjective decisions while deciding on whom to interview. All of the interviewed women were quite cooperative and enthusiastic in terms of contributing to the study. Some of the participants were also quite open in terms of directing me to other members of their organization who they think have a different perspective and approach than their own.

I conducted the interviews between 2020-2021 and this time period corresponded with the COVID-19 pandemic which made it difficult to conduct face to face interviews with women. Thus, I decided to conduct the interviews online, via using “Zoom” application and asked the participants to meet online. Where outdoor meeting was possible, I left it to the participants to decide whether to conduct the interview online or in person. In this respect, I conducted only two face to face interviews and the rest were conducted online.

³⁴ In this section of the dissertation, wherever I use the term “women’s organizations”, both women’s organizations, women’s platforms/coalitions and digital platforms should be understood.
Before each interview, I both explained orally and shared an information note, which explicitly reveals the main objective of the research, research question, content of the questionnaire, target group of the research, research participants and estimated duration of the interviews, with all the participants. I also informed the participants that their personal identity and their position in the organization (if there is) will not be mentioned in the dissertation and will not be shared with third parties.

The majority of the interviews lasted 2-3 hours, while some of them lasted around 1-1,5 hours. As I mentioned before, I mainly followed the same order of the questionnaire and asked the same questions to all participants in order to be able to compare and contrast the responses given by women from different women’s organizations. Thanks to semi-structured interview technique, which provides a certain flexibility to the researcher, in some of the interviews I let the participants talk about what they deem as important related to the topic and reflect their subjective experiences which is of great importance.

4.2.2.1. Profiles of the Interviewed Women

As mentioned before, within the scope of the interviews with women’s organizations, women’s platforms/coalitions and digital platforms, I tried to interview with at least three representatives of the same women’s organization\(^{35}\) who have different positions/roles in women’s organizations - if possible - with a board member, an employee and a young woman, depending on the organizational structure of the women’s organization. In this respect, I interviewed with in total 55 women, 10 of which are young women who are below the age of 30, volunteering or recently started to work as an employee in women’s organizations. The rest of the interviewed women consist of the board members or employees of the women’s organizations. In term of the demographic profile of the interviewees, the majority of the participants are middle/upper-middle class and educated (university graduate and master’s degree) women, some of whom are quite familiar with the academic discussions on women’s movement and feminism. Only one of the interviewed

\(^{35}\) In this section of the dissertation, wherever I use the term “women’s organizations”, both women’s organizations, women’s platforms/coalitions and digital platforms should be understood.
women is high school graduate and one of them is graduate of distance university education. The profile of the interviewed women illustrates the fact that there is a middle-class domination among organized women. Besides, it was not always easy to reach out young women (volunteers or employees) due to the fact that there is a relatively high average age in women's organizations. Only the women’s organizations who have established volunteer orientation programmes and units specific to young people can afford to work with young people and provided me the opportunity to interview with young women.

4.2.3. Profiles of the Women’s Organizations

Deriving from the main objective of this study, in which I aim to uncover the extent to which women’s organizations cooperate with other women’s organizations with different political/ideological standings and whether there are prevailing political/ideological cleavages among women’s organizations, I identified 25 different women’s organizations, women’s coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives and digital platforms with diverse political/ideological standings before conducting the interviews. While identifying the women’s organizations to be interviewed, I searched for the existing classifications of women’s organizations, varying from secular, liberal, feminist/reformist, socialist, Kemalist, Islamic as well as pro-government organizations and tried to ensure the diversity among the women’s organizations to be able to make an adequate comparison. In this respect, I classified interviewed women’s organizations, women’s coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives and digital platforms according to their political/ideological standings as below;

- Turkish Women’s Union (Türk Kadınınlar Birliği), as one of the Kemalist/secular women’s organizations representing the republican values and as being one of the leading actors/secretariat for the Executive Committee for NGO Forum on CEDAW, for the development of “shadow reports” on monitoring of CEDAW (Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women).

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36 Coşar & Onbaşi, 2008
• Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (Mor Çatı Kadın Sığınağı Vakfı), Women’s Human Rights- New Ways Association (Kadının İnsan Hakları Yeni Çözümler Derneği), The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity (Kadın Dayanışma Vakfı); Flying Broom Foundation (Uçan Süpürge Vakfı), Association for Supporting Woman Candidates (Kadın Adayları Destekleme Derneği (Ka-Der), Flying Broom Association (Uçan Süpürge Derneği), and Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (Cinsiyet Eşitliği İzleme Derneği (CEID), as representing feminist/reformist women organizations and as being the most widespread organizations those aim to promote collaboration, communication, solidarity among women and those focus on advocacy, research, and monitoring activities on women’s rights and gender equality as well as political participation of women.

• Capital City Women’s Platform (Başkent Kadın Platformu) and Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (Hazar Eğitim, Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği), as the prominent reformist Islamic women organizations which aims to promote solidarity among women and targets “to bring women from all sections of society” and “addressing the problem of discrimination against religious women in modern society”

• Association for Protecting and Supporting Family (Aileyi Koruma ve Destekleme Derneği (AKODER), as one of the traditional mixed Islamic organizations.

• Havle Women’s Association (Havle Kadın Derneği), as one of the “new generation” Islamic women’s organizations which was founded in 2018, seeking ways for reconciliation among feminism and Islam and defining themselves as “Islamic feminists”.

• KAMER Foundation (KAMER Vakfı), as being one of the most widespread Kurdish women’s organizations, who aim to raise the problems of Kurdish women both deriving from their gender identity and ethnic origin.

37 Aybars and Güneş-Ayata (2019)
• Rosa Kadın Derneği (Rosa Women’s Association); as one of the “new generation” **Kurdish women’s organizations** which was founded in 2018 and whose main objective is struggling with all kinds of social, political, social, cultural, economic, sexual and psychological violence against women and providing legal and psychological support to women who were exposed to violence.

• Women’s Coalition (Kadın Koalisyonu), We Will Stop Femicides Platform (Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu), Socialist Feminist Collective (Sosyalist Feminist Kolektif), and Women’s Platform for Equality (Eşitlik İçin Kadın Platformu (EŞİK), as some of the prominent **women’s platforms** who are consists of various women’s organizations and LGBTI+ organizations, have the main objective of “bringing women together” and assert representing “all women”.

• Women's Solidarity Foundation (Kadınlarla Dayanışma Vakfı (KADAV) and Home Based Working Women Association (Ev Eksenli Çalışan Kadınlar Derneği), as some of the prominent **social rights-centric women’s organizations** who primarily target raising the problems behind women’s economic and social participation and advocate for elimination of discrimination against women in labour market.

• 5 Harfliler, Reçel Blog and Digital Heels (Dijital Topuklar), as some of the **digital platforms/digital public spheres** that bring women from different political/ideological standings.

• Women and Democracy Association (Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği-KADEM) as one of the most prominent **state-led pro-government women’s organizations**.

In addition to the classification of women’s organizations according to their political/ideological standings, in the following section the profiles of the women’s organizations will be revealed within a historical context. It is important to note that, the information about women’s organizations is both based upon the publicly available information on their website and the information obtained from the interviewed women.
4.2.3.1. Brief History of the Interviewed Women’s Organizations

Turkish Women’s Union (*Türk Kadınlar Birliği*) is the first women’s association which was established after the foundation of the Turkish Republic and is one of the rooted and widespread women’s organizations who stands in a very critical position in the history of women’s movement in Türkiye in terms of bringing women’s rights and claims onto the political agenda. Turkish Women’s Union was founded by Nezihe Muhiddin, who is among the prominent feminists and who wants to establish first the women’s political party, namely Women's People Party officially in 1923, however her request was rejected by the government on the grounds that in those years women did not have the right to vote (Tekeli, 2010; Zihnioğlu, 2003). Following the rejection of *Kadınlar Halk Fırkası* (Women's People Party), the founding members of the Women's People Party decided to unite under an association and established Turkish Women’s Union in 1924 in order to continue to their activities (Baykan & Ötüş, 1999). Although the republican regime took necessary measures to ensure equality between women and men through Civil Law enacted in 1926, through regulating monogamy, right to divorce and regulations made in other laws based on equality between men and women, it remained reluctant in terms of women's political rights, such as right to vote and be elected, and remained reluctant in terms of letting women to unite under civil society organizations. In 1935, the Turkish Women’s Union, who played a central role to build up a bridge between the Ottoman women’s movement and republican women, was invited to shut down on the plea of women already had “full equal status with men” and there was no need for a women’s organization as such (Tekeli, 2010). After Turkish Women’s Union repealed itself in 1935, it was re-formed in 1949 by a group of women as a secular/Kemalist women’s organization and still continue to its activities with the main objective of advocating for equal social, economic and political participation of women and raising awareness on women’s political, social and economic rights. In this respect one of the most prominent goals of the union is to raise awareness of women in Türkiye on their rights and promoting women’s equal social and political participation. To this end, the union has been carrying out various activities through its 80 branches in Türkiye in order to raise the level of consciousness of women. The association has been carrying out their activities in
close cooperation and solidarity with national and international civil society organizations, public institutions and local administrations and establish numerous joint projects for the improvement of political and social status of women. Throughout its long history Turkish Women's Union has organised various campaigns in terms of the improvement of the legal framework for gender equality. One of the most important campaigns that was organised by the association is the "Full Equality Before the Laws" campaign, which started to be implemented in 1996 and succeeded in amending the Civil Code and the Penal Code. The association also has a very crucial role in the establishment and implementation of Law No. 4320, which has a significant importance in fighting with violence against women. Since 2005, the Turkish Women’s Union has been carrying out the secretariat for the Executive Committee for NGO Forum on CEDAW, which is made up of 14 civil society organizations (CSOs), whose main objective is to monitor the United Nations’ Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Aside from monitoring CEDAW for the past 14 years, the Executive Committee for NGO Forum on CEDAW has also been monitoring the Istanbul Convention since it was signed in 2011 and produce “Shadow Reports” together with the participating CSOs.

While majority of studies on women’s movement point out the 1980s as the emergence of women’s movement as a vibrant movement in Türkiye, Turkish Women’s Union is the proof that even long before 1980s there has been a profound activism led by women in terms of advocating for women’s rights and gender equality. On the other hand, 1980s, especially after 1980 military coup, witnessed the emergence of women’s movement as an autonomous movement released from the influence of different political ideologies and movements. Together with the increasing number of women’s organizations 1990s marked by the establishment of many heterogenous women organizations and increasing diversity among women’s movement with the effect of rising internationalization and EU accession process.

Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (Mor Çatı Kadın Sığınağı Vakfı); Women’s Human Rights- New Ways Association (Kadının İnsan Hakları Yeni Çözümler Derneği); The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity (Kadın Dayanışma
Vakfı); Flying Broom Foundation (Uçan Süpürge Vakfı); and Association for Supporting Woman Candidates (Kadın Adayları Destekleme Derneği (Ka-Der) are among the women’s organizations established in the 1990s and representing feminist/reformist women’s organizations who particularly focus on elimination of violence against women, promoting solidarity with women, organising awareness-raising meetings, conducting monitoring studies on the implementation of national and international conventions, laws, and regulations etc. These women’s organizations can be associated with the increasing institutionalization in the time frame that they were established and can be counted as some of the prominent women’ organizations who have an important place in terms of protecting and promoting women’s rights and gender equality among the highly fragmented and issue-based women’s organizations. The majority of the founding members of these women’s organizations are middle-class and educated women who have necessary skills and cultural capital to develop and implement projects funded by international and national donor organizations.

**Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (Purple Roof)** was established in 1990, in Istanbul, by feminists with the main objective of combat violence against women and has been managing a solidarity center and women’s shelter where women who exposed to violence can find shelter and get free support including social, psychological and legal support. The work in Purple Roof is grounded on feminist principles while male violence is understood as to be rooted in existing inequalities between men and women that must be overcome by fostering women’s solidarity and empowerment of women. Some of the interviewed women representing Purple Roof identified the activities of the foundation as “developing feminist policy” particularly against violence against women. Apart from implementing a solidarity center and women’s shelter, the foundation also has been conducting monitoring studies on the implementation of national and international conventions, laws, and regulations and is one of the most prominent actors who develops policy recommendations to decision-makers in order to eradicate violence and achieve gender equality. Besides, Purple Roof is organising workshops with women’s organizations, civil society organizations, bar associations and municipalities who are active in struggling with violence in order to share information and experiences in the field. One of the most
important activities undertaken by the Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation is the “Assembly of Women’s Shelters and Solidarity Centers” which has been held in a different province every year since 1998 with the main objective of creating a space for sharing experiences in combating violence against women, identifying common policies, and setting up a lasting communication network between civil society organizations and institutions.

Another prominent women’s organization whose main objective is struggling with violence against women is The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity which was founded in 1993 in Ankara. Similar to Purple Roof, The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity aims at struggling with all kinds of violence against and identifies itself as a feminist organization who has been working with feminist principles. The origin of the foundation goes back to the “Women Discussion Group” formed in 1987 by a group of activist women in Ankara. This group has a great importance in the history of the women's movement by regularly organising “awareness raising” meetings, sharing experiences among women, and mediating the awareness on the prevalence of violence against women. As an outcome of these regular awareness-raising meetings, in 1991, Women's Counseling Center was established in cooperation with a local municipality and has become one of the best practices in terms of providing free support to women who are exposed to violence. In 1993, when the foundation was officially established, Türkiye's first feminist Women's Shelter was established, again with the cooperation of a municipality. Women's Counseling Center still in function and provides free social, legal and psychological support to women who are exposed to violence. The foundation also carries out awareness raising activities on preventing violence against women both through media channels and by organising physical meetings with students at universities, schools, and in certain neighbourhoods. The foundation also take part in various national women’s platforms such as “Assembly of Women’s Shelters and Solidarity Centers” and CEDAW Civil Society Executive Committee and Istanbul Convention Monitoring Platform of Türkiye. In addition to that they are also one of the components of the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE Network), which brings together women's organizations who are fighting with violence against women in Europe.
Especially the period after 1980 witnessed awareness raising activities conducted mainly by the new generation of women’s organizations and particularly by middle-class, urban and educated women who were in constant contact with their Western feminist counterparts and the new wave of feminism in Western countries (Tekeli, 2010). Alongside of The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity, **Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association** and **Flying Broom Foundation** represents another example of women’s organizations who have been conducting *awareness raising* activities on women’s rights and gender equality and strengthening solidarity among women. **Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association** is an independent women’s civil society organization that advocates for women’s human rights, equality and non-discrimination in Türkiye and at international level. It was founded in 1993, in Istanbul, with the main objective of promoting women’s human rights in Türkiye and around the globe. Its name was inspired by the affirmation of women’s rights as human rights in the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna the same year. The main objective of the association is promoting active and widespread participation of women into social life, contributing to the development of legal reforms, increasing awareness on rights, advocating for the realization of women’s human rights in Türkiye as well as advancement of sexual and bodily rights in Muslim societies, and promoting women’s human rights at the United Nations (UN) level. To this end, the association adopts a holistic approach in terms of promoting women’s human rights and working on the various issues concerning women (such as violence against women, education, economic rights, legal rights, sexuality, reproductive rights, and the rights of the girl child). The association also combines various methods in their efforts including action-research, publishing, training, influencing decision-making and policy development mechanisms, forming pressure groups and lobbying. WWHR-New Ways is not only active at local and national level but is also member of many international women’s platforms such as The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR), The Women’s Major Group (WMG), Global Coalition for Human Rights Education (HRE2020), Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID), International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), Women’s Rights Caucus (WRC) and The Global South Women’s Forum on Sustainable Development (GSWFSD). On national level they are the member of The Women’s Labour and Employment Initiative (KEİG),
The Women’s Coalition, CEDAW Civil Society Executive Committee in Türkiye (CEDAW STYK), Istanbul Convention Monitoring Platform – Türkiye, European Women’s Lobby (EWL), Gender Equality Solidarity Network (AĞ-DA) and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Platform Türkiye (CİSÜ).

**Flying Broom Foundation**, which was founded in 1996 in Ankara, is another rooted women’s organization whose main objectives are raising awareness on violence against women, legal rights, inequality in representation and strengthening solidarity among women’s organizations by organising “regional meetings” in different provinces of Türkiye. Flying Broom Foundation represents one of the leading women’s organizations who played a crucial role in bringing the problem of child and forced marriages into Türkiye's agenda. Deriving from the gender inequality that exists in every field of social life, and particularly in the field of culture and arts, Flying Broom started to organize the first International Women's Films Festival in Türkiye in 1998 in order to make women labour visible in cinema. The Flying Broom International Women's Film Festival continues to exist as an international organization where panels, interviews and exhibitions are held, and women directors and actors are hosted. The Festival also has an important role in terms of strengthening communication and solidarity among women and women’s organizations as well as bringing the gender equality and women’s participation into the agenda. Besides, Flying Broom build up close relations with university students in order to share the achievements of the women's movement with students. Flying Broom has representative organizations in many universities today. Together with these representatives, it aims to organize cultural and artistic activities from this perspective of gender equality and ensure young women’s participation into the studies on gender equality.

**Association for Supporting Woman Candidates (Ka-Der)** has a peculiar position among women’s organizations in Türkiye in terms of advocating for equal representation of women in all areas and equal participation of women into decision-making mechanisms. The association was founded in 1997 by a group of women including Şirin Tekeli, who is one of the well-known feminists in Türkiye, with the main objective of combating with gender inequality, promoting women’s political
participation, increasing the number of female representatives in decision-making mechanisms. Ka-Der has been using both traditional methods within the scope of their advocacy activities, such as lobbying activities, however on the other hand, has been conducting training programmes and awareness raising activities similar to their counterparts through public campaigns and film screening. Second, the association has been organizing “School of Politics” in cooperation with universities in order to ensure that women are more involved in decision-making mechanisms and strengthen the capacities of women who want to participate in politics. Third, Ka-Der also works with local authorities to promote “gender sensitive budgeting” and ensure equal participation of women into the decision-making mechanisms. Some of the interviewed women from Ka-Der also emphasized that in the near future they are planning to focus on the re-enactment of Istanbul Convention and planning to conduct advocacy activities targeting political parties and international organizations.

1990s also witnessed the emergence of Islamic women’s organizations together with the reinterpretation of the official ideology through a Turkish–Islamic synthesis after the 1980 military coup and increasing politicization of Muslim women in that period (Coşar and Onbaşi, 2008). Starting from the 1980s many educated, middle/upper-middle class, urban, Islamic and professional Muslim women significantly involved into the policy development processes of right-wing/Islamist parties and started to establish their own independent organizations to work on the issues of improving the social status and ensuring social participation of pious women and reaching out to their female constituencies. As many scholars discuss, Islamic women’s organizations do not have homogeneous ideological standings, are diversified among themselves and can be described as “conservative”, “traditional”, “reformist” and “feminist” or “Islamic feminist” organizations (Acar, 1991; Akman, 2008; Sallan Gül, 2000). Capital City Women’s Platform (Başkent Kadın Platformu) is one of the prominent reformist women’s organizations, which was founded in 1995 by a group of Muslim women’s rights activists with the main objective of tackling with traditional barriers, ensuring social participation of pious women and reaching out relatively economically and culturally disadvantaged women living in the districts outside of the center of Ankara. Although the platform was first established as an association, as mentioned by the interviewed women from Capital City Women’s
Platform, in 2016 the platform had to give up its legal status due to financial shortages and the members of the platform decided to continue to their activities in the form of a platform. Among the main activities conducted by the Platform there were language courses and technical education such as computer courses as well as awareness raising activities on women's rights, health and sexual health. Besides, the platform took active part in the promotion of the Law No.6284 which regulates the protection of family and prevention of violence against women. The platform has never identified itself as a feminist organization, based on the fact that not all the members of the platform identify themselves as feminist. The Platform also organised regular gatherings and reading sessions on gender equality in order to keep up with the global women’s movement. Apart from these activities, the Platform organised social activities with the mother of the handicapped children living in the districts of Ankara to mitigate the care burden on women and strengthen solidarity with those who cannot receive professional care support services due to financial lack.

Another prominent reformist civil society organization who has an important role in terms of the promotion of women’s rights and gender equality in the Muslim community is Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (Hazar Eğitim, Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği). Hazar Education Culture and Solidarity Association was founded in 1993 by a group of women with the main objective of strengthening solidarity and knowledge sharing among women and Islamic intellectuals. The association has been conducting a variety of activities from charity activities, child education and children’s rights, migration studies to women’s rights and gender equality. The activities of the association not only composed of projects on particular topics but also academic readings and discussions particularly from within Islamic discourses. The association does not necessarily focus on women and women’s rights/gender equality but has been working in the form of different commissions specialized on specific issues, such as charity giving, child education and children’s rights, migration studies and gender equality. Among the prominent projects conducted by the association on women’s rights and gender equality there are project entitled “Combating With Domestic Violence” carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services and variety of activities
including symposiums and joint declarations on the state of women’s rights, gender equality and women’s participation into public institutions and decision making mechanisms. Although the association does not identify itself as a feminist organization, all the interviewed women from Hazar Education Culture and Solidarity Association identified themselves as feminist. As a member of the Istanbul Women and Women’s Organizations Network the association also positions itself against the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and aim to advocate for preventing of all forms of violence against women.

**Association for Protecting and Supporting Family (Aileyi Koruma ve Destekleme Derneği (AKODER),** which was founded in 2004 as an initiative group and became an association in 2006, is one of the examples of “traditional” mixed organizations whose main focus is not only women’s rights and gender equality, but also variety of issues such as, reviewing religious texts and examining the impact of media on family. The main objective of the association was identified as examining the positive and negative effects of the media on the family and create a civil initiative with the slogan of conscious audience. The association, which is accredited with many institutions has been organising seminars and publishing magazines and press releases in order to raise awareness of their target audience. The association also has been organising summer camps, youth meetings and introductory seminars on various issues such as contemporary politics, presidential system, Islam, family and youth. The association does not identify itself as a feminist organization. As expressed by the interviewed woman from AKODER, in the process of Türkiye’s withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in March 2021, due to the disagreements among the members of the association in terms of supporting the Istanbul Convention, a group that supports the Istanbul Convention leaved the association and established Aile ve Sosyal Araştırma Platformu (Family and Social Research Platform).

Different from the older generation of Islamic women’s organizations, **Havle Women’s Association (Havle Kadın Derneği)** represents the new generation of

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Islamic women’s organizations who explicitly identify themselves as an Islamic feminist organization. The association was established in 2018, in Istanbul, by a younger generation of educated, middle class, feminist Muslim women who have the capacity to follow up the discussions on feminism at international and national level and would like to produce knowledge and policy from within an Islamic feminist framework. The main objective of the association was identified as combating discriminatory interpretations of Islam which puts women in a secondary and subordinate position and to produce feminist interpretation of Islam in order to empower particularly Muslim women. The name of the association comes from Havle Binti Salebe, who has a place in Qur’an and who protested the injustice she was subjected to by her husband. Inspired by Havle Binti Salebe, the association conducts awareness raising activities through organizing meetings and workshops, fosters solidarity among women to fight against gender-based discrimination, tries to increase the involvement of Muslim women into feminist movement by challenging discriminatory expressions and approaches towards Muslim women due to their choice of covering/not covering their heads, and addressing the unique problems of women derived from their own Muslim communities.

Along with Islamic women’s organizations, 1990s marked by the establishment of Kurdish women’s organizations who were mobilized together with the rising Kurdish nationalist movement after the 1980 military coup against the repressive policies of the Turkish state. Beginning with the 1980s, Kurdish women started to get organized in more institutionalized structures and have been struggling in two fronts: 1) imperialist system that was imposed on Kurdish people by the centralist and authoritarian Turkish state, 2) patriarchal tribal system dominant in Kurdish culture (Diner and Tokas, 2010). Thus, the activities of Kurdish women’s organizations mainly focus on both identity politics and claiming their cultural rights and struggling for women’s rights and gender equality. KAMER Foundation (KAMER Vakfı), which was established in 1997, is one of the outstanding Kurdish women’s organizations who based in Diyarbakır and has been working very actively in 21 cities in the Eastern and South Eastern Anatolia Regions in order to fight with violence against women, identify local practices of the sexist system that harm women and children and develop methods to change it. One of the strongest sides of
KAMER is its wide outreach to women who exposed to violence through conducting awareness raising activities and “home visits”. Besides, the foundation examines case files of women who suffered from discrimination and violence and publish reports on rights violations of women. Another important study conducted by the foundation is the “Emergency Support Program” which aims to respond to the urgent needs of women and provide psychological and legal support to women who were exposed to violence. In addition to that, the foundation also has been conducting different studies, namely, “Women's Entrepreneurship” studies to support economic activities of women, “Early Childhood Education Studies” to create an alternative education method that is free from violence and gender discrimination, and “Support to Refugee Women and Children” which includes psychosocial support activities for victims of violence, monitoring studies on the socio-economic status of refugee women and awareness raising panels on child marriage. The foundation also has one of the most extensive network of volunteers composed of women and lawyers in order to reach out their target group and provide legal support. Although the interviewed women from KAMER Foundation identify themselves as feminist, they do not identify the foundation as a feminist organization in order not to face with prejudices while working in the province.

Alongside of KAMER Foundation, Rosa Women’s Association (Rosa Kadın Derneği) is a recently established Kurdish women’s organizations founded in 2018 in Diyarbakır, with the main objective of struggling with all kinds of social, political, social, cultural, economic, sexual and psychological violence against women. To this end, the association develops and implements projects to promote gender equality as well as providing legal and psychological support to women who were exposed to violence. One of the prominent activities conducted by the association is providing support to women who applied to the Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers affiliated to the Ministry of Family and Social Services or to municipalities in order to ensure they are properly treated and get benefit from the social services provided by the centers. The association was established by a group of women who were dismissed from their profession in local municipalities during the State of Emergency declared by the government in the process after 2015 coup attempt as well as sociologists and lawyers. As expressed by the interviewed women from Rosa
Women’s Association, the association was established with the objective of filling the gap created by the dismissal of public officials and appointment of trustees during the State of Emergency in the field of combating violence against women in Kurdish provinces. The association have been working in close cooperation with other women’s organizations, professional organizations and trade unions and as being a part of the “Diyarbakır Network for Combating Violence Against Women” collects data and creates a database consisting of applications of women who exposed to violence. The association also has been organising awareness raising campaigns against the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and the draft law on the sexual abuse of children which offers marriage as a way of penalty reduction. The association has been working in the form of commissions, namely, Education Commission, Diplomacy Commission, Project Commission, Commission on Violence Against Women and Commission on Legal Studies and Culture and Art Commission.

In addition to increasing heterogeneity and diversity among women’s organizations in the 1990s, 2000s marked by increasing coalition building and interaction between women’s organizations when various women’s platforms/coalitions were established with the participation of different women’s organizations with diverse political and ideological standings. Women’s Coalition (Kadın Koalisyonu) is one of the prominent and successful examples of feminist women’s coalitions, who was established in 2000 and still continue to their activities and stands in a critical position in terms of advocating for women’s rights and gender equality. One of the most important features of Women’s Coalition is its heterogeneous structure which brings together different women’s organizations and LGBTI+ organizations with diverse ideological dispositions. As expressed by the interviewed participants from Women’s Coalition, the coalition is composed of Kurdish, Kemalist, religious, feminist women’s organizations and LGBTI+ organizations from a wide variety of geographies, those who work on education, political representation, poverty and health, and representing different fields of study, such as academia and politics. The coalition has the main objective of joining forces, different working areas, different thoughts, different methods as well as a wide range of knowledge and experience to effect gender policies in Türkiye and increase participation into decision making.
mechanisms, particularly into the local politics. The coalition identifies participation into local politics as an exercise of creating new participation channels and monitoring the municipal services in terms of gender equality, accountability and accessibility. The coalition aims to produce knowledge and capacity development activities for local authorities so as to lead them to establish gender sensitive policies and services. Apart from capacity development activities, the coalition also conducts monitoring activities to track implementation of laws and regulations both at local and national level and analyse their compliance with the Constitution and international standards. The coalition also publishes joint statements against discriminatory, restrictive and sexist policies and/or implementations conducted by central and local authorities. Some of the important statements/reports published by the Coalition are the evaluation of the Women's Coalition on the "Draft Law Amending the Law on the Duties and Powers of Police and Some Laws and Decrees", the declaration against the “Internal Security Draft Law” which paves the way for the use of excessive authority and arbitrary investigation of the law enforcement forces, and the opinions of the Women's Coalition on the Draft Law on Aid Collection which ignores gender equality.

We Will Stop Femicides Platform (Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu) is another feminist women’s platform, which was established in 2010, in Istanbul, with the main objective of fighting against women killings and violence against women. The platform has been working on a large scale in Türkiye and has been working in the form of different commissions where women can voluntarily contribute. Among the commissions which take place in the Platform there are Lawyers Committee, Legal Committee, Application Reception Committee, Press and Communications Committee, Social Media and Web Site Committee, Graphic Design and Video Committee, Women's Labour Committee, Data Committee and Women's Movement Journal Committee. Together with these different committees the platform has been conducting advocacy, litigation and awareness raising activities in order to combat with femicide and affect public policies to prevent violence against women. One of the most significant achievements articulated by the interviewed participant from We Will Stop Femicide Platform is the establishment of Women’s Assemblies in different provinces, universities and high schools. The
platform represents an example of issue-based women’s platforms who particularly focus on violence against women and develop policies in this regard. Moreover, We Will Stop Femicide Platform stands in a distinct position from other women’s organizations and platforms in terms of expressing an explicit attachment with a political party, namely Emekçi Hareket Partisi (Labour Movement Party) due to the reason that the founders of the platform mainly consist of socialist feminist women who previously organized under Labour Movement Party.

Among the women’s platforms and coalitions, Socialist Feminist Collective (Sosyalist Feminist Kolektif), which was established in 2008 in Istanbul by a group of middle-class, educated and urban women, has a significant position in terms of its specific emphasis on the relation between capitalism and patriarchy, challenging patriarchal oppression and struggle with exploitation of women through developing feminist policy. One of the most distinguishing features of the collective was expressed by the interviewed participants from Socialist Feminist Collective as the fact that the members of the collective were extremely diversified which consists of women from different ideological and political backgrounds, different professions and different generations, such as socialist feminists and women from different cities of Türkiye and university students. Some of the prominent activities undertaken by the collective are “Feminist Mekan (Feminist Place)”, where women regularly come together to discuss socialist feminist policy development, feminist magazines and bulletins such as “Feminist Politika (Feminist Policy)”, “Mutfak Cadılar (Kitchen Withches)”, “Mor Nokta (Purple Dot)”, “Women Labour Conference Conclusion Report” and articles called “Düşmanı Sevmek (Loving the Enemy)”. Besides, the collective organized solidarity campaigns for women workers who are resisting against exploitation and for struggling with violence against women. The Socialist Feminist Collective ended up its activities in 2015, compiled and published all pervious publications and visuals on their web site (http://www.sosyalistfeministkolektif.org). The members of the collective continue their activities through women gatherings in “Feminist Mekan” and continue to produce and publish articles on the web site called “Çatlak Zemin” (https://catlakzemin.com).
**Women’s Platform for Equality (Eşitlik İçin Kadın Platformu (EŞİK))** is one of the biggest women’s platforms which consists of various women’s organizations and was established after the amnesty attempt for perpetrators of child sexual abuse by the government, which came to the fore in April 2020 and when the discussions on withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention has started in October 2020. Following the recent developments which jeopardise the struggle with violence against women and child sexual abuse, various women organizations and platforms has decided to unite under one common platform and conduct joint advocacy activities. In this respect, EŞİK carries out many local, national and international studies on various issues such as sexual abuse of children, the Istanbul Convention, and violence against women. One of the most important activities implemented by the Platform is the advocacy and monitoring activities targeting the Turkish Parliament in terms of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. As of October 2020, the platform started to monitor the actions taken in the Turkish Parliament and publish monthly monitoring reports regarding to what extent women’s problems were addressed in the Parliament. Besides, the Platform makes public calls to the Parliament to fulfil the requirements of Istanbul Convention and sends press releases to the Presidency. EŞİK continues its activities as being one of the broadest women’s platforms in Türkiye which aims to draw attention to protect gender equality.

1999 Marmara Earthquake represents another critical turning point for civil society in Türkiye in terms of the emergence of many heterogeneous civil society organizations working in different thematic areas. **Women's Solidarity Foundation (Kadınlarla Dayanışma Vakfı (KADAV))** is one of the social rights-centric women’s organizations civil society organizations established after 1999 Marmara Earthquake in order to mitigate the negative effects caused by the disaster and economic empowerment of women. In this respect, the foundation took an important role in building up solidarity networks in the region and providing psycho-social support to women along with childcare activities, rehabilitation workshops, production workshops, and vocational courses. The Women's Solidarity Foundation is one of the pioneer women’s organizations who highlighted the notion of gender equality in the provision of social services and work for the empowerment of women particularly during the emergency and disaster situations. The foundation officially
established in Istanbul in 2001 and continues its activities by participating into the joint political struggle of the independent women's movement and providing counselling support to women who exposed to violence. In addition to that, the foundation has been carrying out activities for the protection of immigrant women and LGBTI+ people against all kinds of violence and discrimination and aims to contribute to the economic empowerment of those groups. Since 2007, the foundation has been functioning as the secretariat of the Women's Labour and Employment Initiative (KEIG) Platform, which they pioneered for its establishment. The interviewed participant from KADAV highlighted that although the members of the foundation identify themselves as feminist, they cannot describe KADAV as a feminist organization due to the fact that the democratic structure has not been formed yet within the foundation.

Similar to Women's Solidarity Foundation, Home Based Working Women Association (Ev Eksenli Çalışan Kadınlar Derneği), which was established in 2011 in Diyarbakır, is another social rights-centric women’s organization who focus on the economic empowerment and social security rights of women. To this end, the association aims to strengthen the organizational capacity of home-based working women to advocate for their social security rights, raise awareness on gender equality and increase women's participation into social, economic, political, cultural life and decision-making mechanisms. The association targets to make visible the economic contribution of home-based working women to country’s economy and advocate for their social security rights by calculating the total time they spent in domestic labour and its economic value in return. In this respect, the association conducted various activities to advocate for the recognition of domestic work as a “labour” and calling the government to take part as a signatory in International Labour Organization Home Work Convention (No.177). Other important activities undertaken by the association are conducting interviews with women who produce at home and searching for markets where these products may turn into an income, bringing women together outside their home, organising vocational trainings and creating employment opportunities for women. Both the association and the interviewed women from Home Based Working Women Association do not identify themselves as feminist based on the fact that they disagree with other feminist groups on certain issues, such as right to abortion.
Flying Broom Association (Uçan Süpürge Derneği) is one of the feminist women’s organizations which was established in 2008 by a group of women who left Flying Broom Foundation and established an association in order to conduct their own activities. The association adopts a gender equality perspective while carrying out its activities and identifies its main focus area as improving girls’ access to education as well as advocating for their right to participate. The advocacy activities conducted by the association focus on areas such as preventing early/forced marriage, improving women's representation in the media, and directing girls to science and technology. One of the most prominent projects implemented by the association is Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) project which envisages empowerment of girls in the field of science, education and during their career planning. It conducts research and studies at national and international level, especially on right to education, early and forced marriages and rights-based media literacy, and publish the results of these studies in their communication channels and disseminates them to relevant institutions. Very recently the association also carries out activities with Syrian refugee women and girls.

Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (Cinsiyet Eşitliği İzleme Derneği (CEID)) is considered among the professional feminist/reformist women’s organizations who has a specific focus on developing indicators on how to monitor gender equality. The association was established in 2011 in Ankara, by a group of academics and activists, with the main objective of establishment of indicator sets for monitoring the state of gender equality in Türkiye, encourage the development of public policies for gender equality and enhance the capacities of women’s organizations so as to conduct monitoring activities. CEID also implements projects related to mainstreaming gender equality in various fields like child, early, and forced marriages. CEID has been organising particular capacity development training programmes on monitoring of gender equality and organising training of trainers in 10 different cities of Türkiye to increase the multiplier effect. Apart from the training programmes the association also offers an online education portal and brings together experts active in various fields, institutions, and civil society organizations in issues related to gender equality. Among the prominent projects those were implemented by the association there are “Mechanism in Combating Violence against Women:

Increasing heterogeneity among women’s organizations and technological developments paved the way for the establishment of diverse women’s organizations in different forms including the digital platforms in order to respond to the need of women to share their experiences, ideas, concerns talk about different issues such as art and pop culture. “We realized that everybody was complaining about women's interests remained in such a narrow scope of magazines produced by a group of women” says one of the interviewed women from 5 Harfliler digital platform. 5 Harfliler (5 Letters) is an online journal that was established in 2012, in Istanbul, focusing on gender, politics, art and pop culture and pursues a transnational feminist agenda. The name of the platform was originated on the conservative discourse where the word “women” was almost equated with vengeance. In the use of the words "girl" and "woman" in Turkish, there is an implicit attribution to “losing one's virginity” which refers to transition to womanhood. For this reason, words such as "lady" are used in everyday language, which can replace the word "woman" in general. 5 Letters, which includes a humorous criticism against censorship of the use of the word “woman” in everyday language, adopted the name 5 Harfliler (5 Letters), which reflects the five letters in the word “woman”. As articulated by the interviewed participants from 5 Harfliler, the online journal aims to give voice to women from different socio-economic backgrounds and create a platform where they can share their ideas, feelings, comments on a variety of issues including feminism, politics, sociology, sexuality, domestic division of labour, marriage, gender equality, gender discrimination and everyday experiences of women. 5 Harfliler does not only target to function as a digital platform where women can share their ideas and articles on a variety of issues related to gender equality but also aim to contribute to the feminist literature through discussing the notion of “digital feminism”, “internet” as a new public sphere of practicing feminism and conservative discourses against gender equality. The online journal was initially established by a group of women who have not met each other before, but their paths crossed on an online platform.
As expressed by the interviewed participants from 5 Harfliler, they mainly consist of middle class, university graduate, privileged, urban women, however this profile has changed and diversified over time.

**Reçel (Jam) Blog** is another digital platform established by a group of younger generation of Muslim women who previously organized under Initiative Against Violence Against Women. Similar to 5 Harfliler, the interviewed women from Reçel Blog also underlined the need to create an environment where women and especially Muslim women, who are not organized under any women’s organizations or platforms, share their ideas daily experiences, their perception of social issues, their interests, curiosities, troubles, hopes, concerns and struggles through articles. The digital platform does not necessarily target Muslim women however put a particular emphasis on the experiences of Muslim women in order to enable them to share their ideas, feelings, concerns and experiences regarding gender equality. In this respect the platform has an overall objective as building a bridge between Muslim and secular feminist women and making the everyday experiences of Muslim women visible. The name of the platform was inspired by the of women’s domestic production and refers to women labour which is traditionally identified within the domestic sphere. In Reçel Blog women share articles from a variety of topics including politics, sociology, sexuality, domestic division of labour, marriage, gender equality, gender discrimination, everyday experiences of Muslim women etc. Although the interviewed participants from Reçel Blog identify themselves as feminists, they do not identify the blog as a feminist platform based on the fact that not all women who are following and writing in Reçel Blog identify themselves as feminist and pose a more conservative standing against women’s rights and gender equality. Depending on this reason, following Reçel Blog the same group decided to establish Havle Women’s Association which adopts a dissident feminist standing and which excludes all conservative notions from within their activities.

**Digital Heels (Dijital Topuklar)** has a different place among digital platforms in terms of its founding purpose. The platform was established in 2018 by two women who have met in the community of “blogger mother and fathers” and decided the replicate “BlogHer” summit organized in America. Although the initial professional
attempts of the founders of the Dijital Topuklar are “Uykusuz Anneler Kulübü” (Sleepless Mothers Club) and “Blogcu Anne” (Blogger Mother), as emphasized by the interviewed participants from Dijital Topuklar, the platform does not necessarily serve for mothers to share their experiences, ideas and concerns, but also aim to serve as a platform where women from different socio-economic backgrounds can discuss a variety of issues including their concerns and problems as mother and issues related to feminism, gender equality, future of children, children’s rights, entrepreneurship, corporate life, leadership etc. In terms of the platform’s distance to feminism, the participants emphasized that in the initial stage of the platform they refrained from touching upon issues related to feminism and developed contents in a way that the sponsor private brands find “accurate”. However, in the course of time, when they got stronger and feminism started to be more discussed worldwide, they started to talk about the topics they actually want including women's rights, gender equality and feminism. The topics covered in the platform are not limited with the issues related to women, but men as well. The platform also aims to give floor to men to discuss the negative effects of the patriarchal system on men. Another feature that distinguishes Dijital Topuklar from other digital groups is that they also organize physical meetings on different topics once a year. In terms of the future plans of the platform, they would like to organize summits in different cities of Türkiye in order to meet with more women.

Alongside of the women’s organizations and women’s coalitions/platforms, 2000s also witnessed the emergence of pro-government organizations together with the increasing conservatism and authoritarianism during the rule of Justice and Development Party (AKP). Women and Democracy Association (Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği (KADEM), was founded in 2013 and is one of the state-led pro-government women’s organizations who adopts the concept “gender justice” in their advocacy for women's access to equal opportunities and fair responsibility and role sharing in family and social life. By using “gender justice” instead of “gender equality” they put emphasis on “difference in creation between women and men” and focus on elimination of existing injustices and balance rights and responsibilities between men and women. As expressed by KADEM, the association does not identify itself as a feminist organization. Although they acknowledge feminism as a
set of approaches that question the dominant patriarchal order, fight for the protection of women's rights and the elimination of the problems women face in the private and public spheres, they also underline that they are aware of the diversified definitions of the concept of "feminism" and do not adopt a “uniform women's ideology and women's policies that target only a certain audience”. The association have been developing and conducting projects, conferences and trainings on democratic reforms, to contribute to the development and consolidation of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, while observing the human rights of women. Besides, the association has been working on strengthening and improving the existing Law No. 6284 on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence Against Women which they describe as one of the most effective judicial measures in the fight against violence against women. KADEM is one of the widespread women’s organizations, who has more than 5000 registered member and operate 51 representative offices across Türkiye. In terms of the age distributions within the association, it was emphasized that the average age of the head office employees is 32, while the board, headquarters and representative office staff and young members and volunteers are between the ages of 20 and 40. They underlined that there are both young people who have just graduated from the university and are at the master's or doctorate level, and experienced members who have been working since the establishment of the association. As mentioned in the written interview done with KADEM, the association has a highly centralized decision-making mechanism where decisions are mainly taken in the board. The validity of the decisions taken by the Board of Directors is based upon the majority of votes. On the other hand, it was emphasized that consensus is sought in every strategic decision.

4.3. Critical Points and the Theoretical Framework for the Research Question

Making a distinction between “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s rights/women’s rights activism” is one of the most challenging issues in terms of identifying the research question and the subject of inquiry of the dissertation. While there are many arbitrary and controversial use of the concepts “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s rights/women’s rights activism” there is also a big debate regarding the essentialist and normative understanding of gender categories and non-
binary definition of sexes which makes it more difficult to identify the subject of “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s rights/women’s rights activism”. As I mentioned before I deliberately took “women’s movement” and “women’s organizations” (within the binary definition of sexes) as the subject of inquiry of this dissertation, in order to understand the way in which women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings cooperate with each other and to understand their diverse positions towards feminism and feminist movement. Moreover, as it was discussed earlier, there are significant criticisms towards the concept of “sisterhood” which was adopted during the second wave of feminism due its normative understanding of woman category that is based upon sameness, common oppression and shared identity. On the contrary, there are a quantity of studies who offers alternative and different accounts for solidarity and coalition building which are not necessarily based upon the narrative of sameness and common oppression but aims to provide a distinct understanding of togetherness which is based upon differences, mutual recognition, pluralism and communication. Last but not least, young people consist of one of the most significant subject of inquiries of this dissertation. Not limited with an age category, young people refer to a social category who share common experiences within a specific socio-historical contexts and affected by national and international developments. Besides, it is evident in the profound literature on youth, young people perceive socio-historical contexts in different ways that the adults and mainly adopt diverse strategies and tactics to struggle with subordination, patriarchy, conservatism and status quo than the conventional ones. In this respect, in the following sections I will first discuss the conceptual difference between “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s rights/women’s rights activism”, then will continue with the different accounts on solidarity and coalition building and finally will discuss the notion of intergenerational difference and youth as a social category which provides the theoretical and methodological framework for the research question.

4.3.1. The Conceptual Difference Between “Feminism/Feminist Movement” and “Women’s Movement/Women’s Rights Activism”

Depending on the fact that the word “feminism” first and foremost derives from the word for woman, *femme*, primarily refers women’s universal demand for social,
economic and political equality, and initially derives from women’s struggle for women’s rights, it has a conventional and inevitably predominant meaning of “equality between women and men” which is based upon a binary definition of the sexes. On the other hand, it has been proven that feminism is a concept which can never be confined within the limits of simple equality between women and men. A quantity of studies underlines the fact that, even though “feminism” is usually considered as a self-evident concept and something that can be taken for granted, there is a considerable confusion regarding the definition and the agents of feminism (Delmar, R., in Theorizing Feminism, edited by Herrmann and Stewart, 2001; Beasley, 1999). Although they are hardly distinguishable, diverse interpretations of “feminism” and the prevailing discussions on “who is the subject of feminism” paves the way for the emergence of “feminism” and “women’s rights” as two different concepts – either mutually inclusive and distinct from each other. This ambiguity in terms of the definition of “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s rights/women’s rights activism” also entails the arbitrary and discursive use of the concepts and makes it difficult to distinguish “the subject”, “the goals” and “the ends” of the subject matter.

In order to better understand the existing discussions in the literature on the conceptual difference between “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s movement”, in the following section “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s movement” will be elaborated in detail by trying to identify – and distinguish - the actors, the goals, main principles and form of organizations of each concept.

4.3.1.1. Women’s Movement

There is a consensus among scholars concerning the definition of women’s movement that women’s movements involve women as the primary core actors and the fact that ‘women’ are the major actors and leaders of women’s movement underscores an important difference between women’s movements and other movements. Women’s movements are led by and mobilize women and involves gendered identity claims as the basis for the movement, where women primarily unite under the identity of ‘woman’, or ‘mothers’, or ‘daughters’, apart from their
other possible overlapping or competing identities (Alvarez, 1990; Baldez, 1991; Beckwith, 2007; McBride and Mazur, 2008). It is also argued that what makes such movements women’s movement is ‘the common thread of which is the politicization of their lived experience as women’. McBride and Mazur, 2008) argues that women’s movement might vary in terms of the type of actors and the form of the discourse adopted by a certain group of women, at various times and between, for example, North America and Western Europe, postindustrial democracies and transitional regimes, predominantly Islamic nations and Hindu nations, revolutionary situations and internationally. On the other hand, they also argue that, collective actors and gendered discourse as well as expressing explicit identity with women as a group and as a form of gender consciousness are necessary and sufficient conditions to compose a women’s movement. Apart from this definition, Ferree and Tripp distinguish “women’s movement” according to their specific actors and constituency, rather than the specific targets or ends adopted by the activists. Women’s movement might both have the objective of ensuring gender equality, but not limited by this, might also have the objective of ensuring social justice within a particular society. In other words, what distinguishes “women’s movement” from “feminism” is not its diverse goals or objectives, but the specific group of actors organised as well as their constituencies – which is identified under “women’s movement” as women, mothers, sisters, daughters (Ferree and Tripp, 2006: 6). In addition to the definition made by many scholars which describe “women’s movement” as mobilizations concerning primarily the issues related with women, so to say “women’s rights/women’s rights activism” or gender equality, Ferree and Tripp also articulate another definition of “women’s movement” which they express as the movements which also includes “mobilization of women as women start out with a non-gender directed goal, such as peace, antiracism, or social justice, and only later develop an interest in changing gender relations”. So, different from what was proposed by many scholars under the

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39 It is important to note that, the definition of “expressing explicit identity with women as a group and as a form of gender consciousness” is problematic in terms of the exclusionary and normative understanding of the category of woman which is based upon the binary framework of women and men and which is problematized by the Queer Theory. In this definition of “expressing explicit identity with women as a group” implies an agreed and predefined definition of “woman” which disregards the discussions on the binary exclusionary and normative understanding of the category of woman.
conceptual framework of “gendered identity claims” to describe “women’s movement”, Ferree and Tripp introduces an additional definition of “women’s movement” who does not necessarily organize around the main objective of gendered identity claims, but also are mobilized with other purposes such as struggling for peace, antiracism, social justice etc. It is also important to note that, in all these definitions of “women’s movement” there is an implicit presumption that “women” as a social category is considered within the context of binary definition of sexes.

In order to make a more refined and concrete definition, “women’s movement” and “women’s rights activism” is classified and defined below in terms of the actors, goals, main principles, form of organization and the definition of “not a women’s movement”:

**Actors:** Women (within the context of binary definition of sexes, as women and men)

**Goals:** Presentation of gendered identity claims (McBride and Mazur, 2008: 227). According to another controversial definition, “women’s movement” does not necessarily organize around the main objective of gendered identity claims, but also are mobilized with other purposes such as struggling for peace, antiracism, social justice etc. (Ferree and Tripp, 2006: 6).

**Main Principles:** Representation of the self to others via a collective identity (which is here, “women”) and representation of common interests in public life based on gendered identities as women (McBride and Mazur, 2008: 227-228).

**Form of organization:** Assume a range of forms, including primarily cultural and embodied expressions of demands for change (or opposition to change), conventional pressure-group tactics of influence and access to state institutions, confrontational

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40 It is also important to note that, this definition of social movements does not require any specific structural form.
and disruptive protests, sometimes organized simultaneously in the context of specific campaigns (Beckwith, 2004: 314).

‘Not a women’s movement’: Not a women’s movement – means collective action by men (not women), or by women not organized explicitly as women presenting claims other than those based on gendered identities as women (McBride and Mazur, 2008: 227).

4.3.1.2. Feminist Movement

As introduced by many scholars, feminist movement refers diverse goals and ideas different from what is primarily presented under the category of women’s movement. There are three distinguishing features of feminist movement which differentiates it from women’s movement: 1) Feminist movement aim to challenge patriarchy, and contests political, social and other power arrangements of domination and subordination on the basis of gender, while women’s movement primarily focus on gendered identity claims of women. 2) Different from women’s movement, feminist movement has an anti-patriarchal nature. 3) Feminist movement aim to challenge ‘male power’ and conventional gender roles (including women’s reproductive and domestic labour roles) and articulate a democratic vision of a society in which gender is not the basis for a hierarchy of power (Beckwith, 2007:315). It is also noted by McBride and Mazur, (2008), many scholars have used the terms “women’s movement” and “feminist movement” interchangeably (Bull, Diamond, and Marsh, 2000; Mansbridge, 1996; Mazur, 2002; Kaplan, 1992; Lovenduski, 1986; Katzenstein and Mueller, 1987; Gelb, 2003; Chapell, 2002; Banaszak, 2006) depending on the fact that the concept of feminism is highly contested among thinkers and actors of the movement alike which makes the comparative research on feminist movement and women’s movement more difficult.

One of the prominent discussions on the conceptual difference between “feminist movement” and “women’s movement” is about which one of those concepts provides a broader perspective to fully cover all women (even women and women’s organizations who do not identify themselves as “feminist”) and amplify women’s struggle for equality. Karen Beckwith (2007) in her study on “Mapping Strategic
Engagements: Women’s Movement and The State”, takes attention to the difficulty of making a distinction between feminist movement and women’s movement, however, defines feminist movements as the subset of the larger group of women’s movements by explaining that not all women’s movements are feminist, and not all women’s political activism requires the definition of ‘feminist’. The difficulty of making a distinction between feminist movement and women’s movement is again derived from the complicated definition of feminism as well as multiple definitions of feminism. Similarly, Ferree and Tripp (2006) distinguish “feminism” from “women’s movement”, not according to its specific constituency, but according to its goals. Different from other scholars, Ferree and Tripp (2006) identifies a clear distinction between gender identity of the actors of both “women’s movement” and “feminism/feminist movement” by claiming that the main actors (and also the constituency) of “women’s movement” are “women” – which implicitly refers to the binary definition of sexes, while feminism, as a goal, applies to the agenda of not only “women’s movement”, but also to mixed-gender organizations such as socialist, pacifist and democratization movements. They argue that, according to some feminists, feminism means simultaneously combating other forms of political and social subordination, since for many women, embracing the goal of equality with the men of their class, race, or nation would mean accepting a still-oppressed status. Thus, feminism is identified as recognizing ways in which male-dominated institutions have promoted values fundamentally destructive [not only for women] for all people, such as militarism, environmental exploitation, or competitive global capitalism, and associating the alternative values and social relations with women and women-led groups as well as mixed-gender organizations. With this regard, restricting the definition of feminism with the mobilizations that exclusively focus on challenging women’s subordination to men would overlook feminism’s relation with combating patriarchy, other forms of oppression and other types of organizations who are struggling with different types of male-dominated institutions (Ferree and Tripp, 2006: 8-9).

In order to make a more refined and concrete definition, “feminism/feminist movement” is classified and defined below in terms of the actors, goals, main principles, form of organization and the definition of “not a feminist movement”: 132
**Actors:** Feminist (not necessarily unite under a common identity, such as ‘woman’)

**Goals:** Challenging patriarchy, and contests political, social and other power arrangements of domination and subordination on the basis of gender (Beckwith, 2004). Ferree and Tripp also argues that ‘feminism as a goal can be adopted by individuals of any gender, as well as by groups with any degree of institutionalization, from informal, face-to-face, temporary associations to a legally constituted national or transnational governing body’ (2006: 7). The main goals of feminism are also described as challenging and changing women’s subordination to men (McBride and Mazur, 2008: 238; Ferree and Tripp, 2006: 6)

**Main Principles:** Non-hierarchy, collectivity, participation, diversity and inclusion.

**Form of organization:** Similar forms and tactics those adopted by women’s movement as well as a discourse which both includes the elements of women’s movement discourse and three main components which can be listed as struggle for changing the position of women in society and politics, challenge and change women’s subordination to men through gender equity and challenge and change the structures of gender-based hierarchies.

‘Not a feminist movement’: Even though it is not possible to make common definition of “feminism”, “not a feminist” can be described in relation with ‘internalizing inequality’ and ‘domination’ or ‘hegemony over someone’.

What is common in all different conceptualizations of “women’s movement” and “feminism/feminist movement” is that, feminism (and thereby feminist movement) is considered as a specific goal which refers challenging patriarchy, challenging ‘male power’ and struggle with all political, social and other power arrangements of domination and subordination on the basis of gender\(^4^1\), while women’s movement

\(^4^1\) In addition to that definition, the main goals of feminism are also described as challenging and changing women’s subordination to men by McBride and Mazur (2008: 238) and Ferree and Tripp (2006: 6)
refers to all movements led by women regardless of their goals or objectives and where they include both gendered identity claims of women or other objectives, such as being against, war, racism or social injustice. In all these classifications, feminism/feminist movement is considered as a subcategory of “women’s movement”, as being a goal, as a specific objective, that might be – or might not be – adopted by women’s movements or by other mixed-gender organizations. What is distinctively underlined by Beckwith (2007) is that, it is important to distinguish feminist (which is based upon a mixed-gender organizations) and women’s organizations (which is identified within the limits of binary definition of sexes) in order not to overlook women’s distinctive position towards political, economic and social institutions and their universal exclusion from and subordination in all these institutions. On the other hand, it is also important to scrutinize and identify where and when women do not call themselves “feminist” and put a distinction between their struggle and the ones conducted by “feminists”.

The distinction between “feminist movement” and “women’s rights/women’s rights activism” is important to realize that sometimes it is hardly possible the distinguish the concepts “feminism” and “women’s rights” from each other. On the other hand, although the concepts “feminist movement” and “women’s rights/women’s rights activism” many times are mutually inclusive, it is also necessary to take “woman” as a distinct category in order to make visible the distinct position of “woman” within the framework of the binary definition of sexes.

4.3.2. Different Accounts on Solidarity and Coalition Building

One of the most significant questions that has been asked by theorists who seek for diverse modes of solidarity and coalition building among women – or feminists - is how to go beyond the limits of “sisterhood” that was invented during the second wave of feminism and widely criticized since the beginning of the third wave of feminism due to the assumption based upon sameness, common oppression and identity shared by all women. What is common in all thinkers who aim to offer a different mode of solidarity and coalition building among women – or feminists is their emphasis on the necessity of non-hierarchical, non-repressive and egalitarian
account of solidarity and coalition building. One of the prominent thinkers who introduce a diverse understanding of “politics” and solidarity is Hannah Arendt who reject all unitary identity categories and offer an open-ended, non-repressive, non-identitarian view of politics derived from dialectical understanding of collectivities that is predicated on a mediated conception of group identity (Allen, 1999:99). Although Arendt does not give place to woman question and women’s movement – or feminist movement - in her theoretical framework, feminist literature widely benefitted from the theoretical background drawn by Arendt in terms of overcoming the limitations that movement face and create a new understanding of togetherness and coalition building. As Allen (1999) argues Arendt’s political theory provides an important insight into the power that binds feminist movement together without mistaken by (repressive) identity and (fragmented) non-identity and to go beyond this dichotomy. I believe that Arendt’s theoretical framework on “action” and “public sphere” provides us an important ground to describe what women’s movement – or feminist movement – have the potential to be beyond the essentialist and exclusionary notions of group identity.

Arendt (1958), who made a profound and unique philosophical contribution to the understanding of not only to “politics” but to “the political”, explicitly correlates “action” with the essence of politics - which she conceptualised as vita activa – and puts forward a methodological connection between philosophical thinking and politics as the virtuous way of life. Her understanding of “the political” is to a certain extent a Utopia of political action, which is away from being a mere political participation and which constitutes the essence of human nature. According to Arendt “the political” is something unpredictable and claiming to create a human history is something completely misleading. Arendt argues that the Greek understanding of politics has been lost, while it is substituted by the word “social” and the concept “social” is directly correlated with the rise of modern society, where “action” is replaced with “behaviour”. Her profound contribution exists where she makes a distinction between “the political” and “social” and where she correlates the rise of “social” with the disappearance of the “political sphere”.

She believes that the utmost reason of life (bios) is participating into the political realm through “action”. She introduces the concept immortality while explaining the
main essence of action and argues that human beings become immortal as long as they come across with other people in the public realm and share and recreate their “doxa” during their interaction with others. She thinks that philosophical thinking is not something peculiar to the philosophers and every human being have the capacity of philosophical thinking and the potential of a “hero” through participating into an action, which is heroic. She believes that each individual is unique and this plurality makes “public sphere” necessary for the interaction of different human beings. On the other hand, every action derive from distinct human beings are unpredictable and contingent; and this is what “politics” consists of according to Arendt. “Speech” is necessary in this sense, for the articulation of different ideas; and human beings can only distinguish the “invisible hand” behind their thoughts and their own/unique ideas only during their interaction with others. This line of thinking is quite crucial in terms of providing a philosophical background for women’s movement – or feminist movement be more inclusive and ensure plurality within the movement through its emphasis on the importance on the interaction of different human beings and non-repressive, non-identititarian view of politics grounded on dialectical understanding of collectivities. In this respect, her account goes beyond the idea of shared identity behind the collective political action and offers a ‘shared commitment of distinct individuals’ for a common goal (Allen, 1999).

Similar to Arendt, other scholars also put emphasis on differences among women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, beliefs, identities, ideologies and views and aim to offer an ideological background for an effective solidarity and coalition building among women – or the agents of the movement. Mohanty (2003:224-225) takes attention to the “common differences” instead of “common oppression” which is sensitive towards power differences within and among the various communities of women and which might provide the ground for a deeper solidarity among women. By taking attention to the importance of non-colonizing feminist solidarity across borders and a feminist solidarity that could overcome a universalized framework of “white feminism”, Mohanty argues that differences and particularities could make it possible for better connections and commonalities. On the other hand, Dean introduces her account of solidarity through the concept “reflective solidarity”, which she conceptualizes as the precondition of mutual recognition necessary for a pluralist
and communicative understanding of "we" that enables to overcome the competing dualisms of us / them, male / female, white / black, straight / gay, public / private, general / particular (Dean, 1997). According to her, many theorists have begun to seek for a specific understanding of solidarity that is based upon an egalitarian difference and universal ideals of accountability for exclusion (Dean, 1996). Moreover, Reagon offers “coalition building” as an effective way of solidarity among feminists in order to go out of their “safe spaces” and confront with the differences among feminists (1983). She argues that it is necessary to “join forces across difference” and establish tactical solidarities among women for the ends that women’s movement would like to achieve.

Although many theorists take attention to the idea of non-hierarchical organization, and disagreements and arguments among women that can be the source of solidarity, it is important to ask the question of “how”? How it can be possible to overcome the structural barriers and inequalities which restricts solidarity among women? For instance, Arendt’s account of interaction between differences do not offer a solution for the gender inequality in a society and different social statuses of individuals which restricts their equal participation into the public sphere and limits articulation of different ideas. Similarly other theorists accounts for solidarity and coalition building, which offers a solution responsible towards differences, still miss an important component of their theory. It is mainly the structural conditions that hinders women to overcome the inequalities and hierarchies among themselves and build up an effective solidarity and movement that is based upon their valuable differences. The lasting question in here still is, how to bring this already agreed importance of difference together and make it concrete to achieve an effective and strong women’s movement – or feminist movement. Thus, in this dissertation I not only aimed at to analyse how women’s organizations overcome the political and ideological differences among themselves, but also aimed at to understand the structural barriers (that includes ideological, economic and social status-based barriers) that prevent them to build up an effective solidarity, coalition and movement.
4.3.3. Intergenerational Difference – “Youth” as a Social Category

The youth category, which is widely defined as a transition period from childhood to adulthood, refers to specific social category that cannot simply be reduced to an age category and refers to a social category and social institution which is defined by a more complex definition of a generational unit who share common experiences shaped by common national and transnational developments (Mannheim, 1928/1952). The ambiguous identification of “youth” as a social category is based upon young peoples’ diverse positioning as citizens in society and state who are politically and economically dependent and have not yet engaged in labour market. It is a relatively new and politically and economically dependent concept which is directly correlated with the emergence of modernity and modern industrial society whereas the precondition of being a citizen is identified with rights and duties and differs according to state policies and legislations. Diverse identification of youth category by different national and international institutions proves that youth category needs to be identified according to the context where they would apply. There are diverse definitions of youth made by United Nations and the statistical office of the European Union (EUROSTAT). United Nations defines youth as the persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. On the other hand, EUROSTAT defines youth as the persons between the ages of 15 and 29. These diverse definitions are basically associated with the fact that young people stay longer in education and often remain economically dependent. Thus, youth category mainly correlates with students who have not fully participate in economy in an adult-centred society (Gaullier, 1998 in Lüküslü, 2023).

According to Mannheim (1928/1952) introducing social generation as a theoretical tool is of great importance due to the fact that youth experiencing a particular historical context constitute a specific generational unit and social category which have certain common tendencies, approaches and abilities. Many studies on young women take attention that young women engage with feminism and socio-economic differences within their own generation in different ways and have a unique potential to represent a complex and changing wider feminist movement (Bashi et al., 2018).
There are two important facts that designates the way in which young women engage with feminism. First, many studies conducted with the participation of young women and regarding their perception of feminism shows that, feminism is detached from its “Western” and “bourgeois” definition which refers to a certain group of middle/upper-middle class, urban, educated women and is considered as something “intuitional” instead of being normative and theoretical, while feminism is defined as part of their daily life and an autonomous evolution. Second, as being described as an “in-between liminal category” – not a child and not an adult yet – young people have always been considered in a process of “becoming” mainly of whatever is deemed appropriate by adults. It is a common practice that young people are discriminated by the older and earlier generations on the grounds of age and frequently face with the problem of having little space to work and produce in their own ways and tools (Bashi et al., 2018; Lüküslü, 2023). Moreover, as it is evident in the studies conducted with young people, the category of youth which is defined as a transitory stage and “in-betweenness” provides opportunities for change and innovation and young women are particularly developing innovative and creative strategies and tactics to challenge the status quo, fight against rising conservatism, violence, and restricted mobility and freedom of speech.

Experiencing a different socio-historical context, young women establish their own understanding and definition of feminism and adopt a more intersectional approach which tries to reconcile differences between the agents of their generation from different race, class, caste, disability, and other aspects of identity. They develop new tactics to fight against status quo, conservatism and patriarchy and in this respect, they deserve a specific attention on their diverse perception and diverse way of organization.
CHAPTER 5

THE PROFILES OF WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONS

One of the most significant questions regarding women’s movement – or feminist movement whose main objective is to ensure women’s rights and gender equality, and overcome patriarchal social and political structures that hinder gender equality, is to what extent women’s organizations aim to – or can achieve – to establish non-hierarchical, participatory, inclusive and “feminist” organizational models which is line with their main objectives. As feminist critique towards the organizational theories argue, organizational theories mainly assert hierarchical organizational models replicated from modern institutions those are patriarchal by nature. In this respect, feminist literature widely discusses the possibility of non-hierarchical, participatory, inclusive and “feminist” organizational models those are sensitive towards diversities, promoting equal rights, empowerment, cooperation and collaboration. Second, it is not only about the will of women’s organizations to establish non-hierarchical, participatory, inclusive and “feminist” organizational models but it is about the legal framework that should provide a conducive environment for civil society organization in order to let them act in line with their objectives and principles. In a legal environment that imposes heavy bureaucratic obligations and hierarchical organizational structures to civil society organizations it might not be possible for women’s organizations to establish feminist organizational models in line with their priorities and principles. Moreover, taking into consideration the fact that structural obstacles such as availability of sufficient financial resources for women’s organizations might also be restrictive for women’s organizations to achieve their objectives. In this respect, in the following sections of this chapter I will scrutinize to what extent women’s organizations adopt and establish non-hierarchical, participatory, inclusive and “feminist” organizational models and do they face with structural (both financial and ideological) obstacles to reach out sufficient financial resources to continue to their activities. In addition to
that, women’s organizations’ cooperation with public institutions and political parties will also be analysed in order to better understand their position towards public institutions and political parties, to what extent public institutions and political parties establish participatory mechanisms or strategies for the inclusion of civil society organizations and to what extent women’s organizations can be able to cooperate with these organizations without engaging in any political affiliation.

5.1. Diverse Organizational Structures of Women’s Organizations and the Question of Establishment of a “Feminist” Organizational Model

As discussed under research methodology chapter, this dissertation intentionally targeted “organized” women, thus the interviews were conducted with women’s organizations who have diverse organizational structures, including legal entities (associations and foundations), non-legal entities (coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives) and digital platforms in order to scrutinize different approaches, methodologies and management structures adopted by women’s organizations. To this end, apart from the main objectives, scope of work, target group, activities of women’s organizations and their distance to feminism, I also asked specific questions regarding their organizational structure and how the decisions are taken within their organization, which method do they use often (majority or consensus) and do they think that they can give enough space to different ideas while taking decisions. In addition to that, I also asked a particular question regarding the age distribution within their organization in order to understand to what extent their organizational structure allows the participation of young women.

With regards to the questions related to the organizational structure of women’s organizations, four important ties to the organizational models of women’s organizations came to the fore. First, many interviewed women’s organizations (both the legal entities and non-legal entities) expressed that they have been trying to establish a “feminist organizational structure” within their own organizations by adopting certain principles to ensure horizontal hierarchy, participatory democracy and respect to diversity. Second, although the 1990s brought with increasing number
of women’s organizations and diversity among women’s movement, it also brought with high level of institutionalization regulated by laws and secondary legislations which inevitably standardize and restricts the organizational models and management structures of CSOs. Third, informal organizational structures, such as women’s coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives and digital platforms provide a more flexible and non-hierarchical sphere for women to work in line with their main objectives and to bring together women from different generations. Fourth, the average age in the vast majority of women’s organizations is demonstrated as high. Due to this reason, it was observed that some of the women’s organizations established volunteer orientation programmes and units specific to young people in order to ensure participation of more women including young women to their activities.

Establishment of a feminist, non-hierarchical, participatory, youth friendly organizational model is among the prominent concerns of the many interviewed women’s organizations. Many existing studies on feminist organizations reveal that feminist organizations are mainly based upon a critique of mainstream patriarchal structures of organizations which are “taken for granted” as hierarchical and neglect diversity, participation and gender equality (Hearn and Parkin, 1983). This critique mainly derives from the “gender ignorant”42 organizational theories which assert a hierarchical organizational structure and “top level managers” where gendered stereotypes prevail and men possess the managerial power. Hence, “feminist organizational model” not only refers to ensuring gender equality but ensuring diversity, participatory democracy and intersectionality within an organizational structure. In other words, as Diner and Tokaş (2010:55) argue “feminist ideal” refers to “working together” for ensuring emancipation as well as resisting hierarchical relationships and competitive structures of power. In this respect, the unique character of feminist organizations is mainly grounded on certain values and principles - which makes an organization “feminist” - such as promoting equal rights

42 Here, I deliberately refrain from using the term “gender blind” and use instead “gender ignorant” in order to avoid reconciling a physical condition of a person or a creature with a lack of understanding. By the term “gender ignorant” I do not refer to a physical condition but refer to a lack of perspective which has nothing to do with physical abilities.
and empowerment, commitment to consensus, cooperation, collaboration, and coalition building, respect for diversity and differences (Mizrahi, 2007). Related to this, one of the interviewed women from Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (1) stated that, although they have to fulfill certain legal obligations due to the legal ground framing foundations in Türkiye, they have been trying to avoid any organizational structure that might create “hierarchy” and “power” within their organization. She underlined that, there is no *de facto* board in Purple Roof, however, there are alternate members of the board on paper, including the president of the foundation, signatories etc.

**Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (1):** “Let me tell you about its structure very briefly... Purple Roof does not have a board of directors. However, since it is a foundation, we have alternated board members and a chair, those authorized to sign, etc. on paper. This is something we do alternately, on purpose. We pay special attention to not having a kind of structure that will create a hierarchy, which will eventually cause a field of power.”

Similar to the interview held with one of the participants from Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation, another interviewed woman from Women's Solidarity Foundation (KADAV) (2) emphasized the same problem of “being obliged to fulfill certain legal obligations”, such as the obligation of establishing a “governing board”, and their effort to establish a “feminist” and non-hierarchical organizational structure on the contrary. One of the methodologies adopted by women’s organizations in terms of developing a feminist and non-hierarchical organizational structure is the distribution of “power” among sub groups within the organization (Irefin et al., 2012:21) in order to avoid a “board centered” authority. As articulated in the interview with the participant from Women's Solidarity Foundation, they have been implementing “working groups” on variety of issues, such as “violence against women” and “networking”, within their organization and each and every working group has the autonomy to take decisions on the issue that they would like to work and the methodology that they would like to adopt. In addition to that, all issues related to the foundation also being discussed in a “coordination council” which includes both the board of the foundation and the working groups.

43 In Chapter 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 all interviews with different members of the same women’s organization will be expressed with numbers according to the order of meetings held within interviewees.
Women's Solidarity Foundation (2): “...We actually have a hierarchy that is not hierarchical.... We are a feminist organization and we oppose to hierarchy, we have a horizontal organization that is not hierarchical but, on the other side, we are officially a foundation that has a board of directors. We have it compulsorily.... We are obliged to elect a board of directors but we elect it regardless of who we elect, in each general assembly.”

In "KADAV", there is a structure that we call the “Collective”. It includes everybody from volunteers to employees.... Indeed, we deliberate everything within the Collective and meetings are open to everybody's participation. There are different working groups... [for example] the “working group on violence” or...the “working group on networking” .... [who] have their own decision-making mechanisms... [Each group] has a facilitator [and] we have a coordination board in which those facilitators and the board of directors are included."

Among the women’s organizations who are organized in the form of associations or foundations and aim to develop a “feminist” organizational model, Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (CEID) stands in a distinct position due to being a women's organization specialized on a particular subject and composed of academics and activists from different women’s organizations. As expressed by one of the interviewed participants (1), CEID was founded with the initiative of a group of women from academia and different women’s organizations in order to develop indicators for monitoring gender equality and conduct mapping studies in accordance with the international conventions that Türkiye is a signatory. There are two important facts that distinguish CEID from other women’s organizations. First, development of indicators in terms of monitoring gender equality requires a particular expertise and academic competency, thus the organization consists mainly of academics and women specialized on gender equality and monitoring activities. Second, the scope of the work targeted by the association that includes carrying out a comprehensive mapping study all over Türkiye, requires a financial resource and the technical capacity to manage that fund. In this respect, another interviewed woman from Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2) underlined that CEID is a women’s organization whose scope of work and boundaries was strictly defined and it is not possible to see such clear lines in most women's organizations. Although CEID identifies itself as a professional feminist/reformist women’s organization, the interviewed participant expressed that she does not identify CEID as a “feminist” organization due to its institutionalized and professional organizational structure and
due to the fact that she describes “feminism” as “the rejection of all those hierarchical relationships”.

**Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (1):** “We started to seek assistance from the EU and the UN in around 2011-2012... At that time, the Ministry for EU Affairs was also taking gender equality seriously and we decided to do this in Türkiye by creating something with them through EU funds.... They pledged their support and we brought together leading women from various women's organizations, women who are engaged in this field, women who have invested their hearts in this work, and we ultimately established an association.... In ten areas in Türkiye, we developed reports on how to monitor and map gender inequalities. We mapped all international conventions, norms, rules and resolutions that Türkiye is a party to..., we developed indicators, and we collected data from local, foreign, civil and public reports. We developed indicators in ten areas, conducted trainings on them, worked in seven pilot provinces, and established local platforms...."

**Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2):** "CEİD is an organization established intentionally, that is, as an organization that identified its borders in an extremely precise way, with the purpose of monitoring the gender equality. It is not possible to see such precise lines in most of the women's organizations. CEİD is not a feminist organization...in my definition."

Second, the organizational model that women’ organizations would like to adopt is not independent from legal framework for CSOs. CSOs are obliged to fulfil the founding, management and reporting obligations that legal entities are entitled to and to a certain extent have to comply with the organizational structure that is offered by laws44. Within the scope of the interviews, some of the interviewed women highlighted the limitations of highly structured legal framework for CSOs those who have legal entities. As expressed by one of the participants from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1), the procedural obligations that should be fulfilled by the civil society organizations, such as the obligation of forming a general assembly during the establishment of an association and having a board who has to be in charge of the management of the organization, impose a hierarchical organizational structure to CSOs and predefines and restricts the organizational structure that they would like to adopt in line with their main objectives. The interviewed participant took attention to the fact that their “will” to establish a “feminist” organizational structure - which refers to non-hierarchical, participatory,

44 In Türkiye the legal framework for associations and foundations are regulated by the “Law on Associations” that was adopted in 2004 and “Law of Foundations” that was adopted in 2008.
transparent and accountable organization - is also bounded with the legislation on associations which obliges them to fit into the hierarchical and patriarchal dress tailored by the public authorities.

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1):** “...While discussing the structure, we need to take a look at the laws... the bureaucracy imposed by the state on civil society. This is what our organization experienced, at least... First of all, our organization... does not operate on the basis of volunteerism in effect, it operates in a professional, paid, "full-time" way.... [Second], we were feminists.... We must be independent. We must act in accordance with feminist criteria and values and run the organization accordingly.... Third, we are an organization. We are bounded by the association’s legislation.... We have to make notifications every year. We have to submit declarations. We must hold a general assembly every two years.... Therefore, it is not that easy to maintain our operations on these three steps... A lot of women’s organizations actually have a lot of problems with this. So, on the one hand, the association is bounded by the law of associations, on the other hand, [the association] wants to abide by feminist principles, values and rules. There must be as little hierarchy as possible, there must be horizontal organization, there must be no superior-subordinate relationship.... Challenging issues, indeed. We discussed these for a long time...”

Third, it is evident in the interviews with women’s coalitions and platforms that, it is easier to adopt a feminist, non-hierarchical, participatory organizational structure in informal organizational structures, such as women’s coalitions, platforms and initiatives, other than legal entities such as associations and foundations which are regulated by law and regulations. Given that the non-legal entities are not entitled to any legal framework and composed of various organizations with diverse political standing and working in different thematic areas, it provides women’s coalitions and platforms the opportunity to develop a more flexible and non-hierarchical sphere which preserves diversity. As expressed by one of the interviewed women from Women’s Coalition (1), the Coalition consists of different organizations from different backgrounds and political standings and in this respect ensure diversity and avoid hegemony of a particular ideology or group. The coalition also aims to build up a horizontal organizational model in which all the decisions are taken in a consensus and each component of the Coalition has the equal authority to initiate an activity. Thus, one of the most significant dimensions of feminist organizational models is distribution of power among sub groups and members within an organization. Similarly, another interviewed woman from Socialist Feminist Collective (1) expressed that the Collective could achieve to bring together women
from different generations as well as women from different political backgrounds which allows diversity and mutual learning within the organization.

**Women’s Coalition (1):** "…In the beginning of 2000, the Coalition brought together a lot of women from the Kurdish Women’s Movement, Kemalist women, religious women, feminists, [women working in the field of] education, poverty, health, political representation…women from academia, from politics, [which is a] real coalition… We have annual coalition meetings where we share with everyone what has been done and planned for the upcoming year…. In a way, these annual meetings are actually a kind of General Assembly and a place where general decisions are made."

**Socialist Feminist Collective (1):** "The Socialist Feminist Collective was interesting because women from different generations were together. I mean, some of them were women from the leftist movement in Türkiye, or from the 68-78 generation, who had been involved in various socialist organizations, who had been involved in Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi - ÖDP [Freedom and Solidarity Party], etc., but there were also very young women from, for example, Boğaziçi University, etc. The juxtaposition of those two was lovely. They really had a lot to learn from each other."

On the other hand, as expressed by another interviewed women from Socialist Feminist Collective (2), development of a feminist and non-hierarchical organization is not always easy due to the fact adopting an organizational structure which is based upon participatory democracy and consensus is quite time consuming and difficult where the issues discussed within the organization are not independent from the political agenda of Türkiye. In addition to that, as emphasized by the participant, keeping the motivation of all members at high level is also difficult where “division of labour” in the Collective is based upon voluntary participation and the structure of the Collective envisages an organizational model released from hierarchy and “top level managers”.

**Socialist Feminist Collective (2):** “…It (Socialist Feminist Collective) is ultimately a place that claims to establish a structure different from a leftist organization, a feminist organization. [They] are probably trying to establish a structure where there is no hierarchy, no chiefs, no people in senior positions and that adopts a horizontal organization model. On the one hand, Türkiye has difficulties…. Apart from that, feminists have a different organizational model…. It might be a little more difficult to motivate a group [where] no hierarchy is named [and] division of tasks is determined completely based on volunteerism."

Another prominent finding regarding the organizational structures of women’s organizations is that some of the interviewed women’s organizations have developed
their own volunteer orientation programmes, not particularly targeting young women, but also offer an important opportunity for young women to engage in the activities of women’s organizations. Among the women’s organizations who have developed their own volunteer orientation programmes there are Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation, The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity, Association for Supporting Woman Candidates and Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association. These organizations articulated that they have been conducting “volunteer workshops” to discuss certain issues with volunteers that are relevant to their organizations, such as feminism, gender equality, violence against women etc. In terms of the involvement of young women to women’s organizations, the interviewed participants from Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (1) and The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity (1) underlined that the majority of the volunteer applicants are young women, mainly university students. On the other hand, the participant from The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity emphasized that working with volunteers requires a specific effort in order to involve them into the activities of women’s organizations and in this respect, they have difficulty to engage volunteers into their ongoing activities. Although they have been conducting targeted and issue-based volunteer workshops to engage volunteers according to their profession, making sure their active participation into the work of the foundation still needs a specific effort. When I asked a particular question regarding the age distribution within their organization and whether young women actively participate into their activities, one of the interviewed women from Association for Supporting Woman Candidates (Ka-Der) (2) emphasized that their organization consists of predominantly female members over middle age and they have been trying to establish a specific unit for young women, namely “Genç Ka-Der” (Young Ka-Der), in order to increase the number of young women and balance age distribution within their organization.

**Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (1):** “Looking at those who want to volunteer lately, a vast majority of applicants are young women, university students. We even see occasionally that women below 18 also fill in forms…. There is a pool of people who want to volunteer for Purple Roof, they fill out the form on the website, there are thousands of women in that pool…who aim to volunteer in different ways…. to contribute to their professional career…. [or] to do feminist politics and do it here.”
The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity (1): “We actually conduct volunteer workshops. We did it in 2019.... It is a seven-session workshop with different topics, which we call a general volunteer workshop. And apart from that...for example, [we did] a volunteer workshop for lawyers only, since the number of volunteer lawyers was very limited.... We can conduct workshops, which are more target-oriented and concentrate on specific things, when needed... After workshops, young women...like university students or newly graduates...in general, make applications...[however]...not everybody participating in these workshops become volunteers. Just some of them may do so.”

Association for Supporting Woman Candidates (2): "What I consider as one of the main weaknesses of KA-DER is the fact that it is heavily composed of women above the middle age. We have young members, too, but the average age is high. We have actually initiated some works to overcome this and we are trying to form structures for both “Young KA-DER” and volunteers.”

Another example of women’s organizations who has developed a specific unit for young women, is Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association. The association has a group of young volunteers, who are working within the sub component of the association, called “Genç Hazar” (Young Hazar), developing and implementing their own projects and have the authority to take their own decisions. As emphasized by one of the interviewed participants from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association, a unit such as Genç Hazar, which consists of young women – mainly university students and university graduates -, allows a mutual learning between “older” and “younger” generation women and eliminate age and knowledge hierarchy among the members of the association45.

Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (1): "...We have a [group] called “Young Hazar” [composed of young women] and they do not ask for approval while doing their own sharing. They do not seek approval from anyone while doing their own work.... [In addition to this] Young Hazar has trained us to establish an equal relationship [with them] in our language and behaviour."

It is apparent in the interviews that, women’s organizations both have been trying to act within the limited scope drawn by the legal framework and trying to overcome the traditional form of “organization” which has its origin from hierarchical/patriarchal organizational models that take off modern institutions.

45 Participation of young women to women’s organizations and intergenerational difference between “older” and “younger” generation of women will be further elaborated in Chapter 9 Intergenerational Difference and Future of Women’s Movement.
While increasing in number and diversity especially after the 1990s, women’s organizations both specialized on certain issues such as struggling with violence against women and stand against the government as a strong agent, but also have been struggling with hierarchical structures within the organizations in order to make them more participatory, inclusive, sensitive towards diversities. The busy political agenda of Türkiye and constant attacks on women's rights, to a certain extent, obliges women’s organizations to respond quickly to attacks and to have a certain level of profession in this respect. However, “feminist ideals” which refer to working together despite all diverse ideological and political standings and resisting hierarchical relationships, inform women’s form of organizations to release themselves from all competitive structures of power. Deriving from this objective, women’s organizations also have been trying to overcome the problem of balancing age distribution within their organizations and create more space for young women to engage in women’s organizations and women’s movement.

5.2. Financial Resources of Women’s Organizations

The existence of a vibrant women’s movement is also related with the availability of relevant funding opportunities and capability of women’s organizations to mobilize human and financial resources. Many existing studies on women’s organizations and women’s movement in Türkiye take attention to two important facts regarding the financial and organizational sustainability of women’s organizations and women’s movement. First, there is limited public and private funding opportunities as well as insufficient flow of funds for women’s organizations which make their work even harder (Esim and Cindoğlu, 1999:179). Second, beginning with 1990s and together with the European Accession process the increase in the availability of international funding opportunities resulted both with 1) more funding opportunities for rights-based activities of CSOs and engaging “international gender agenda”, 2) increase in the project-based activism or “project feminism” which requires a high level of institutionalization (Arat, 2006; Esim and Cindoğlu, 1999:186; Kardam and Ertürk, 1999). Moreover, many studies also point out increasing institutionalization, fund dependency, project-based working and issue-based activism among women’s organizations which reveals another aspect of existing financial resources of
women’s organizations that will be discussed in the following chapters of the dissertation. Related to this, departing from women’s activism in 1980s and moving towards more institutionalized women’s organizations in 1990s has largely been discussed as an obstacle against ensuring a sustainable women’s movement and achieving a remarkable success on affecting policies. Moreover, many existing studies take attention to the importance of diversified funding opportunities for CSOs in order to protect the “independence” of CSOs and avoiding fund-dependency.

In the course of the interviews held with women’s organizations their primary financial resources, fund raising strategies, structural and ideological obstacles against accessing to funds and their approach towards structured, project-based funding opportunities was scrutinized. In this respect, several questions were asked to women’s organizations including, “what are their main funding sources? (EU projects, international institutions, public funds, individual donations, corporate donations, in-kind supports, etc.)”, “do they think that they have access to sufficient resources to continue their activities? If 'No' why?” and “do they encounter with any problems while accessing to financial resources?”. In addition to that, in order to understand how they evaluate the sufficiency and convenience of existing funding opportunities comparing to the objectives and organizational culture of women’s organizations, I also asked what kind of financial support they think that women's organizations need in order to carry out strong/adequate activities and advocacy activities. It is important to note that, this section of the study does not aim to argue the relevance and accuracy of the existing financial resources and fund raising strategies of women’s organizations, but aim to reveal the existing situation in terms of the availability of sufficient financial resources and the coherence of the existing financial opportunities with the main objectives and organizational structures of women’s organizations and platforms.

The outstanding outcomes of the interviews held with women’s organizations reveals five important facts regarding their fund-raising strategies. First, in terms of the financial resources, international institutions (mainly European Union, United Nation funds, embassies and international foundations) constitute an important part of the financial resources of the majority of the women’s organizations based in big cities.
Secondary financial resources of women’s organizations consist of income from their economic enterprises, donations and sponsorship they received from private companies. However, some of the interviewed women organizations take attention to the immature donation culture in Türkiye where individuals and institutions rarely make donation to rights based CSOs or women’s organizations who are working on women’s rights and gender equality. Second, besides the underdeveloped donation culture, restrictive legal framework for income generating activities of CSOs, lack of transparency and accountability of the public funding and prejudice against foreign funds consists of other obstacles against the fund-raising activities of women’s organizations. Third, other than the financial resources, voluntary and “pro-bono” support that women’s organizations can receive from their members are considered as vital for their financial and organizations sustainability. On the other hand, when it comes to local and small scale women’s organizations who are based in smaller cities or local areas, they neither can achieve to access to available national and international funds, nor have enough access to necessary cultural and social capital in order to sustain their activities. Fourth, different from more institutionalized women’s organizations, women’s platforms and coalitions who do not have a legal entity and composed of various women’s organizations deliberately refrain from raising funds from international and structured funds and sustain their activities through mobilizing their own sources in order not to be limited with the structured framework of the project-based funding organizations. In addition to that, interviews with women’s organizations reveals that some of the women’s organizations have identified certain principles, similar to the ones developed by women’s platforms and coalitions, in terms of receiving – or not receiving - support from funding institutions and private companies. Finally, in terms of the recommendations, some of the interviewed participants highlighted the importance of the provision of “core-funding” instead of “project-based” funding, some of the interviewed participants took attention to the availability of simplified, in-kind and ad-hoc supports for CSOs which might provide them a certain level of flexibility in terms of responding to the rapidly changing political agenda of Türkiye and some of the interviewed participants underlined the necessity to become self-sustaining organizations who can generate their resources instead of being a “project organization”.

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It is evident in the interviews that majority of the interviewed women’s organizations have the necessary capacity\textsuperscript{46} to apply to the international funds and implement foreign funded projects. Other than these, women’s organizations articulated that they also generate income from their economic enterprises, donations and sponsorship they received from private companies. The fact that international funds constitute the main financial resources of women's organizations can be explained in two ways. The first is the increasing institutionalization and issue-based activism among women's organizations since the 1990s, which was also promoted with the short-term and project-based funding structure of the international and national organizations. On the other hand, underdeveloped donation culture and the restrictive legal framework which limits the income generating activities of CSOs and impose similar taxation policies applied to private companies entail women’s organizations to be dependent to international funds\textsuperscript{47}. One of the interviewed women from Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (1) underlined that other than the funds raised from international donor organizations, their secondary financial resources comprised of the income they generated from their economic enterprise through selling the promotional materials those are belong to the foundation. Other important financial resources are individual and corporate donations. In terms of the donations they received, she emphasized that donations constitute a small percentage of their financial resources due to the fact that the donation culture in Türkiye is not yet developed and individuals and institutions basically prefer to make donation directly to the “end beneficiary” or provide “in-kind” support instead of making a financial contribution which might reveal the lack of trust to CSOs in general\textsuperscript{48}. Another

\textsuperscript{46} Here “capacity” refers to having necessary skills including ability to speak foreign languages, technical knowledge on developing a project and project cycle management, having necessary human and cultural capital to implement a foreign funded project.

\textsuperscript{47} “Individual Giving and Philanthropy in Türkiye Report – 2021” published by Third Sector Foundation of Türkiye (TUSEV) emphasizes that individuals in Türkiye mainly consider helping the poor as the responsibility of the state and the vast majority of individuals prefer to make their donations directly to those in need, instead of through an organization. (https://tusev.org.tr/usrfiles/images/BB2021EN31052022.pdf)

\textsuperscript{48} “Individual Giving and Philanthropy in Türkiye Report – 2021” published by Third Sector Foundation of Türkiye (TUSEV) emphasizes that trust in the organization and the transparency of the organization are the most common reasons of why individuals choose a particular organization to donate.
important fact regarding the low level of donation to Purple Roof was expressed as it is usually women who make donation to women’s organizations instead of men and given that the income level of women is lower than men in Türkiye, the level of donations stay limited. Similar to the latter hypothesis expressed by the interviewed participant from Purple Roof, another interviewed woman from Rosa Women’s Association (1) articulated that they do not rely on membership fees and donations as the prominent financial resource of their organization based on the fact their members and constituencies composed of women who are impoverished and either expelled or dismissed from their professions.

**Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (1):** "Donations are another source, of course, individual donations, donations from institutions... Contrary to what is thought, Purple Roof does not get an influx of individual donations (smiling feebly) .... [There is no] a strong culture of donation in Türkiye.... People generally tend to donate in kind and would like [to donate to those] who are in need, in general.... Additionally, women don't have much money in general. It is [usually] men who have money and they rarely donate to Purple Roof."

"Another independent source of ours is...our economic enterprise... We sometimes produce various products and put them on sale periodically... Sometimes, big companies may purchase huge amounts in the period of 8 March, new year’s period, and rarely around 25 November as gifts to their employees. This has really been an important resource for us in recent years."

**Rosa Women’s Association (1):** “...We actually don't have much expectation of receiving member dues or donations. Because we are already talking about a very poor society, especially the women who are impoverished, who work with us or who are members, have all been dismissed or thrown out of their jobs by this system, by the trustees. Considering this, we do not have an expectation as such.”

On the other hand, on the contrary of the emphasis given to the immature donation culture, one of the interviewed women from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (1) revealed the success of reformist Islamic women’s organizations to mobilize donations as being the main financial resource of their organization. In addition to that, it was also expressed that they generate financial resource through implementing EU funded projects on specific issues.

**Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (1):** “Hazar doesn't usually have such a big sponsor or anything like that. Indeed, it runs on women's donations…and tries to provide the necessary expenditures today through projects.... There is no limitation here.... No one knows who pays what.”
Apart from underdeveloped donation culture, lack of transparency and accountability of the public funding for CSOs is another very crucial issue in terms of the financial and organizational sustainability of women’s organizations. As mentioned by many recent researches\(^\text{49}\) regarding the conducive legal and financial environment for CSOs, the lack of strategically planned regular and permanent public funding mechanisms as well as the lack of transparency and accountability criteria in terms of planning, distributing, and monitoring public funding is one of the most fundamental obstacles for CSOs in terms of their equal access to public funding. Related to this, in the course of the interviews one of the participant women from Havle Women’s Association (2) underlined that there are limited public funding available for women’s organizations as well as reluctance of public institutions to provide funds to women’s organization who do not agree with the conservative policies adopted by the government particularly on the issues related to empowerment of women. Thus, she emphasized that the reason why international funds consist of the prominent financial resources is because of the absence of public resources for women’s organizations. On the other hand, another important dimension of the public funding is about the ideological disposition of the ruling party against the concept of “gender equality”. Another interviewed woman from Flying Broom Association (2) stated that, especially in recent years, they had to avoid using the term “gender equality” while working with the public institutions, since public institutions prefer using the terminology of “the equality of woman and man”\(^\text{50}\).

**Havle Women’s Association (2):** "...When it comes to women's empowerment, mobilization and solidarity, it might be a bit more difficult to get funding from the..."

\(^{49}\) The Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society 2019 Türkiye Report of Third Sector Foundation of Türkiye (TUSEV)

\(^{50}\) As many human rights organizations in Türkiye reports, especially beginning from 2020 there is an apparent attack of the government to LGBTI+ groups which has been revealed mainly as a smear campaign and the restriction of the public gatherings of LGBTI+ groups. In 2020, Amnesty International Türkiye office published a joint statement together with the signatory CSOs which expresses their concerns regarding the systematic attacks and bans that LGBTI+ movement has experienced since 2017 under the control of the Turkish authorities. Besides, the annual report published by ILGA-Europe (European organization of the International Union of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex (ILGA) in 2021, Türkiye ranks second to last among 54 countries where homophobic and transphobic discourse has dramatically increased. ([https://www.amnesty.org.tr/icerik/ortak-aciklama-turkiye-deki-lgbtirler-yonelik-nefret-soylemi-ve-planli-saldirilara-son-verilmeli](https://www.amnesty.org.tr/icerik/ortak-aciklama-turkiye-deki-lgbtirler-yonelik-nefret-soylemi-ve-planli-saldirilara-son-verilmeli))
public institutions. I especially imply the Turkish Republic here. It might be different in other countries. That's why continuous EU funds [are needed]….”

**Flying Broom Association (2):** "Unfortunately, we cannot get support from public institutions. But this has nothing to do with us. I can say it is the problem of the women's struggle in general, because even the term "gender" has become unspeakable, so, what public institution are we going to work with? This…is a huge problem…. I'm doing interviews [for a European Union program] …with women's organizations. They all say, they cannot pay their rent because the state doesn't allocate them a place, for example. There are a lot of bills, electricity, internet…. It is very difficult without the slightest support from the state.”

Another important obstacle against income generating activities of not only women’s organizations but also all civil society organizations in Türkiye is about the economic activities of CSOs which can be organised through the economic enterprises of associations and foundations. As The Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society 2019 Türkiye Report51 of Third Sector Foundation of Türkiye (TUSEV) underlines, economic enterprises of associations and foundations are subject to the same tax regime as for-profit businesses and there are no special advantages set in place for the economic activities of associations and foundations. Thus, all income generating CSO activities are subject to tax. On the other hand, some of the interviewed women’s organizations emphasized that after the change in the Turkish Civil Code in 2006, the establishment of liaison offices and “non-for-profit” companies in Türkiye has been restricted and many prominent women’s organizations obliged to change their legal entity to an association which also restricted their economic activities. Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association is one of the examples of women’s organizations who has been founded as a liaison office of a France based women’s organization, however then turned into an association due to the change in the articles of Turkish Civil Code related to associations which restricts the activities of liaison offices of transnational organizations in Türkiye.

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1):** “Our association was founded almost 27 years ago. That means, it is an organization established in 1993…. It had not been established in the status of “association”…. Our organization worked as a contact bureau of a France-based women's association…. At that time in Türkiye, the law allowed this…. Then, the Civil Code was amended with regards to

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associations in 2006. In a very undemocratic way, laws were passed that contact bureaus cannot operate in Türkiye. This was a turning point for many women's organizations. Because each of them had to be reconstructed. Our friends wanted to establish a foundation first. However, establishing a foundation required a very large amount of capital. Especially at that time. The foundation was abandoned and the association was established.”

Moreover, two different interviewed women from Socialist Feminist Collective and Capital City Women’s Platform took attention to the increasing prejudice against foreign funds and underlined the fact that when CSOs receive funds from international organizations they are marginalized, “labelled” and targeted by the government and public institutions which also prevents them from accessing to public funding. One of the interviewed women from Capital City Women’s Platform (1), which is mainly composed of Muslim women, expressed that they had a decision about not receiving funds from embassies or from multinational companies or foundations in order not to be labelled as ‘controlled by foreigners’, based on the fact that women working in the field of women's rights in their conservative community are always tried to be tainted, polluted and excluded even though we have never received funding from foreign organizations. Similarly, another interviewed woman from Socialist Feminist Collective (2) also stated that any CSO who receive fund from foreign funds are being targeted by the public institutions.

**Capital City Women’s Platform (1):** “We had a principal decision not to receive funding from embassies...[international] foundations, multinational companies and foundations.... There is a concern about foreigners. Initially, for instance, there was a reservation even for EU funds. There is a concern of being controlled by foreigners.... Unless we receive funds from those groups [international organizations], women working in the field of women's rights in their conservative community are always tried to be smeared, discredited or excluded in the conservative community. This was the case of the Capital City Women's Platform from the start.”

**Socialist Feminist Collective (2):** "...In Türkiye, you are immediately targeted when you receive funding from abroad.... A local organization that works [with international foundations] might be targeted by the government at any moment.”

Deriving from the interviews held with women’s organizations, not only the financial resources but cultural and social capital they own consist of a very crucial part of their resources in terms of achieving their objectives. Herein, “cultural and social capital” refer to symbolic means of capitals, beyond the narrow understanding of economic capital, social networks “which have a value” and non-financial symbolic
elements such as skills, credentials, posture, material belongings etc. (Bourdieu, 1990, 1991). Although the questions asked to women’s organizations particularly target to scrutinize their financial resources and fund-raising strategies, voluntary based work and “pro-bono” expertise were emphasized among the important resources of women’s organizations. The interviewed women from Purple Roof (1) underlined that, even though it is not considered as a financial resource, women who volunteer in Purple Roof consist of an important part of the cultural and social capital they own in terms of sustaining the provision of services in the foundation. In addition to that, another interviewed woman from Rosa Women’s Association (1) emphasized the financial resource they received as a consequence of the volunteer work they had been conducting before applying to funds. According to her, the remarkable work that has been done by women’s organizations in terms of protecting and promoting women’s rights and gender equality on a voluntary basis were very much appreciated and welcomed by the donor organizations.

Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (1): “First, I would like to say that the most prominent source of Purple Roof is its solidarity with its volunteers... Even though it seems like it is not a financial source, Purple Roof is able to offer much of its support...not paying anything thanks to the solidarity of volunteers....”

Rosa Women’s Association (1): “...One of our projects for which we made an application has been approved so far... We actually did not develop a project but submitted our own work. They [funding organizations] said, “okay, we'll fund this”.... They appreciated the fact that we were able to do this on our own with our voluntary work...without any funding...without any support.”

The interviews with Purple Roof and Rosa Women’s Association reveals that women’s organizations are quite successful in terms of mobilizing cultural and social capital which gives an important strength to them in order to sustain their activities. On the other hand, women’s organizations who are based in smaller cities or local areas, do not always have access to cultural and social capital as such, neither can be able to raise funds through applying to international funds, nor achieve to mobilize volunteers who own the necessary cultural capital to reach out their goals. Apart from the women’s organizations who are based in big cities and who have the necessary capacity as well as human and cultural capital, some of the small-scale women’s organizations, such as, Home Based Working Women Association, which
was established in 2011 in Diyarbakır with the main objective of strengthening the organizational capacity of home-based working women to advocate for their social security rights, reveals that it is mainly high capacitated, large scale women’s organizations who can afford to access international funds and implement big scale projects. One of the interviewed women from Home Based Working Women Association (1) pointed out that only the big scale organizations can afford to develop and manage large scale projects since they have the necessary cultural capital and technical knowledge on how to develop a project. However, based on the fact that they do not own such an expertise, they carried out their activities and tried to cover their administrative costs by mobilizing their own resources. Another interviewed woman from Rosa Women’s Association (1) emphasized the heavy bureaucratic procedures in the application process to international funds which creates another obstacle beyond owning necessary cultural capital and technical knowledge. As she mentioned, the application process to international funds requires the preparation and submission of many different documents that put an additional burden on women’s organizations.

**Home Based Working Women Association (1):** "As you know, especially big projects are managed by bigger institutions in Türkiye, or they know how to prepare projects professionally.... Our main source of funds is usually ourselves, the vast majority of them comes from within. There were many cases when I paid the rent, etc.... Sometimes, we were able cover the costs of the office rent from the projects... As to the electricity, water...we just handle it ourselves, we don't even keep a ledger...because they are not such big amounts. Whether it is food, tea or coffee... We pay them ourselves..."

**Rosa Women’s Association (1):** “They all have a lot of procedures.... For me, this is the most difficult part, because we have to prepare a lot of things, present, and document them. That's what they want from us anyway. This makes it a little difficult, and it requires a really strong team to do it. We also really have...two people interested in this issue right now.... Therefore, they have troubles. I would say that this is the only part that challenges us, other than that, we have not seen or experienced any difficulties yet."

Similar to the interviews held with Home Based Working Women Association and Rosa Women’s Association, two different participants from Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation and Flying Broom Association underlined the necessity of simplified procedures and certain level of flexibility in the allocation of funds particularly for local and small-scale women’s organizations in order to enable their
access to funds. According to them the highly structured framework of the available funds does not fit into the low level of capacities of local and small-scale women’s organizations which leaves them out of the available financial supports.

**Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (1):** “...There emerges inequality. One has to know how to request funds... how to apply to projects, how to maintain relations with funders.... [There are women] who barely encountered a computer in their life but produce incredible policies from where they are, go to the governor's office and change many women's lives.... The ways and methods of their involvement should be different, but they really have no resources. They cannot afford to employ a secretariat, to pay a minimum wage at that moment, to pay the rent of their association or to answer the question of how to develop their volunteer network and capacity. First of all, I think there is an inequality here.”

**Flying Broom Association (1):** "We cannot get into EU funds, big project funds, whatsoever.... That technical procedure really bothers me a lot…. If I cannot be able to do this, [women’s organizations] in the local areas cannot do it anyway. [In one of the] UN Women meetings, women’s organizations articulated the need to work with local women’s organizations. However, it is not clear how these local women's organizations can fulfil the capacity requirements [of UN agencies]. [On the other hand] [local women’s organizations] are often able to reach out to the victims at first-hand than those living in big cities, like us.”

Beyond the technical and bureaucratic difficulties in the process of application to international funds, another important outcome of the interviews with women’s platforms and coalitions is that they purposefully refuse to get funds from international organizations which provide structured, project-based, short-term supports to CSOs in order not to be limited with the specific subjects and timeframe that are predefined by the funding organizations and in order to be independent from any kind of bureaucratic and ideological interference. As expressed by the interviewed participants from Women’s Coalition (1) and Socialist Feminist Collective (1), what is important for women’s platforms is being independent from any ideology, being able to develop their own agenda and being able to act quickly when needed. As expressed by one of the interviewed women from Socialist Feminist Collective there was a principal decision taken by the members of the Collective with regards to not getting support from any existing national or international funds. Thus, all the necessary expenses of the Collective were being covered by collaborative work.

**Women’s Coalition (1):** "We are a platform, so we have never preferred to apply to a funding source and receive funding.... We didn't want to mess with the money….
The accommodation and transportation [costs] of some of our working group meetings were covered directly [from civil society organizations] [in-kind]... rather than receiving [the costs] directly... We paid attention to using our own resources. Such as holding a meeting in the meeting hall of an organization, if any, and cooking at home...

Socialist Feminist Collective (1): “...We had a principal decision and no fund is accepted anyway. Therefore, the main resource was the membership dues. Everyone paid dues as much as they could afford.... There were not many expenses anyway.... However, when there was a party organization on 8 March, we generated income from that party…. or when a card and invitations were sold for an event…. [We always functioned] with the help of acquaintances, by finding a free hall to meet, or a pro-bono translator... It is more of a way of getting everything as cheap and free as possible or asking favours.”

Moreover, one of the interviewed women from Purple Roof (1) explicitly highlighted that they have determined certain “principles” and preconditions regarding receiving support from funding institutions and private companies. With respect to this, the interviewed participant expressed that they have a joint decision in terms of not getting support United Nation agencies due to their “problematic” political standing, not receiving funds from [embassies of] certain countries that are very actively involved in wars and not receiving financial support from drug companies and arms companies. On the other hand, with regards to getting sponsorship from private companies, they do not allow private companies to use their name and logo as a principle, and prior to getting support from private companies they scrutinize whether they have policies to protect the rights of their workers and [if it is a cosmetic company] protect animal rights. Only exception that might be considered in terms of working with drug and arms companies was expressed as solidarity building with women workers of those companies if they demand to cooperate with Purple Roof.

Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (1): “By no means Purple Roof receive any funds from UN institutions. This is a principal decision of our organization which is in line with our political standing since the 2000s…. We still don't receive any funds from countries that are actively involved in wars...."

"Sometimes, there are companies who would like to carry out a social responsibility project and use the name of Purple Roof.... [Upon this] we developed a series of principles.... If a company or an artist wants to cooperate with us, we…deliberate this with the Collective, we investigate it, for example, whether they perform any experiments on animals, what kind of an approach they have with regards to their employees.... None of them is allowed to use the logo of Purple Roof. Allowing our
logo to be used is something that we rarely do... We never let our name be mentioned with pharmaceutical or arms companies. We don't cooperate with them. On the other hand, if women working with them want to be in solidarity with us, we consider this, but mostly we don't opt for it."

In addition to the financial resources, structural framework of available funds, structural and ideological obstacles against accessing to public funding and diverse fund-raising strategies of women’s organizations and women’s platforms, I also asked the question what kind of financial support women's organizations need in order to carry out strong/adequate activities and advocacy activities. The main objective of asking this question is to understand whether there are different approaches towards the most appropriate fund-raising strategies which comply with the main objectives of women’s organizations. In this respect, there are four important findings of the question. First, one of the interviewed participants from Socialist Feminist Collective (2) expressed that the fund-raising strategies might differ according to the targeted achievements of different women’s organizations. Hence, while some of the women’s organizations might prefer to receive fund from national and international institutions and establish a more structured organizational framework in order to produce “feminist policy”, some other women’s organizations or platforms, such as Socialist Feminist Collective, might prefer to stay away from structured funds in order to simply develop “political statements” regarding women’s rights and gender equality.

**Socialist Feminist Collective (2):** "For example... there is a difference between [a women's organization with legal entity] to do research, employ people and get funding for that purpose, and a structure like SFK [Socialist Feminist Collective] getting funds. In fact, ...they may be both feminist organizations…. However, one of them [Socialist Feminist Collective] cares about doing politics, producing political speech and campaigning, while the other one [a women's organization with legal entity] has another vision and task such as employing people [to conduct their activities]. That's why it seems to me that these are separate areas from each other…. It's not just money that will support a group of people who are organized to do politics, I think."

Second, some of the interviewed women’s organizations highlighted the importance of “core-funding” instead of “project-based” funding, which spells providing support to the core activities of women’s organizations and supporting their *raison d’etre*. One of the interviewed women from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways
Association (2) underlined the limitations of project-based funding opportunities where women’s organizations usually need to comply with the priorities identified by the funding organizations. According to her, what is fundamental for women’s organizations is their ability to act quickly against the repressive and conservative attacks of the government which might disrupt women’s rights and gender equality. Thus, providing support to the core activities women’s organizations and enabling a certain flexibility in terms of the allocation of funds in line with the main objectives of women’s organizations is of great importance.

Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2): “The anxiety of the questions, “Is there any money for the next year?” “Can we afford human resources?” “Can we afford the rent?”, alone makes people a little bit unable to work. That's why "core funding" is something that makes life easier.... In project-based [work] you need additional human resources to fundraise, apply to the funds, and ensure its continuity…. We are in such a period where there are direct attacks on women's rights, where fundamental rights are questioned, such as withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention.... We don't really know when we are going to encounter these. Right now, for example, our agenda is the Istanbul Convention, but in a month or two, there might be another attack to a completely different issue. In order to be able to think about whether we should campaign against these or whether we should conduct an advocacy activity, the only thing we need is human resources and we should not have concerns about the financial resources.”

Third, another important recommendation expressed by the women’s organizations is the increase in the number of European Union projects like European Union Sivil Düşün (Think Civil) Programme which provides in-kind and ad-hoc support to the rights-based activities of the civil society organizations. The simplified application procedure and the small amount of supports offered by the programme introduces an important opportunity for civil society organization who do not have enough capacity to apply to bigger funds and who would like to cover their ad-hoc and urgent needs derived from rapidly changing political agenda in Türkiye. The interview with one of the participants from Women's Solidarity Foundation (1) took attention to three important facts regarding the financial resources of women’s organizations. First one is the need for small amount of supports which should be offered together with a flexible and simplified approach without asking for certain level of professionalization and highly institutionalized structures. Second, supports to be provided by the local authorities might be important for CSOs for covering their rental costs and/or providing venue support to conduct their activities. Third,
economic enterprises of associations and foundations should be exempt from tax and some special advantages needs to be envisaged to promote the income generating activities of civil society organizations.

The Foundation for Women's Solidarity (1): “It should be flexible; this is very important…. Small-scale organizations experience serious problems at the [project] writing stage. As professional staff becomes necessary [for project writing], it causes an organization to get professional, to specialize and cut off its amateur connections with the field. That's why flexible practices matter a lot. For example, I find Sivil Düşün very positive in that respect. I think it is the most important/positive project of the EU. The issues of rent and venue [costs] are problem for everyone. For example, local governments can offer such a fund. I am against an independent organization receiving rent [costs] from the state. And the issue of being exempt from tax… All women's organizations work for public benefit, but it is very difficult for them to obtain the public benefit status…. We could not obtain it, for example, we pay a lot of taxes, just like a company. This kind of [tax exemption] support to civil society in general, not only to women's organizations, but to civil society should be included in public policies.”

Fourth, some of the interviewed women’s organizations underlined the fact that one of the most prominent need of women’s organizations is to become self-sustaining organizations that can generate their resources instead of being fund dependent or “project organization”.

Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (1): "The main goal, of course, is not to be a project organization…but to be a self-sustaining place which can produce its own resources…. We're not very close to that at the moment.”

Similar to the legal framework that draws a limited scope for women’s organizations, the structural framework of available financial resources also, to a certain extent, defines the “way of doing” and “what can be done” for women’s organizations. It is an important fact that, international funding opportunities, as being the prominent financial resource of women’s organizations, provide them the opportunity to grow further, act freely and be independent from the state ideology and public institutions. This is something that emancipates women’s organizations from the trap of “state feminism” that is regulated and funded by state institutions in line with their dominant ideology. On the other hand, the limited framework of international funds entail increase in institutionalization and professionalization, that is something some of the women’s organizations have been trying to avoid in order to protect the “activist” spirit of the movement and in order not to be stuck within the structured,
project-based and predefined agenda drawn by the funding organizations. Avoiding bureaucracy and ideological interference is also another concern of women’s organizations and women’s platforms that leads them to take some principal decisions regarding not getting support from any existing national/international funds or stay away from some of the international organizations and embassies that they deem “problematic” due to their political standing. International funds, as being the prominent financial resource of women’s organizations, not only entail increasing institutionalization and professionalization among women’s organizations, but also leave out local and small scale women’s organizations who are based in smaller cities or local areas and who cannot afford to access international funds due to not having the necessary capacity, such as speaking foreign languages and having technical knowledge to develop and implement a project. What is quite crucial in terms of the outcomes of the interviews is that, women’s organizations consider voluntary work they conduct in terms of sharing their expertise, knowledge and network as an important resource for women’s organizations in order to overcome the socio-economic inequalities that prevents some local and small scale women’s organizations to engage in women’s movement and activism. Sharing their cultural and social capital with other women and women’s organizations is something that women’s organizations take as a priority – at least as an objective – to overcome the unequal distribution of resources and to strengthen each other. Apparently, the underdeveloped donation culture and restrictive legal framework for income generating activities of CSOs, both oblige women's organizations to receive international funds and restrict their activities within a project framework. Lack of transparency and accountability of the public funding is another significant obstacle against women’s organization, especially for those who are dissident of government’s conservative policies and who reject to avoid using the term “gender equality” while working with the public institutions. Unfortunately, this is something that fosters polarization among pro-government women’s organizations and dissident women’s organizations regardless of their ideological and political standings. Women’s organizations emphasize the importance of “core-funding” instead of “project-based” funding, in other words, supporting the activities they already carry out instead of confining the supports in a framework of a project. Availability of simplified, in-kind and ad-hoc supports for CSOs are also considered crucial in terms
of protecting flexibility to be able to rapidly respond to the changing political agenda of Türkiye. As a concluding remark, majority of the women’s organizations have been looking for ways to become self-sustaining organizations who can afford to generate their resources and who can identify their own agenda, while struggling in various fronts and trying to act within the limited legal and financial framework.

5.3. Women’s Organizations’ Cooperation with Public Institutions

Along with the cooperation among different women’s organizations, cooperation between women’s organizations and public institutions was also scrutinized in terms of understanding different approaches adopted by women’s organizations, level of involvement of women’s organizations to the development and implementation process of laws and regulations and different practices of women’s organizations in terms of development of feminist policy. Various studies on the participatory governance systems in public institutions take attention to the positive outcomes of the citizen participation to decision making mechanisms which significantly improves the responsiveness and accountability of states and entails the development of inclusive and cohesive societies (Gaventa and Barrett, 2010; Speer, 2012). Besides, many international mechanisms, treaties and guidelines, such as Council of Europe, Guidelines for Civil Participation in Political Decision Making and UN General Assembly, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, emphasize participation of citizens into the decision-making mechanisms as one of the core principles of democracies in line with the international human rights standards. Some of the necessary requirements of participation of citizens into the decision-making mechanisms are mentioned in the UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 25 and Council of Europe, Guidelines for Civil Participation in Political Decision Making as ensuring freedom of expression, assembly, and association and ensuring the involvement of informal civil society groups as well.

Although within the scope of this dissertation women’s organizations contribution to women’s rights and gender equality is not limited with the development of feminist policy or contribution to the improvement of laws and regulation, cooperation between women’s organizations and public institutions is of great importance in
terms of the recognition of gender inequality and understanding to what extent ideological differences among women’s organizations is decisive in cooperation with public institutions. In this respect, I asked several questions to women’s organizations in order to understand their distance to and the forms of cooperation with public institutions, including, “do they cooperate with public institutions?”, “if yes, which public institutions do they cooperate with? central or local governments?”, “what is the scope and form of their cooperation with public institutions?”. In addition to that, I also asked whether they think that public institutions have sufficient infrastructure and necessary participation mechanisms to cooperate with civil society organizations (CSOs) in order to understand how women’s organizations evaluate participation mechanisms in public institutions.

The interviews held with different women’s organizations reveals five important points in terms of cooperation between women’s organizations and public institutions through which the interviews will be elaborated in the following part. First, although many reforms have been done by the AKP government in cooperation with women’s organizations especially in the 2000s with the impact of European Union accession process, this cooperation was considerably interrupted in the 2010s and completely dissolved after military coup attempt in 2015. Second, 2010s witnessed the emergence of pro-government organizations, deepening cleavages between especially secular and Islamic organizations and marginalization of many secular and Islamic women’s organizations who are not co-opted with the rising authoritarian rule and conservative gender agenda of the government. Third, together with the changing conservative gender agenda of the government the concept “gender equality” was explicitly excluded from all public policies and development plans related to women. Fourth, although cooperation with central public institutions were considerably disrupted, many women’s organizations continue to cooperate with local municipalities those who adopt a more reformist approach. Fifth, Kurdish women’s organizations and local municipalities in the Eastern and Southeastern regions of Türkiye stand in a quite distinct position in terms of cooperation between civil society organizations and public institutions, where trustees appointed to many local municipalities which dramatically disrupted dialogue between CSOs and local municipalities.
As expressed by many participants from different women’s organizations, although there has been a sound cooperation established between women’s organizations and public institutions until the 2010s, the conservative shift in the political standing of AKP in the 2010s resulted with the significant erosion of the dialogue with public institutions. Özkazanç (2020) analyses AKP rule in two different periods. According to her, in the first two governmental terms (2002-2011), AKP posed a “conservative-democrat” standing, instead of a right-wing populist standing, in the context of democratization enabled by the EU accession process without alienating most of the electorate – even the ones who do not support AKP - and accommodating their demands through reinterpreting them according to the requirements of neoliberal conservative policies. On the other hand, the second period of AKP, which corresponds with the period between 2010-2015, is considered as the signal of a drastic transition from a conservative-democrat standing to “nationalist-populist” and “electoral-authoritarian” standing within which gender agenda of the government was also transformed into a conservative one. In the second period, AKP government not only adopted a conservative standing against the notion of gender equality but also established pro-government organizations or co-opted the existing civil society organizations in order to develop and implement their own conservative policies (Arat, 2021; Koyuncu and Özman, 2019).

In line with and similar to the periodization of AKP rule discussed above, within the scope of the interviews held with different women’s organizations, majority of the interviewed women, regardless of their political standing, emphasized that beginning from 2002 until the 2010s many reforms were done by the AKP government in cooperation with women’s organizations together with the European Union accession process of Türkiye which gained momentum especially in the 2000s. Some of those positive developments were expressed as the “Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence” known as the “Istanbul Convention” which was enacted in 2011 and Law No.6284, namely, “Law on Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence Against Women” which was enacted in 2012. It was underlined by one of the interviewed women from Capital City Women’s Platform (3) that many CSOs and women’s organizations actively took part in the development process of the Law No.6284 in times when
there was a sound dialogue between public institutions and CSOs, and laws and regulations were consulted to CSOs before entering into force.

**Capital City Women’s Platform (3):** “...We saw this very clearly between 2002 and 2010. There were really good cooperations [between CSOs and public institutions].... In fact, everything was going well with the Istanbul Convention and Law No. 6284. Law No. 6284 is a law written with the full participation of civil society organizations and women's organizations. Then somewhere something has broken and everything turned upside down.... I mean, there were lots of committees and boards [before], and [public institutions] were listening to civil society organizations. But now... They [public institutions] are calling their own civil society organizations. In other words, they now [cooperate with] [state driven] civil society organizations those are close to them… and affiliated with [public institutions]. They don't want to cooperate with independent organizations.”

It was emphasized by one of the interviewed women from Flying Broom Association (1) that, their cooperation with public institutions is of great importance in terms of both implementing an effective policy for the education of girls and improvement of women’s status through development of sound policies on gender equality. In this respect, although previously they have worked in close cooperation with public institutions, such as Ministry of National Education and Ministry of Family and Social Services, this situation has completely changed in the 2010s when public institutions left many secular, liberal, feminist/reformist, socialist and Kemalist women’s organizations out of the cooperation mechanisms, however, continue to cooperate with women's organizations who were “accredited” by the ministries. She also emphasized that Directorate General on the Status of Women (Kadının Statüsü Genel Müdürlüğü – KSGM) is one of the most crucial units under Ministry of Family and Social Services in terms of addressing issues related to women’s rights and gender equality and in terms of monitoring of international treaties, such as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), however the importance of KSGM has been considerably disrupted due to the fact that many women’s organizations were excluded from making contribution to the development and monitoring processes of the mechanisms, treaties and laws and regulations. Another important point that was highlighted by the interviewed participant is that “gender equality” concept was removed from the policies and strategy documents prepared by the ministries, which explicitly reveals the conservative shift of the government towards excluding the notion of gender equality from public policies.
Flying Broom Association (1): “In recent years, we have been most associated with the Ministry of National Education, among the public institutions. This was a ministry that we wanted to be a facilitator for STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering and Math] projects. Because we were working in schools, in high schools, with girls, doing experiments, trainings, seminars, etc. .... Public institutions are key institutions for us.... The Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services [as of 2021, the Ministry of Family and Social Services] and of course KSGM [Directorate General on the Status of Women], although its name and nature have changed a lot. We can no longer work with these institutions because they are no longer functional.... Other women's organizations probably [have] the same [problem] because there are some [other] women's organizations that the ministry accredits, and they only include them into their list [for cooperation with civil society organizations].... They are mostly organizations that...display similar political views [with public institutions].... Feminist organizations...are not on the agenda of the relevant directorates at all. However, KSGM was such an important mechanism, it was first and foremost a national mechanism. It was a place, an address that would carry out the implementation of CEDAW, take necessary actions, work with women's organizations, and be our voice...in the public sector. But in recent years, it has taken such a strange turn.... In fact...gender perspective...has not developed in the ministry... [and] unfortunately, [gender] even as a concept...have [been] erased from all [policy documents].... They are preparing tens of pages long strategy document on early marriages and gender is not even mentioned in a single place.”

The interview held with the participants from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2) is one of the examples of women’s organizations providing expertise to the public institutions in terms of improving public officials’ capacities for gender equality. As expressed by the participant, although they signed a protocol with public institutions for the implementation of “Women’s Human Rights Training Programme” in the public institutions, they could not be able to sustain this cooperation after 2012 due to the reason that the way of cooperation with the central government was blocked. Besides, she also underlined that cooperation with public institutions not only interrupted with the central public authorities but also with local municipalities governed by the ruling party. On the other hand, they can be able to sustain cooperation with municipalities governed by opposition parties such as Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi – CHP) and People’s Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi – HDP). However, she also emphasized that although they incorporated Kurdish women working in municipalities governed by HDP\textsuperscript{52} into their training programme, they could not be able to work with those women due to the interruption of “peace process” and

\textsuperscript{52} A pro-Kurdish party
appointment of trustees to local municipalities in many Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia region after the declaration of State of Emergency in 2015 following the military coup attempt.

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2):** "The Women's Human Rights Training Program [KİHEP]... [signed] a protocol with SHÇEK [Sosyal Hizmetler Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu (Ministry of Family and Social Services, Social Services Child Protection Agency)] in [1998] ... when SHÇEK existed... [to] provide training of trainers to social workers working in community centers... This protocol was in effect until 2017. However, after the AKP government... I think in 2012... although the protocol was due to expire in 2017... we turned our path to local governments since the way to cooperate with the central government was blocked.... I think this was one of the biggest works in the history of the association in terms of public cooperation, especially with the central government.... We collaborated with ILO [International Labour Office] to provide KİHEP to women attending vocational training courses in municipalities and local governments.... AKP [Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)] municipalities were also involved, but...we encountered various problems in the process of providing the trainings, I suppose the cooperation with AKP municipalities failed to continue after this ILO project.... It has being conducted mainly with CHP [Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People’s Party)] municipalities for a long time. In 2013, if I am not mistaken, women from HDP [Halkların Demokratik Partisi (People’s Democratic Party)] municipalities, mainly from Kurdish provinces, were included, but then, of course, due to the [political] conditions in the country, our friends there became unable to open groups, so the municipal collaborations there have also ended in practice."

The ideological difference between political parties in Türkiye also reveals itself in their cooperation with women’s organizations. Two different interviewed Islamic women’s organizations, namely, Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (representing a *reformist* women’s organization who does not identify itself as a feminist organization) and Havle Women’s Association (representing an *Islamic feminist* organization) expressed that they have been mainly cooperating with local municipalities, but with the ones who are governed by different political parties. In this regard, while women’s organizations who do not identify themselves as “feminist” can be able to cooperate with local municipalities governed by the ruling party – despite the fact that cooperation between CSOs and public institutions was considerably deteriorated especially during the 2010s -, the ones who identify

53 Services Child Protection Agency (Sosyal Hizmetler Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu – SHÇEK) has become Directorate General of Children's Services under the Ministry of Family and Social Services in 2011.
themselves as “feminist” or “Islamic feminist” can only be able to cooperate with democratic local municipalities mainly governed by the opposition parties. In addition to that, as expressed by one of the interviewed women from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (2), they have been cooperating not only with local municipalities but also with central public authorities. On the other hand, one of the participants from Havle Women’s Association (3) emphasized that unless the public institutions or local municipalities have a democratic standing, there is no way for cooperation since they basically marginalize women’s organizations who can be described as secular, liberal, feminist/reformist oriented.

**Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (2):** “We have collaborations with local governments.... We also have cooperation with ministries, especially with the Ministry of Family and Social Policy [Ministry of Family and Social Services]. They come to the association and observe…. We have an ongoing project with the support of the Ministry of Interior, the "Because I am a Child" project.”

**Havle Women’s Association (3):** “We actually have [cooperation] with municipalities.... But other than that, we have no ties with the public institutions.... It is not something unique to Havle, but to many women's organizations. If it is not a democratic municipality or institution, they immediately ignore CSOs.... The participation mechanisms are not very functional, either. Weak.”

When I asked whether they think that public institutions have sufficient infrastructure and necessary participation mechanisms to cooperate with CSOs, one of the interviewed women from Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2) expressed that the lack of cooperation between CSOs and public institutions is not about the lack of necessary infrastructure and participation mechanisms to cooperate with CSOs, however it is about public institutions’ “willingness” to cooperate with CSOs. In this respect, she underlined that, although the public institutions they have worked with have enough capacity to cooperate with CSOs, following the declaration of State of Emergency in 2015, public institutions completely cut off their relations with CSOs, most probably due to the reason that they started to be afraid of being accused of building up cooperation with CSOs who are not “accepted” by the government. Besides, she also emphasized that LGBTI+ organizations are completely excluded from cooperation mechanisms and public institutions have only begun to cooperate with CSOs who are close to the ideological and political standing of the government.
Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2): “I don't think this is an infrastructure issue…. After 15 July [military coup attempt], they completely cut their ties with civil society organizations…. Probably a process of investigation was initiated by public institutions…. The capacity of the public institutions we work with is sufficient, or at least it was…. I think it's a matter of intention…. Lately…public institutions don't want to work with LGBTI organizations, that's for sure and clear…. They don't come side by side with them in any way, they don't take photos with them…. Maybe public institutions…[decided to work] …with women's organizations who close to them…. In other words, they made an unwritten decision in their minds; they divided civil society organizations into two and they work with those who close to them.”

The State of Emergency declared after the military coup attempt in 2015 paved the way for the appointment of trustees to local municipalities in many Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia region which significantly disrupted cooperation between women’s organizations and local municipalities. As expressed by one of the interviewed women from Rosa Women’s Association (1), which is one of the Kurdish women’s organizations founded in 2018 in Diyarbakır, their cooperation with local municipalities was completely interrupted after the appointment of trustees to local municipalities while before that they had been working in close cooperation with local municipalities in terms of the development of policies related to women’s centers and improvement of women’s rights.

Rosa Women’s Association (1): (When it is asked whether they cooperate with public institutions including central and local governments) "Well, unfortunately…. Our relationship with local governments was cut off, with the trustees. For example, in between the period of [the appointment of] trustees and… the period of elected mayors, we could talk and plan… quickly… with [municipalities]… especially on women's centers and women's policies…. Then it was cut off after the trustees.”

5.4. Women’s Organizations’ Cooperation with Political Parties

Within the scope of the interviews held with women’s organizations, their cooperation with political parties was also analysed in order to understand their approach and distance to existing political and ideological groups and scrutinize whether they have a particular affiliation with any political party. In this respect, I asked certain questions including whether they cooperate with political parties and if “yes”, which political parties do they cooperate with. In addition to that, I also asked what is the scope of their cooperation with political parties and how do they evaluate
the shortages of political parties in terms of promoting women’s political participation and nomination of women candidates in Türkiye.

One of the outstanding findings of the interviews with women’s organizations regarding the cooperation between women’s organizations and political parties is that all of the interviewed women’s organizations articulated that they are open for dialogue and cooperation with all political parties regardless of their political and ideological standings, however, keep a certain distance to and stand neutral towards all political parties in order to refrain from engaging in any political attachment. As mentioned by one of the interviewed women from Havle Women’s Association (3), they put a specific effort to communicate with all political parties, however, also advocate against the political parties that do not respect women's rights and try to regress them. One exception was expressed by the representatives of Capital City Women’s Platform, which is one of the reformist women’s organizations founded in 1995 by a group of Muslim women’s rights activists. One of the interviewed women from Capital City Women’s Platform (3) expressed that they provided support to the ruling party (Justice and Development Party (AKP)) during its foundation since some of the members of the Platform were also founding members of AKP, who had a “conservative-democrat” standing in its first two governmental terms (2002-2011), however then adopted a “right-wing populist” and “electoral-authoritarian” standing that has become intolerant to counter views. It is assumed by the interviewed women that their support to AKP was not welcomed since they were considered “strong enough” to challenge conservative policies of the ruling party. Other than this, the interviewed participant from Capital City Women’s Platform underlined that they have never engaged in close relation with any political party.

Havle Women’s Association (3): "We invite them, we try to meet them all, we try to be in contact with them.... We do not reject them, but of course we struggle with political parties who do not respect women's rights and try to regress our achievements. This prevents us from getting closer [to political parties]. It erodes the space for communication."

Capital City Women’s Platform (3): “…We have never actually worked with political parties. However, when AKP [Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)] was founded, since a few of our friends were founding members, we supported it, hoping that something good would happen at that time. We wanted to be in it, but they consider us, in my personal opinion, too strong….
They thought they couldn't control us. After that, we have never approached to any political party again and we distanced ourselves from AKP."

Another exception is the Women and Democracy Association (KADEM), who is one of the pro-government organizations established during the rule of Justice and Development Party (AKP). It is mentioned in the written interview shared by Kadem that, due to the nature of being a CSO, they have no ties to political parties. On the other hand, in the course of the question regarding the shortages of political parties in terms of promoting women’s political participation and nomination of women candidates in Türkiye, an explicit acclaim is expressed concerning the abolishment of headscarf bans in 2014 by the AKP government which facilitates women’s participation into politics and increase the number of female representatives in the Turkish Parliament. However, it is also mentioned that, despite the positive developments brought with in terms of women’s political participation during AKP government, the representation of women in politics is still not at the desired level. In this respect, the written interview points out certain shortcomings and inconsistencies of opposition political parties in terms of ensuring women’s political participation and taking into consideration of gender equality in their policies. It is also important to mention that, AKP is left out of these criticisms directed to political parties.

**Women and Democracy Association:** “As a civil society organization, KADEM conducts studies and produces discourse on women's issues that also fall within the field of work and influence of politics. However, by its very nature, it has no ties to political bodies. It is possible for it to establish contact with political identities and structures if the subjects it works on require it.”

*(When it is asked what are the shortages of political parties in terms of promoting women’s political participation and nomination of women candidates in Türkiye.)*

"One of the biggest obstacles to women's participation in politics in Türkiye was the headscarf bans that were lifted during the AK Party governments. While these bans were in place, more than sixty percent of the female population was not represented in parliament. Prior to this, unfortunately, women could not participate in the public sphere, working life and decision-making mechanisms because they were deprived of their basic education rights. Within the framework of the normalization efforts that began in the period after the ban was lifted, the presence of women in politics has been increasing with a rising momentum. Despite this, it is still not possible to say that we have achieved the ideal now... Unfortunately, we are also aware of the ideological approaches, unsustainable discourses and election-indexed temporary
solutions of some political parties in these and similar areas, where women experience rights violations.

For example, despite the HDP's emphasis on equality through the co-presidency system, we are at a loss for words in the face of its silence on the fact that girls and women abducted by PKK are subjected to all kinds of harassment, including sexual harassment, in PKK camps. Likewise, the fact that this political party ignores the struggle of the Diyarbakır mothers is completely contrary to this emphasis on equality.... Therefore, we see in the case of HDP that the discourse of equality is used as a bait to get votes. We also know that the CHP's uniformizing and marginalizing perspective on women has continued for years, and we know the difficulties faced by women wearing headscarf, especially in CHP-run institutions, where they are dismissed from their jobs or not preferred for certain positions. It is obvious that the CHP still cannot get rid of the mentality that supported the headscarf bans during the period of 28 February and ensured their implementation. This mentality, which categorizes women with the imposed "acceptable woman" model and marginalizes a certain group of women, is of course a major obstacle to the strengthening of women's social, institutional and political representation."

As expressed by many interviewed women, People’s Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi – HDP) stands in a distinct position than other political parties in terms of promoting women’s political participation, nomination of women candidates as well as representation of LGBTI+ people in politics. On the other hand, none of the interviewed women think that political parties are eager to adopt gender equality as one of their core principles and establish participatory and inclusive mechanisms in order to ensure equal representation of not only women but also different gender identities. One of the interviewed women from Havle Women’s Association (3), explicitly expressed that although HDP and partially İYİ Parti have a remarkable effort to ensure women’s political participation and gender equality, she thinks that even HDP’s efforts in terms of the inclusion of women is far away from being sufficient and reflects that consider women only as “decorations” in order to show that they put women in an important position in party policies.

**Havle Women’s Association (3):** “There is probably such equality in HDP, and partly in the İYİ Party, if I remember correctly. Apart from that, even in HDP, they call women as a decoration. I think it is very inadequate… Other than that, there are almost no political parties...”

Regarding the shortages of political parties in terms of promoting women’s political participation and nomination of women candidates in Türkiye, some of the

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54 A centre-right political party that was established in 2017.
interviewed women expressed that they do not find political parties sincere about establishing democratic structures and supporting female candidates. One of the interviewed young women from Association for Supporting Woman Candidates (3) explicitly articulated that she considers both political parties and their representatives as the maintainers of status quo and perpetrators of the same patriarchal system. Thus, none of the political parties is considered to produce policies relevant to the political participation of women. Similarly, another interviewed woman from Havle Women’s Association emphasized that the election system in Türkiye does not function democratic and relies on personal and patriarchal relations which does not give floor to the democratic participation of women. According to her, unless a woman has a strong network and a status in the society, it is possible for a woman to be a candidate.

**Association for Supporting Woman Candidates (3):** "As if the system that kills women, deprives them of a life without violence, makes discrimination a constant fact of life, and the system that causes women not to be represented in politics were two different things... As if, the people who speak about women's issues in those political parties are all “good apples”, and there are also “rotten apples” in our society... there are those who beat their wives and their children, and so on. Yet they are all perpetrators of the same systems. They are all people who have contributed a great deal to the continuation of the same government in this way, in this status quo.... They don't even think about how these systems are interconnected, why there is 10.5% women in their party and why women's visibility in society is so low even in the public sphere.... I think it's a disgrace.”

**Havle Women’s Association (3):** "...I think that they [political parties] do not develop any policies other than on paper.... They do not take any initiative in this regard. Since the election mechanisms do not work in such a democratic way and it relies on families, individuals, individual relationships, women do not get a turn. If women are not very strong, if they don't have a good network, if they don't have a good position, they are not easily selected as candidates."

As a concluding remark, the interviews with different women’s organizations regarding their diverse organizational structures, financial resources, cooperation with public institutions and cooperation with political parties reveals four important findings. 1) Despite the structural and legal obstacles they face in terms of establishing non-hierarchical, participatory and inclusive mechanisms majority of the women’s organizations put a great effort for establishing feminist organizational structures which refers to non-hierarchical, participatory and inclusive mechanisms that is sensitive towards intersectional identities. Besides, some of the women’s
organizations also take as priority to establish participatory mechanisms for young women through specific units for young people and/or volunteer orientation programmes for their efficient integration. 2) In terms of the resources to sustain their activities, women’s organizations with diverse mode of organizations (such as legal entities and non-legal entities) adopt different strategies for fund raising which is also in line with their main objectives. In this respect, international institutions (mainly European Union, United Nation funds, embassies and international foundations) constitute a significant part of the financial resources of the majority of the women’s organizations who are working on long-term activities such as struggling with violence against women and awareness raising of women regarding their rights. On the other hand, women’s organizations with non-legal entities, such as women’s platforms and coalitions, deliberately prefer to stay away from project-based funds in order to be able to protect their flexibility, act freely and define their own agenda independent from the donor organizations. There is also a consensus among some of the interviewed women’s organizations regarding the importance of “core-funding” and becoming a self-sustaining organizations who can generate their resources instead of being a “project organization”, which would provide a certain flexibility to women’s organizations and to let them act in line with their raison d’etre. 3) Based on the fact that cooperation with public institutions stand in a critical position for women’s organizations to put gender equality onto the agenda of the government and public institutions, all of the interviewed women’s organizations underlined the necessity of sustainable communication and cooperation with public institutions without being co-opted by the governments’ ideological position. Almost all of the interviewed women’s organizations took attention to the fact that, especially after 2015 military coup attempt, cooperation with public institutions was completely disrupted while public institutions started to cooperate only with pro-government organizations. They can only be able to cooperate with local municipalities those who would like to adopt a more reformist approach. 4) It is an important fact that none of the interviewed women’s organizations express affiliation or sympathy towards any of the political parties by underlining that they think none of the political parties take the principle of gender equality seriously in their party policies and structure. On the other hand, while standing in a neutral position towards political parties, they also state that they are open for dialogue and cooperation with
political parties considering the fact that as public institutions, political parties stand in an important position in terms of women’s political participation.

Another crucial point in terms of diversities between the ideological and political positions of women’s organizations is their interpretation of and their distance to “feminism”. As discussed in Chapter 2, under the section “Historical Background of Feminism and Feminist Movement”, the concept “feminism” has diverse meanings and diverse interpretations as an “approach”, as an “ideology”, as a “belief”, as a “power”, as a “movement”, as an “identity”. One of the core discussions regarding feminism is its “Western dominated” conceptualization which can hardly apply to the needs and demands of women living in non-Western societies. This is also why not all of the women’s organizations identify themselves as a “feminist” organization and do not identify their acts as a “feminism”. On the other hand, independent from its Western dominant conceptualization, “feminism” stands in a significant position in terms of women’s and women’s organizations self-identification and the way in which they interpret “feminism” also informs their objectives, organizational structure and their approach towards other women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings. Moreover, the way in which majority of the interviewed women’s organizations interpret “feminism” also stands in a distinct position that the conceptual difference made in the literature between “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s movement/women’s rights activism”. In the following chapter, I will elaborate how do the interviewed women interpret feminism and to what extent they put a distance between their organizations and feminism and why.
Building up a discussion on feminism begins with a controversial debate on “what is feminism?” There are many different definitions about the concept “feminism”, so to say, while some writers or feminist thinkers refers a specific political movement which seeks for equality for women, some other writers conceptualise feminism as an “ideology” or “belief” which is originated on the social, economic and political equality of the sexes. In its common definition, feminism is understood and conceptualised as an approach that opposes discrimination between men and women and advocating for all kinds of economic, political, socio-cultural and social equality between sexes. Indeed, there is a consensus about the complex nature of the concept feminism which entails an interdisciplinary approach to understand its historical evolution both as an ideology and as a social movement. Even though the roots of the concept reaches long before the first emergence of women’s activism in the late 19th century, the word feminism, which is relatively a contemporary concept, refers the first organised women’s movement which spread through European countries in the 1890s and in North and South America in 1910. The term combined the French word for woman, femme, and -isme, which referred to a social movement or political ideology that seeks for answers to women’s universal demand for social, economic and political equality of the sexes. As being largely originated in the West, feminism is a worldwide movement and ideology adopted, challenged and widened by different social actors, mainly by women from different ethnic and socio-economic background. In the 19th century, the first-wave feminism mainly referred ‘women’s movement’ based on the fact that its participants particularly addressed women’s rights which was primarily linked with motherhood. In addition to that, middle-class women who opposed to the articulation of feminism as a claim to universal rights for all women rather than particular rights as mothers, refrain from calling themselves feminists (Freedman, 2003). On the other hand, in the beginning of 20th century, a
younger generation challenged the maternal discussions concerning women’s human rights as a basis for equal rights with men. This ideological shift within the feminist movement led to the emergence of many newer forms of feminisms since the late 20th century which criticized the earlier forms of feminism for taking into account only white, middle-class, college-educated, heterosexual or cisgender perspectives (Weedon, 1999). Beginning from the second half of the 20th century, articulated demands of women for equality in the social and political spheres as well as equal opportunities for women in education, work and politics has been extended by second wave of feminism which focuses more on legal inequalities concerning sexuality, family, domesticity, the workplace and reproductive rights, and put more emphasis on the special needs of women deriving from their differences than men. The third wave of feminism, on the other hand, started with questioning the “subject” of feminism which coincide with the emergence of post-structuralist theories particularly those focus on “identity”, “cultural politics” and “micro-politics”. The third wave of feminism brought up a reaction and criticism against the universal perception of femininity and reducing feminism to the rights and liberties of upper, middle-class, white women. Thus, the third wave of feminism put more emphasis on differences among women due to race, ethnicity, class, nationality and religion. On the main agenda of the third wave of feminism there was certain issues varying from gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationalism, politics, economics, etc. which were discussed and reconsidered by feminists from a perspective of gender equality.

Within the scope of the discussions on feminism and feminist movement there are three important facts that will be revealed in this section of the dissertation regarding the concept “feminism” and the conceptual difference between “feminism” and “women’s rights”. First, although it is an important fact that the deriving point of feminism is women and gender inequality, it is not possible to confine feminism within the limits of only equality between women and men or women emancipation, or even gender equality as well. By looking at the ambiguous, discursive and “taken for granted” definition of feminism within the literature on feminism, it is possible to strongly argue that, initially being introduced as “the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes”, in the course of time, the concept has gone beyond its early definition which refers acting and advocating on behalf of women's rights and
has adopted a broader understanding of gender equality and has become a concept which refers any action, speaking and/or writing in the name of challenging the social status quo and patriarchy that is embedded in every social relation and politics as well. Second, although the concept feminism, first and foremost, refer women and emerged as a movement which is predominantly associated with asking equal social, political, and economic rights for women, throughout its journey it has gone far beyond being a movement that merely address women’s rights and women emancipation, extended by the LGBTI+ movement and has gained a broader understanding of gender equality and challenge for patriarchy. Third, not any ideology is free from people who define themselves with that particular ideology. Deriving from the controversial and diverse definitions of “feminism” and its historical and discursive attachment with the rights and liberties of upper, middle-class, white women, many existing studies take attention to the fact that, some women distance themselves from feminism, since they do not associate themselves with individuals who identify themselves as “feminist”. Thus, the expressions, such as “I am not a feminist, but….” or “I am a feminist, but….,” refers to a certain stereotype called “feminists” and points out certain characteristics that defines that particular group (Bruschman and Lenart, 1996; Remenyi, 2016). This situation also leads to discursive use of the concept “feminist movement” and “women’s movement” – which also applies to the concepts “feminism” and “women’s rights” - while each of them has been used interchangeably and leads to uncertainty between the definitions and usage of these concepts.

Based on the discussions above and deriving from the highly controversial definition and understanding of feminism as well as discursive use of “feminist movement” and “women’s movement” in the literature, I aimed at to illuminate to what extent women’s and women’s organizations’ approach to “feminism” and “feminists” is decisive in their cooperation with women’s organizations and how feminism applies to their works. In this respect, within the scope of the interviews I asked the questions to women’s organizations “what is feminism?” and “how do they describe the conceptual difference between “feminism” and “women’s rights”? in order to analyse how the interviewed women perceive and conceptualize “feminism”, how they position themselves and their organization against “feminism” and to what extent they make a distinction between “feminism” and “women’s rights” and why?
In the following section, first, how the interviewed women perceive “feminism” will be analysed in order to provide a general overview regarding the definition of “feminism”. Second, it is not only about how its agents conceptualize feminism, but it is about how the concept “feminism” is perceived and used by general public to refer gender equality activists. Thus, “feminism” will be analysed as an “assigned identity” to reveal how the concept “feminism” it is perceived by people out of the “feminist movement” – or “women’s movement” and how this conceptualization is effective for women to identify or not identify themselves as “feminists”. Third, the conceptual difference between “feminism” and “women’s rights” will be discussed deriving from the already existing discussions on the conceptual difference between “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s movement” and how the interviewed women differentiate these two concepts - “feminism” and “women’s rights” – from each other and why.

As mentioned in the research methodology chapter, it is also important to note that the qualitative research conducted within the scope of this dissertation was restricted with the women’s organizations and women (within the framework of binary definition of sexes) in order to analyse how women organize under different women’s organizations with diverse political standings and to what extent they engage in a collective action with different women’s organizations within the women’s movement. Thus, whenever “woman” is mentioned here in this section, “woman” within the framework of binary definition of sexes should be understood. In addition to that, whenever “feminist movement” and “women’s movement” is discursively used in the following sections, women - as one of the agents of feminist movement - who are organised under “feminist movement” and women who are organised under “women’s movement” – with the assertion of adopting feminist ideals – should be understood.

6.1. The Definition of “Feminism”

The interviews held with women’s organizations with diverse political standings pose four outstanding features: 1) Feminism is described as something that should be away from essentialism and cannot be restricted within the limits of binary definition
of sexes. 2) The definition of feminism goes beyond a struggle for gender equality and is associated with struggle with all kinds of inequality and patriarchy which is deeply embedded in all aspects of social and political life. 3) Feminism refers not only to being against gender inequality and all kinds of discrimination and exploitation, but also refers to being against “status quo” beyond offering mere reformist political views. 4) Feminism not only helps women to identify gender equality, but also provides a reference point to settle certain priorities and principles in their lives.

First, it is important to underline that except two interviewed women - one from an traditional Islamic civil society organization and one from a social rights-centric women’s organization - all of the interviewed women regardless of their political standing, identify themselves as “feminist”. The majority of the interviewed women refrain from being essentialist, reject binary definition of sexes and reject a common identity of “woman” and emphasize the different identities among women. When it is asked how the participants would describe “feminism” as it first comes to their mind, “feminism” was simply described as “gender equality”. However, none of the participants reduced the definition of “feminism” to only gender equality or to an equality between women and men and gave reference to its attachment to the notion of “equality” – or struggle with inequality - in a broader sense.

**The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity (2):** "When I think of feminism, I guess I define it as women advocating for the equality between women and men, standing against the subordination of women in social life, imagining a world focused entirely on equality and structuring everything (the world) accordingly."

**Flying Broom Association (2):** “Feminism is a field that has a lot of debates within itself, for example, whether it is inclusive or not, whether it is essentialist or not. There is a constant renewal of debates, so I can't really give a clear definition…. I can simply say “gender equality”. I don't want to say “equality between women and men” in order not to be essentialist, so maybe I can explain it as gender equality."

On the other hand, the definition of feminism is not only related with how it is conceptualized, but how it is perceived by different women. As many scholars argue, feminism cannot be restricted within the limits of a series of agreed demands or central concerns like sexual division or male domination, cannot be limited with a common and normative identity of “woman” and “woman’s perspective” and cannot
be confined within a simple unity and a shared feminist definition of “feminism” (Delmar, 2001). On the contrary, the definition of feminism varies as much as the diversity of the representations of the “feminists” (Delmar, 2001:6). Similar to these arguments, two different interviewed women from The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity took attention to the fact that they can hardly make a common, unified definition of “feminism” and emphasize that depending on diverse identities of women, there are several different definitions of “feminism” made by different women. Besides, one of the interviewed participants from The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity underlined the dilemma they experience while conducting recruitment interviews with volunteers and intend to ask whether the candidates identify themselves as “feminist”. As Rothfield argues, “feminism is not a term that is entirely up for grabs” and it is quite difficult to make a traditional dictionary definition of “feminism” (Rothfield, in Beasley, 1999, xiii). On the other hand, even if the boundaries of the definition of “feminism” change over time and are permeable or fluid rather than concrete, this is not to suggest that feminism has no boundaries. Feminism means somethings and not others at any given moment in time and in a certain cultural climate, thus requires a comprehensive and broader understanding of the given social, political, cultural and economic conditions. In this respect, it was emphasized in the interview that, although there are certain agreed principles of “feminism”, they refrain from making a judgement in terms of being a “feminist” based on the fact that they do not want to create a hierarchy over “making a correct and concrete definition of “feminism” - or being a “feminist””.

The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity (1): “How do I define feminism? I feel like each woman can define it by adding something in it from their own unique perspective. I can simply define [feminism] as an idea that dreams of every woman owning her own life, living according to her own choices, making her own choices, and if necessary, paying the price for it….”

"...It can differ a lot for everyone, actually..... For example...when someone is going to volunteer in the foundation or...during job interviews, we ask whether they are a “feminist” or not, or whether they define themselves as a “feminist” or not.... I mean, who am I to decide whether someone is a “feminist” or not? However, on the other hand, being a feminist... also has some compromises. I mean, someone might call themselves “feminist” and actually might do something completely on the contrary.... On the other hand, there are women who do not identify themselves as feminists, but who are actually very “feminist”.... That's why I feel like... it is a subject that can be talked about...for a long time. It is an interesting thing.”
Second, there are two prominent theoretical discussions for explaining the interconnectedness between feminism and other political or identity movements. The first one is about the discussions on “feminist identity” and “feminist politics” which gives reference to intersectional social justice agenda adopted by feminists, while the second one addresses the “intersectional feminism” which refers feminist movement not only as a fight for gender equality, but also as a movement which is on the front lines of political, social, and economic justice movements, such as, access to health care, LGBTI+ rights, end to police brutality and mass incarceration, social movements against militarism, ecological movements etc. Based on the fact that there is no one single identity group or “subject” that forms feminism, on the contrary, there are multiple identities and subjects who are in a way associated with “feminism”, it leads feminism to become an ideology or social movement that is sensitive to differences, inequality and multiple discrimination. Thereby, both the theoretical discussions on “feminism” and interviews held with women give reference to feminism which is beyond a struggle for gender equality and is related with all other forms of patriarchy, oppression, discrimination, exploitation and violence (Beckwith, 2004). Some of the interviewed women underlined that there are different definitions of “feminism”, however, what has never changed is that, in essence, it can be seen as an ideology that aims to transform all power relations and focuses on the issue of gender and women. On the other hand, some other participants take attention to the fact that while “feminism” as a conflicting concept is primarily understood as standing against sexism and gender-based discrimination, the methodological approach introduced by feminism, in terms of understanding inequalities within each and every social relation as well as understanding different levels of discrimination, also applies to all areas of social and political matters, such as, militarism, socio-economic issues, class, ecology etc.

**Women’s Coalition (1):** "Yes, it [feminism] can be defined in very different ways, but I can say: it is, in essence, an ideology targeting to transform the power relations.

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55 The word itself was first used by scholar and civil rights advocate Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989. While still a law student interested in critical race theory, Crenshaw started questioning the way the law treated cases that centred issues of sexism and racism. To Crenshaw, studying them in isolation of each other was a significant conceptual limitation of the courts and ignored a very simple fact of life – that black women were both black and women and, therefore, subject to discrimination on the basis of both their race and gender.
and also, concentrating on the issues of gender and women.... Of course, these are controversial issues, but of course, no one would reduce it to “women's rights”. Nobody would define it in such a reductionist way.... Its definition can vary, however, I think what does not change is its target [to transform] whole power relations.”

**Havle Women’s Association (1):** "Since it is a very controversial concept, we define it as “standing against sexism and gender-based discrimination”.... We kind of stick to this definition. Both because it is understandable and in fact, we try to ensure that no one is discriminated against because of their gender or sexual orientation. However, then, as it expands, we try to talk about [feminism] by establishing its link with militarism, socio-economic issues, class or ecology. Since we see that the lower echelons of discrimination are reflected in many different areas of life. However, basically what we do is to fight against sexism, that is what I understand from feminism."

**Flying Broom Association (3):** "Because my feminism is something like this...if I say “I am a feminist”, I must also be anti-militarist, I cannot be homophobic, transphobic.... I must defend sustainable life and the right to life for all living things. Human beings are not the only ones living on Earth. We have to protect the rights of rivers, trees and animals, since as women we have been going through a very similar processes of oppression.... If I say that “I am a feminist”, I cannot take on a position that excludes a certain group of people, a certain faith group or ethnic, cultural group.... If I am a feminist, I cannot be racist, I cannot be xenophobic, I cannot create language of discrimination and hate speech based on cultural identities and affiliations. I think it is the sum of all these things, when I think about my own feminism, and it seems to me that this is how it should be."

In addition to the emphasis put on “intersectional feminism” which gives reference to its relationship with all kinds of systematic exploitation, another important fact that is highlighted by one of the interviewed young women from Association for Supporting Women Candidates (3) is that, “feminism” is described as an ideology or movement which is – or should be - against “status quo” and should not be limited with mere reformist political views and women's rights activism. According to her, feminism should involve a “system critique” and should also challenge itself so as to be more inclusive. The interview also puts emphasis on two important points about feminism. First, “feminism” is defined as a rights-based struggle where inclusiveness and intersectionality are at the forefront. Second, it is not possible to make a one simple definition regarding the subject of feminism while there are multiple identities and different groups that form the “subject” of feminism both as an ideology and as a social movement in practice.

**Association for Supporting Women Candidates (3):** “How do I define feminism? .... In my [understanding]...it is of course a struggle for rights; but I don't think it is
limited to that..... I would call “feminism” a rights-based struggle that includes everyone who is subjected to gender-based discrimination, violence, exclusion and marginalization. Of course, [feminism] is not pro-status quo...[not] conservative.... Of course, I'm not the gatekeeper of feminism. I cannot assign people to feminism or dismiss them from feminism according to my views.... [However, I think feminism is not limited with] "let's keep the system as it is, let's not renew it too much, let's make small reforms"... For example, "men should not be able to walk around after stabbing their wives in 80 places, that's enough activism for today", [feminism] is not this, for me.... [It is] a rights-based struggle where inclusiveness is at the forefront, intersectionality is at the forefront... Therefore, it is not only a struggle that defends the rights to life and political rights of cis heterosexual women. It is a struggle that defends the rights of every group, like women, those who may or may not identify themselves as “women”, those who exposed to male violence or gender-based violence. Kurdish movement, queers, the LGBTI+ movement, defending refugee rights should be included in this [struggle]. So, let's call it an extensive struggle for rights, built and observed from the lenses of gender."

As it was discussed earlier, feminism owes its dynamic nature to the participants from different socio-economic, ethnic and political background which triggers feminism to go out of its borders. Some of the interviewed women articulates that feminism is not something that its borders can easily be drawn but is a concept that renews and develops itself even by the criticism from within the movement. In addition to that, some of the interviewed women defines feminism as an ideology that determines their reflexes and priorities in life, allows them to ‘know themselves’, and paves the way for a more democratic society. In order to go one step further, feminism is described as the touchstone that deeply effects their raison d'être.

Flying Broom Association (3): "It is an ideology that determines my reflexes and priorities in life, that makes me recognize myself, that makes me believe that the relations between me and other people can be more democratic."

Flying Broom Association (1): “So when I say feminism, ..... I get goosebumps.... I was a child who was very prone to be conservative, to be radical. And I was a child who was very likely to be very religious or...moralistic. Coinciding with feminism...have transformed me from a child, who could obey the orders of dominant people, to a person, a woman, who is more tolerant [and sensitive]...towards all differences or disadvantages...and the political economy of these.... I'm not so much into this femininity, masculinity stuff. I don't believe in this biological binary either.... If there was no feminism, I could have been a radical person, and I could have been part of the dominant language....”

How women position themselves against “feminism” is not only about how they define feminism or to what extent they identify themselves as “feminist”, however it
is also about how “feminism” and “feminist” identity configured in a particular society and who identify themselves as “feminist”. In the following section, apart from the definitions articulated by the interviewed women about feminism, how “feminism” and “feminists” perceived by people outside of women’s movement – or feminist movement – will be discussed.

6.2. Feminism as an “Assigned Identity”

Within the scope of the profound literature on “feminism”, one of the most prominent discussions regarding the definition and perception of “feminism” is based upon the identification and “image of” feminism which is not only adopted and constructed by the feminists themselves but also produced by the general public within the scope of socio linguistic formations. In the literature on feminism, there is a quantity of studies dedicated to the analysis of “hegemonic standards of “feminist” as an identity, which mainly articulates itself in everyday conversation or during conversations about feminism or feminist identity (Marrese, 2021). As proved within the scope of the interviews, there are different dynamics behind whether women’s organizations identify themselves as “feminist”, not only depending on the individual preference of their members, but also depending on how the concept “feminist” is constructed by external audience.

A quantity of studies in feminist literature discusses the dynamics behind how “feminist” identity identified, perceived, constructed by ‘others’ – namely who do not identify themselves as “feminist” and regardless of they are male or female. It is also important to note that this search for the dynamics behind how “feminist” identity identified, perceived, constructed by ‘others’ is also important to better understand the distinction between “feminism” and “women’s rights” where “feminism” is not only associated with an ideology but also a stereotype that illustrates a preconceived identity category. One of the clearest explanations to the dynamics behind the perception and identification of “feminist” identity is introduced by Delmar (in Herrmann and Stewart, 2001) who explains how feminism and feminist identity is perceived, or constructed, through “the image of feminism” – or feminists – which discursively and implicitly illustrates ‘Western’, ‘privileged’,
‘radical feminists’ those articulate and use radical strategies and discourse against male domination and patriarchy. This “image of feminism” reflects two important dimensions. First, “the image of feminism” is considered within a marginalized definition of women’s issues and without making any necessary correlation between feminism and the general field of human endeavour. Second, feminists are also imagined as the “bearers of female anger”, “bra-burners” and the protestors against sexual constraint (Delmar, 2001:21-22).

In addition to this explanation there are two important facts that need to be taken into consideration while identifying “the image of feminism”. First, independent from the discussions on the definition of “feminism” or “what feminism is?”, this image – discursively – represents a Western, white, middle-class women image, depending on the Western bias observed in studies of “feminism” where the main frontrunners of feminism are reflected as the middle-class, white women and an inappropriately narrow and static definition of the “feminism” that has been only made by giving reference to the mobilizations that exclusively focus on challenging women’s subordination to men (Ferree and Tripp, 2006:9). Second, many scholars argue that there is an image of feminism, which is – discursively – constructed by the “self-presentation” of feminists who represents a – more or less – common stereotype that contains references to a style of dress, to looks, to ways of behaving to men and women and how to live their lives (Delmar, in Herrmann and Stewart, 2001:5; Marrese, 2021:2). This understanding of “the image of feminism” also entails the biggest cleavages between women call themselves “feminist” or “women’s rights activist” depending on the fact that they think they do not comply with the woman category that they see or perceived by the general public as “feminist”.

When it is asked to the participants representing Capital City Women’s Platform (1), which is one of the women’s organizations established by Muslim women, whether they describe their organizations as a feminist organization, one of the interviewed women answered as “no”, by stressing that although there are many women who describe themselves as feminists in the organization, there are also women in the organization who do not call themselves ‘feminist’ and in order not to be unfair and disrespectful to their friends they refrain from carrying out such a radical discourse,
which they expressed as ‘calling themselves feminists’. Following this question, when it is asked why some women are distant to feminism and why there are two separate concepts such as “feminism” and “women's rights”, two important reasons become prominent. First, it was emphasized that feminism has a negative connotation in many Muslim countries as being usually labelled as an “evil and alien ideology”, copied from Christianity who “demonizing woman” since Middle Ages and also adopted by Islam, and something that disrupt the family values and women as well. Second, according to how feminism is – in general - seen by the society it was underlined that feminists usually ‘seen’ as “Femen”, “radical feminists”, “misandrist” and as women who “having free sex”, thus many women do not want to be ‘labelled’ as a feminist woman as such.

Capital City Women’s Platform (1): "Feminism is something that is demonized in our country as it is in many religious and Muslim countries…. A foreign ideology… Something that spoils women and family. And people know feminists more because of liberal feminists and radical feminists. I mean, to make it clearer, I can say that the general public sees all feminists as “Femen”, and they stigmatize religious women, conservative women who call themselves feminists in this way…. There was an understanding in the Middle Ages that demonized women. This was supposedly Christianity. However, patriarchal orthodoxy interpretations of Islam also accept it as it is, and those who could not demonize women…still maintain their negative reflexes by demonizing feminism, and women are affected by this. ..... None of them [religious women] have any problems with any of them [feminists] as individuals. However, they are uncomfortable with this demonization of feminism because it sticks to them as a political label. Even today, some women in the AKP [Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)] feel the need to start any conversation by saying that "I am not a feminist"."

Capital City Women’s Platform (2): Question: "What do you think is the reason of the platform members having distance to feminism?" Answer: “This is something [about] the social perception and... comparing to the most extreme definition of “feminist”, they do not regard themselves as feminists, that's what I think.”

Question: “Can you elaborate on the most extreme definition of “feminist”?"

Answer: "Let me put it this way: Because they [feminists] do not accept any kind of family pressure, family…. [women who are criticized by feminists because they are] married, have children, have sons…don't accept [being] marginalized [in such a way]…. For example, they say “no, I am not a feminist” because they argue that discrimination should not be to such extent. I don't know if I have made myself clear...”

Another interviewed woman from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association who identify herself as Muslim, even though they do not identify their
organization as a feminist organization, strictly criticize the attacks and imputation against “feminism” – or feminists – which describes feminism as a “terrorist” activity and defines it as “disrespectfulness” to start a sentence with the word “I do not identify myself as feminist, but...” by considering this as an attempt for marginalization of women’s movement. By taking attention to the different waves of feminism within which there were different ideologies, concerns and priorities as well as the existence of different “feminisms” adopted by women, she also emphasizes that the way in which feminism accept the existence of the “other” ontologically is different within each different waves of feminism; and thus, this makes it a difficult concept to identify but also a strong movement which is based upon a historical struggle and courage.

Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (1): “The word “feminist” has never been a word that bothers me like the word “terrorist”. I even consider the sentences like, "I don't call myself feminist but...", "don't misunderstand, I am not one" as a disrespectfulness to this movement and to everyone who gave their voice from the right or left.”

On the other hand, another interviewed woman representing a Kurdish women’s organization, namely, KAMER Foundation, underlined the ‘institutionalization’ of ‘feminist as an assigned identity’ in public institutions where women labelled as the ones who are “misandrist” and would like to “disrupt the family values”. In order to better understand how truth and knowledge are produced through discourse and language it is better to turn back to Foucault, who attributes discourse a more comprehensive meaning rather than simply being a linguistic concept and explains discourse as a practice that produces rules and knowledge – and also truth as a consequence. According to Foucault, it is the rules of discourse that define what is sayable and thinkable by prescribing certain ways of talking. It is also a discursive practice that produces the rules of discourse and become a subject position and also institutionalized by subject who adopts and become bearers of certain knowledge (1982). Thus, Foucault rejects the idea that considers identity as a metaphysical concept but argues that identity is a political notion that is formed within a certain power configuration. According to Foucault, “subject” is produced through discourse in two different ways: 1) the discourse itself produces subjects with certain
attributions; such as “feminist” that is understood as “radical feminists”, “misandrist” and as women who “having free sex”. The way in which these figures are produced is discursive and historical; in other words, belong to certain discursive regimes and historical periods (Hall, 2001: 80). 2) The discourse also defines the way in which individuals be “subjected to” discourse, as ‘positioning themselves’ and ‘be positioned as’ the audience of discourse – until they become subjects or the bearers of power and knowledge.

One of the interviews with a representative of KAMER Foundation who is working in collaboration with public institutions well illustrates how truth – in Foucauldian terms – regarding “feminists” is constructed through discourse and language produced by public institutions. Within the scope of the interview, it was emphasized that, in the public institutions, women, particularly who are struggling with violence against women, are labelled as “feminists” who aim to disrupt family – as a social structure – and disrupt traditional cultural codes which the society has been built upon. In other words, women who are struggling with violence against women are labelled as “feminists” who would like to subvert the ‘truth’ those were delicately produced by the institutionalized discourse and create a counter-hegemony against traditional values which are considered as the ‘blocks’ of society - mainly based on family values. This is also one of the reasons of why KAMER Foundation does not explicitly identify itself as a “feminist” organization, as articulated by the interviewed participant, just in order not to be restricted with the reductive definition of “feminist”.

**KAMER Foundation (1):** *(When it is asked whether they identify their organization as a “feminist” organization)* "I would [identify KAMER as a feminist organization]…. Each organization working in the field of women's rights is a feminist organization, for me…. However, KAMER does not feel the need to call itself [feminist] because calling itself feminist may lead to different [consequences] in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia."

*(When it is asked how the concept “feminist” is perceived by public institutions)*

“Misandrist…. [Even there is] a definition that goes beyond misandry. When they [public institutions] hear the word “feminist”, they start to think about a definition
6.3. The Conceptual Difference Between “Feminism” and “Women’s Rights”

“Feminism is like a country where all women can pass without a passport.”
(A volunteer woman from The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity)

The conceptual difference between “feminism” and “women’s rights” is derived from the questions “who is the subject – or actors - of both “feminism” and “women’s movement/women’s rights activism”?” and “why and when there is a need to distinguish these two concepts from each other?”. The difficulty of drawing clear lines for the concept of “feminism” also reveals itself when the question about the difference between “feminism” and “women’s rights” has been asked. This question leads to broader discussion about whether “feminism” is an ideology, a way of life, an identity and most importantly “who is the subject of feminism?”. The main challenge drives from while conceptualising feminism as an “ideology” and as an “identity”. In addition to that, the ambiguity concerning “the subject”, “the goals” and “the ends” of feminism entail to the discursive use of the concept “feminist movement” and “women’s movement” and blurs the line between “feminism” and “women’s rights”. McBride and Mazur (2008) in their article on “Women’s Movement, Feminism and Feminist Movement” focus on the conceptual difference between “women’s movement” and “feminism/ feminist movement” and reveals that there is a common uncertainty between both the definitions and usage of these concepts. One of the most featured distinctions articulated by the authors is that; while -in general usage- “women’s movement” represent movements explicitly organized by women in the name of their claims in public life, “feminist movement” based on particular claims from democracies in the name of justice and gender equality. For instance, for measuring feminist discourse different from “women’s movement”, changing the condition of women, challenging and changing the subordination of women, analysing and challenging structures of gender equality

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56 Law No. 6284 on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence Against Women
have been used as measuring indicators. Similarly, Polatdemir (2017) emphasizes the
different and discursive usage of “women’s movement” and “feminist movement”
depending on different political contexts. While Bora (2014) and Cön (2015) argues
that feminist movement ‘should’ include women’s movement, other scholars such as
Sancar (2014) and Üstün (2014) insist on that these two terminologies should be
considered separately. Moreover, some scholars, such as Beckwith (2007), Ferree
and Tripp (2006) and McBride and Mazur (2008), identify “feminist movement” as a
‘type’ or a ‘subcategory’ of “women’s movement” who adopts feminist goals and
uses feminist discourse. On the other hand, Beckwith (2007) underlines the distinct
position of women who are universally excluded from political power and adopt a
more strategic action and position in its relation with state and in the context of state
reconfiguration. According to Beckwith, a social movement whose actors only
consist of women, does not necessarily make it a feminist movement. In addition to
that, drawing strict lines between feminist movement and women’s movement might
prevent us to make a comprehensive and sound analysis of primarily feminist
movement and then women’s movement, and feminism as well, which also includes
nonfeminist and anti-feminist women’s movements with different ideological and
political orientations. Beckwith also offers two practical benefits of making a
distinction between feminist movement and women’s movement. First, the
distinction between feminist and other women’s movements should help us identify
when women’s movements, regardless of ideological or feminist orientation, employ
the same strategies and tactics simply because all the movement actors and leaders
are women (Beckwith, 2007: 315). Second, the recognition that the feminist
movement and women’s movements are separable makes visible and underscores
women’s unique relationship to the state.

Another two important distinction between feminist movement and women’s
movements are expressed by Ferree and Tripp (2006) in terms of the ‘form’ and
‘goals’ of the movements. In this respect, Ferree and Tripp (2006) argues that while
the main actors (and also the constituency) of “women’s movement” are “women” –
which is implicitly referred as the binary definition of sexes - feminism, as a goal,
applies to the agenda of not only “women’s movement”, but also to mixed-gender
organizations such as socialist, pacifist and democratization movements. In addition
to that, “women’s movement” does not necessarily adopt the agenda of gender equality but mobilization of women as women might start out with a non-gender directed goal, such as peace, antiracism, or social justice.

According to this, while “feminism/feminist movement” is described as a specific goal that is against patriarchy and all political, social and other power arrangements of domination and subordination on the basis of gender, “women’s movement” refers to all movements led by women regardless of their goals or objectives which include both gendered identity claims of women and other objectives, such as being against war, racism, or social injustice.

Within the scope of the interviews, four important facts were highlighted by the interviewed women regarding the conceptual difference between “feminism” and “women’s rights” which will be elaborated in the following parts: 1) First, different from many scholars who identify “feminism” as a goal adopted by certain women’s organizations or a subcategory of “women’s movement”, the majority of the participants who identify a difference between “feminism” and “women’s rights” described feminism as a broader and comprehensive concept – or ideology – which is not only related with women’s rights and gender equality but also with other forms of patriarchal oppression and exploitation. 2) Second, in terms of the conceptual difference between “feminism” and “women’s rights”, it was emphasized that while “women’s rights” are mainly related with civil and legal rights of women, “feminism” is connected with a broader objective, such as abolition of all structural inequalities and gendered roles which put women in a subordinate position. 3) Third, it was emphasized that confining the definition of “feminism” within “women’s rights” misses a very crucial notion concerning feminism, which is expressed both by many scholars and interviewed women as feminism’s relation with other forms of domination, subordination and exploitation created by male-dominated institutions. 4) Last but not least, it was underlined that although it is quite important to hold a discussion on the concepts “feminism” and “women’s rights” on theoretical level as well as discussing “who is the subject of feminism?” and “how we define “woman” as a social category”, in practice, “feminist movement” and “women’s movement” should not be separated from each other, especially while fighting against patriarchy and subordination.
Within the scope of the interviews held with women, when the conceptual difference between “feminism” and “women’s rights” has been asked, while some of the participant women emphasized that there is no strict difference between women’s rights and feminism and identify all women who advocates for their rights as feminists, the majority of the participants defined feminism as a broader concept which is far beyond referring simply women’s rights and even as a concept that covers women as the agents of the feminist movement and women’s rights activism.

The ambiguity and the discursive use of concepts “feminist movement” and “women’s movement” that has been previously emphasized by scholars, such as, Beckwith (2007), Ferree and Tripp (2006) and McBride and Mazur (2008), was reflected by one of the interviewed women from the Foundation for Women’s Solidarity (1). She stated that there are two different concepts, namely, “women’s movement” and “feminist women's movement” and not everyone in women's movement is a “feminist”. She also underlined that although “feminists” do not aim to distinguish themselves from “others”, there is an implicit assumption of “feminists” as the ones who “divides the movement” and who have a negative attitude towards women's groups within mixed organizations who adopt the idea that women and men can conduct a joint work.

The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity (1): “I guess there is a distinction. I don't know how to define this but, for example, when talking about “women's movement”, there is a “feminist women's movement” and there is a “women's movement”… As two different things… In fact, not everyone in women's movement is a feminist. I don't think feminists try to distinguish themselves but they somehow do.”

Second, on the contrary of some scholars, such as Beckwith (2007), Ferree and Tripp (2006) and McBride and Mazur (2008) who identify “feminist movement” as a type of “women’s movement” or a subcategory of “women’s movement” that adopts feminist goals and uses feminist discourse, many interviewed women disagree with the idea of identifying “feminism/feminist movement” as the subset of “women’s movement”. What is quite apparent in the interviews is that, feminism is expressed as a concept which cannot be confined within the limits of women’s rights and refers to a broader understanding of equality that envisages the abolition of patriarchal structures and phenomena rather than referring a mere social, political and economic
equality between men and women. Some of the interviewed women also underlined that not everyone who advocates for women's rights necessarily has to be a feminist, while on the other hand identified feminism as a way of life, an identity, a way of self-creation which is more deeply internalised by individuals in every aspect of their life. Hence, “feminism” is expressed as a set of principles which steer lives of women.

**Capital City Women’s Platform (2):** “I don't really distinguish [“feminism” and “women’s rights”] since I consider everyone who defend women's rights as a “feminist”. Because the starting point of feminism is the focus on seeking women's rights. Then, regardless of the conditions, geography and the field, if any woman seek their rights, they are feminist.”

**The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity (2):** “I think, I would say not everybody defending women's rights has to be feminist. Because feminism, on the one hand, is a way of life, an identity, a way of self-existence. Many people can defend women's rights.”

**The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity (3):** “When it comes to women's rights, for example, I see a field of rights that is more submissive to gender inequality…. However, feminism is something higher than laws, higher than nations, higher than the state, higher than all borders and boundaries.... [Against anything] that puts them in a status, nationality, religion, law or rule against their will..... [Feminism] is superior to everything else... [something that] opens our minds and hearts.... It's something like where I open up all options for discussion. What if I was woman or not. What if my assigned gender was male, female. I don't believe that the women's movement has been able to have these discussions within itself.... For example, for me, “women's movement” is like the women's branch of a party, however, “feminism” is like a country where all women can pass without a passport.”

On the other hand, an interviewed woman representing one of the traditional Islamic civil society organizations, namely Association for Protecting and Supporting Family (1), articulated that although she does not make a distinction between “feminism” and “women’s movement”, she prefers to use the concept “women’s freedom” to address the works done for women’s rights and women’s liberty. She also mentioned that she refrains from describing “women’s movement” – in her own words “women’s freedom” – as “feminist” in order not to be “misunderstood”. In this respect, her emphasis on making a distinction between “feminism” and “women’s freedom” implies implicitly not an ideological difference between “feminism” and “women’s freedom” but a cultural difference which might lead to a misunderstanding. In the following sections of the interview, she also emphasized
that she respects “feminism” and the struggle for women's rights, however her reference point in terms of promoting and protecting women’s rights is Hz. Fatima, who is described as one of the prominent figures for advocating for women’s rights in the history of Islam.

Association for Protecting and Supporting Family (1): "...I don't necessarily look at it as “feminism” or “women's movement”, I call it “women's liberation”.... Those who work for women's freedom... When I look at someone who first worked for women's movement, I see Hz. Fatima. Hz. Fatima was the first woman who worked for women's rights in the Islamic world. I wish I could write about this, it should be recorded in the world's literature.”

Another important point underlined by the interviewed women regarding the conceptual difference between “feminism” and “women’s rights” is the fact that “equal rights” (equal civil rights) does not necessarily imply abolition of traditional gender roles and inequality between women and men. While “women’s rights” and “women’s rights activism” can simply be identified as women’s struggle for equality in civil rights, “feminism” refers to a broader ideology and goal which leads women to realize the structural inequality that is implicit both in the legal framework and in the implementation of civil rights – which is gendered and/or is away from recognizing the differences and different needs of genders. As it is seen in the following interviews, some participants identify a concrete and precise distinction between “feminism” and “women’s rights” by underlining that “equal rights” do not necessarily entail “equality” and “women’s rights” are related – and limited with – the field of law whose borders were drawn by the modern liberal state.

Socialist Feminist Collective (1): "When we talk about women's rights, we are getting into the field of law, and there is actually a limit to what it can explain and solve.... I would say that women's struggle should be more general, not just about rights."

Socialist Feminist Collective (2): "Women's rights...is a word that is based on the framework of rights [and] human rights. Therefore, from a purely feminist point of view, it is a sub-heading.... It is also a more liberal view if we look at the debates in the West.... The discussion on human rights and the discussion on women's human rights so on so forth were all liberal notions then. And it [women's rights] is a perspective that might reduce the issue to rights and law."

Distinguishing “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s movement” from each other provides us a practical opportunity to see women’s distinct position towards
political, economic and social institutions and women engaging in struggle with patriarchal political and social institutions regardless of they adopt feminist ideals or identify themselves as feminist. On the other hand, distinguishing “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s movement” also gives us the opportunity to observe when women’s movement become stuck within the limits of mere women’s rights or women’s rights activism - which overlooks other forms of oppression and exploitation - and when feminism contributes to women’s movement to adopt a political standing against other forms of oppression and exploitation. As discussed before, this overlapping forms of oppression, subordination and exploitation, is expressed by many scholars (such as, Bashi et al., 2018; Crenshaw, 1989; Ferree and Tripp, 2006:10-11) as “intersectionality” which refers the multiple discrimination that different social groups encounter as well as the interconnectedness between different forms of social movements in order to struggle with these multiple discriminations, privilege and oppression. For instance, a woman might face with multiple discrimination because she is a “woman” and she is “black” in a white dominated society. Similarly, social movements both might adopt a goal of fighting against racism, while on the other hand, might adopt a feminist strategy to embrace women’s distinct position within their struggle with racism. In this sense, feminism provides a solid ground to realize and reveal different forms of oppression, subordination and exploitation and diversify and connect different goals and strategies adopted by social movements.

As being a concrete example to the discussions held above, the following interview very well illustrates that, when women’s organizations or women’s movement overlook the notion of intersectionality between gender equality and other forms of political struggles, the movement becomes confined within the restricted sphere of liberal rights and liberal ideals of women and exclude periodical or consistent forms of oppression both within and outside the women’s movement. In the interview, one of the examples of overlooking intersectionality is expressed as the “Purple Roof Women’s Shelters and Counselling Centers Congress” where certain antagonisms were observed between Kurdish and Turkish women before and after the “Türkiye’s Kurdish question and peace process”. It was underlined that depending on the political conjuncture of Türkiye in the time being, some women attempted to restrain
putting Kurdish women’s problems into the agenda of the Women’s Shelters Congress and ignored the multiple discrimination that Kurdish women encountered in their hometown.

Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1): "...Why do we talk about “women's movement” and “feminist movement” as two separate movements? In fact, there is a group that does not consider itself “feminist”. There are nationalists in the group who do not define themselves as “feminists”...

"I think it [might be] good to look at the history of the Shelters Assembly [Assembly of Women’s Shelters and Solidarity Centers]…. It was 2013-2015, when the resolution process was on the rise, women from the Kurdish women's movement were able to speak and raise their voices in the assemblies between 2013 and 2015, and there was no fighting. However, before and after the resolution process, especially after 7 November 2015 [second general elections in Türkiye]…there were reactions [within the assembly against Kurdish women], [saying] “No, you can't say Kurdistan, this is the Turkish Republic”, “No, we don't have to talk about Kurdish women separately”... Women's organizations in Kurdish provinces were closed down, women in women's counselling centers were dismissed since trustees were appointed to municipalities, the working conditions of women who were not dismissed became very difficult. The Shelters Assembly is actually a space where women in these counselling centers talk about their own experiences…but the Shelters Assembly has also turned into a space where they [Kurdish women] are not allowed to talk about [their experiences]. [Thus] women's movement is a liberal [space] that overlooks intersectionality and [limited only with the discussions] at the level of rights....”

While feminism’s intervention to political theories and political and social institutions is not limited with gender equality and strengthening women’s status in society, the historical fact that “women” has a distinct position against political and social institutions makes it important to accept “women” - as a social category - as a political subject whose struggle against male domination and patriarchy will worth forever, until all these patriarchal social and political structures would resolve. Some of the interviewed women also underlined that it is important to discuss the concepts “feminism” and “women’s rights” on theoretical – more precisely philosophical, sociological and political - level which brings an intellectual richness and avoids the risk of being confined within an essentialist definition of “woman” as a social category (Butler, 1990). On the other hand, in practice and while being on the street, “feminists” and “women’s rights activists” should not be separated from each other in order not to undermine women’s universal fight against patriarchy and subordination as well as since “feminism” and “women’ rights activism” are
mutually inclusive. The interview articulates that women are still being killed by men, and this ongoing violence against women shows that there is still an immediate need for being mobilized against male violence without making a distinction between “feminism” and “women’s rights”.

Flying Broom Association (2): “Well, if I were in, for example, Switzerland, Sweden, etc., and not in Türkiye, I would say, yes, there is definitely a serious difference between [“feminism” and “women’s rights”]. Because when we mention “women's rights”…we might exclude other categories of womanhood, etc….

However, when we are in Türkiye…it feels like “women's rights” and “feminism" are the same thing, because I still feel like we are at the very, very beginning.”

"This is actually something we talked about…with my feminist friends [in my university]…. In the literature, when we are making philosophical or sociological, political, etc. discussions, we should definitely make a distinction [these two concepts “feminism” and “women’s rights”]. But I think we should not separate [these two concepts] within the [women’s] struggle. Because we ultimately have the same problem…. We can separate them while we are discussing [these two concepts] in academia…since it [provides] intellectual richness."

To sum up, while from time to time it is inevitable to use “feminism/feminist/feminist movement” and “women/women’s rights activist/women’s movement” discursively and interchangeably, there are two prominent definitions for – or diversification between – “feminism/ feminist movement” and “women’s rights/women’s movement”: 1) As a general definition, “feminism” is identified as a “goal” rather than being identified with a group of people who united under a certain identity. It is not only adopted by “women’s movement”, but also by other movements who are organized against different forms of patriarchy, subordination and exploitation. It not only represents a struggle against gender inequality, but also represents a struggle against all inequalities originated in male dominated political theories as well as political and social structures. 2) “Women’s rights/women’s movement”, first and foremost, is associated with “women”, as the specific actors and constituency of “women’s movement”. Although “women’s movement” might adopt different objectives, such as, ensuring gender equality or non-gender directed goals, such as, peace, antiracism and social justice, what is precise about “women’s movement” is that it is initiated by women (based upon the binary definition of sexes). As proved by the discussions both held by the scholars and interviewed women, making a definition of “feminism”
is a quite complicated and controversial issue deriving from the fact that “feminism” has diverse forms as an approach, as an ideology, as a belief, as a movement or as an identity. However, what is precise about feminism is that, as being an ideology, both related with gender equality and “equality” in a general sense, it gains a meaning and makes a difference in practice, independent from in which context or within which social movement or everyday practice it appears.
CHAPTER 7

WOMEN’S MOVEMENT IN TÜRKİYE

Women’s movement in Türkiye is in a continuous transformation including both solidarity and clash. While the modernization process of Türkiye and Western secular ideology of the Turkish Republic stands at the core of the discussions over the transformation process of women’s movement in Türkiye, neoliberal, nationalist and religious politics stands on the other side of the political agenda of Türkiye which has a significant impact over the relations between different women’s organizations. The profound action-repertoire of the women’s movement which is acknowledged worldwide as “the most enduring and successful of all social movements of the modern period” (Ferre and Mueller, 2004:576) also have a heterogeneous and fragmented nature of competing identities.

While the history of women’s movement in Türkiye dates back to the foundation of Turkish Republic and even to Ottoman Empire with great achievements in terms of putting women’s rights on the state agenda, the history of women’s movement is full of achievements and failures not only deriving from the dynamics within the women’s movement but also because of the changing global political developments. Although the history of women’s movement in Türkiye dates back to the foundation of Turkish Republic and even to Ottoman Empire, many scholars point out the period after the 1980 military coup as one of the critical turning points in terms of the emergence of women's movement as an autonomous movement independent from other political and social movements and women became more visible in the public sphere with massive campaigns (Coşar & Onbaşı, 2008; Diner & Tokaş 2010; Gupta, 2015; Negron-Gonzales, 2016; Çağatay, 2018; Somersan, 2019). Besides, 1990s marked by the establishment of many heterogenous women organizations and increasing diversity within women’s movement also together with the rising internationalization especially deriving from EU accession process. Moreover,
2000s and 2010s, which particularly corresponds with the time period Justice and Development Party (AKP) in power, has a significant importance in the history of women’s movement related with the increasing neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government and increasing coalition building and cooperation within women’s movement despite the highly fragmented and heterogenous nature of women’s organizations which can be both considered as an opportunity for its strength and a challenge against building up solidarity and an “inclusive” structure to bring together women from all segments of society. Some of those campaigns and platforms can be listed as Turkish Penal Code Women Platform, Women Platform for Violence Against Women, “Don’t Mess with My Outfit!” (Kıyafetime Karışma) campaign, “Women Are Strong Together” (Kadınlar Birliktə gücü) campaign, Equality, Justice, Woman Platform (Eşitlik, Adalet, Kadın Platformu), Woman Coalition (Kadın Zirvesi) as well as very recently established Women’s Platform for Equality (Eşitlik İçin Kadın Platformu – EŞİK) in 2020 which provides basis for significant women’s coalition building against AKP’s authoritarian and patriarchal discourse.

From this point of view, within the scope of this dissertation the interviews mainly focus on the period after the 1980s when women’s movement gained significant momentum especially after the 1980 military coup and particularly scrutinize the changes, transformations and cooperation practices between women’s organizations with diverse political standings within women’s movement during the rule of Justice and Development Party (AKP). Thus, in this part of the dissertation, I aimed to scrutinize how the interviewed women evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of women’s movement in Türkiye and the way in which those movements transform in the historical process deriving from 1980s. In this respect, I asked the questions “how do they evaluate the history of the women's rights struggle in Türkiye?”, “what are the strengths and weaknesses of the women's rights struggle in Türkiye?”, “are there situations where they think the struggle for women's rights has failed and if yes, what is the reason of this failure?”, “do they think women's coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives have strong structures and have been advocating at a sufficient level?”, “do they think ethnic, religious or socio-economic differences are decisive in the success or failure of the struggle for
women's rights?” and “how do they see the future of the struggle for women's rights?”. In addition to that, I particularly asked the question “what do they think about the concept “Islamic feminism”?” in order to better understand how the interviewed women from different women’s organizations with diverse political standings elaborate the efforts of Muslim women within women’s movement and the prevailing discussions on the reconciliation of Islam and feminism as one of the most heated debates in women’s movement.

In this part of the dissertation, the discussions on women’s movement in Türkiye will be analysed under two different sections: 1) Historical Achievement of Women’s Movement in Türkiye 2) Cooperation Between Women’s Organizations with Diverse Ideological Standings

7.1. Historical Achievement of Women’s Movement in Türkiye

Women’s movement in Türkiye, which has evolved in the historical context and has certain similarities with women’s movements – or feminist movements – worldwide, also has peculiar features which are linked with the political conjuncture and characteristics of civil society in Türkiye. As discussed before, many scholars mark the period after 1980 military coup as one of the critical turning points of women’s movement in Türkiye when many heterogenous women organizations and informal groups were established, awareness raising activities were considerably accelerated among women and women’s organizations, women started to mobilize in digital platforms and reach out a wider audience through various feminist publications and cooperation among different women’s organizations significantly increased (Saygılıgil, in Feminizm, 2020). Within the scope of the interviews with women’s organizations with diverse political standings, many of the interviewed women described 1980s and 1990s as a period within which women’s movement achieved considerable success in terms of changing and improving laws and legal rights in line with the women’s rights, cooperating with public institutions in terms of the improvement and implementation of laws and legal rights especially in the areas of health, education, struggling with violence against women and empowerment of girls. As articulated by one of the interviewed women from Women’s Human Rights
– New Ways Association, awareness raising activities for the promotion of women’s rights and cooperation with public institutions in terms of the improvement of laws and legal rights concerning gender equality are described as the success of women’s organizations. In particular, cooperation with the Ministry of Family and Social Services, Social Services Child Protection Agency (Sosyal Hizmetler Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu – SHÇEK) under Ministry of Family and Social Services and with other ministries were pointed out as the successful outcome of the efforts of women’s organizations, such as Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association, Association for Supporting Woman Candidates, KAMER Foundation, Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation, Antalya Women's Counselling Center and Solidarity Association and Van Women’s Association who both worked with the public institutions and reached out to women in a wider audience and provided information on legal rights.

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1):** “…I think the women's movement in Türkiye is a worldwide movement that has achieved incredible success in 30 years. In other words, it made a lot of major law changes in 30 years. Very few women's movements in the world have been able to do this. Maybe the women's movement in India might be a competitor. We talked with the government...we discussed the laws with the [Ministry of Family and Social Services] and other ministries... We [organized] big campaigns.... Improving and strengthening women's legal rights in Türkiye [is an achievement]. Secondly, [we] ensured their implementation. This happened by providing information to women, for example through programs such as KİHEP [The Women's Human Rights Training Program], our program; KADER's [Association for Supporting Woman Candidates] work; KAMER's [KAMER Foundation] work; organizations working on violence such as Purple Roof [Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation]; Antalya Women's Solidarity [Antalya Women's Counselling Center and Solidarity Association]; organizations in Çanakkale, Mardin, Diyarbakır, Van, such as VAKAD [Van Women’s Association] etc. [They] provided this information [on legal rights] to women in the field with extraordinary efforts. The more women knew about their rights, the more they protected and enforced them.”

Second, the period after 1980 military coup also coincides with increasing emphasis on developing “feminist policy” which targets the existing public policies and political institutions and aims to improve the public policies so as to be sensitive to the issue of gender equality. Indeed, feminist policy not only aimed at improving the

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57 Services Child Protection Agency (Sosyal Hizmetler Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu – SHÇEK) has become Directorate General of Children's Services under the Ministry of Family and Social Services in 2011.
existing public policies, but also aimed at developing new methodologies and structures to ensure women’s participation into decision making mechanisms and eliminate any kind of discrimination and violence against women. As it has been largely argued, women’s movement in Türkiye, beginning with the 1980s has gained a remarkable success in terms of challenging authoritarian regime and put women’s “private” problems such as domestic violence against women onto the political agenda. This period also coincides with the emergence of worldwide echoed slogan “the personal is political” which aims to reveal the hidden patriarchy in the idea of making a distinction between private and public sphere, while the private mainly correlates with women and refers confining women to the domestic sphere (Gupta, 2015; Lee, 2007). One of the outstanding examples of the women’s organizations who are specialized in a particular feminist policy area is the Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation which was established in 1990 by a group of feminists in order to combat violence against women and has been managing a solidarity center and women’s shelter where women who exposed to violence can find shelter and get free support including social, psychological and legal support. It was expressed by one of the participants from Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (1) that the foundation has been developing feminist policy to eliminate violence against women and building up solidarity with women who exposed to violence to help their voices be heard. Insisting on sustaining the activities related to combating violence against women and not changing their route or activities according to the changing political agenda and framework of existing funds was mentioned as a success of the foundation. Given that feminist policy not only address transforming policies implemented by state institutions, but also aims to offer comprehensive policies concerning physical and psychological well-being of women.

**Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation (1):** “Purple Roof is actually doing something quite framed. In fact, I think this is where…its strength and power come from. Purple Roof is an organization that works for producing feminist policies against violence. In order to produce this feminist policies, it conducts studies on Women’s Solidarity Centers and on Shelters, and I can say that the rest is shaped around these. Our most basic work is to provide one-to-one counselling to women who are subjected to violence…. [This counselling support also] include mental support…[and] legal support…. Purple Roof has been running The Solidarity Center without interruption since its establishment. We still receive letters…especially from women in prison, and women can get support from here through face-to-face applications. We also have shelter project... I think this is the strongest and most successful aspect of Purple
Roof, [which] is to persistently make the voices of women, who have been subjected to violence, heard against violence.…"

It is evident that women’s movement in Türkiye has evolved in relation with other political movements, such as leftist, socialist, Kurdish nationalist, Islamic movement, before and especially after 1980 military coup, when various opposition political groups have emerged against authoritarian regime. As Bora (2020) argues, when the second wave feminism has begun in Türkiye, which is described as the period after 1980 military coup, women were eager to associate the history of women’s movement with the left opposition before 1980 military coup instead of women’s movement began during Ottoman Empire due to their previous political attachment with left opposition and the political language of the left opposition and its power to determine the political problematic. On the other hand, it was not a coincidence that, in 1980s, women’s movement started to gain a certain level of autonomy along with other opposition ideological movements who seek for new modes of democracy and political participation after a period of ban of all political organizations from politics (Sirman, 1989:15). It was articulated by of one of the interviewed women from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1) that her personal politicization within women’s movement – or feminist movement – went hand in hand with other political movements in 1990s, when there were no strict lines between different opposition political groups. Similarly, another interviewed woman from Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (1) took attention to the peculiar structural and political features of Türkiye and underlined that women's movement arose together with the organizations who defend democracy, such as liberals, leftist movements, environmentalists, etc., and gained a level of strength.

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1):** “I came to Istanbul to study.... I was already coming from a very political family.... Since we are a Kurdish family.... As soon as I arrived, I immediately got involved into a lot of political circles. These were leftist circles, socialist circles, circles from the Kurdish movement, at that time. While the women's movement has been recently established, I suppose I had already been a “feminist” since my adolescence."

**Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (1):** “Türkiye has certain structural, political features.... Women's rights movement has a specific feature that arose together with democratization processes and with organizations that defend democracy. In other words, liberals, leftist movements, environmentalists, etc. got stronger together, and to the extent that they got stronger, they influenced women in other fields.”
Given the fact that, women’s movement in Türkiye exists long before the 1980s and dates back to Ottoman Empire, women find out their own history and their own voice is quite important in terms of the evolution of women’s movement in Türkiye as an autonomous and independent movement defining its own agenda. As Bora (2020) argues, in the 1990s women started to discover their own history together with the establishment of Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi (Women's Works Library) and books published by Aynur Demirdirek (Osmanlı Kadınlarının Hayat Hakkı Arayışının Bir Hikayesi / A Story of Ottoman Women's Quest for the Right to Life) and Serpil Çağır (Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi / Ottoman Women's Movement) which reveals the history of women’s rights struggle since Ottoman Empire. Hence, 1990s was acknowledged as the period when women’s organizations/coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives released from the ideological monopoly of Kemalist, Islamist or leftist groups and has become a relatively autonomous movement who started to organize their own demonstrations and campaigns and started to develop their own agenda. Two prominent reasons are articulated by the scholars concerning women’s movement becoming a relatively autonomous movement independent from other ideological groups. First, the reinterpretation of Kemalist ideology as the official ideology together with the “Turkish-Islamic synthesis” and ban of political organizations representing the ideological attachments of the previous decades before 1980 paved the way for women’s movement to gain its own autonomy and ideological disposition. Second, the influence of the new wave of Western feminism in the form of “non-hierarchical and independent organizations and consciousness–raising organizations” became visible in women’s movement when women’s organizations/coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives have emerged in various forms (Sirman, 1989).

Related to this, the interviewed women from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1) also described the 1990s as the period when independent women’s organizations, demonstrations and campaigns were established by women’s platforms where various women’s organizations got together independent from other mixed political organizations, labour unions and chambers and produced their own agenda, discourse and movement. One of the prominent examples of those
independent women’s platforms was articulated as “8 March Women’s Platform” which was “released from male leadership in mixed political organizations, labour unions and chambers”.

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1):** "For example, I moved from Eksik Etek magazine to the 8 March Platform... And the main concern [in 8 March Women's Platform] was to take 8 March [International Women's Day] out of the hands of men... Men in trade unions, men in chambers, men in mixed political parties had taken over 8 March. That is to say, [men] were publishing calls for 8 March, organizing rallies, panels, various events, under...the leadership of mixed structures dominated by men.... We have achieved this, within the 8 March Women's Platform. We organized the "Now Organized" rally in 1997. It was very, very important, since, it was almost the first independent women's rally. I mean, women’s march against bullying, we can accept all of them as a rally, of course. However, the difference of the 1997 rally was that it was an action in which independent women's organizations and independent feminist women, together with women from mixed political structures, unions, chambers or other mixed civil society organizations, set the agenda and the action themselves."

The weakening attachment with other ideological dispositions after the 1990s is also visible in the example of Socialist Feminist Collective. One of the participants from Socialist Feminist Collective (3) described their attachment with “socialism” on the ground of being against patriarchy and inequality which are rooted in capitalism and advocating for the equal allocation of the resources which they consider as a prerequisite for equality. On the other hand, she also articulated that, as Socialist Feminist Collective, they have never discussed “socialism”, have never been in a constant relation with any group or women representing a class and have never adopted an agenda of building up particular relations with working class women.

**Socialist Feminist Collective (3):** "Although the Socialist Feminist Collective is socialist in name, it is not an organization that own the elements of socialism. [The Collective sees]...socialism as a prerequisite...in order for resources to be allocated for women's care labour. There must be a system for the equal sharing of those resources. And this system is socialism. Today, being against only patriarchy does not mean anything, but we also need to be against capitalism. And the only alternative to abolish capitalism is socialism. But that is the only way that [Socialist Feminist Collective] associates itself with socialism.... We have never discussed socialism [within the Socialist Feminist Collective].... [We have never adopted a] method like...meeting with the working class, meeting with working women...."

The process after the 1980s brought up a certain level of understanding, solidarity and cooperation between different ideological movements which also dramatically
affects the mode of organizations and cooperation among women’s organizations with diverse political standings (Coşar & Onbaşi, 2008; Sirman, 1989). Especially 1990s witnessed increasing number of diverse women’s organizations with diverse political orientations and with diverse forms (such as, publications, platforms, coalitions, massive demonstrations etc.), which was described as one of the positive developments in terms of women’s rights struggle. As highlighted by many scholars, beginning from the 1990s, in the 2000s, different women’s organizations with opposing ideological viewpoints started to get organized under platforms on certain issues, such as putting pressure on government in terms of taking necessary measures in accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Kinds of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and to make gender-sensitive amendments to the Turkish Penal Code (2004) and Turkish Civil Code (2001) (Coşar & Onbaşi, 2008). Among the interviewed women, some participants representing feminist and socialist feminist women’s organizations, namely, Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association and Socialist Feminist Collective, pointed out Eksik Etek Dergisi (publication) in 1994 and Dayağ a Karş ı Yürüyüş (Solidarity March Against Bullying) in 1987 as some of the successful examples of platforms and women’s massive demonstrations in the 1980s and 1990s when women started to become more visible in the public sphere and in the political arena, established consciousness-raising groups voicing the issues of sexual freedom, sexual harassment, rape, battering of women, and discrimination at the workplace, jointly stated that violence against women is political and directly targeted to challenge patriarchal state structures and justice.

Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1): "Eksik Etek magazine….is important. Because it was one of the consciousness-raising groups where we raised awareness for the first time after the 1990s. In addition to institutionalized women's organizations such as Purple Roof, Women's Human Rights, and the Library of Women's Works, there were also informal women's organizations such as Eksik Etek, which I was a part of…. I was more involved into the informal, young groups who were publishing magazines and going through a very active period. Well, those processes inevitably led us to meet a lot of women…. As women and as feminists, we grew in number. Both our organizations and forms of organizations have increased…. We were both learning from the world and creating our own.”

Socialist Feminist Collective (3): "In 1987, with the Campaign Against Bullying, it was announced that male violence is political. [In the same period] we were following up cases... We have never been in favour of severe punishment [against
male violence], because severe punishment is not something that suits us. We have always based our policies on sentence reduction and reflections of masculinity. In other words, our demand for justice has never been about severe punishment. Our demand for justice was against the patriarchal understanding of justice.”

Although many scholars emphasize the period after the 1980 military coup as an important era for the emergence of women’s movement as one of the strongest social movements in Türkiye, the interviewed women from Turkish Women’s Union (1) underlined that, women’s efforts before the period of 1980 are usually overlooked by both feminist historiography and women’s organizations. She underlined that women gained a lot of success even before the 1980s, especially in terms of the improvement of laws and legal rights in line with women’s rights and this successful movement dates back to the foundation of the Turkish Republic. The participant emphasized that, in 1925, Turkish Women’s Union has organized one of the biggest women’s movements for “equal pay for equal work” and the founders of the Turkish Women’s Union advocated in the Parliament, in 1926, for the changes in the Civil Code as women’s movement have done in the 2000s. Coinciding with the first wave of feminism which puts “equality” onto the main agenda of the feminist movement, the struggle for improvement of laws and legal rights in line with women’s rights in the beginning of the 20th century in Türkiye correlates with its counterparts in the United States and in Europe who demand for “equal pay for equal work”, which emerged within the framework of the alliance (and conflict) with the labour movement (Lears, 1968; Bora in Feminizm, 2020). Bora (2020) argues that in terms of the historiography of feminism in Türkiye there are two important facts that need to be emphasized. First, the studies on the history of women’s rights activism in Türkiye give no place to women's own experiences and initiatives. Second, the well-known characteristics of “waves” of feminism, which are “equality” in the first wave, “difference from men” in the second wave and “difference between women” in the third wave, intertwined with each other in the history of women’s movement in Türkiye. One of the examples of this is articulated by Bora as the first wave feminism in Türkiye, when women both took place in the modernization and nationalisation process, demanded equality for women, however, on the other hand, criticised the modernization process as well as gave emphasis on differences between women. Similarly, one of the interviewed women from Women’s Coalition (1)
underlined that women’s movement and women’s demands for equality in Türkiye has not emerged after the 1980s, however dates back to the 1930s where women articulated their demands which might be considered “radical” even today.

**Turkish Women’s Union (1):** "This association [Turkish Women’s Union] is the history of the women's movement since the foundation of the Republic. [It is usually said] women's movement [in Türkiye] started in 1980s, as if the history [of women’s movement] have never existed [before 1980s]... Of course, women's movement did not start [in 1980s], it continued. It became stronger (says with emphasis). It opened up to collaborations... In this country, an association [Turkish Women’s Union], the first and only largest association, taking to the streets to demand equal pay for equal work in 1925 should not be ignored.... It is very important that Nezihe Muhiddin"58 came out at that time and took on the whole burden with her team. We must give credits women who went to the parliament, learned legislative work and raised their voice for their demands for the amendments to laws passed in 1925 and 1926.”

**Women’s Coalition (1):** “In fact… we were able to see the Ottoman foundations of history only in the late 80s, when our friends who studied Ottoman learned about them and passed them on to us. When I look back now, I see such words [raised by women in Ottoman Empire] that we find very radical today…. Today, there are some people who refer to international gatherings as “the first feminist gathering”. In fact, the first feminist gathering in the world took place in Türkiye, in Istanbul, in 1930s....”

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s the improvements in the laws and legal rights in line with women’s rights and massive campaigns organized by women’s platforms are the most articulated achievements and successes of women’s movement by the interviewed women. Some of the examples of those achievements are mentioned as the “Full Equality Before the Law Campaign”, improvement of the Civil Code and Penal Code, amendments in the Constitution and improvement of Law on the Protection of the Family, on which various women’s organizations have worked together. In addition to that, improvements in the legal regulations, development of service delivery models for the elimination of violence against women by women’s organizations and the ability of women’s organizations to come together against threats to women’s rights were expressed as the strongest sides of the women’s movement.

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58 Founder of Turkish Women’s Union. Nezihe Muhiddin, is one the prominent feminists who wanted to establish the women’s political party, namely Women's People Party, in 1923.
Turkish Women’s Union (1): "Full Equality Before the Law Campaign... We realized the problems in The Civil Code in the 1970s.... And, the faults of the provisions in the Penal Code, plus the changes we envisage in the Constitution.... I don't exactly remember now, but it was 300, I guess, the number of women's organizations which came together.... We passed the Law No. 4320 on the protection of family in 1998. We were able to get it passed...together with women's organizations, especially those which were composed of lawyers. That law was passed thanks to us, that's how assertive I am. But at that time, we were around 40 organizations, in the 2000s, the number [of women’s organizations] reached to 300 for the Civil Code and the Penal Code. Now I think that is a great thing. An amazing thing.”

Women’s Coalition (1): "Especially since I know the field of violence better, this is a great achievement. I think [women’s movement] has developed a lot of service models about violence. I mean, especially the advocacy conducted during the legal regulations...is very critical. I think this is a great success. [Women’s organizations] also have the ability to come together, especially when there are threats to women's rights, and that is a very strong side of it.”

Apart from the profound history, broad action repertoire and remarkable achievements of women’s movement in terms of protecting and promoting women’s rights and gender equality, women’s movement also harbour various shortcomings both because of structural obstacles and patriarchal policies of governments and insufficient cooperation between women and women’ organizations with diverse political standings. The existing studies regarding the cooperation among women’s organizations in Türkiye, takes attention to three crucial points which identify the main shortcomings of women’s movement in Türkiye. The first one is the hegemonic attitudes of certain groups in women coalition building processes which leaves particularly the representatives of Islamic and ethnic identity-based women’s organizations out. The fragile relationship especially between secular and pious women organizations would be one of the most prevailing topics of research to envisage the future of women’s movement in Türkiye. Second, after the 1990s the increase in the institutionalism and project-based activism that mainly came into the stage with European Accession process has resulted with a more short-scaled, short-termed, ad-hoc and issue-based activism. It has largely been argued that while the issue-based activism has certain opportunities such as rapid draw backs in the authoritarian-patriarchal policies, the lack of sustainability in terms of cooperation among women’s organizations overlooks class-based socio-economic problems of women which requires the development of long-term comprehensive policies. Third,
lack of organization among lower-class women and lack of solidarity in less visible areas of discrimination against women such as in the labour unions are revealed as one of the most crucial weaknesses of women’s movement in Türkiye. Apart from these prominent features of women’s movement, transparency problem in the distribution of public funds, existence of state-led women’s organizations which embrace the conservative-patriarchal ideology of the ruling party and binary approach adopted by public institutions for cooperation with women’s organizations entail strong cleavages between women’s organizations with diverse political standings.

Related to this, in order to more deeply analyse the shortcomings in women’s movement, certain questions have been asked regarding “how do they evaluate the history of the women's rights struggle in Türkiye?”, “what are the strengths and weaknesses of the women's rights struggle in Türkiye?”, “are there situations where they think the struggle for women's rights has failed and if yes, what is the reason of this failure?”, “do they think women's coalitions/commissions/networks/platforms/initiatives have strong structures and have been advocating at a sufficient level?”, “do they think ethnic, religious or socio-economic differences are decisive in the success or failure of the struggle for women's rights?”. The findings of the in-depth interviews conducted with women from different women’s organizations within the scope of this dissertation reveals more or less similar problems in terms of cleavages among women’s organizations with diverse political standings as well as the structural problems that they experience in terms of increasing institutionalism, project-based activism, lack of sustainability in terms of cooperation among women’s organizations and overlooking class-based socio-economic problems of women. In response to these questions certain shortcomings of women’s movement were highlighted by the interviewed women which will be revealed as insufficient cooperation between women’s organizations due to diverse ideological dispositions; discursive and unintentional hegemony of white, middle-class, urban, educated women and the problem of identifying a feminist “we”; the need of different women groups to organize in their own habitus due to the dominant implicit and unintentional hegemonic feminist identity and discourse; lack of intersectionality and being ignorant about the gender
identity claims and identity-based activism of certain social groups such as Kurdish and Islamic feminist women; lack of a shared agenda in women’s movement; increasing professionalization and issue-based activism which hampers building up a common agenda and solidarity within women’s movement; and the problem of “localization” and women’s movement still stays as a “metropolitan city movement” or “middle-class movement” which can hardly diffuse to local areas and engage with women from different socio-economic backgrounds.

7.2. Cooperation Between Women’s Organizations with Diverse Ideological Standings

Despite the historical achievements of women’s movement in Türkiye in terms of protecting and promoting women’s rights and gender equality, majority of the interviewed women also emphasized the prevailing insufficient cooperation between women’s organizations with diverse ideological dispositions, which weakens the resilience of the movement against attacks on women's rights and ensuring gender equality. Not surprisingly, in the feminist literature, insufficient cooperation between women’s organizations and prevailing cleavage and polarization among women’s organizations are among the most cited problems of women’s movement in Türkiye. Beginning with the 1990s the increasing number of women’s organizations, not only in the metropolitan cities, such as İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir, but also in other cities of Türkiye, both considered as a positive development in terms of the increase in diversity of women’s organizations with diverse agendas and priorities, while on the other hand, considered as a negative fact in terms of cooperation, consensus and solidarity among women’s organizations (Aksu and Günal, 2002). The increasing diversity and institutionalization especially since the 1990s entail the establishment of women’s organizations “dealing with their own priorities and field of work”, building of strong coalitions on particular issues, such as violence against women and legal reforms, however on the other hand, weakening possibility of establishment of a common agenda and feminist solidarity (Coşar and Onbaşı, 2008; Koçali, 2005). In line with the discussions in the literature, the interviews with women’s organizations with diverse political standings reveals similar prominent problems of women’s movement, such as, lack of sufficient cooperation between women’s
organizations with diverse ideological standings, *hegemonic feminist identity and discourse* prevalent within women’s movement, lack of heterogeneity and intersectionality within women’s organizations and platforms, increasing professionalization and issue-based activism which pose a challenge for women’s movement to become one of the most strongest movement for equality.

In this respect, in order to analyse the level of cooperation between women’s organizations with diverse political standings certain questions have been asked including, “do they cooperate with other women's organizations in their work?”, “which CSOs do they cooperate with? and what is the form of their cooperation?” (project partnership, solidarity, mentoring, guidance, mutual learning etc.), “would they describe their cooperation with other women's organizations as sustainable? If 'No' why?” and “do they have predefined criteria in terms of choosing the CSOs with which they will cooperate and are there any groups they think they left out?”. In addition to that, the question related to “what is the most fundamental problem of women's movement?” and “do they think ethnic, religious or socio-economic differences are decisive in the success or failure of the struggle for women's rights?” were also included into the analysis under the section on cooperation between women’s organizations with diverse ideological dispositions.

To begin with, it is important to underline that in line with the interviews with different women’s organizations, there is an apparent consensus among interviewed women in terms of being willing to adopt the principle of “no one left behind” and being inclusive as much as possible in order to increase the diversity within their own organizations and in their relations with other women’s organizations. On the other hand, there are ideological differences between “traditional” & “reformist” Islamic women’s organizations and secular, liberal, feminist/reformist, socialist and Kemalist women’s organizations in terms of their cooperation practices and approaches to “other” women’s organizations. First, what is common in the discourses of interviewed women from secular, liberal, feminist/reformist, socialist and Kemalist women’s organizations is that they identify similar “red lines” in terms of their cooperation with different women’s organizations. In this respect, apparently, feminist principles apply to the cooperation practices of women’s organizations,
which not only take gender equality as priority but also struggling with all forms of inequality, patriarchal oppression and exploitation. Majority of the interviewed women from secular, liberal, feminist/reformist, socialist and Kemalist women’s organizations articulated that they would not cooperate with any organization who are misogynist, racist, nationalist, fascist, homophobic etc.

**Socialist Feminist Collective (2):** “Saying a word together is one thing, but working together with someone who is a misogynist, a racist, a nationalist, a fascist, or a homophobe, is not something that can be possible.”

Second, some of the interviewed women expressed their principle of not cooperating with mixed organizations, however being open for collaboration with women from mixed organizations providing that they “leave aside” their affiliation with mixed organizations, such as political parties and labour unions. It was emphasized that this collaboration usually realizes within the scope of campaigns organized by women’s organizations on certain issues, such as violence against women.

**Socialist Feminist Collective (3):** “…IFK [Istanbul Feminist Collective] was not specifically in contact with the groups anyway. But when we initiated some campaigns, for example, we initiated the "We Are in Rebellion Against Femicide" campaign in February 2009…we went to feminist women's groups at that time... We did not have a preference among the feminist groups…. We had a principle that friends who were organized in mixed groups should leave their mixed group aside and come with their independent feminist identity. A person might be organized in the CHP [Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People’s Party)], but if they participate in a feminist activity, they are participating as a feminist. In other words, women from CHP cannot be a component of IFC.”

Third, one of the most prominent “red lines” of secular, liberal, feminist/reformist, socialist and Kemalist women’s organizations was expressed as not cooperating with state-funded pro-government women’s organizations, who explicitly discriminate LGBTI+ people and put more emphasis on the unity of “family” instead of promoting women’s rights. In addition to that, majority of the interviewed women from secular and feminist/reformist women’s organizations did not define pro-government women’s organizations among women's organizations organized within women's movement and put them in another context which is not related with women’s rights activism or feminist movement.
Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2): *(When it is asked whether there are women’s organizations that they would not prefer to contact with)* "Actually, there is, of course not from the movement… I will give an extreme example, for instance, it can be… a "GONGO" [government-organized non-governmental organization]…government supported CSOs…. They are engaged in a discourse telling “homosexuality is a disease” or “feminists are ruining family” or something like that. They do not accept the presence of LGBTI, highlight family and impose traditional roles on women instead of empowering women. I think it is difficult to cooperate with them. I mean, we do not prefer it politically either.”

On the other hand, although there is not much space where they come together, “traditional” and “reformist” Islamic women’s organizations seem to be more open to cooperation both with secular, liberal, feminist/reformist, socialist and Kemalist women’s organizations as well as with other traditional and mixed organizations who do not only focus on women’s rights and gender equality but have been working on variety of areas such as, health, education, reviewing religious texts as well as ‘family related’ issues. One of the explicit examples of those organizations is Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association, who both have affiliation with traditional Islamic women’s organizations, mixed organizations and pro-government women’s organizations and position themselves not as “traditional” but “reformist” when it comes to protection and promotion of women’s rights and gender equality. Another important fact regarding Islamic women’s organizations is that they do not consist of a homogeneous group who are entirely consistent in terms of their ideological standing and discourses, however, can be distinguished as “conservative”, “traditional” and “reformist” Islamic women’s organizations who have diverse approaches and discourses towards women’s rights and gender equality. Acknowledging the cleavage between Islamic women’s organizations, it was expressed more than once by the interviewed Muslim women from different Islamic women’s organizations that Türkiye’s withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in March 2021 made the disintegration between “conservative”, “traditional” and “reformist” Islamic women’s organizations clearer while they posed different reactions against the decision of withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. In this respect, it was emphasized by one of the interviewed women from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (1) that some of the Muslim women who were

59 The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
previously active in “traditional” women’s organizations, whose main working area is health, education and protecting “family unity”, detached from those organizations due to their conservative reaction against Türkiye’s withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and associating the convention with “LGBTI+ rights” which is deemed disrupting family values.

Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (1): "...In line with some of the work on the Istanbul Convention that Hazar and KADEM [Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği (Women and Democracy Association)] did... I can't remember the name of [a woman] ... [a "traditional" Islamic women's organization], said, "Am I supposed to research the convention, what is this LGBTI thing"...and finally they had to leave that ["traditional" Islamic women's organization] ... ASAP [Aile ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Platformu (Family and Social Research Platform)] has become such a platform...those women from other associations...switched to ASAP.... So, when there is something to be published or said...you can see KADEM, HAZAR and ASAP together."

In terms of the cooperation practices between different women’s organizations, within the scope of the interviews, one of the most agreed facts regarding the “weaknesses” of women’s movement was articulated as “lack of sufficient cooperation between different women’s organizations with diverse political standings” and “discursive – and sometimes unintentional – exclusion of certain groups” due to their diverse political or ideological standings. Despite the increasing heterogeneity, diversity and coalition building especially after the 1990s, women’s movement faces with many challenges including the rising authoritarianism particularly in the 2010s as well as prevailing cleavage between different ideological dispositions of women organizations. Many of the existing studies takes attention to shrinking space for women’s organizations in term of their freedom of organization and freedom of expression, deepening polarization among women’s organizations together with the emergence of pro-government organizations and existing cleavages between especially secular and Islamic organizations and nationalist/republican and Kurdish women’s organizations. Similar to the articulated problems in the literature regarding building up a strong women’s movement, many of the interviewed women highlighted the need of being more inclusive and strategic in their relations with “other” women’s organizations – who have diverse political and ideological standing other than their own organization. As mentioned before one of the most prominent
“red lines” of secular, liberal, feminist/reformist, socialist and Kemalist women’s organizations was expressed as cooperation with state-funded pro-government organizations who explicitly discriminate LGBTI+ people and put more emphasis on the unity of “family” instead of promoting women’s rights. On the other hand, one of the striking examples of the resistance to building up strategic relations with different women’s organizations was expressed by one of the interviewed women from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1), who underlined the necessity of the development of a “communicative action”, even with the pro-government organizations, in order to compromise on “minimum standards” of gender equality and elimination of violence against women. This approach definitely does not disregard the power relations operate in the public sphere, however ‘situate the self’ \(^{60}\) in a position which is open to deliberation above all existing power configurations to succeed a feminist end. The interview also includes criticism of certain women’s organizations who take place in women’s platforms, however, cannot afford to well analyse the socio-political situation in Türkiye and oppose to the idea of adopting a more strategic approach beyond individual or collective prejudices and presumptions.

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1):** “For example, there have been serious attacks in the last 4 - 5 years, like the alimony issue, the Istanbul Convention, Turkish Penal Code 103. This has increased even more with the pandemic. There is a state of madness in the government to the point of withdrawing their signature from the Istanbul Convention. We, a group of women, say let's meet with KADEM [Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği (Women and Democracy Association)]. Let's meet with the President, let's ask for an appointment…. It's not accepted [in women’s platform]. There are women who say “if you meet them, we will leave the platform”…. That is why we cannot meet with KADEM, for example…. We are already in separate lanes [with KADEM]…. We should be clear about how we can make an alliance in those separate lanes, we should be clear about the strategy and stuff…. I think we cannot well analyse Türkiye as the women’s movement.”

A similar emphasis on the importance of building up strategic relations/coalitions with different women’s organizations was expressed by one of the interviewed women from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association and the Academy Commission of the Woman and Democracy Association (KADEM) (1), which is one

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\(^{60}\) Benhabib (1999:345)
of the prominent pro-government organizations, who thinks that women’s organizations should act strategically in terms of struggling with women’s rights violations and eliminating violence against women. Within the scope of the interview, she expressed that the only way to struggle with “masculine authority” is “establishing strategic and continuous relationships between women’s organizations” and “inspiring trust” without considering the ideological differences between women’s organizations as "the game of foreign forces". By apparently acknowledging the “reasonable” antagonism between feminist/reformist women’s organizations and pro-government organizations, she underlined the necessity of “uniting” against violence against women and being generous in terms of transferring knowledge on feminist principles. What also stand out in the interview was, as being from the Academy Commission of KADEM, she also emphasized that even KADEM is not free from ideological pressures of the government, and “gets stuck” at the point of freely expressing what they think.

Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (1): "...We will not be able to overthrow this masculine language and masculine authority with a revolution all at once, we must be able to persuade them with strategic moves, by establishing a relationship internally, by not interrupting the relationship, by instilling trust.... If necessary, let KADEM [Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği (Women and Democracy Association)] and Purple Roof [Mor Çatı Kadın Sığınağı Vakfı (Purple Roof Women’s Shelter Foundation)] yell at each other (laughs) and get angry. But in the end…everything stops where there is death... If I were the feminist movement, I would act more strategically in order to be able to come together a little more and to convey the information to the relevant places. Today, even KADEM [Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği (Women and Democracy Association)] is not where it started... But KADEM also has some constraints. They sometimes get stuck in expressing what exactly they think."

Besides, another interviewed woman from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2) - although she thinks that there is no ground for collaboration with pro-government organizations - acknowledges the possibility of being agreed on certain rights-based issues such as, “right to alimony”\(^{61}\), where, even KADEM, also has become the target of threats due to their support for women’s right to alimony.

\(^{61}\) In 2022, following the discussions on legal amendment proposal to put a time limit on the right to alimony, many women’s organizations reacted to the legal amendment discussions on the ground that the amendment is against international conventions and does not take into consideration the socio-economic dynamics in Türkiye where women poverty is at high level.
What is apparent in the interviews with feminist/reformist women’s organizations, despite of the potential risk of being limited with an essentialist presumption, the possibility of meeting on a categorical definition of “woman” identity and building up coalitions - or establishing counter-hegemony – against inequality, discrimination, exclusion, exploitation and violence still constitutes to be one of the strongest aspects of the women's movement.

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2):** "...One of the jokes we make with my friends is "it will be us who defend KADEM [Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği (Women and Democracy Association)] now". I mean, we have come to such a point that they are also attacked. Will we come to a common plane?.... Actually, I don't think so. Discourses might be common. For example, if my memory serves me correctly, KADEM made statements about alimony, that is, the right to alimony should not be taken away from women. This is actually one of the reasons why they were attacked…. However, do we work together? Will we be in the same campaign? I don't think so at this stage.”

Another most prevalent and significant divergence within women’s movement is based upon the secular-religious dichotomy and question of reconciliation between feminism and Islam, where participation of Muslim women into women’s movement have been overlooked from time to time, due to ideological differences between different women’s organizations, changing political agenda, rising neo-liberal conservative discourses and deepening polarization in the society. All of the interviewed Islamic women’s organizations, those who do not have any political, ideological and organic attachment with the government or with any other political party, articulated that, although they do not have any “reservation” against any women’s organizations with diverse ideological standing, Muslim women’s rights activists usually are disregarded by other women’s organizations and are not considered as equal “agents” of the women’s movement. In addition to that, the second prominent challenge against women’s movement was expressed by many of the interviewed women – regardless of their political standings - as the conservative, neo-liberal and patriarchal policies of the government which hampers the development of women’s movement as a successful movement in Türkiye. However, beyond the conservative, neo-liberal and patriarchal policies of the government, the

62 I deliberately refrain from using the concept “feminists” based on the fact not all the interviewed Muslim women identified themselves as “feminists”.
most important fact that prevents women’s movement to pose a challenge against conservative policies of the government was expressed as the prevailing intolerance towards different views and ideologies.

A young woman from Havle Women’s Association (3): "In my opinion, we do not have such a reaction to any organization. But sometimes there might be personal conflicts...... But we do not exclude anyone.... Our aim is to be inclusive...to strengthen women's solidarity.... Maybe it is a bit more difficult to get together with Kemalist women.... Other than that, we do not really have a problem."

(When it is asked “what is the most fundamental problem of women's movement)

"Not being able to come together... Different views not looking out for each other... Of course, we can also say that the state is very tough. However, I think that internal issues in women's organizations is something that prevents these obstacles to be overcome.”

Moreover, the interviewed woman from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association and the Academy Commission of KADEM (1) explained the indifference of women’s movement towards Muslim women as “self-orientalism” and took attention to the “incuriosity” of “other” women’s organizations towards Muslim women. In this respect, according to her, the hegemonic ideology and “subjectivity” that is mainly based-upon “Western-dominated” configurations and discourses through appropriation of the “Western stereotyping” should be abandoned by the women’s organizations within women’s movement (Iwabuchi, 1994; Schafer, 2009).

Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (1): "For example, I think that Hazar has a very important function in this regard by not cutting ties with anywhere here. However, to put it bluntly, I don't think that the dominant feminist women's movement in the country, “the purple women's movement”, has been able to approach the Muslim-sensitive women's movement and break the chains...as much as Hazar does. This "self-orientalist" atmosphere needs to be overcome in order to find a common ground here."

Apart from the insufficient strategic cooperation between women’s organizations and prevalent cleavages among women’s organizations, dominant position of middle/upper-middle class, urban, educated, secular women who own the necessary

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63 Here it refers secular, liberal, feminist/reformist, socialist and Kemalist women’s organizations.
resources, skills, knowledge and time constitute another important fact – and problem - about women’s movement in Türkiye, which provides an epistemic privilege to middle-class women if diversity and intersectionality would not be taken into consideration within the movement. In the following section, discussions on the middle-class domination in women’s movement will be analysed in order to better understand the ideological, socio-political and structural barriers against the successful cooperation between women’s organizations.

7.2.1. Prevailing Hegemonic Feminism and the Problem of Identifying a Feminist “We” within Women’s Movement

“Just as the white woman fell into the situation of the white man…”
(An interviewed woman from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association)

The discussions on the second wave of feminism mainly entails the critique of women’s movement - or feminist movement – which brought up the questions “who is the “subject” of “women’s movement” or “feminism”64?” and “is there a collective identity that could define the actors or “subjects” of women’s movement/feminism/feminist movement?”. In addition to the questions on the subject of women’s movement/feminism/feminist movement, the profound literature on “feminism” also leads us to the discussions on the “white, middle-class, Western” hegemony in the studies of “feminism” where privileged, white, middle-class women are at the forefront of the women’s struggle against male-domination and discussions on gender equality.

Since the beginning of the third wave of feminism which started over 1980s and brought up strong criticisms to the second wave feminist movement, against: 1) universal perception of femininity, 2) reducing feminism to the rights and liberties of upper, middle-class, white women and 3) disregarding differences among women due to race, ethnicity, class, nationality and religion, the agents of women’s movement – or feminist movement - questioned the “subject” of feminism from a

64 In cases where it is applicable and whenever women involved into the women’s movement identify themselves as “feminist”.
post-structuralist perspective. In other words, the criticisms directed by the feminists to the second wave feminist movement includes neglecting the needs and different perspectives of women from different socio-economic backgrounds, being typical mobilizations of relatively privileged women who are seeking for equal rights and equal access with men to social, political, and economic institutions and presupposing a collectivity in terms of common needs and requests which disregards differences based on class, race, sexuality, ethnicity etc. (Ferree and Tripp, 2006:9; Freedman, 2003:3-4; Hooks, 1986).

Both post-structuralist and new social movement theorists – who also correspond with the emergence of third wave of feminism - argue that, social movements mainly are composed of new middle class individuals who have certain values and skills, who adopt more universalistic concerns and who could allocate time, energy, values and capabilities (Inglehart, 1977; Offe, 1985; Rose, 1997). Hence, both post-structuralist theorists, new social movement theorists and feminist scholars acknowledge the dominant identity and epistemic privileges of white, secular and middle-class individuals, and thus, problematize the ownership of necessary skills, resources and educational opportunities which provides a certain privilege to the white, middle-class, educated people within the social movements (Badran, 2009; Rose, 1997; Walker, 1984) – which I call hegemonic feminism in this dissertation.

65 As Webb (1995) argues, epistemic agent occupies a position in one or more social groups and it is the class, gender, and racial background that defines the way of knowing of an individual. Thus, there are diverse epistemologies and epistemic positions adopted by white feminists, black feminists, Islamic feminists etc. For instance, Sharma and Dwivedi (2017:80) underline that, African-American women use alternative ways of producing and validating knowledge to offer a re-presentation of the social world in relation to universal human interests in American society.

66 The concept hegemonic feminism used by Reyes and Mulinari (2020), inspired by a Gramscian understanding of power, in order to conceptualize their aim to challenge normative understanding of feminism and acknowledge the existence of other kinds of subversive feminism knowledge that has remained at the margins, as indigenous, anti-racist and trans feminism. Here in this dissertation, I use the concept hegemonic feminism in order to refer to the position of middle-class, urban, educated, secular women in women’s movement which creates a dominant position and epistemic privilege among other women with different identities and different socio-economic status due to having necessary resources, skills, knowledge and time to allocate for activism and occupying a significant position in terms of defining “what feminism is?” or “how a feminist should be?”. It is also important to note that this hegemonic position does not necessarily ground on a deliberate action of middle-class women to create hegemony over ‘other’ women, but derive from fact that the middle-class values, tastes and lifestyles mainly create a driving force for social movements and thus become a dominant discourse among other women groups.
On the other hand, both new social movements theorists (such as Inglehart, 1977; Offe, 1985) and theorists of feminist intersectional perspective (such as Crenshaw, 1989) argue that the actors of social movements do not necessarily refer empirical objects composed of a homogeneous group of people with common interests and do not imply an essentialist or unitary movement. However, this necessary defence of social movements, cannot overlook the – inevitable and structural – fact that the ownership of necessary skills, resources and educational opportunities provides a certain privilege to the white, middle-class, educated people within the social movements and create an unintentional hegemony over non-white, non-urban, non-Western and non-secular women. As articulated by one of the interviewed Muslim women from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (1), “white woman” stumble over the same mistake and adopt the same approach previously done by “white man” in terms of subordinating and establishing hegemony over non-Western regions and non-white men and women. It is the discourse and lifestyle adopted by white, middle-class, urban and educated women which stand in a dominant position among non-white, non-urban, non-Western and non-secular women and which intentionally or unintentionally determines what a feminist should think, what a feminist should say and how a feminist should live.

Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (1): “If the process that started with Mary Wollstonecraft…the process of speaking out, giving voice…was not there…. These things [women’s movement] would not have happened, either. But of course, there are many details…. While the European man was actually enslaving his own woman, the white woman, he somehow learned to enslave other lands and the East, where he marked the places he did not go, and learned to rule there. As it is in the thesis, we can see that white women and white feminist women sometimes apply the domination and priority position they learned from the white man to the eastern woman and look at them from this perspective.”

Besides, at the top of the discussions highlighted beginning from the third wave of feminism there is the collectivity that was articulated and conceptualized by the activists of second wave feminism as “sisterhood”, which represents the emphasis given to the solidarity among women. There are two main poles of the criticisms directed particularly to second wave feminism which are described within the scope of new social movements: 1) critique of essentialism and 2) hierarchical model of compulsory “sisterhood” which gives little room for disagreement and dissent.
The assumption that women might be able to unite under common problems and needs and would fight against the oppressive mechanisms under a unified collective entity, was first expressed during the second wave feminism and articulated with the term “sisterhood”, which represents the solidarity among women who are assumed to have similar experiences. However, this account also encountered with strong criticisms again reflected by feminists, due to being a monopolist assumption and referring to an enforced commonality under “woman” identity. Moreover, the implicit emphasis on the binary definition of sexes during second wave of feminism, where “woman” category is taken up as a fixed identity, also reflects the heterosexist understanding of the sexes where differences and different sexual orientations among women are ignored (Allen, 1999; Butler, 1990; Naghibi, 2007; Mohanty, 2003). As Butler emphasizes, it is important to question the best way to challenge the stability of gender categories which are based on gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality and criticise cultural and biologic determinism behind the construction of sex and gender. She basically criticizes all normative approaches, which defines gender over two different sexes and as a concept that has been culturally constructed, besides put emphasis on the polysemy of gender category that should not be restricted with one sex (1990). Similarly, one of the interviewed young women from Flying Broom Association (2), while reflecting her criticism on the implicit hierarchical structure behind the notion of “sisterhood”, also underlined the heterosexist assumption behind the concept and discursive hegemonic feminist attitude of “Western radical feminists” to interpret “other” women in the East and Muslim majority societies. She emphasized that women do not have to be “sisters” and do not have to unite under a compulsory gender identity.

*Flying Broom Association (2):* “...What we call “sisterhood”, is something that belongs to radical feminism. And, radical feminism is [the way in which] middle-class white women in the West, interpret Islamic women from their own point of view. That is how they make comments about women in Iran. All of a sudden, [they say] “come on, sisters, we unite”. This is not real. Everyone's experience is really unique, though. We need to understand this first. That's why we don't have to be sisters. We can also be lovers, for example ...”

There are two important problems behind the solidarity among women which was reflected as “sisterhood”. The first one is the fact that the word “sisterhood” undermines the solidarity among women into a *solidarity simply based on common*
needs and claims which also overlooks the socio-economic differences among women. Second, the idea behind “sisterhood” apparently overlooks the inequalities among women as well as the power relations implicit in relations among women. What was thought earlier as “influential” to gather women and build up allies against the oppressive mechanisms, later on turned out to be controversial and restricted especially after the involvement of women who are non-white, not educated, or not belonging to middle class into women’s movement (Siegel, 2007:46). As Bell Hooks (1986) argues, the assumption of “global sisterhood” failed because of the implicit relations of domination within the women’s movement, which mainly based on the domination of bourgeois feminists, who could not afford to build up an equal relationship and solidarity with “other” feminists. Thus, the assumption of ‘uniting under the commonality of shared oppression’ is established within a hierarchical structure mainly constructed by white, middle-class, bourgeois feminists who forgot to leave the door open for “other” women from different socio-economic backgrounds and with different experiences. Related to this, one of the interviewed women from Havle Women’s Association (1), highlighted the ‘predefined agenda’ and ‘legitimate discourse’ acknowledged in the feminist meetings which leaves out the discussions on religion that also overlooks the patriarchal notions and male interpretation in the practice of religion in daily life. She emphasized that Havle Women’s Association was established based on the need of incorporating religious discourses into feminism and challenge the dominant secular discourse in women’s movement which was described as only “one version” of feminism.

**Havle Women’s Association (1):** "I was once organized around the feminist women's movement for a long time. It was one of the deficiencies I felt in the [feminist women's movement], [which is] talking about my own needs…as a Muslim woman, as a Muslim feminist. At that time, we actually had an [agenda] of closing this gap. Preparing a new ground for women who feel like us, who cannot actually take part in feminist organization… [Our main objective was] to integrate women…into feminism [and] to talk about the religious dimension of feminism which we thought was not actually [given enough space in the feminist women's movement]…. And in this way, we are actually giving the association the mission of mainstreaming feminism in Türkiye."

Another frequently articulated problem by the interviewed women is the prevailing discursive and unintentional “hierarchy” between women who are active within the women’s movement. The feminist assumption within women’s movement considers
women’s rights activism as an act for challenging patriarchy, challenging ‘male power’ and struggle with all political, social and other power arrangements of domination and subordination on the basis of gender. This definition of “feminism” might presuppose that “feminism” as a social movement would be against hierarchy and discrimination. However, “feminism” is not the title of a certain social movement, certain ideology or a certain identity, on the contrary, it has different forms and changing meanings according to its agents. Although social movement theories assert an ideology the movements, which is based upon the assumption of autonomous individuals organized around non-material concerns, the structural limitations within which social movements act in order to establish collective actions is also related with power relations both within and outside of the movement. As mentioned by many of the interviewed women from different political standings – including one of the participants from Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2), women’s movement itself is also subject to certain structural limitations which paves the way for hegemony, hierarchy and discrimination among women. One of the most articulated facts regarding women’s movement in Türkiye is about prevailing hierarchy among women and certain women who are constantly “on the stage” and brought forward by other women within women’s movement. On the other hand, one of the interviewed women from Havle Women’s Association also emphasized that women’s movement should be built upon a solidarity which is released from antagonism, should let women speak who are not from academia, should be released from elitism and should be more inclusive in terms of giving floor to different views.

**Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2):** “…It is necessary to rethink about the hierarchical relationship between women. I think that hierarchy is getting stronger… I attach importance to the fact that the names of some people are constantly highlighted, they are made untouchable, some people always being talked about, coming to the fore, [while] other people…become obscure.”

**Havle Women’s Association (4):** “I have known a lot of women, especially among the Istanbul feminists, who have worked hard in the field for years…but who have never been invited to any critical meeting. That is something that makes me very sad, for example, in this GREVIO process, none of them were there. There are always academics. I don't think that women who love the stage…can bring this work forward. We see the same names under each report. There is a feminist elite group, and…elitism continues. It makes me a little desperate.”
As discussed before, organizing around certain values and ideas is mainly a practice of middle class – or new middle class – who can afford to access to knowledge, can allocate time and energy and can develop certain capabilities. This results with the development of a discursive collectivity and hegemonic norms and values - and thus, hegemonic identity – which refers to common ideas, values, capabilities and lifestyles of a particular social group or social movement. Besides, the assumption that women can be unified on the ground of their shared experiences and shared characteristics also reflects the epistemic privileges of white, secular and middle-class women, which was embedded in the second wave feminism. The epistemic privileges also associate with the hegemonic “cultural capital” developed and owned by the white, secular and middle-class women that creates an unintentional privilege over “other” women. As discussed by Walker (1984), there are various examples of reactions of women from different socio-economic backgrounds against the epistemic privileges of white, middle-class women, such as black feminists, who even rejected the term “feminism” and adopted “womanism” instead in order to criticise the association of feminism with whiteness. A similar account was introduced within the scope of the interviews particularly by volunteer women who argue that there is an invisible and unintentional hegemony of “older”, “knowledgeable” and “experienced” women within women’s organizations and women’s movement, which is not imposed but acknowledged by young volunteer women. It is an important fact that women who are against hierarchy and hegemony also bear the risk of establishing their own hierarchy and hegemony within their own collectivity. An interviewed woman who is volunteering in a women’s organization articulates that the knowledge of “old” feminists on “feminism” might create an “unintentional” hierarchy over the new comers and might create an “unintentional” hegemony in practice. She also emphasizes the – discursive – gap between the discourse and practice, within which both the feminist ideals and issues are discussed, and where feminist practices also needs to be protected. Another volunteer woman states that she feels herself “inexperienced” or “not sufficient enough” to talk about “feminism” or to identify herself as “feminist” among all those “experienced” women who have been active for a long time period in women’s movement.

The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity (3): "For example, I believe that since old feminists have more practices in feminism than new feminists, they can be a little
more active and their words can have a bigger impact on us. But they do not do it in an oppressive way. For example, for me, there are women like whatever they say is right for me (laughs).... This might naturally create a hierarchy.... If they do not have a feminist awareness of their own, they might be dominant in this field.”

The Foundation for Women’s Solidarity (2): “…Older women, women who have always been in street protests since the 1980s, women who have always gathered in consciousness raising groups, etc… Sometimes…makes me feel like I am just a little spot there…. So feminism seems to me to be something much bigger…based on equality for everyone, equality for everything, and structuring all actions and all areas…accordingly…. As you can see, my personal experiences are also a bit effective in constructing this definition in this way. I'm confused.”

7.2.2. The Need for Organizing in Women’s Own “Habitus”
The creation or acknowledgement of feminism as a hegemonic identity is not only related with the hegemony of cultural and social capital owned by white, secular, middle-class women, but also related with their lifestyle and values. The term habitus, which was first and foremost introduced by Bourdieu (1984), refers to economic, cultural and symbolic capital that people acquire in life in return are matched with certain kind of dispositions, tastes and values. Besides, habitus associates with a field connotes a social setting organized around specific types of capital, i.e., resources of power determining the relative positioning of the subject, and in return, generates and generated by a certain system of certain dispositions.
The secular-Islamic dichotomy, as being one of the biggest cleavages in Türkiye, always subject to the discussions of “legitimate” discourse, aesthetic values and expectations which signifies two different habitus.

The secular-Islamic dichotomy, “legitimate” discourse and aesthetic values which are predominantly “secular”, based on the modernization experience of Türkiye, also creates and implies a cultural hegemony on ‘others’; namely, who does not belong to that particular habitus. One of the explicit reflections of dominant feminist dispositions, tastes and values was articulated by one of the interviewed women from Capital City Women’s Platform (3) who illustrated hegemonic feminists as the ones “who even eat as a feminist” which implies performance of “feminism” in the form of radical strategies and discourses and on the other hand, implies a middle-class movement which stands as a “privileged” and “discursively Western” mode of feminism in non-Western contexts. However, it was also articulated that this
prevailing antagonism between different women does not create a problem in terms of their communication and cooperation with different women’s organizations.

(When it is asked what is the most fundamental problem of women's movement)

Capital City Women’s Platform (3): "There is a group of extreme feminists…even when they eat, they eat like feminists. But we also work with them and we do not have many problems. At most, we argue a little…. They see themselves a little different…. That's what I think. But we love them, we really do not have an unusual problem."

As discussed by many scholars, studying the articulation of “feminist identity and identification” is of much importance in order to better analyse the contemporary feminist identity configurations and gender discourses. The dominant feminism is also visible in the interviews with other Muslim women who described the “legitimate” discourse and aesthetic values implicit in the “feminist” organizations with the feeling of “not belonging” to that organizations. Two interviewed women from Havle Women’s Association emphasized the need for being organized with the ones “who look, live and think like them” because of the feeling of “not belonging” to that particular habitus. One of the young volunteer women from Havle Women’s Association expressed her assumption of “being criticized” due to her Muslim identity if she would participate into other [secular] women’s organizations even though she finds the existence of different women’s organizations quite valuable. Hence, she underlined her need for positioning herself in a women’s organization where she feels herself “safe and confident”. Another interviewed woman from Havle Women’s Association similarly expressed the feeling of “being alien” within the feminist organizations and feeling of not belong to the so-called “feminist friendship” among “feminists” who take place in that feminist organization, which implies the power dimension inevitably involved into any public sphere.

Havle Women’s Association (young volunteer woman) (2): "I find Havle's work really valuable and the reason why I got involved in Havle is because I actually feel a bit more comfortable there…. I see it as a place where people like me – I am saying this in quotation marks - exist and I can also exist. No matter how much I criticize it, I find it very valuable…. Is this why I don't take part in other women's organizations since I would feel more uncomfortable there? Not really... This is probably a little bit related to the fact that I refer myself as a Muslim…. Since I am a Muslim, I might look different there [in other women’s organizations]…. I mean, I
am actually a feminist, and maybe they are feminists too. However, for some reason I feel like there will be tension when we get together. And I position myself where I feel more comfortable. In fact, this is also something that shows why I need Havle….”

**Havle Women’s Association (4):** “For example, I remember the day I went to [a meeting of a feminist organization] for the first time. I was around, 21, 22 years old…. I remember feeling like, I am a guest there and they served me tea and say a few greetings. But it was very clear that I will not have a path here. I felt very clearly that I could not be part of their ambiance of friendship, feminist friendship…. So…I need to find women who look like me, live like me, think like me….”

As Moi (1991: 1024) argues, “any field is necessarily structured by a series of unspoken and unspeakable rules for what can legitimately be said or perceived within the field.” Thus, any field is owned or dominated by the individuals who possess the necessary capital and display dispositions adjusted to the field - that also creates the habitus. One of the interviewed Muslim women expressed that meeting with “feminism”, did not only entail a change in their ideology but in their habitus, which apparently implies and recognizes a dominant lifestyle of secular, middle-class women organized within women’s movement. However, in the case of women’s movement/women’s organizations the articulation of the “change in habitus”, does not imply an exclusionary notion or “upward mobility”, on the contrary implies a mobility between different cultures – or different habitus, which entails a change in their way of living and the use of places in a city. On the other hand, another Muslim woman from the same women’s organizations underlines an implicit censorship works through an implicit agreement among women, which also resulted with a discursive articulation of what can be spoken within the women’s movement. She articulates an implicit exclusion from the field – which hear implies women’s movement –since they want to discuss religion and “localization of feminism” among the discussions held within women’s movement.

**Havle Women’s Association (4):** "...I have never been in Taksim or Kadıköy until I met feminism. I always felt like a stranger in the city…. I used to feel very uneasy when I went to the upper middle-class neighbourhoods of Istanbul. For example, I [was feeling like ] I can't afford anything here [in the upper middle-class neighbourhoods of Istanbul], [if] something happens here, I would be dumbfounded, I can't do anything, no one would come and help me…. A great uneasiness…. Üsküdar, Fatih, our neighbourhoods which are richer but conservative…were the places where we felt more comfortable. For me, meeting feminism was something that changed [my] “habitus”….."
Havle Women’s Association (1): "We are going to organize a conference on the localization of feminism, which is basically one of the points that...prevents us from getting into feminism, [the thing that] it does not talk about religion.... In fact, we will try to answer some questions like why many women with feminist pretensions prefer not to position themselves within feminism. Women more in local [areas]."

Another important fact underlined by the interviewed women in terms of *implicit – and unintentional - exclusion* within the women’s movement is about 1) social status of women and 2) dominant tastes and aesthetic values of women who are active in the women’s movement. One of the interviewed Muslim women articulated that some women stayed outside of the decisions taken based on the fact that they are married and need to take care of their husband and children, and thus, cannot be able to participate into meetings organized at 7 p.m. in which certain decisions are taken. She also emphasized that women, those who are active in women’s movement, are usually “unmarried” women and women who are not employed in sectors with busy working hours, thus women who can be able to allocate time and energy to the activities undertaken within women’s movement. In addition to that, some of the interviewed women took attention to the differences in *lifestyles and tastes* which creates an unintentional cleavage among women who are active in the same organization. An explicit example of this was articulated as the difference between “drinking tea” – which implicitly and discursively implies “conservative” and/or “religious” lifestyle – and “drinking beer” - which implicitly and discursively implies a hegemonic lifestyle and taste of white, secular, middle-class women. This discursive exposition of “drinking wine” and implicit reference to white, secular, middle-class women was also articulated by another interviewed woman who expressed the need for explanation of the “hierarchy” and “domination” that she observed in women’s meetings on violence against women, which refers to – in Bourdieusian terminology - belonging to a particular *habitus* and arbitrary power configuration.

Havle Women’s Association (4): "When we go out of our organization, we sit in a cafe...we drink tea, we make decisions by mistake, we talk politics by mistake. We accidentally get excited and we want to implement that decision tomorrow.... Usually those who have children cannot come. Those who have husbands cannot stay in the evening.... Therefore, the decisions of women without families become more effective.... Because...it is not possible for a woman who works 8 in the morning and 8 in the evening to come to the......meetings at 7 pm...to actively
participate in meetings three days a week…. There are [usually] friends who are students or civil servants and who do not work hard..."

"...[After leaving a meeting], [women usually] go straight to the bars.... And...women who cannot enter that environment where alcohol is consumed...cannot participate in those conversations [and] are left out of that circle. We have so many splits like that. For instance, we are coming out [of a meeting]...and walk up the street...then, we ask each other "where are you going?", "we're going to drink here", "we're going to have tea over there", "can't you come with us? But there is also tea there, you come and drink your tea with us” and so on. And then, we cannot agree and leave. Two separate groups, one going for a beer, the other going for tea. Therefore, you are staying out of the circle.”

KAMER Foundation (1): “We are made up of very strong women. Indeed, each of us has a different power... [But] I realize that we don't listen to each other much and there is too much hierarchy. I will give a very simple example of a recent meeting I attended. A big meeting of a coalition... The TCK 103 Platform.... We created a WhatsApp group for this. There are 154 people in the group, [however there are women] sending a photo of the wine they drank until 2 a.m. to the group... [There are conversations like] "How are you? How are you doing? How is she? Is she okay?" I couldn't believe it.”

Creation of diverse public spheres is not only a matter of having similar ideologies and discourses but also matter of lifestyles and tastes which refers to “something that makes women feel comfortable and belong”. The interview held with one of the women from Socialist Feminist Collective well illustrates the interconnectedness between lifestyles, tastes and cultural hegemony established within middle-class educated women which unintentionally leaves women who are not ‘sufficiently modernized’ and who do not feel belong to that particular habitus, even though the women in the organization pay particular attention to the differences between women and not leaving anyone outside. She expressed this like similar lifestyles “creates a harmony”. However, she also emphasized that this has never been done with the purpose of leaving “others” out, while they take care of being inclusive as much as possible.

Socialist Feminist Collective (2): “Most of them [women in the Socialist Feminist Collective] are women who live similar lives... We live in metropolitan Istanbul. We have more or less similar levels of education. Not everyone has to have a master's degree or something, but whatever.... We are more or less people with similar habits.... It creates a harmony.... That harmony is something that makes you feel comfortable and that makes you feel belonged.... However, when there is a situation where there is someone who cannot do this, of course, we take care of them... There
might be some people who felt like outsiders, but at least I know very well that there is an intention [of being inclusive as much as possible]."

7.2.3. Lack of Intersectionality

It was largely acknowledged by many of the interviewed women that the highly fragmented structure of society in Türkiye both makes it difficult for women being organized within women’s movement for struggling for the women’s rights and gender equality and brought an opportunity in terms of broadening the borders of the movement with the inclusion of different agents with diverse identities. The notion of “intersectionality” stands at the heart of the discussions related both to the “weaknesses” and “strengths” of women’s movement. As discussed by many scholars, “intersectionality” reveals different axes of identity interact on multiple levels and systematically contribute to experiences of domination and exclusion. This approach basically aims to challenge all presupposed comprehensive identity categories, such as the category of “woman”, which entails an inevitable hegemony based on the privileged positions of individual perspectives that define the concept of “woman” (Hekman, 2004:16). As discussed by one of the interviewed women from KAMER Foundation (1), in the history of women’s movement in Türkiye, there is an apparent hegemonic articulation of women’s rights which was reduced to the rights of aristocrat, middle-class, educated, white women that is away from being pluralist and not sensitive towards different identities of women. Although she acknowledges that this has changed through time and with increasing intersectionality of identities within women’s movement, she also argues that there is still room for improvement.

KAMER Foundation (1): "When we look at the history of women's rights in Türkiye, it seems like they are the rights of a certain group of women.... The rights of aristocratic women, or the rights of [upper-middle class] women.... There is nothing very holistic, very pluralistic.... [However]...it has changed a lot, it has evolved a lot.... I can say that intersectionality has changed us all.... It is important that we move forward...."

Another interviewed woman from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1) takes attention to three prominent and prevalent ideological cleavage within women’s movement. First one is the prevalent prejudice and discrimination against Kurdish women which shows itself as a practice of ignorance combined with a
feeling of nationalism and racism. Second one is the prejudice against Islamic women’s organizations that ignores their need to speak from within their own comprehensive doctrines and challenge the dominant secular literary canon. Third one is the homophobic and discriminatory perspective against LGBTI+ people that ignores their sexual identity claims. She argues that many women’s organizations within the women’s movement failed to keep up with the increasing diversity and “political expansion” in women’s movement in terms of giving up their hegemonic understanding towards different identities, rights and liberties.

Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (I): "...No matter how diversely women joined into the women's movement...and became stronger, one of the weaknesses of the women's movement was that... Most of the independent women's movements, feminists and organizations could not keep up with this political expansion. For example, they were very prejudiced against religious women's organizations. We were... There are still women who approach Kurdish women's organizations with a very serious sense of nationalism, almost with a feeling and practice of racism in quotation marks. There are also many women who have a homophobic and discriminatory perspective...against women in LGBT organizations and do not question it...[against] women with disabilities [as well].... The movement has taken off, expanded, grown.... But the women's movement itself has not yet digested this in terms of inclusiveness and mentality....”

Similar to the identity claims of Islamic women’s rights activists, the identity claims of Kurdish women also pose a great challenge against nationalist/republican presumption of unitary character of “women’s demands” within women’s movement. That is to say, the idea of uniting under the common identity of “woman”, especially before the 1990s, not only assumed a unitary conception of “womenhood” but also the idea of having the same nationalist/republican feelings related to the demands and needs of women. “Kurdish problem”, which is mainly based upon the cultural identity claims of Kurdish people living in Türkiye and the refusal of recognition of distinct ethnic identity of Kurdish people by the Turkish government, has always been one of the most challenging issues in the political history of Türkiye and also entails one of the most prominent cleavages within women’s movement, especially between Kurdish and nationalist/republican women’s organizations.

As being one of the most explicit examples of intersectionality of identities, Kurdish women’s movement well illustrates that there are multiple axis of oppression that in
certain cases intersect with “being a woman” and without taken into consideration these intersectional identities it is not possible to make diverse problems of different women visible and ensure gender equality which applies to all segments of society. The interview held with the participant from Turkish Women’s Union (1) set light to the evolving women’s movement history in Türkiye, which passed through certain ignorance and discrimination between women’s organizations, exceeding to excluding each other during campaigns for advocating for women’s rights. The participant also underlined that certain obstacles, such as being intolerant towards each other, were overcame with passing time and increasing interaction between diverse women’s organizations.

**Turkish Women’s Union (1):** "...During the amendment of the Penal Code, it would be voted in the Parliament. We planned a big rally... We were 200-300 organizations... We planned to march to the Parliament, we were all together.... The police surrounded us.... We had a statement, and we also had friends from Kurdish organizations. They said, “let's read both in Turkish and Kurdish”. We said yes, and of course the police intervened. [In addition to that] [a Kemalist women's organization] said that, if the statement would be read in Kurdish, they would withdraw from the rally and they withdrew.... Plus, there were also LGBTIs among us.... At that time, [an Islamic women's organization] also came and said, "our religion does not accept LGBTI people, thus, we won't participate", so they withdrew... Today they [Islamic women's organizations] can [raise their voice] and say that [LGBTI+ rights] are human rights. But in the 2000s, at the very beginning of this organized struggle, we were able to face all these [obstacles]."

Although majority of the interviewed women point out the remarkable change within women’s movement in terms of the recognition of multiple identities and identity claims of different groups, such as Islamic women, Kurdish women, LGBTI+ people, interviews with women’s organizations with diverse ideological standings reveal that the problems that involve ignoring Kurdish women’s claim for their “right of expression in the mother tongue” and being intolerant to the use of the concept “Kurdistan” - which is mainly used for describing a predominantly Kurdish region - by considering it as a divisive political expression still prevail. One of the interviewed Kurdish women from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1) took attention to the criticisms they faced by different women’s organizations,

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67 hooks, 1984; Mohanty, 1991
who question the use of words “Kurd” and “Kurdistan”, due to their support to Kurdish seasonal workers who travelled from Mardin to Sakarya in 2020 for collecting hazelnut and attacked by the people in Sakarya and using the word “Kurdistan” in one of the women’s congresses. Moreover, another interviewed Kurdish woman from Havle Women’s Association (3) emphasized that the most significant weaknesses of women’s movement are the political polarization between women’s organizations and being ignorant towards multiple discrimination and inequality that Kurdish and Islamic women face. She also underlined that when it comes to being sensitive towards different forms of oppression and discrimination, women’s organizations fail to effectively respond to the repressive policies of the government towards Kurdish women and support the struggle of veiled women for their rights.

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1):** "[There was an] incident where Kurdish workers were attacked and women were beaten. A couple of our friends wrote messages about it. Right after that there were reactions [from the women’s movement], saying "why do you only say Kurdish?". A friend of ours said “Kurdistan” in a meeting and it instantly sparked an uproar. [Women saying] "how dare, where is Kurdistan?”; “how dare you say Kurdistan?”.... The police were called because Kurdish was spoken at assemblies. We cannot say “Kurdish”, we cannot say “Kurdistan”.... These are very backward things. [The things] that pull us down.”

**Havle Women’s Association (3):** "...The reason why the level of struggle is weak is a bit political... We have some difficulties when we try to include others.... Maybe we would be much stronger if we were...more inclusive, more cooperative.... For example, a lot of Kurdish women have been sent to prison here [in the eastern regions of Türkiye]... Not even 1% of the feminist organizations in the West have made a very little noise.... So...the [Kurdish women’s] struggle here was ignored. [Similarly] the struggle of women wearing headscarf is not supported by the more radical feminists."

Lack of intersectionality is not only expressed as overlooking intersectionality of rights and overlapping identities but also identified as being closed to different opinions and diversities among the agents of women’s movement, which was described as “conservatism”. The interview with one of the representatives of “traditional” women’s organizations, namely, Association for Protecting and Supporting Family (AKODER) (1), shows that although they do not identify themselves and their organization as “feminist”, they have been influenced by feminist discourse and discussions, have connection with other feminist and
women’s organizations as well as LGBTI+ organizations, and position themselves apart from other religious women's organizations, which they describe as "conservative" and who are closer to the government policies.

**Association for Protecting and Supporting Family (1):** "For example... I attended feminist meetings; I attended meetings of homosexuals. I attended as a person wearing a headscarf. Yes, they looked at me strangely, I looked at them strangely when we first met, but later.... we became friends with many people, we became friends with feminists from there..."

Depending on the interview with the participant from AKODER, what they understand from “conservatism” is “being ignorant for reading, researching or questioning about opinions and ideas that differ from their own”, instead of being religious or having comprehensive doctrines. Hence, the interviewed participant described all different political and religious ideologies, including the secular, leftist, rightist, atheist, religious etc., being ignorant against each other as “conservative”. What is evident in the interview is that Türkiye’s withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in March 2021 has become a breaking point among traditional and conservative women’s organizations. As expressed by the interviewer, although they were initially convinced by the groups who believe that Istanbul Convention pose a threat against “Turkish society”, “family values” and women, they started to search for the content of Istanbul Convention to understand whether it really pose the alleged threat and concluded that it does not. Deriving from this point of view, they started to advocate for the re-enactment of the Istanbul Convention and explicitly describe the women’s organizations and platforms who have been advocating against Istanbul Convention as “conservative”.

**Association for Protecting and Supporting Family (1):** “Conservatism includes all of them: Seculars, leftists, rightists, atheists, religious ones... Therefore, we are still reading, our ideas are still changing. If we stand still, we become conservative, Conservatism is a disaster for all humanity. It is stagnant because it does not improve itself....

"...First we believed what we were told [about] the Istanbul Convention. The Istanbul Convention would really affect family, women and will worsen Turkish

68 The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
Besides, when it is asked whether they have a predefined criteria in terms of choosing the CSOs or groups they will cooperate with, another interviewed women from Women’s Coalition (3) underlined that although they cared about ensuring diversity and inclusiveness in women’s platforms, one of the biggest challenges that she experienced while working in Ankara Women’s Platform was the difficulty of working with women who have leftist orientation based on the fact that they posed a *hierarchical dominant discourse* which was intolerant towards different ideas and discourses adopted by other women in the platform. In the anecdote she told, she underlined that in a moment that they will make a joint statement in the name of a women’s platform, they realized that the statement that was jointly prepared by the women’s platform has been changed by a group of left oriented women in way they think “more appropriate”.

**Women’s Coalition (3):** "...I cannot be in such an organization...with such red lines...so none of the organizations I was in were like that.... But I remember that we had a lot of difficulty with women from the left in the Ankara Women's Platform. Because strangely there was a much more dominant male perspective...a very...hierarchical...strict discourse.... For example, we were going to publish a joint press release. We prepared something, and then the press came. Fifteen minutes before, we realized that they [women from the left] were changing the text, they added something else [which] did not reflect us, [and] we didn't make a joint decision, etc. ...."

7.2.4. Lack of a Shared Agenda in Women’s Movement

It was several times articulated by the interviewed women that one of the strongest aspects of the women's movement in Türkiye is its ability to organize very quickly when it comes to issues such as violence against women or responding to the repressive legal reforms. As argued by many scholars, as of the 1990s, increasing number of women’s organizations also brought a significant amount of
diversification and fragmentation in the field of women’s activism. On the other hand, this increasing diversification and fragmentation did not entail women’s movement to become a movement that defines their own agenda, but stayed limited with issues violence against women and struggling for legal reforms. Similar to this argument, an interviewed young woman from Flying Broom Association (2) underlined that, “lack of comprehensiveness” and “lack of a common target” which embrace diverse problems and issues of women from different backgrounds and staying as a white, middle-class women’s movement which disregards class dimension, diversity and intersectionality, are some of the important shortcomings of the women’s movement in Türkiye. She also emphasized that, even though women’s movement is able to “get together” on certain issues, such as violence against women, rape and harassment, what is fundamental for women’s movement is finding out common points which intersects all different groups, classes and identities within women’s movement.

Flying Broom Association (2): “Maybe not inclusive enough. Maybe that is why…. I read about “intersectionality” etc. When I think about what binds us all, the only thing that comes to my mind is violence…. Things like violence, rape and harassment come up. Other than that, I don't know exactly a common “target”. Maybe the problem is that I cannot find this common ground. But, well, class differences are also very important…. [For instance] I define myself as working class. And being in such a white, middle-class women's struggle does not attract me…. Let's imagine a Kurdish woman. That is why it is so hard... To be able to find a common ground.”

Similarly, another interviewed woman from Socialist Feminist Collective (3) stressed that one of the most important shortcomings of the women's movement in Türkiye is that, it cannot set and consistently act within the framework of a certain agenda apart from fighting against the repressive and conservative policies of the government. In her comparison of women’s movement in Türkiye, with the “right to abortion” movement in Argentina since 2003, she took attention to the continuous and consistent efforts of women’s organizations in Argentina in terms of identifying their own agenda for claiming their rights, which was concluded with the legalization of abortion in 2020 as a victory of women’s movement.

Socialist Feminist Collective (3): "...When I look at the [women’s movement], I don't see that the women's movement sets an agenda and something is done within
the framework of this agenda. Especially since 2000, I cannot say that at all. Before 2000, there were some examples...[like] the Campaign Against Bullying.... After 2000, I cannot think of anything like that.... We have the Istanbul Convention on our agenda...we have femicides, but it is not clear what we say about femicides.... For example, think about the struggle for [right to] abortion in Argentina.... In Argentina they started with a meeting of 10,000 people in 2003, then they established the campaign in 2005, [and] they continued on their way steadily...."

Along with lack of *intersectionality* and *inclusivity* in women’s movement the interviewed young woman from Flying Broom Association (2) also identified lack of *praxis* as one of the prominent problems of the women’s movement in Türkiye. She underlines that although street movement is quite strong in terms of advocating for women’s rights and gender equality, when it comes to thinking about the theoretical framework of the advocacy conducted by women’s organizations it stays weak comparing to street movement.

**Flying Broom Association (2):** "Well, maybe this is a very academic answer, but I think "praxis" is not very strong. The phenomenon we call “praxis” is not at a very advanced level in Türkiye.... There are times when the street movement gets stronger and sometimes it declines.... But I think the street movement is still strong right now.... It is strong despite all the prohibitions..... But from a theoretical point of view [of] "praxis", [women’s movement] is weak."

The interviews with women from different women’s organizations are important in terms of revealing the implicit three intersecting problems of women’s movement, which was largely emphasized in the literature and articulated by many of the interviewed women. The interviews take attention to the hegemony of white, middle-class women in women’s movement which entails overlooking the diversities of women, being restricted with the advocacy for legal reforms and thus, being limited with issue-based activism mainly organized around the issue of violence against women. Deriving from this point of view, “issue-based activism” as one of the most fundamental shortcomings of women’s movement will be analysed in detail in the following section.

### 7.2.5. Issue-based Activism

While the 1980s, especially the period after the 1980 military coup, acknowledged with mass feminist demonstrations basically organized around certain issues such as
violence against women and targeting juridical decisions as well as neo-liberal policies, the 1990s marked by the establishment of many heterogenous women organizations and rising internationalization especially deriving from EU accession process. It was largely argued that women’s movement gained a significant autonomy especially after the 1980 military coup and started to bring problems of women in private sphere, such as domestic violence against women, on the political agenda and target legal framework to improve women’s rights and women’s status in Türkiye (Coşar and Onbaşı, 2008; Gupta, 2015). As Sirman (1989) argues, the political authoritarianism of the 1980s, which coincide with broadening women’s movement in Türkiye, both triggered women’s movement to gain its autonomy, however on the other hand, cause women’s movement not being able to cross its limits of being an issue-based activism. 2000s, on the other hand, witnessed a diverse form of conservatism and authoritarianism during the rule of AKP, who adopted an Islamic perspective of fitrat (purpose of creation) - which refers to differential natures of men and women - instead of gender equality and put the family at the center of their policies while pointing out family as “the only institution within which women’s sexuality can rightly be expressed and their sanctified role, motherhood, realized” (Özyeğin, 2015:197). Although until the 2010s, AKP adopted an egalitarian and reformist approach towards gender equality and enabled significant improvements in women’s rights together with the legal amendments in the Constitution, the Penal Code and the Labour Code, and by establishing an Equal Opportunity Commission in the Parliament in 2009, its gender equality policies have significantly transformed into an authoritarian-populist gender regime which departed from the notion of gender equality (Aldıkaçtı Marshall, 2013; Müftüler-Baç, 2012). Some of the significant policy changes in 2010s during the rule of AKP can be summarized as, replacement of the State Ministry responsible for Women and the Family with the Ministry of Family and Social Policy (Ministry of Labour, Social Services and Family as of June 2018) and enactment of the bill (the so-called Mufti law) that allows muftis (religious civil servants) to perform civil marriages in 2017. The period beginning with the 2010s also witnessed to systematic suppression, discrimination and hate speech against LGBTI+ people by describing the activities of LGBTI+ people as “against public morality”. Türkiye’s withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in March 2021 can be regarded as the utmost point that the conservative
policies of AKP reached and led women’s organization and platforms to mobilize against the withdrawal from the Convention and establishment of large-scale women's platforms to monitor the developments in the Turkish Parliament.

With regards to the increasing conservative and discriminatory gender policies of the government, majority of the interviewed women pointed out the shrinking space for women’s and LGBTI+ organizations, where they are coerced to fight with continuous attacks against women’s and LGBTI+ rights. As emphasized by one of the interviewed women from Socialist Feminist Collective (3), women’s movement in Türkiye, unfortunately, always manifests itself as a reaction towards the repressive policies of the government and predominantly focus on improving or amending the existing laws so as to comply with women’s rights and gender equality. As it is evident in the interview with the participant from Socialist Feminist Collective, the period after the 2000s has a peculiar importance for women’s movement both in terms of increasing coalition building between different women’s organizations and in terms of drawback of conservative neo-liberal policies introduced by the government. On the other hand, dominant “issue-based activism” among women’s organizations constitutes an obstacle against building up strong coalitions between women’s organizations. Moreover, another interviewed young woman from Havle Women’s Association (3), which was established in 2018 by Islamic feminists, underlined that their most intense areas of cooperation with other women’s organizations are mainly related to violence against women and legal reforms and they recently participated into the advocacy activities against Türkiye’s withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in March 2021, which was conducted by various women’s organization and platforms.

Socialist Feminist Collective (3): "...The women's movement in Türkiye has always, unfortunately, been working on the basis of the government's reactions or...the laws brought to the agenda.... For example, the [amendment] of the Penal Code was a great success in 2005.... The articles on sexual assault/sexual harassment were included, [and] the articles on crimes against society were changed."

Havle Women’s Association (3): "...I think we cooperate more [within the scope of] actions, policies, the Istanbul Convention, or when there is a situation related to violence against women... Our cooperation remains a little more in solidarity.... In the 8 March, [or] on 25 November.... If something has happened to a woman, or a
women's association has been closed down, or in the policies to be made regarding violence against women…[we become] signatories, or there are meetings where we all women's organizations work together regarding the Istanbul Convention…”

7.2.6. Professionalization

Another important reason of the fragmentation and increasing issue-oriented activism within women’s movement is expressed as increasing institutionalization within women’s movement together with diversification of resources, emergence of international funds and increasing international cooperation between women’s organizations. The new modes of organizations mainly based upon ad-hoc issues concerning women’s rights and gender equality and brought forward a certain level of professionalization among women’s organizations. Three prominent problems were largely emphasized by the interviewed women regarding the increasing issue-based activism and professionalization within women’s movement. First, especially after the 1990s the increase in the institutionalism and project-based activism that mainly came into the stage with European Accession process and fund allocated by UN agencies as part of their “developmentalist” projects has resulted with a more short-scaled, short-termed, ad-hoc and issue-based activism. It has largely been argued that while the issue-based activism has certain opportunities such as rapid draw backs in the authoritarian-patriarchal policies, the lack of sustainability in terms of cooperation among women’s organizations hampers the development of long-term comprehensive policies concerning women’s rights and gender equality. Second, increasing number of women’s organizations together with the emergence of international funds also brought with diversified and fragmented activism varying on different issues, which – to a certain extent - disrupts the ability of women’s movement to produce a common agenda and activism, not necessarily are designated in line with the priorities identified by the donor organizations. Third, the emergence of international funds not only brought with diversified and fragmented activism among women’s organizations, but also entailed inevitable and discursive dominant activism of middle-class, educated, urban women who are mainly voicing the ideals of middle-class women.

69 Diner & Tokaş, 2010:52-53
Within the scope of the interviews, increasing institutionalization and professionalization among women’s organizations are primarily problematized by secular, liberal, feminist/reformist and socialist women’s organizations. When I asked “how do they evaluate the history of the women's rights struggle in Türkiye?” and “what are the strengths and weaknesses of the women's rights struggle in Türkiye?”, an interviewed woman from Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2) described one of the most significant shortcomings of women’s movement as increasing “professionalization”, which creates a disengagement from activism. It is a fact that, one of the most critical issues for women’s organizations, is to ensure their institutional sustainability, which directs them to seek for external funds and develop mainly short-term, ad hoc projects in line with the requirements and priorities of the donor organizations. Related to this, it was largely argued that this increasing trend of “issue-based activism” among women’s organizations due to the rapidly changing political agenda of the government and highly diversified and fragmented nature of available funds, is an important indicator of prevailing ideological cleavages between women’s organizations, and the lack of common reference point and feminist political stance which goes beyond the limits of dominant political agenda (Coşar & Onbaşı, 2008).

Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2): "Being project oriented, the relations with international institutions, the United Nations, the European Union Delegation, a great desire to take part in those international institutionalized mechanisms…. is the point of breaking away from activism."

Another interviewed woman from Capital City Women’s Platform (1), acknowledged the necessity of availability of funding opportunities for women’s organizations while describing “professionalization” as something “inevitable” for the survival of women's organizations. On the other hand, she also underlined that, this also brings with the problem of ‘being stuck’ within the predetermined agenda of the donor organizations and inability to focus on the issues that women’s organizations would set as a priority for themselves and produce policy recommendations other than the predefined priorities of donor organizations. In addition to that, an interviewed woman from Women Coalition (1) emphasized that, although the availability of funds provided in the form of projects are quite important in terms of strengthening and supporting women from different socio-economic
backgrounds and supporting the nation-wide activities of women’s organizations, this also entails “professionalization” and hampers the political aspect of activism, which paves the way for women can no longer be a “political subject” and turn out to be “technical staff”.

**Capital City Women’s Platform (1):** "Developing projects is inevitably necessary for women's organizations to survive. But the funds...are organized under certain headings.... When [a women’s organization] want to do a different work that does not fit into these specific headings, they cannot find funding. When [women’s organizations try] to comply with those headings, [then] the problems of women's organizations, [and] their work on developing political proposals and problem identification are led by the funding agency. This is what bothers and upsets me the most.”

**Women’s Coalition (1):** "I think that funding, resources, projects or grants, have a very empowering and useful aspect. When women do not even have the experience of going out of their neighbourhoods..., or when a women's organization would like to do anything nationwide, the smallest supports make great contributions.... So, there are many empowering...useful and good aspects [of funds]. On the other hand, depending on the way it is used and depending on the way the funds are distributed, [they] have a weakening aspect, rather than strengthening. Because these funds can turn some structures into something so professional that they can reduce politics to technique. In other words, [women’s organizations] can no longer be a political subject and turn into technical staff... When the field of politics is tried to be squeezed into the framework of the project, it begins to move away from being politics. This, of course, brings about another kind of marketization, something like drawing a path according to the demand of the project.”

As Arat (2006) argues, project-based activism – or “*project feminism*” – entails women’s organizations to focus on the everyday issues related to women and their own organizations, while alienating women’s organizations from focusing on strategic issues of feminism. This also resulted with difficulties in communication between women’s organizations, detachment from grassroots organizations, weakening of volunteerism and bureaucratization of activism. One of the interviewed women from Women’s Platform for Equality (1) argued that while “professionalization” among women’s organizations increases, the distance between “professional staff” of women’s organizations and volunteers began to widen and “professionals” have become the main actors of policy development processes concerning women’s rights and gender equality. As mentioned by another interviewed woman from Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2), mobilizing volunteers depends on two important facts: 1) being a part of a social
movement that has a concrete objective, 2) engaging in activism or advocacy in order to find out a solution to a social problem. Otherwise, it is not possible to mobilize volunteers within the scope of a project which is narrow in scope and impact. In addition to that, another interviewed young woman from Flying Broom Association (2) emphasized that the dominant “project-based activism” within women’s movement, which is instrumental for women to bring their concerns into the political agenda, hampers women’s movement from making a macro level change that includes a feminist character.

Women’s Platform for Equality (1): "... As they [women’s organizations] became professionalized, as funds came into play, I think there emerged a gap, a distance between the volunteers and the professionals... Professionals has become the ones who determine the policies in the movement. This has created a distance between volunteers and professionals in the women's movement."

Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2): "...[When] all the work is based on projects…[one] cannot mobilize volunteers. Or one cannot mobilize volunteers if [they] are not part of the social movement. Either one will engage in advocacy, either one will act to solve a problem, either one will do something…so that people will come."

Flying Broom Association (2): “[It is not possible to] make macro changes. Because as per its structure, it is a field that developed in the 1980s and 1990s. I mean, civil society has always existed, of course, but…unfortunately, we all depend on projects at some point. So, it is very difficult to make a macro change…."

This structural obstacle that is created through the predetermined, diversified and fragmented nature of available funds, which refers to the necessity of complying with the priorities and eligibility criteria of donor organizations, paves the way for inevitable and privileged dominant position of middle-class, educated, urban women within women’s movement who have the necessary resources and cultural capital to reach out available funds. The dominant position of middle-class, educated, urban women within women’s movement also led to hierarchies, divisions and power imbalances within and among women’s organizations and articulation of only the needs and demands of middle-class women while leaving the needs and demands of women from different socio-economic status out of women’s movement’s agenda (Arat, 1997). Similar to that, one of the interviewed women from Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2) expressed that, when it comes to making a general evaluation regarding the women’s movement in Türkiye, what she sees is a women’s
movement that is dominated and led by middle-class women which articulates the ideals of middle-class women. Another interviewed woman from Women’s Coalition (1) took attention to the minimum technical requirements necessary for applying to international funds where a local or small women’s organization located in the provinces other than the metropolitan cities can hardly afford to fulfil the predetermined language and technical requirements.

Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2): "...And it seems to me that what is dominating right now is a women's movement dominated by middle-class women, led by middle-class women and voicing the ideals of middle-class women."

Women’s Coalition (1): "[In project development]…one must handle the language, one must know the required format [by funders], and one must have experience on implementation too. There are three separate things, it has an economy, it has a format, it has a language. And we know that some women's cooperative in Urfa, Siverek [a city in South-eastern Region of Türkiye] does not know all these three."

The emphasis on the need for protecting “activism” and not being stuck in the ‘trap’ of “professionalization” is also prevalent in the solution proposals of the women’s organizations. In order to overcome the problems arising from professionalization within the women's movement, almost all of the interviewed women from women’s collectives and platforms, such as Socialist Feminist Collective, Women’s Coalition, articulated that they deliberately refrain from receiving project-based funds and stay away from international donor organizations who predetermine certain priorities while allocating funds to civil society organizations. According to them, advocacy and activism cannot be made by “funds” and should not depend on the availability of resources. What is dominant in women’s movement today is the existence of professional women’s organizations who work like “opinion leaders” and who take the leading role in terms of the improvement of rights and legal framework. However, it was also emphasized that the dominance of professional women’s organizations in women’s movement cannot lead to a remarkable change in the political agenda of Türkiye. What is needed is the diffusion of women’s movement to all different cities, different neighbourhoods and different woman groups.

Socialist Feminist Collective (3): "I am a little distant from the fact that...advocacy is done with money.... I think that advocacy with money is a convenience and actually hinders the dynamic women's movement... In fact, the women's organizations who engage in advocacy work very professionally. There are very few
people [working in these organizations]. They work like opinion leaders. They are actually working in the field of legal rights. Nothing will come out of that picture that will shake Türkiye. What maintains that movement…are the women's group with a foot in city A, city B or in neighborhoods.”

**Women Coalition (1):** "We are a platform, so we have never preferred to apply to a funding source and receive funding. There are some decisions taken in the group, for example... We did not want to get involved with money."

On the other hand, when I asked what kind of financial support they think that women's organizations need in order to carry out strong/adequate activities and advocacy activities, one of the interviewed young woman from Havle Woman’s Association (2) emphasized that availability of international funds provides an important opportunity not only in financial means but also in terms of cooperation and exchange of information between women based in different countries to follow up “international gender agenda”.

**Havle Woman’s Association (2):** "...Working with transnational women's organizations abroad and carrying out projects at an international level can be really effective. This is an important thing not only for us, but also for other people, women living abroad to be able to see Türkiye more closely and to better follow the deficiencies and the problems of women in this country."

7.2.7. **The Problem of “Localization” and Socio-economic Differences Among Women**

Corresponding with the previous discussions, the problem of “localization” is another crucial topic that stands at the hearth of the discussions on women’s movement in Türkiye. It has largely been argued by many scholars that women’s movement still stays as a “metropolitan city movement” or “middle-class movement”, can hardly diffuse to local areas and engage with women from different socio-economic backgrounds and the dominant framing of the “gender equality” still prevails which unfortunately overlooks class-based discrimination among different cultural/religious sphere (Çağatay, 2018; Diner & Tokaş, 2010; Hacıvelioğlu, 2009; Somersan, 2019). Inefficacy (or inability) of women’s movement to bring up different problems of women onto the agenda is particularly based on the lack of organization among lower-class women as well as lack of time, financial opportunities and organizational capacity within those groups. The structural
limitations and inevitable domination of white, middle-class, educated women who own the necessary resources, skills and certain lifestyle as the frontrunners in women’s movement, and the inclusiveness and comprehensiveness of women’s organizations is still a question mark which also preoccupies the interviewed women in this study. Being aware of the structural limitations of acting within the scope of a women’s organization and women’s movement as well, many of the interviewed women acknowledge that they need to increase the diversity within their own organizations and within women’s movement, particularly by reaching out local women who are non-white, not educated, or not belonging to middle class, etc.

Similar to the largely articulated critiques against the distinction between middle-class, urban women with a high level of “cultural capital” as the “subjects” of women’s movement and lower-class women who are positioned as the “objects” of the activities of central – urban – women’s organizations, many interviewed women highlighted the need of strengthening local organization among women living in local areas and “localization” of women’s movement so as to cover diverse needs of women from different socio-economic backgrounds. One of the interviewed women from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1) underlined that she prefers to use the word “organization” instead of “advocacy” due to the reason that what she understands from “activism” is “being organized” and sharing all resources including money, expertise, “cultural capital”, “human capital” and “know-how”. She emphasized the fact that women’s movement in Türkiye has already been established and gained a remarkable success in terms of the promotion of women’s rights and gender equality, and now “has to” take onto their agenda reaching out different provinces other than the metropolitan cities, broadening the scope of the movement and strengthening local women’s organizations through sharing the resources.

Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1): “...We have already established the women's movement. It is done. [Now] the women's movement needs to be strengthened... I don't like the word “advocacy”... We took [the word “advocacy”] from the West.... I can't understand it at all... I mean, I prefer “activism”, “organization”... Because the spirit of all the work we do with all these platforms is organization... We did two things, actually.... We attacked the laws. We wanted them to get better.... Secondly, we managed to get organized... Women from
every segment in Türkiye came together for a common problem and for a common solution. In that context...I think that all the resources [including] knowledge, money, expertise, human resources, "know-how"...all these should be shared as much as possible.... Because...I think it is an important responsibility for us, the main women's organizations, to establish relationships with local people and to strengthen local women's organizations. I think this is done little. This is a very fundamental problem of the women's movement.”

Another interviewed woman from Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (1) also emphasized the need for departing from “popular issues” and addressing the needs of “vulnerable” women living in local areas. She pointed out that, mainly conservatives and religious groups can more easily reach out those women living in local areas, and thus giving emphasis on the promotion of grass-roots women’s organization are of great importance in terms of challenging the dominant framing of the “gender equality” predefined by middle-class, urban women.

Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (1): "There is a serious handicap in reaching out to weak and disadvantaged women. In other words, there is still a very serious problem in reaching out less educated, more isolated and disadvantaged women who live [in the periphery]. It is the conservatives, religious groups and others who still reach out those women more easily... Of course, there are grass-roots movements in the world that have been able to change this, but there is no grass-roots women's rights movement in Türkiye. To be more precise, there is no grass-roots movement in Turkey."

Localization does not necessarily mean “moving from city centers towards local areas”, however has diverse dimensions to be taken into consideration, such as, race, ethnicity, religion, language, class etc. that intersects with each other. Considering the structural obstacles against broadening women’s movement towards the margins, which was previously discussed as being limited with middle-class women who own the necessary cultural, economic and social capitals, women’s movement does not successfully speak to women living in disadvantaged districts and neighbourhoods who do not have equal access to resources and communication technologies. Another participant from Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2) underlined the problem of “having no contact” with lower-class women living in the periphery of metropolitan cities which requires face-to-face communication with women living in these areas, instead of trying to reach out women through social media channels which does not fit into their reality. She also emphasized that reaching out women
living in disadvantaged districts and neighbourhoods depends on the availability of financial resources and public spheres, such as “community centers” in the neighbourhoods, which might enable women’s organizations actively work with women. According to her, what is apparent in women’s movement is the dominant position of middle-class, educated, urban women and their “disconnection” with districts and neighbourhoods which was identified as being “disconnectedness” from the “class” dimension. Similarly, another participant from Women’s Coalition (1) underlined that women’s movement is “detached” from class dimension of the movement and inevitably could not achieve to include women from lower socio-economic backgrounds due to structural obstacles.

**Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2):** “…Not a single women's organization is working [in neighbourhoods]. We do not establish one-on-one relationships with women [in neighbourhoods]. All our ways of establishing relationships are through social media and it has limitations..... When there were community centers, it was possible to carry out woman studies [in neighbourhoods], if the social workers in those community centers were organized either. Now there is a [women’s] movement in Türkiye, organized in the center, more professional, led by women who are university graduates [and] educated.... It is detached from the neighbourhoods, it is detached from the class, [and] therefore an extremely small group, conducting discussions within itself..."

**Women’s Coalition (1):** "...I don't think that the women's movement is a movement that [takes into consideration] the class issue...[and] deep poverty. But it is [also] not expected that [women in] deep poverty will be in such a movement. In other words, [our] contact with a woman who does not have enough food and whose children sleep with hunger is not something that can be carried out at the table with a discussion about “what to do with the Civil Code”. Of course, women are not just at the table.... Of course, there is the contact of organizations and feminists who are in the field, who make politics there, who carry out some work there. But I think this is very weak in terms of what the movement includes."

It is important to note that all of these discussions related to cooperation among women’s organizations, intersectionality and the problem of professionalization and localization brings up again the question of who is the “subject” of women’s movement – or feminism – and reveals the distinction between ideology and practice which refers to the distinction between “ideals” and “structural obstacles” that prevents women to broaden the scope of their work, although they acknowledge the necessity of “reaching out” women from different socio-economic backgrounds. In addition to that, as being one of the most significant cleavages in the political history
of Türkiye, secular/republican and Islamic dichotomy and the concept “Islamic feminism” has been asked in a separate question. In this respect, in order better understand the ideological cleavages among women’s organizations, I deliberately asked one particular question related to “what do they think about the concept “Islamic feminism”? in order to analyse to what extent the interviewed women take into consideration the differences among women and notion of “intersectionality” in their analysis of women’s movement and feminism and how they elaborate the dominant secular discourse and privileged position of secular, middle-class, urban women within women’s movement. In the following chapter, Islamic feminism, both as a concept and as a movement, will be discussed in line with the existing discussions in literature and in comparison with the debates on Islamic feminism worldwide.
CHAPTER 8

PERSPECTIVES ON ISLAM AND FEMINISM

8.1. The Definition of Islamic Feminism

In the feminist literature concerning the women’s rights movements in the Middle East, there is a considerable ambiguity regarding whether Muslim women’s activism and struggle for women’s rights in their countries can be described as a feminist movement or not. The use of the concept Islamic feminism is as controversial as the definition of “feminism”. It is not clear that when and by whom the concept of “Islamic feminism” was first used and in most of the studies on Islamic feminism it is apparent that the concept is taken for granted without paying attention whether Muslim women activists in Africa, Asia and in Muslim communities identify themselves as feminist. This situation obviously paves the way for the discursive use of the concept Islamic feminism and the conflict that is inherent in between the use of the concept by 1) Muslim scholars to identify women’s movement in Muslim societies and 2) Muslim women who engage in women’s rights activism but consider feminism as a hegemonic ideology and thus do not identify themselves as Islamic feminist. One of the most explicit examples of this conflict is articulated by Fatima Seedat (2013) who argues that she first coincided with the concept Islamic feminism, when the local Muslim gender activism in South Africa is described by Margot Badran (2005, 2006, 2009) as Islamic feminism, although they did not name their work as such and were not familiar with feminist theory but familiar with feminist hegemony. The concern that she highlights in her article is not about questioning the viability of feminism as a tool for gender struggles and equality work in Muslim societies, but to find out the common points between Muslim women’s struggle for gender equality and feminism, which might provide a challenge to the hegemony of the European intellectual heritage. Similar to the discussions held by the Muslim scholars, the interviewed women within the scope of this thesis also highlighted the
same ambiguity regarding the use of the concept Islamic feminism in order to describe the work of Muslim women in Africa, Asia and in Muslim communities. Before moving to the responses of the interviewed women, it is important to note that there is a need for distinguishing to what extent Muslim women identify themselves as “Islamic feminist” or whether they adopt this concept to identify their work and how the concept Islamic feminism is perceived and understood by women who do not identify themselves “Muslim”. An interviewed woman who does not identify herself Muslim from the Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (1) expressed that Islamic feminism is most eager to be an external naming which was partly introduced by the groups who call themselves feminists within the Muslim and Islamic populations abroad, in the West, in America and Europe and it is mostly an academic concept that was invented by the Muslim scholars. On the other hand, Islamic feminism is not a concept that is used to describe secular feminism that is seen in Muslim communities, but a concept that is used to describe the efforts of Muslim women to reinterpret Islamic doctrines and challenge secular, white, Western hegemony in feminism. The interviewed participant also articulated that she finds the efforts of Muslim women’s rights activists quite meaningful in terms of creating a serious tension with conservative men and challenge the Islamic practices and interpretations those are in conflict with women's rights, through using different channels of communication and from within different social institutions and sects.

Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (1): “Well, I don't think those groups call themselves that way, it is probably an external naming, and it is the groups that call themselves feminists within the Muslim, Islamic population abroad, in the West, in the US and Europe. It is largely an academic thing, Islamic feminism. There are also prominent names of Islamic feminism. Most of them are academics, working in the fields of sociology, politics or theology at well-known universities in the West. They have opened an important space through Islam by claiming that Islam could have and already has a content that is egalitarian and respectful to women's rights, and it is the existing Islamic practices and interpretations that contradicts with the women's rights. They also did a lot of work in Türkiye. Causing a serious tension, a serious conflict with the conservative men,....Islamist men; both through and from within the Presidency of Religious Affairs, through the sects, through the press,... [being] visible on television, etc... they have done a very serious thing.... It is clear that they are fighting for equality, equality between genders, within Islam. It is obvious that they have made men seriously step back. They opened a space for themselves. But those who came forward were largely lynched, in a sense, in quotation marks.”
8.1.1. Challenging “Hegemonic Feminism” and Secularism

Apart from being an external naming to describe pious women’s efforts to struggle for woman’s rights in the Middle East countries, there are two prominent reasons why pious women in Africa, Asia, in Muslim communities and in Türkiye call themselves “Islamic feminists”. The first one derives from the need to challenge Western-dominated, secular and imperial feminism/s which usually interpret Islam as a backward religion and exclude Muslim women who regret to give up their Muslim identity to be involved into the feminist movement. As discussed in the previous sections, the prevailing Western, white, middle class and secular women’s domination within the feminist movement bears the need for Islamic feminists to put an additional adjective before “feminism” and to try to find out or create new spaces for themselves within which they can be able to discuss and act freely. One of the interviewed veiled women from Havle Women’s Association (1), which was founded in 2018 by a group of middle-class, educated, Muslim women, described Islamic feminism as an effort of mutual understanding for building up a link between Islam and feminism and to understand both their religious belief from the point of view of feminism and feminism from the point of view of their religious belief. In addition to that, she put emphasis on the critical standing of the pious women against feminism in the Middle East countries and emphasize that the efforts of women in a country like Egypt mainly includes the critique of colonialism – and imperial feminism, thus make pious women to explain what kind of feminism they are talking about when they call themselves feminists. Her emphasis on the need for making an explanation regarding what kind of feminism Muslim women are talking about point outs an implicit dominant definition and understanding of feminism which excludes women with Muslim identity.

Havle Women’s Association (1): "...It is the struggle of women who both [have a religious background] and have a relationship with feminism to understand their own ways of believing and to understand feminism from their own ways of believing. I see Muslim Feminism as a process of mutual understanding. I mean, it has no definition in that sense. It is just to see and analyse religious texts from a feminist perspective, and, if possible, to offer certain criticisms there…. But also this becomes more prominent within feminism, especially in geographies such as Egypt, where imperialism and colonialism are very visible…. What Islamic Feminists and Muslim Feminists do is making the discrimination within feminism is visible… In a
country like Egypt...we talk about a group of women who call themselves feminists and try to explain what kind of feminism they are talking about..."

As being one of the representatives of a contemporary Muslim women’s associations, namely Havle Women’s Association, another interviewed veiled woman (4) underlined that while they have no problem with the concept feminism, they problematize “feminists”, which implies that what they understand from “feminist” is white, middle class and secular women who consider Islam irreconcilable with feminism. It is evident that women’s organizations who were founded by pious women in postmodern and postcolonial era, which mainly coincide with the second half of the 20th century as well as the third wave of feminism, have adopted and provided a new epistemological vision for feminism that is beyond the limits of feminist experiences of white, middle class, Western women (Alcoff, 2006:142). Muslim women’s rights activists, both in the Middle East countries and in Türkiye, apparently reject the implicit hegemony of Western feminism which idealize and envisage changing existing social, cultural and political arrangements in the Middle Eastern countries - and mainly in Muslim societies – those are regarded as “backward” and needs to be Westernized (Grami, 2013:103-104; Stoler in Scott, 2020:210). It is evident that not only in Türkiye but around the world, many Muslim women’s rights activists have problem with the predominant liberal and secular approach that sees Islamic feminists as the “annexation” of the feminist movement, and thus fall short to understand and incorporate pious arguments of women’s rights activists (Gonzalez, 2013:6). As expressed in the interview by giving reference to the discussions within women’s movement in Türkiye regarding the “subject” of feminism, the interviewed participant articulated that they fully agree with the idea of identifying the “subject” of feminism as “feminists”, which refers to anyone who identify themselves as “feminist”, regardless of their religious belief, sexual identity, ethnic origin etc., however on the other hand acknowledge the patriarchal relations embedded in all social and political structures and fighting against all kind of discrimination, subordination and exploitation.

**Havle Women’s Association (4):** *(While mentioning the discussions among women in women’s movement in Türkiye)* 
"...There is a debate on “who is the subject of feminism?”...we followed this a lot...and we looked for a space where we could take a breath... The debate...[concluded with] that “the subject of feminism are
feminists”. I mean, this was something that made us feel so comfortable…. However, it's not a slackness either, like “whoever calls themselves a feminist is a feminist”.…. It is said, feminism is about being aware of the power that causes a relationship of oppression and subordination between two sexes. If you read power is this way, yes, you are a feminist, and if you call yourself a feminist, you are the subject of this feminism. If liberation is to be achieved, it is not all women who will be liberated, only feminists…. [This discussion] opened us up a lot. Because we personally do not have a problem with feminism, but we had a problem with feminists. Therefore, this was a discussion that saw us [Islamic feminists] different but equal…. We discussed it ourselves afterwards, our own position, etc.”

It is an important fact that, the need for putting an additional adjective before “feminism” apparently unfolds the fact that the concept “feminism” is taken for granted as deeply embedded in Christianity and Christian communities and together with its implicit connotation with Western, secular, white, middle-class feminists. As Margot Badran (2005:12), who is one of the prominent thinkers focused on the historical evolution of “Islamic feminism” in the Middle East countries expresses, West is not the hometown of feminism from which all feminisms derive and against which they must be measured.

There are two main point of views which are highlighted by the academics discussing Islamic feminism: 1) The first one argues that the misinterpretation of the Qur'an by the male-dominated discourse has turned Islam into a patriarchal structure, therefore, the reinterpretation of the Qur'an from a "female" point of view is necessary for challenging this dominant structure. 2) The Qur'an is essentially egalitarian; however, its wrong practices – mainly by men - give rise to sexist practices in Muslim societies. Related to this, another important point of view articulated by Muslim scholars is that Muslim women do not try to “reconcile” or converge feminism with Islam, but aim to argue that Islam is not in conflict with the principle of human rights for women. On the other hand, what is in conflict with the principle of human rights for women is the “male interpretation” of Islamic doctrines and the patriarchal structure established in Islamic states on the grounds of Islam (Badran, 2005; Grami, 2013; Saleh, 2002). Besides, Islamic women’s rights activists also direct their criticisms towards the mainstream women’s liberation movement which failed to understand and incorporate the demands and needs of women to advocate for their rights within Islam and pious societies (Grami, 2013:103). In line with these discussions, one of the interviewed veiled women from Capital City
Women’s Platform (Başkent Kadın Platformu) (1) expressed that they feel the need to identify themselves “Islamic feminists” given the fact that there is a common prejudice against veiled women within feminism – or feminist movement – which argues that wearing headscarf is completely against feminist principles. In addition to that, it was underlined by the interviewed participant that it is not only feminists who reject the relationship between veiled women and feminism, but pious people, Islamic parties and general public as well, who cannot reconcile wearing headscarf and feminism. Based on that, trying to show wearing headscarf or having a religious identity is not something conflicting with feminism and human rights principles, was articulated as one of the main objectives of Muslim women’s rights activists in order to overcome the historical cleavage between “feminists” and Muslim women.

Capital City Women’s Platform (1): "Actually, in terms of our field of work, it might need to be defined like that. We are feminists…. However, there are discourses like “a woman who wears headscarf cannot be a feminist” [or] “a Muslim woman cannot be a feminist”. Who is saying this? Feminist organizations say this, religious people also say this, the government also says this, ordinary people also say this. Well, then there is really a need to name it to show that it is possible. Otherwise, it is not a differentiating factor..."

A diverse – but also similar – argument was articulated by another interviewed women who identify herself Muslim from Capital City Women’s Platform (3), opposing the use of the concept of Islamic feminism. According to her, Islamic doctrines actually present the same arguments that can be very meaningful in the period it was revealed with feminism in terms of ensuring gender equality in a society. According to her, it is not Islam, but the patriarchal interpretation of Islam which tries to move women’s rights backward. Thus, she finds meaningless to put an additional adjective before feminism in order to emphasize their Muslim identity.

Capital City Women’s Platform (3): “I am against it. I mean, is there a Christian feminism, is there a Jewish feminism? Why did they invent a word called Islamic feminism? As if Islam and feminism are very different things. So, when I read the Quran, God seems very feminist to me. But of course, not everyone reads the Quran like I do. For others, it has a very patriarchal approach, but in my opinion, if we look at the period in which it came and the innovations it introduced, I see that we have not managed to build anything on it compared to that period. [Quran] have imposed women's free will on a society that beats new-born girls. [However], men are always looking for ways for how to pull these women back, how to beat them again. That is why I see it [the Word Islamic] as a means of separation…. Feminists wearing pink, feminists wearing purple, black feminists, Muslim feminists…. I am a Muslim and a
feminist at the same time. I'm also myopic. So, this is one of my characteristics (laughing). But I think such a definition [Islamic feminism] is wrong.”

Another young volunteer women from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Foundation (2) also expressed a similar argument with the participant from Capital City Women’s Platform mentioned above, by describing feminism as an “umbrella” concept that covers and includes all differences and all different identities, so, for her, it is not necessary to emphasize the “Islamic” identity before the concept “feminism”. On the other hand, her definition of Islamic feminism also reflects the ambiguity regarding by whom the concept Islamic feminism was first adopted and used. In her initial definition she described Islamic feminism as a concept that emerged together with women with high religious sensitivities who became active in the feminist movement. However, in her later definition she also argued that the concept might be used by both feminists in Western countries or conservative Islamists to criticize or to excommunicate women from Muslim society who involved into feminist movement. Besides, although she described feminism as an “umbrella” concept that covers and includes all differences and all different identities, when it is asked “what might be the reason of Islamic feminists to describe themselves as such”, she also acknowledged that pious women might think that a woman with high religious sensitivities might not be considered under the umbrella of feminism or might not feel like they belong to feminist movement.

**Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Foundation (2):** "I think Islamic feminism is a concept that emerged when women with religious sensitivity became active in the feminist movement. I cannot say that I have a lot of knowledge, and I do not think it is very necessary…. Feminism is already an umbrella concept, a concept that can include everything. So I don't think we need an extra concept like Islamic feminism.”

*(When it is asked what might be the reason of Islamic feminists to describe themselves as such)*

“I don't know…. They might think that…a woman with high religious sensitivities cannot be considered under the umbrella of feminism…. They might not feel like they belong here [feminism], or they might use it because they feel that they cannot be included in feminism, and are somehow not accepted. That's why.”

The second reason of why pious women in Africa, Asia, in Muslim communities and in Türkiye call themselves “Islamic feminists” is to challenge the “male interpretation” of Islam which put women in a subordinate position. In the following
section pious women’s efforts to challenge “male interpretation” of Islam and to reinterpret religious doctrines through a gendered lens in order to defend their rights and claim gender equality will be discussed in detail.

8.1.2. Challenging “Male Interpretation” of Islam

The need and the attempt for reinterpreting Islamic doctrines is another crucial feature and objective of Islamic feminism that aims to challenge patriarchal Islam itself. First, as discussed previously, Muslim women’s rights activists largely articulated that Islam is not in conflict with feminism and human rights principles, however what is in conflict with women’s human rights principles is the “male interpretation” of Islam and the patriarchy established on the grounds of Islam in Muslim societies. Badran elaborates secular feminism and Islamic feminism as two discursive modes (Badran, 2005:6). According to Badran, while secular feminism based upon and is constituted by multiple discourses including secular nationalist, Islamic modernist, humanitarian/human rights, and democratic, Islamic feminism is expressed in a religiously grounded discourse taking the Qur'an as its central text. It is evident that, in the 1990s, the expression of “Islamic feminism” came into use in different places around the world through both women’s organizations and publications that includes Qur'anic interpretation (tafsir) by men and women alike as well as discussions of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) affirming women’s rights (Latte Abdallah, 2010).

Indeed, it is an important fact that it is not the first time that Islamic women’s rights activists attempted to speak from within religiously grounded discourse, while dates back to nineteenth century, early feminist activists in the United States also adopted the same religious discourse by giving reference to Bible and by publishing “Woman’s Bible” to challenge the patriarchal notions embedded in the male interpretation of religious doctrines as well as to defend their rights and claim gender equality (Badran, 2009:2).70 In fact, as Badran (2009) argues, religion has always

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70 “To cite American experience, they ignore their forebears who produced the Woman's Bible in the mid-nineteenth century and the Jewish and Christian religious studies scholars who created women's liberation theology in the late twentieth century” (Badran, 2009:2).
been an integral part of feminisms both in West and East based on the fact that religion is an indivisible part of the culture of a particular society. Thus, there are two main reasons of why Muslim women’s rights activists use religiously grounded discourse to struggle for gender equality: 1) To prove that apart from being a faith, religion is a social institution that consists of patriarchal codes embedded in everyday social life derived from the patriarchal interpretation of religious texts. 2) To reach out their pious constituencies by adopting a religiously grounded discourse. In other words, Muslim women both would like to retain their space in religion by reinterpreting religious doctrines and would like to find out a “common language” to speak out to their pious constituencies to ensure gender equality. One of the interviewed women who identify herself Muslim from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Foundation (1) acknowledged Muslim women’s attempt to reinterpret religious doctrines as a remarkable job in terms of challenging patriarchal religious historiography and challenging the way in which the knowledge transferred to posterity – which has been introduced as a norm together with male interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). Another interviewed woman from Association for Protecting and Supporting Family (1) took attention to how religion has been used by Muslim men as a legitimization or justification of patriarchal notions embedded in Muslim majority societies. She gave the example of two different interpretations of the same doctrine from Qur'an by men and women and emphasized that while men take the doctrine as an indicator of women’s necessary “loyalty” and acknowledgement of women’s primary roles as “wives” and “mothers”, women try to show the hidden part of the story by putting emphasis on women’s engagement in economy and being autonomous individuals who take their own decisions instead of complying with the requirements of traditional society.

**Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Foundation (1):** …What we call Fiqh is, for example, is the solution to current problems. Fiqh is not something dull. Fiqh can say [what kind of] solution is required under [certain] circumstances…. But that fear [and] pressure, brought the jurisprudence down to such a level that any ruling given those times [under specific circumstances] are assumed still valid in all days, times, processes, etc. Therefore, Muslim women were concerned with all these

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71 The attempt of women’s rights activists to reach out their pious constituencies by speaking from within religiously grounded discourse will be further elaborated in the fourth part and through Habermasian “translation” theory.
things. First, they made a source criticism... Then they noticed problems in the way of [male] reading the sources and in the way of writing the history, [and] in the way they were transferred [today]. [There are women who] oppose to religion being used as a weapon against women.... [These women] in Türkiye call themselves Islamic feminists and they openly express this."

**Association for Protecting and Supporting Family (1):** “… Is it only women who read Hz. Fatima and Hz. Hatice? Men read them too, women read them too. Why do women [and] men understand them [in a different] way?.... [Men] took Hz. Hatice’s eternal loyalty to our Prophet, her assistance, her duty as a companion, and her duty as a mother. What I understand [when I read about Hz. Hatice] is that Hz. Hatice was a businesswoman who owns an international fleet. I understand that she proposed to someone younger than her with such self-confidence. In the culture of that time and now, woman would go to the house of the man she married. [However], Hz. Hatice brought Mohammad [the Prophet] to her house. These are what I understand... This conservative group only takes the part that “Hz. Hatice was a very obedient woman, she did not speak out, she did whatever her husband said”. It is not like that, she personally guided the Prophet.”

Another very crucial point that was highlighted by the interviewed Muslim women is that, it is important to distinguish the concepts “İslamcı” (Islamist) and “Müslüman” (Muslim/Islamic) from each other while giving reference of Muslim women’s activism. With this regard, while the concept “İslamcı” (Islamist) points out an attachment with “political Islam”, “Müslüman” (Muslim) mainly refers to an identity and belief which does not necessarily address any political standing. In this respect, many Muslim women’s rights activists strictly try to avoid themselves from being associated with political Islam and to be seen as the proponents of Islamic political parties. One of the interviewed women from Capital City Women’s Platform (1) explicitly differentiated herself and her political standing from what is called “Islamists” or the proponents of political Islam and articulated that she is definitely aware of the fact that the discourse that prohibits, restricts, and hinders women in the name of religion does not belong to religion itself. Thus, even though she identifies herself as “Islamic feminist” (Müslüman feminist), she refrains from being called “Islamist” as well. Besides, she also underlined that she is trying to “deconstruct” verses and hadiths in the Qur’an through using feminist methodologies and do not see feminism as a “sub-branch” that will strengthen Islamic ideology, on the contrary, prefer to adopt feminism as an ideology that would empower religious women and help her to find out feminist justifications from within religious doctrines.

**Capital City Women’s Platform (1):** "I call myself an Islamic feminist, I can say that I am naming myself, because there is no need to object after so many people say
this.... I am a woman who looks at life from the perspective of Islam and tries to realize women's freedom from within Islam. I am a person who researches answers in line with my own religious beliefs, from my own religious sources. I am not a theologian..., but a religious person. I am deepening the knowledge I have gained over the years by trying to benefit from different sources.... In this sense, of course, I am an Islamic feminist. I know religion well enough to know that the discourse that prohibits, restricts and hinders women in the name of religion does not belong to religion itself and I struggle with it. Therefore, I have no objection to them calling it Islamic feminism, but some people call it "Islamist feminist". They say it like "Islamist". I am against this because I have never considered myself as an Islamist. I have never been involved in Islamist groups or ideological Islam. And apart from that, I don't see feminism I do not see feminism as a side branch that will strengthen the Islamic ideology. On the contrary, I prefer to consider feminism in a way that will empower religious women and bring support from religion. I try to achieve this by deconstructing religious discourse, verses, hadiths, etc., with feminist methods.... Therefore, I call myself an Islamic feminist.”

8.2. Islamic Feminism in Türkiye

It is an important fact that Türkiye is standing in a distinct position among Middle East countries due to its complete separation of state affairs and religion, while in majority of the Middle East countries only education and law were removed from the jurisdiction of the religious authorities and Islam is still mentioned in secular constitutions as the "state religion" (Badran, 2005:10). Badran (2005) argues that the Turkish notion of secular resembles closely to the French notion, while the Turkish word for secular, laiklik, derives from the French laïcité. In the Middle East, education and law - with the exception of family law - were removed from the jurisdiction of the religious authorities to that of the secular state (excluding countries of the Arab Peninsula). Islam, however, lived on as a wellspring of law and was enshrined in secular constitutions as the "state religion” (Badran, 2005:10). Although there are similarities between some Middle East countries and Türkiye, Muslim women’s claim for their cultural rights and their emphasis on their religious identity in Türkiye has another dimension than Muslim women’s struggle for their rights in a country that is ruled by Sharia or described as an Islamic republic. In majority of the Middle East countries women struggle for their basic rights and freedoms which were already recognized in majority of the Western countries and constitutional states. On the other hand, scholars, such as, Kandiyoti (1991), Kadioğlu (1998) and Tekeli (1986), who critically focuses on the modernization process of Türkiye and try to reveal cleavages between individual/collective liberties...
and republican modernization ideologies, argue that the modernization process of Türkiye always embrace conflict in terms of women’s emancipation and this process brought up a never ending battle between Republican elites, secular women and religious conservative groups. First, pious women have always been perceived as the ones who could not keep up with the modernization/Westernization and Turkification efforts of the new regime, and thus, regarded as the “betrayers” of the young republic. Second, the Kemalist project has been built up on the idea that women were oppressed by “backward” traditions and Islam, and laicism would ensure gender equality between men and women (Çağatay, 2018:49). Third, Muslim women’s practices and struggles for their cultural rights has always been associated with the rising political Islam in Türkiye which has led to a significant misperception in terms of the political standing of Muslim women and a discursive tendency to see Muslim veiled women as the no strings supporters of the Islamic political parties.

Throughout the political history of Türkiye, there are four important driving points that mobilizes Muslim women to appear in the political stage with their Muslim identities. First, while the secularization project in Türkiye mainly manifested itself through its emphasis on lifestyle and modernization of the public sphere, it overlooked improvement of living conditions and social status of lower-class women. The elitist notions that consist of the base of modernization reforms have never reached out lower-class women, neither improved their social status, nor achieved to involve them as active participants of the nation-building process. Based on the fact that Kemalist ideology is so much linked with modernism/Westernism, while Islamic practices has always been regarded as “backward”, this situation dramatically effected the social and political participation of Muslim women who do not want to give up manifesting their Muslim identity (Çağatay, 2018). Hence, one of the main objectives of the early women’s organizations founded by Muslim women in Türkiye was primarily designated as the improvement of living standards and social status of lower-class women as well as improvement of the social services which target to reach out disadvantaged groups. Second, many educated, middle/upper-middle class, urban, Islamic and professional pious women significantly involved into the policy development processes of right-wing/Islamist parties, such as, Refah (Welfare) Party (RP) in the 1990s and Justice and
Development Party (AKP), who is the ruling party in Türkiye since 2002, and had an important role in mobilizing women within the scope of the political campaigns held by the political parties and bringing parties into power (Arat, 2005). Many scholars admit that foundation of right-wing parties in Türkiye can be considered as a crucial turning point in terms of the politicization and political participation of pious women (Arat, 2005; Akman, 2008; Diner & Tokaş, 2010). On the other hand, it is an important fact that considering pious women who mobilized within the scope of the political campaigns held by the Islamic parties as a homogenous group would be a mistake which might lead to an underestimation of the political struggle of Muslim women and overlooking the fragmented political standings among Muslim women.

In addition to the rise of political Islam in Türkiye, the “post-modern coup” in 1997 and exclusion of headscarf from the public and educational institutions have forced well-educated pious women stay out of public institutions and higher education and led the rise of identity claims and mass movements of Islamic women. Third, Muslim women have not only mobilized within the scope of the political campaigns of right-wing/Islamist parties, however the 1990s witnessed a new phase of women’s movement together with the increasing institutionalization and foundation of women’s organizations, platforms and initiatives established by pious women, such as Capital City Women’s Platform (Başkent Kadın Platformu), Women Rights Association Against Discrimination (Ayrımcılığa Karşı Kadın Hakları Derneği-AKDER); Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Foundation (Hazar Eğitim Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği) and Rainbow Woman Platform (Gökkuşağı Kadın Platformu) (Akman, 2008). These organizations particularly established by educated, urban and professional religious women as independent organizations without any specific attachment to the political parties and with the main objective of reaching out their female constituencies in order to encourage them for social and political participation and improve their social status. As many scholars discuss, towards the end of the 1990s, a certain diversification among the politicized religious women which could be described as “traditional”, “conservative” and “reformist” has become evident, while there are also women’s organization who can be described as both “traditional” and “reformist” (Acar, 1991; Akman, 2008; Sallan Gül, 2000). Undoubtedly, some of the Islamic women’s organizations who were established in the 1980s and 1990s and had a critical point of view towards gender equality were
influenced by feminist discourse and discussions in that period (Çakır, 2000). On the other hand, the majority of the Islamic women’s organizations established in the 1980s and 1990s posed a certain distance to “feminism” due to the fact that some of their members do not prefer to identify themselves “feminist”. It is also important to note that not all women’s organizations established by pious women have the main objective of improving women’s rights and gender equality, but focus on variety of issues, such as charity giving, child education and children’s rights, migration studies and gender equality. Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Foundation, which was founded in 1993, is one of the examples of women’s organizations who have been working on variety of issues including gender equality and who have the main objective of strengthening solidarity and knowledge sharing among women and Islamic intellectuals. Another, women’s organization, namely, Association for Protecting and Supporting Family (AKODER), which was founded in 2004 as an initiative group and became an association in 2006, not primarily focused on women’s rights and gender equality, but has worked in a variety of areas such as, reviewing religious texts and examining the impact of media on family.

Apart from those relatively “traditional” women’s organizations and women’s platforms established in the 1990s and in the beginning of the 2010s, there are contemporary women’s organizations and digital platforms established by a younger generation of educated, middle class pious women who identify themselves “feminist” and explicitly call themselves “Islamic/Muslim feminists”, such as Muslims’ Kadına Şiddete Karşı Müslümanlar İnísiyatifi (Muslims’ Initiative Against Violence Against Women), Kadınlar Camilerde İnísiyatifi (Women Are in Mosques Initiative), Reçel Blog (Jam Blog) and Havle Kadın Derneği (Havle Women’s Association). Among these organizations, Muslims’ Initiative Against Violence Against Women, Women Are in Mosques Initiative, Reçel (Jam) Blog represents the initial attempts of a younger generation of pious women who are willing to extend the working field of pious women, produce an Islamic discourse and stance among the groups that are currently fighting for and together with women, create a digital public sphere especially for Muslim women to enable them to share their ideas, daily experiences, perception of social issues, interests, curiosities, troubles, hopes, concerns and struggles through articles and struggling with violence against women.
Besides, Havle Women’s Association represents a more institutionalized example of women’s organizations established by a younger generation of educated, middle class pious women with the main objective of enhancing the Islamic feminist movement initiated by above mentioned women’s organizations, combating discriminatory interpretations of Islam against women, producing knowledge and policy from within an Islamic feminist framework and focusing on the feminist interpretation of Islam.

Capital City Women’s Platform (Başkent Kadın Platformu), which was founded in 1995, has been considered among the prominent women’s organizations established by Muslim women’s rights activists, who studied theology and participated into the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing +5)\(^\text{72}\). As discussed above, one of the main objectives of the platform was designated as tackling with traditional barriers and ensuring social participation of pious women. To this end, the platform has designated their primary working field as the small neighbourhoods on the periphery of Ankara and improving the social status of pious women in cooperation with the Directorate of Religious Affairs and offices of muftis. On the other hand, as articulated by the representatives of the platform, although fighting against the bans for headscarf was not among the objectives of the platform, due to the fact that the majority of the members of Capital City Women’s Platform consisted of veiled women who were dismissed from their profession during the “post-modern coup” in 1997, they indirectly involved into the advocacy against headscarf bans and involved into the policy development processes of AKP.

\textbf{Capital City Women’s Platform (1):} "Capital City Women's Platform was founded in 1995. The Beijing +5 movement was very effective in strengthening the women's movement in Türkiye. Capital City Women's Platform was established with the initiative of religious women who went to the Beijing Conference.... The founding core group has a theological background and they targeted to struggle with

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\(^{72}\) Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing on 4-15 September 1995 and has an important place in terms of discussions on gender policies of states. The Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action was adopted on 15 September 1995, with the signature of 189 member states. The declaration included many determinations and demands for ensuring gender equality in the fields of women and poverty, education, health, violence, conflict/war, economy, participation in politics and decision-making processes, media, environment and girls. Participating governments were held responsible for the implementation of the action plan.
At that time, we had many friends working in the Directorate of Religious Affairs. With their support, we shaped and carried out projects… in line with the agreement with the muftis' offices and the Directorate of Religious Affairs. But we also had a problem with the headscarf bans…. The headscarf bans continued until 2014. This is an issue that falls into the hands of the Capital Women's Platform. In fact, it is not an association established to fight against headscarf bans. But between 1997-1998, many women who were members of the Capital City Women's Platform, that is, 60 out of 100-odd members, were dismissed from their professions during that period. Therefore, [the association] carried out activities such as legal support, lobbying, protests, street actions, press releases, panels, etc. on the problems of women wearing headscarf and the problems of women who were dismissed from working life..." 

The interviews held with the members of Capital City Women’s Platform apparently reveal two important facts: 1) The similarities between the political strategies adopted by Islamic parties in the Middle East and Türkiye - who can be regarded as pragmatist in terms of collaborating with women during their policy development processes and political campaigns; 2) the cleavage between pious women who were alienated to women’s movement when they were back into their professions in 2014 after the abolition of headscarf bans, and pious women who continued to struggle with any kind of authority that would attempt to silence and oppress dissenting opinions. The way in which Muslim women in Türkiye involved into the policy development processes of Islamic parties, such as RP and AKP, proves that political Islam – which is mainly based upon the male interpretation of Islamic doctrines – have never been sincere about ensuring and protecting gender equality and considering women as equal partners of the government. As articulated by the members of Capital City Women’s Platform, although they took part in the policy development processes of the Islamic parties, after Islamic parties came into power, they were considered as an obstacle to the party power and tried to be suppressed by the political parties. Second, co-optation is one of the most frequently used strategy of not only Islamic parties but all political parties without a concrete strategy on gender equality. Some of the Middle East countries, such as Egypt, and Türkiye, following the national independence and adoption of a new constitution, have similar experiences in terms of the development of “state-feminism” on a new nationalist discourse which is deprived of a feminist dimension (Badran, 2005; Magdy, 2017).
This also resulted with the marginalization of dissident feminist organizations together with a systematic suppression and silencing policies of the governments. Similarly, one of the members of Capital City Women’s Platform (1) expressed that many civil society organizations were co-opted during the rule of AKP, while Capital City Women’s Platform was tried to be oppressed in that period due to its oppositional stance against the ruling party and they rejected to be co-opted with the government policies which has become intolerant against dissident ideas. Another important fact that paves the way for the annulment of the platform was expressed by the interviewed participant as the cleavage between the members of the platform who preferred to return their profession and built up close relations with the government due to their “personal interests”, and the members who did not give up their critical stance towards government policies. It was underlined that the organizational structure of the platform has been weakened together with the abolition of headscarf bans and with the return of some members of the platform to their professional life. In addition to that, one of the main strategies of ruling parties to co-opt civil society organizations (CSOs) was described as blocking access of CSOs to public funding and to the European Union funds implemented by the public institutions in Türkiye and force them to adopt the ideology of the ruling party in order to be able to continue to their activities.

Capital City Women’s Platform (1): “...We have developed policy proposals to the AKP government many times. We focused on lobbying [for the lift of the headscarf ban] during this period. After 2014, when this problem was overcome and our friends returned to work, [and] we started to experience serious problem in the platform. Everyone returned to work. There is a house. There is work. It became a problem when no one could devote as much time to the platform as before. On the other hand, the pressures of the government increased during that period. The government fully affiliated many of civil society organizations to itself…. However, the Capital City Women's Platform did not want to compromise its independent and oppositional stance. We have always expressed our different views against the government on various issues.... From 2016 onwards, things fell apart. The government started sending messages like "change your name" and "close [the association] down" and all the work we were doing in partnership with public institutions were terminated. In the meantime, when EU funds started to be given by ministries under the control and supervision of the government, we could no longer receive EU funds. We couldn't do a project. None of the projects we submitted were accepted after that date and we had to dissolve the legal entity of the platform a year ago…. But we continue as a platform.”
(When it is asked to what extent they describe their organization as a democratic organization which includes women with different opinions)

“Yes, our platform was actually a very democratic structure. Women from very different views were together there and we could easily defend our own ideas. We would not make a decision that we did not agree with…. Of course, we would have arguments to convince each other, etc. But issues that could not be agreed were shelved. We had such a democratic structure and we had a horizontal, not hierarchical, form of relationship. Even those who were not members of the board would also come to the board meeting. In fact, our board meetings were open to everyone, even our guests could attend. We would also take their opinions into consideration when it came to decisions to be taken…. However, the gradual decrease in the government's tolerance towards civil society and its demand for 100% allegiance created problems in the platform. Because we had friends who were close to the government. Those who do not want to lose their own jobs, those who do not want their spouses to lose their jobs, those who want to find jobs for their sons and daughters were disturbed by the open opposition and this time they started to say, "No, let's not do this. Let's not do that. Let's not do it like that". We have become unable to do any work in our decision-making model in recent years."

When I asked the reason of the cleavage within women who choose to stand on the side of the government and dissident women who oppose to the conservative policies of the government, one of the participants from Capital City Women’s Platform (1) expressed that this cleavage is basically grounded on the different ideological standing among women, such as, women who have a more liberal standing mainly stand in an opponent position towards the government, while those who are more statist and who are more close to the ideology of power stand closer to the government.

**Capital City Women’s Platform (1):** "This is related to how close are the ideology of the government and the ideology of the organizations to each other…. Women who are more liberal on social [issues], for example on the Kurdish issue, appear to be oppositionists, but those who are more statist, those who care about the state's opinion…or whatever, stand from the inside [of the state ideology]."

Another important problem that pious women encounter while they are trying to be involved into the women’s movement and trying to get organized, was described being considered as the supporters of political Islam and Islamic parties and as a homogenous group which is misleading in terms of overlooking the diverse and fragmented political standing among pious women in Türkiye. An anecdote told by one of the interviewed veiled women from Havle Women’s Association (4) illustrates how veiled women predominantly were considered by other secular and
liberal women’s organizations as the indisputable supporters of the Islamic parties, women’s branch of AKP and pro-government women’s organizations, although they have no affiliation with the ruling party. Second, the interview also touches upon the illusion of assuming Muslim communities as being composed of a homogeneous and consistent group of people without any dispute or cleavage among themselves. The anecdote told by the interviewed women from Havle Women’s Association explicitly reveals the reason of feeling not belong to the discursive hegemonic women’s movement and feeling of resentment for being exposed to a preconceived judgement regarding their political disposition just because they are veiled.

Havle Women’s Association (4): “[A women’s platform which deals with femicide] was the first organization I noticed as a woman who was just trying to learn these things... We went to Özgecan's trial together in Mersin. It was a very rainy and muddy day and... KADEM [Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği (Women and Democracy Association)] also showed up.... They sat under the tent as if they had come to watch a theatre and waited for the end of the hearing without getting wet, and they had standard banners cut in a standard way and written in standard sizes with a standard pen.... When I saw them like that, [I was thinking] “I'm glad that I came with [the women’s platform which deals with femicide]. [Then] one of the leaders [of the women’s platform] at that time...said, "I appreciated it very much", "but why...didn't you come with KADEM?". I was so annoyed.... I felt so bad.... [Because] she [implies], "I can't take part here just because I wear a headscarf" [and asks] “why didn't this woman come with the women's branches of the AKP?” I'm not angry, but that moment was the reason for me to completely walk away... They do not see or know Muslims and women wearing headscarf. [They] do not know what storms have broken out between us, how two sects are so hostile to each other...[and] there is nothing unified... That is why it is good that there are these independent feminists in Istanbul. I can say that I got closer [to women’s movement – or feminist movement] thanks to them.”

The independent women’s organizations who were founded by pious women have always been fighting on three fronts: 1) in politics, for the elimination of repressive state policies; 2) within women’s movement itself, against some women’s organizations who regret to consider the headscarf bans as a women's rights violation; 3) within their own Muslim community, mainly against Muslim men who have been trying to demonize and marginalize Muslim women’s rights activists. One of the members of Capital City Women’s Platform (2) who described the abolition of headscarf bans as the success of the advocacy activities conducted by the platform expressed that they worked hard for the abolition of headscarf bans, while on the other hand, they spent years for explaining to other women’s organizations that
headscarf bans are a women's rights violation. And this specific effort is described as a success of the women’s organizations who were founded by pious women to build up a more sustainable cooperation between other secular, liberal, socialist and Kemalist women’s organizations. As Benhabib expresses, integration of Islamic religious and cultural differences into modern liberal democracies is a never ending process (Benhabib, 2011). She argues that headscarf has never been simply seen as a religious item of clothing, but a political symbol and potential political threat against liberal democracies. Thus, headscarf has also become a symbol of public rebellion of Muslim women once state regulation was imposed on wearing headscarf while excluding Muslim women from the public sphere. According to Benhabib, rights and other principles of the liberal democracies need to be periodically challenged and rearticulated in the public sphere which would enhance the dialectic of rights and identities in the process of regeneration of democratic states.

Capital City Women’s Platform (2): "...We had to do this in two ways. We had to carry out activities through the state to lift these bans, and at the same time we had to explain to other friends in the women's movement that the headscarf bans is a violation of women's rights. In other words, women in many civil society organizations, who are described as feminist, spent years understanding that headscarf bans is a violation of women's rights. We spent years explaining it (reproachful tone of voice). We had to go through a long struggle to find a common ground. But we managed it. So, it has all been achieved. Both the women's movement recognized that the headscarf ban is a violation of women's rights and we saw that we could work together with them in different fields."

It is another important fact that women have led to a vulnerable position twice, deriving from the patriarchal structure of their communities as well as being marginalized by other members of their communities (Benhabib, 2002). Another veiled woman from Association for Protecting and Supporting Family (AKODER) (1) expressed that they feel the obligation to prove their autonomy, both to the secular segments of the society and to their own religious community, in order to be acknowledged as “equals” in a society. Besides, one of the interviewed women from Havle Women’s Association (3), who identify themselves as feminists, underlined that they both struggle with men and the “male interpretation” of religious doctrines within their own religious patriarchal community and fight against all kind of discrimination against women together with their feminist counterparts which puts an additional burden on their shoulders.
Association for Protecting and Supporting Family (1): "...Women those who do not wear headscarves, maybe they have two, three or five areas of struggle, but we [women wearing headscarf] have two communities...in front of us that we have to struggle with. One is the secular people, and the other one is the religious people in our own community. I do not mean Muslim people, but with the religious community. With the community that immediately tries to line women up if they read a little..."

Havle Women’s Association (3): “...There is a group of men who constantly mislead you with the verses of the Quran by saying that “God said this or that”. For 1000 years there have been male commentators. There has never been a woman exegete to interpret the Quran. We fight with those inside first, but we also fight with those outside equally. We are where all feminist women are.... We fight against all discrimination, all shortcomings and all problems faced by women.... In fact, we are also struggling with Muslims additionally."

Comparing to other Middle East countries where Islamic law applies and where the practices of women’s rights activists mainly derive from 1) fighting against oppressive, patriarchal and discriminatory policies of Islamic governments 2) anti-colonial movement, one of the interviewed women from Havle Women’s Association (1) underlined that, deriving from the fact that Türkiye is a constitutional state and not governed by Islamic law, Muslim women’s efforts in Türkiye are more focused on the interpretation of religious texts to reach out their pious constituencies and are more provocative to challenge mainstream secular feminist discourses by putting an additional emphasis on their Muslim identity. On the other hand, an important correlation between the postcolonial feminist movements in the Middle East countries, such as Algeria and Morocco, and Islamic feminist movement in Türkiye was made by another interviewed woman who engaged in and who is also among the founding members of the women’s organizations, such as Muslims’ Initiative Against Violence Against Women, Reçel (Jam) Blog and Havle Women’s Association (4). She argues that Muslim feminists in Türkiye have similar “postcolonial feelings” with the women’s rights activists - in Middle East countries who have been fighting against both colonial practices of the West and patriarchal policies implemented by the Islamic governments, due to the oppressive Kemalist modernization project of the Turkish Republic which excludes Muslim women from the “modern-secular” public sphere and overlook their identity claims and diverse needs. Moreover, each of the interviewed women also underlines that they do not feel the need to call themselves “Islamic feminist” and just want to identify themselves “feminist”, although they would be inevitably identified by secular
women as “Islamic feminist” just because they are veiled. However, there are two prominent reasons of why they identify themselves “Islamic feminist”. First, as expressed by most of the interviewed pious women, they feel the need to challenge hegemonic secular, white, middle-class, urban women’s movement and discourse in Türkiye that unable to reconcile Islam and feminism and ignore the Muslim identity of Muslim women’s rights activists. Second, as told by one of the interviewed Muslim women, it is a matter of “commitment” to the issue of transforming patriarchal practices in Islam and Muslim communities, thus, they need to address and challenge Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), which regulates the everyday social life of the Muslim women in a Muslim community, in order to claim their rights and ensure gender equality.

Havle Women’s Association (1): "In the case of Türkiye, we are a little more focused on the interpretation of religious texts... Actually, our effort to emphasize Islamic feminism and Islam stems from our reference to religious texts. Otherwise, we even talk among ourselves, “I just want to call myself a feminist”. Because there are friends who express that they do not feel the need to emphasize [the notion Islamic]. I find [our efforts] in Turkey a little more provocative [and] I feel that what we say is understood.... We are more feminists than we are "Muslims" in quotation marks.... [And our efforts mainly based upon to explain the possibility of] being both a Muslim and a feminist...."

Havle Women’s Association (4): "...I am now in favor of being a feminist directly, I have always insisted on this.... In fact, when we look at the international literature, there are a few things about Islamic feminism. Islamic feminism is a rebellion of women ruled under sharia, as in Malaysia and Iran. Or, it is against Western feminism, as in Algeria and Morocco, which is fed by the "post-colonial" literature. [In] Türkiye...we all have "post-colonial" feelings because of the Kemalist "apartheid" and oppressive modernization. For example, when I read the criticisms...about Algeria and Morocco, I compare it very much with Türkiye.... But [when] I look at the dynamics of the emergence of Islamic feminism in Türkiye.... This is nothing more than an identity definition in Türkiye, because we live under civil law. We have to get our rights like other feminists.... It is not a multi-jurisdictional place like Malaysia.... When I go to a feminist protest, a woman looking from outside will call me a Muslim feminist because I wear a headscarf. That is why I see it as something that determines how I am defined. It is also more like a two-pronged struggle.... It is all a matter of "commitment".... In the end, this thing called Fiqh will surround my life.... It is my duty to transform Fiqh as a way to achieve my rights as a woman.... For me it opens an extra line of struggle. So, I think that is the only difference.”

8.3. Islamic Feminism from the Perspective of Secular Women

As discussed in the previous section, Turkish modernization process always embrace conflict in terms of top to down Westernization project and adoption of Western secular ideology and laicism by excluding all religious symbols from the public sphere. On the other hand, it is an important fact that Turkish secular ideology does
not completely remove religion from state, however interpret, regulate and administer through institutionalization of religion (Davison, 2003). Many existing studies point out that institutionalization of religious affairs and Turkish modernization project 1) fell short to diffuse all segments and regions of Türkiye, 2) accepted headscarf as the main symbol of Islamic-modern dichotomy and tried to complete the modernization project over the female body (Çağatay, 2018, Leake, 2012). This process paved the way for prevailing secular-religious dichotomy particularly between Republican elites, secular women and religious conservative groups as well as challenged women’s movement through patriarchal hegemony that is inherent in the republican ideals.

Yet, despite the prevailing secular-religious conservative dichotomy, women’s movement has experienced crucial turning points to overcome the obstacles inherent in the problematic top to down modernization project of Türkiye. First, Muslim women’s identity claims became visible especially after the 1980s together with the rising multicultural claims during the third wave of feminism. Second, Muslim women politicized simultaneously with the rising political Islam especially after the 1980s which also paves the way for the politicization of Islamic women for their identity claims and claiming their equal existence not only in the public sphere but also within the women’s movement as well. Third, “post-modern coup” in 1997 which is known as “28 February” and which have forced well-educated pious women stay out of public institutions and higher education led the rise of individualism, identity claims and mass movements of Islamic women. The post-modern coup in 1997 also resulted with a significant transformation in the women’s movement so as to become more collaborative and inclusive while an important alliance between different secular and religious groups was established, namely, “Birbirimize Sahip Çıkıyoruz İnisiyatifi” (We Protect Each Other Initiative) within which women from different ethnic, ideological and religious backgrounds raised a collective voice against male intervention to woman body. Although there are still ideological cleavages between secular and pious women, it is apparent that secular and pious women mutually change each other.

The interviews held with women from different political standings reveals the same prevailing ideological cleavages, while on the other hand point out a crucial potential
for mutual understanding and collaboration between secular and pious women. It is evident that, the vast majority of the interviewed women who do not associate themselves with any religious identity understands and agrees with the use of the concept Islamic feminism, while only a few of the interviewed secular women disagrees with or finds it “unnecessary”. The interviews reveal three different groups of women whose approach to Islamic feminism differs in terms of their understanding of Islam, women’s relation with constitutional state and feminism: 1) A few of the interviewed women consider Islam “irreconcilable” with gender equality and feminist ideals, 2) a few of the interviewed women consider that it is “unnecessary” to adopt an “Islamic” identity in a secular and constitutional state and 3) the majority of the interviewed women understand and acknowledge the identity struggle of Islamic women and finds their struggle from within their own comprehensive doctrines meaningful.

Although not deliberately been asked, the headscarf issue stands in the core of the debates on woman freedom being assumed as the most basic indicator of “backwardness” when the question has been asked related to Islamic feminism. However, particularly the interviews with “secular”\(^{73}\) – including socialist, liberal or Kemalist - women apparently shows that secular women’s confrontation with Islamic feminists apparently increases their awareness about Muslim women’s struggle for their rights and polish their prejudice against the relation between Islam and feminism which they previously considered as “irreconcilable”. One of the interviewed women from Foundation of Women’s Solidarity (1) articulated that her encountering with Islamic feminists challenged her perception of Muslim women as a homogeneous group and led her to realize the differences among and different ideologies adopted by Muslim women. I believe that her emphasis on encountering with Islamic feminists in a higher education institution also shows the importance of encountering “counter-publics”\(^{74}\) and “deliberative discursive multicultural spaces”\(^{75}\).

\(^{73}\) Here the term “secular” is used to refer women who do not associate themselves with any religious identity.

\(^{74}\) Fraser (1990)

\(^{75}\) Benhabib (2002)
which is necessary to overcome the normative understanding of public sphere and representation of the ideas of subordinated social groups.

**Foundation of Women’s Solidarity (1):** "...There was a debate at that time about whether or not wearing headscarf should be allowed [in universities] in Türkiye.... [In my university] there was a women's research club.... I used to attend their meetings and seminars. It is where I first heard it. It was called Islamist or Islamic feminism and veiled women or other feminists were talking about the issue of headscarf, [saying that] it is actually a women's issue... it is an issue related to feminism.... A woman said something like this. “When I go somewhere, I am there.... I am there as Ayşe, I am not the daughter of Islam, I am not the representative of Islam, I have no such thing as representing Islam, I am also a feminist, I call myself a feminist....” For example, when we [think about] Islamic feminism, there might be only one thing that comes to our mind, but it is not the reality,...there are many other women out there,...thinking and saying different things."

There are two predominant assumptions articulated by the interviewed women who disagrees with the adoption of the concept Islamic feminism: 1) The assumption that considers headscarf as the most basic indicator of “backwardness” which is linked with patriarchal Islamic culture. 2) The assumption that considers feminism purely secular and comprehensive without any preliminary connection with religious discourse and without any exclusionary practice of its agents. One of the interviewed secular young women explicitly expressed her confusion concerning the relation between feminism and religion – more specifically Islam – which she thinks “irreconcilable” based on the presumption that feminism – by nature - is against any kind of restriction over women imposed by religious doctrines.

**Foundation of Women’s Solidarity (2):** “I think that...there is a perspective that accepts and internalizes many religious restrictions directly as the discourse of religion. How can the two [feminism and Islam] come side by side while it is feminism that completely opposes these restrictions? I don't really understand.... But it doesn't mean these two can never come together.... I did not read much to understand this part. I do not know much about it. But what Islam imposes is for women to be more decent,...cover their heads, cover their wrists or do something.... But what feminism says is that there should be no rules. It says these rules should not restrict women's lives. I don't understand how these two ideas come together. That is why I am quite confused."

Besides, there are two important facts that make secularism an important source of discussion: 1) Secularism has an inevitable connection with human rights-based approach and law which has its origin from Kant’s political philosophy which argues
it is not critique but law that ends the chaos of metaphysics, 2) human rights based approach and secularism are proclaimed to provide common language – which is assumed universal and relevant worldwide. However, there are two other important facts which bring up the need to scrutinize the historical and socio-political aspect of secularism: 1) Apart from the simplest definition of secularism as a separation between private religious belief (or non-belief) from public life and state affairs, it also refers to liberalism, rule of law and scientific approach while “universal legal equality” is - implicitly or explicitly - assumed firmly established in Western states and mainly exported from Western law (Asad et.al., 2009:24). 2) Secularism does not necessarily mean exclusion of all religious doctrines from public institutions while there are certain practices implemented by different countries to co-opt religion as an integral part of their public life and national identity. For instance, religious education is among the compulsory lessons of high school education in Türkiye and certain Sunni-Muslim identity has been push forward as the desirable moral and behavioural dimension of Turkish citizenship (Atasoy, 2011; Çağatay, 2018:49).

This confusion and distinction between secular state and religion makes itself explicitly apparent in one of the interviewed women from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1) who strictly opposes with the adoption of the identity of Islamic feminism by women living in Türkiye based on the fact that Türkiye is a constitutional state where rule of law prevails. Thus, by making a distinction between some of Middle East countries those are governed by Islamic law, she founds it “unnecessary” to reinterpret Islamic doctrines in a constitutional state while the legal framework has already provided the ground for equality and liberty.

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1):** “Well, I think religion and feminism cannot reconcile. I do not say anything to women who call themselves religious Islamists and feminists…. I find it very important that this voice is raised in Islamic countries…[such as] Pakistan, India, Iran,…or Saudi Arabia…. Therefore, I have great respect and I attach great importance to their continuation…. [However], that is not what I think for Türkiye, because Türkiye is a secular country…. Most importantly, there are secular laws. Therefore, I find Islamist feminism important when I think of countries where Islamic rule is dominant, but I do not find it good for Türkiye. Secularism is our guarantee, of women. Whether religious, Kemalist, Kurdish…. For me, it is not the identities that are important there. For this reason, Islamic feminism…seems dangerous to me, for Türkiye….”

Similarly, another interviewed woman from one of the Kemalist women’s organization, namely, Turkish Women’s Union (1), clearly emphasized her belief
into the rule of law while disregarding the efforts of women to use Qur’an as a central text in order to explain and advocate for women’s rights and gender equality. Although she expresses a sense of understanding, she apparently finds it irrelevant and dangerous to try to use religious doctrines and sources to explain and justify women’s rights and gender equality, which bears the potential risk of different interpretation of religious texts by different groups, that might pave the way for patriarchal and oppressive policies and establishment of far-right militant religious organizations. A similar discussion was also held by some of the Muslim scholars, such as Seedat (2013), who argues that the convergence of Islam and feminism creates more conflict and opens more doors for “Islamists” to interpret or misinterpret the Qur'an to suit their political needs. On the other hand, she believes it is important to speak about and illustrate how feminism has existed in the lines of the Qur'an, instead of insisting on the convergence of Islam and feminism. She also suggests maintaining a critical space between Islam and feminism so that their coming together recognizes the different and specific history and politics of Muslim women’s equality work (Seedat, 2013:27).

**Turkish Women’s Union (1):** “Now they [religious women] are among us, of course. But if you ask me as an individual,…if you ask my political opinion, I would be against discussing rights and freedoms on the grounds of religion. I oppose it because [the] source [hear] is a book, [and] everyone interprets that book according to their own way…. Some says that the headscarf is freedom, some says that the black chador is freedom, some says that working within the ISIS organization is freedom…. And someone says that actually there is feminism within Islam. Now, however, what we have learned is that there is violence against women in that book. So, if one defends rights and freedoms based on religion, as I said, we will fail there. Because everybody will defend it according to their views. If you ask me if I work with them [Islamic feminists], I will say yes, but if you ask me if I accept this idea, I will not. Because it is necessary to separate religion and world affairs. Especially when it comes to women's issues. Definitely.”

Based on the discussions above, it would not be wrong to argue that an approach that includes a reduced diversification between secularism/rule of law and religion and an assumption that women who speaks from within a religious doctrine undermine the principle of rule of law in a constitutional state, might overlook the fact that religion also comprises a cultural aspect. Hence, another important point that should be revealed concerning Islam is the fact that Islam is not only a religious and ideological doctrine but also a social institution and cultural cement mainly governed by men
Türkiye’s transition to multi-party regime and the role of right-wing parties in terms of integration of Islam into the official ideology as components of Turkish culture well illustrates how the legal ground that creates a nation-state is blended with religious elements that reinforce national identity. While laicism has been one of the building stones of the foundation of modern Türkiye in 1923, religion has always been an integral part of the national identity. This has become more apparent especially during the transition to a multi-party regime in 1946 when religious-traditional rhetoric has become to be articulated by the right-wing parties and reached to its peak in the 1980s following the enaction of the 1982 Constitution in which religious education was introduced among the compulsory education as an attempt to control cultural sphere as well (Çağatay, 2018:50; Keyman & Kancı, 2011). On the other hand, the co-optation project of Islam which goes hand in hand with secular national identity did not apply to women and has been intolerant to veiled women which resulted with the prohibition of headscarf in the public and educational institutions together with the “post-modern coup” in 1997 which is known as “28 February”. Unlike the oppressive official ideology and state intervention to women body, “28 February” paved the way for the reconciliation between secular and religious women where they stand together against the state surveillance over women and become more sensitive towards cultural, religious and ideological differences. One of the interviewed women from Socialist Feminist Collective (3) pointed out 1997 “post-modern coup” as one of the most significant turning points in terms of building alliance between secular, liberal, socialist feminist women and Muslim women. As Çağatay (2018) discusses, “28 February” was one of the most significant points which uncovers how laicism and national identity were constructed through women’s bodies while Islamist men having high positions in state institutions. Second, the anecdote told in the interview about whistling of the azan, particularly by secular feminist groups, during the 8 March feminist night march in order to protest the government (AKP) using religion for their oppressive policies, clearly reveals how Islam has been instrumentalized and institutionalized by previous and present governments and thus made it difficult to capture – especially for secular, liberal, socialist women – that religion is a part of the individual and cultural identity of Muslim women - and thus makes it relevant for Muslim women to attempt to reinterpret religious doctrines. However, the anecdote was concluded
with the expression of a mutual understanding between secular and religious and women with different socio-cultural and socio-economic identities which illustrates a very important potential in terms of overcoming ideological cleavages and building up strong alliances beyond existing political dispositions. This mutual understanding also consists of the appreciation of the efforts of Muslim women to challenge patriarchal religious doctrines and reinterpret them with a feminist perspective.

Socialist Feminist Collective (3): "I think it was 2008, during the headscarf issue, women from the conservative segment and feminist women tried to create a common voice, and the “Birbirimize Sahip Çıkıyoruz İnisiyatifi” [We Protect Each Other Initiative] was born, and a joint text telling "do not interfere with neither my miniskirts nor my headscarf" came out. This bond and bridge established in 2008 continued in the following years. I find them very radical on some issues…. [During the feminist night march] they carry banners questioning the sexist division of labour within the family, they carry banners that directly mention God or something like that. I think it is a big thing for a veiled woman to carry it. They are the ones who are attacked the most. As a result, a veiled woman and [women] carrying a sign saying "I am a prostitute, what do you care?" [are side by side] at that march…. In fact, I would like a system where women are not covered…. But I do not think the issue of veiling is a fundamental problem at the moment…. So, it is good that they exist.”

Apart from those who consider Islam “irreconcilable” with gender equality and feminist ideals and who consider that it is “unnecessary” to adopt an “Islamic” identity or advocate for women’s rights and gender equality by reinterpreting religious doctrines in a secular and constitutional state, it is evident that the majority of the interviewed women, who do not associate themselves with any religious identity, express a sense of understanding Muslim women’s need to call themselves Islamic feminists - or their will to be visible in the public sphere with their Muslim identity - and their need to challenge Islam by reinterpreting Islamic doctrines. Besides, the majority of the interviewed women recognize the identity struggle of Islamic women - as being “feminist” against patriarchal Muslim communities and as being “Muslim” against Western-secular feminist discourse which includes hegemonic and imperial notions. As discussed by many post-structuralist and Muslim scholars, there should be no epistemic supremacy between secular approach and Islamic feminism in terms of advocating for women’s human rights and claiming gender equality. In addition to that, it is also important to refer Islam – or any other religion - as a cultural phenomenon which shapes the everyday practices and discourse of a particular society who identify themselves with that particular religion.
Based on that, similar to the post-structuralist and Muslim scholars, some of the interviewed secular women representing socialist and liberal feminist women’s organizations consider and describe Islam as a cultural sphere instead of being an ideological phenomenon in which Islamic women struggle for their rights against the male hegemony. They apparently find the efforts of Islamic women’s rights activists quite meaningful to challenge patriarchal Islam by reinterpreting religious doctrines and recognize the different experiences and the need to organize as Islamic women. As Benhabib and many other scholars argue that depending on an epistemological model of culture, it is important to defend the creation and expansion of deliberative discursive multicultural spaces – without mistaken by cultural relativism - in liberal democracies. She argues that modifying our understanding of culture and rejecting cultural holism and considering the capacity of ordinary political actors to negotiate their own narratives of identity, such as Islamic women, is necessary (Benhabib, 2011).

**Socialist Feminist Collective (2):** “...I cannot say much in terms of political approach. I do not think that it is me to say something about it. But I think it [Islamic feminism] is very important in an environment like Türkiye. I think it is very important for it to be able to rise, to open discussions and to gain a place for itself within Islam and the Islamic movement. I think Reçel [Reçel Blog] is doing a very good job.... Islam is also a very controversial area in terms of feminism issues. That is why it seems interesting to me [Islamic feminists struggle for their rights in a] field that is full of male dominance.... It seems very important to me to wage a struggle and embrace feminism. In this conjuncture, I think it is very important not only for Türkiye but also for the world.”

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2):** “Feminist theory talks about liberal feminists, radical feminists, socialist feminists and so on.... For example, socialist feminists or radical feminists differ from each other on a very theoretical context, but what about Muslim feminists? What are they telling us? In other words, they are talking about exactly what they live and experience in the habitus of their community. In fact, the field of feminists is secular, but [Islamic feminists say] ”religious practice is also a very important in my life, in my language, in my behaviour, in my relationships, and....as a woman, I am actually discriminated by the men that I am in the same community....”.... That is why…Muslim feminism stands in a more cultural place, I mean, it doesn't have anything theoretical.... They do not actually offer us something different. They share their own experiences.... But I find it very reasonable to organize with women who have similar problems, as is part of feminist organizing. I consider it as Muslim feminists organizing with Muslim feminist women..."

On the other hand, two interviewed young women representing different secular and liberal feminist organizations, explicitly express their support to the use of the
concept “Islamic feminism” and Islamic feminism as a movement of Islamic women, by underlining that Islam – or political Islam – should be considered as the expression of male interpretation of religious doctrines and by making a distinction between religion as a social institutions and “tool of power” and religion as an individual belief. Moreover, one of the interviewed young women from Association for Supporting Women Candidates expressed that underestimating the efforts of Islamic feminists through a presumption of epistemic supremacy of white, middle-class and secular women includes a reductionist approach that overlooks the specific needs and discourses that Islamic feminists have. According to her, what needs to be done is creating a common ground where different experiences of Muslim and secular women would be discussed.

**Flying Broom Association (2):** “…I am happy that we have Islamic feminism. I'm an atheist. I definitely do not believe it at all. But I think it is very important to have Islamic feminism…. A person does not have to not believe in Islam to be a feminist…. There are a lot of Muslim women who actually take time and produce something about feminism. I think this is very valuable…. Islam is also about interpretations. What we call Islam is also something that has been interpreted by men in some way, and these women want to bring their own interpretation…. I think this is an incredibly powerful thing.”

**Association for Supporting Women Candidates (3):** "... So religion is a power mechanism, just like the state…. But I believe that it is necessary to distinguish between one's beliefs and the use of religion as a tool of power. Therefore, I think that approaching this [Islamic feminism] from such an essentialist and militant point of view is extremely exclusionary, extremely wrong and full of a superiority complex. [Asking questions to the Islamic feminists like] "the Quran says to kill gays, what do you say to that, since you are a feminist?”…. I think…this is very superficial,…very shallow,…exclusionary. I think it…labels people of faith as "ignorant and illiterate people". At the same time…I think excluding Muslim feminists or Islamic feminism is also actually a kind of misogyny…. We are all shaped by many social, economic and political conditions from the moment we are born, and our perception is shaped accordingly…. I don't think we need to have theological discussions like [people's perspective on Islam]. We need to get together and discuss "What does a Muslim woman experience? What does a non-Muslim woman experience? Is it really the case that non-Muslim women are given more space within the feminist movement?". We need to be discussing on these more."

In conclusion, I believe that the way in which the vast majority of secular women interpret and understand the concept “Islamic feminism” is quite promising in term of leaving behind the dominant official discourse of “backwardness” attributed to individuals with Muslim identities, stemming from the Republican interpretation of
secularism. As discussed above, among the interviewed women, there are a few women who thinks that, due to the patriarchal doctrines embedded in Islam, it is “irreconcilable” with gender equality and feminism and adopting an “Islamic” identity in a secular and constitutional state is “unnecessary”. On the other hand, the majority of the interviewed women acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists on two grounds: 1) Islamic feminism is an important expression of identity claims of Muslim women’s rights activists or Islamic feminists to challenge dominant secular feminist discourse and hegemonic feminism within women’s movement and to show that subversive feminism can be possible which speaks from within comprehensive doctrines. 2) Depending on the fact that Islam is not only a religion but also a cultural phenomenon which shapes the social structure of a society, the efforts of Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists stands in a significant position in terms of challenging the patriarchal interpretation of Islam and uncovering the fact that there is no one single truth that Islam points out, however there are diverse interpretations of Islam. Deriving from latter conclusion, in the following section I will discuss why it is important for Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists to speak from within their own religious doctrines to reach out their Muslim counterparts and challenge the patriarchal notions in their own communities, which I conceptualize as “cultural translation”.

8.4. Islamic Feminism as an Attempt of “Cultural Translation”

As discussed in the previous sections, there are two predominant arguments raised by secular women in terms of describing the efforts of Islamic women’s rights activists – or Islamic feminists. The first approach claims that Islamic feminists are making use of modernization and trying to “translate” feminist principles into a religious discourse. The second approach asserts that while the efforts of Muslim women’s rights activists in Middle East countries is meaningful due to the fact that they have been fighting against an oppressive and patriarchal regime based on Islamic law, adopting an Islamic feminist identity in a constitutional and secular state, such as Türkiye, does not make so much sense except advocating for their identity claims and struggling with discrimination against pious women. It is evident that, each of
these approaches includes a hegemonic view which assumes “feminism” as an invention of Western, secular, white, middle-class women which needs translation into other cultures. However the interviews with Islamic women and the profound literature on women’s rights activists in Middle East countries prove that the efforts of Muslim women’s rights activists – and Islamic feminists – in Türkiye and in Middle East countries do not simply consist of translating Western, secular feminist principles into a religious language through reinterpreting religious doctrines, but 1) aim to challenge dominant secular feminist discourse, 2) aim to appeal to women from different socio-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and 3) aim to appeal Muslim men who ignores gender equality, which will be conceptualized in this dissertation not only as “translation” in Habermasian terms, but as “cultural translation” which does not simply refer translation of secular discourses into a religious discourse or visa versa. Depending on the interviews with Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists, it is seen that they are not trying to translate feminist ideals – which is discursively considered as Western, secular and belong to white, middle-class women – into religious doctrines. However, they are trying to translate what they inherently have as feminism into gender equality by uncovering the sexist interpretations of religious texts.

First, as it was underlined by the interviewed young Islamic feminist in the previous sections, although “feminism” provides the necessary ground for gender equality, there is still a need to adopt a different “language of equality” that would make sense to pious people who speaks from within religious discourses. One of the interviewed women from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (1) underlined the importance of “cultural translation” done by Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists in order to reach out pious men and in order to overcome the cleavage between secular and religious groups due to 1) their prejudice against feminists as “an assigned identity” which was discussed earlier, 2) the requirement of being familiar with the cultural aspects and everyday language of that particular social group. Thus, this “communicative action” between women and men requires a certain level of knowledge of cultural aspects of that particular society. As it was emphasized in the interview, although there is little difference between the content that would be produced by secular feminist women’s organization and Hazar
Education, Culture and Solidarity Association, it might be quite difficult to communicate with people in Directorate of Religious Affairs due to their prejudgement of secular feminist groups presumed as the representatives of Western secular ideology which is considered alien to Muslim societies. Another interviewed woman from Capital City Women’s Platform (2) expressed a similar need of “cultural translation”, by giving the example of abortion debates in Türkiye, in terms of advocating for women’s rights and communicating with conservative pious men who would never take into consideration what feminists say and where the secular discourse would be inadequate to explain women’s rights and gender equality.

**Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (1):** "...In [one of the] European Union project [implemented by the Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association] on violence,...we interviewed with preachers, those in religious affairs who somehow deal with families or aid recipients as well as psychologists and teachers.... On the other hand, if any women's association, like Purple Roof [Women's Shelter Foundation], wanted to train the people at the Directorate of Religious Affairs, all hell would break loose.... There would be criticisms like they [women's associations] are pumping feminism, they are deviating people, and so on, the directorate would probably be lynched.... What Hazar did ultimately was configure the information produced and clarified in the field by academics as the training of trainers.... I am sure [Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association] did not give any different content than what Purple Roof would give.

**Capital City Women’s Platform (2):** "...[As] an example.... It is not possible for feminists and religious women to share a common view on the abortion issue.... What religious women...address is conservative men or religious men. They [conservative men or religious men] will not pay attention to what any [secular feminist] woman out there would say [by assuming that these women] are already controlled by the West.... But when a Muslim woman says “I know my rights and I know my duties that God has given to me and I remind you of them”, they start talking on a different base.... Thus, this distinction needs to be made. In other words,...feminism, that...feminism coming from the West, does not meet the need of the religious segment and the Muslim women."

Second, as discussed by Jonas, “post-secular” does not mean an increase in the meaningfulness of religion or a renewed attention to it, but a changed attitude towards the pious communities in order to better understand the dynamics behind the social relations and to challenge patriarchal notions embedded in the society through speaking from within their own language (2004, in Benhabib, 2011:172). As expressed within the scope of the interviews with one of the representatives of Havle Women’s Association (1), what is striking in terms of the outcomes of the research
conducted by one of the CSOs regarding the role of religion on conservative inclinations in the society such as “forced” or “early marriages” is that religion does not have a decisive power, but has a *legitimizing power* when it comes to maintaining a conservative approach in a society. Thus, Muslim women’s efforts to discuss religion both within their own communities and within women’s movement is not because proving the epistemic supremacy or equivalence of religious doctrines to liberal democratic principles, but because they need to challenge the patriarchal notions embedded in society that both effect their and other women’s lives through understanding the role of religion in the society and by challenging the male interpretation of religious doctrines.

**Havle Women’s Association (1):** “We are conducting a monitoring of social activities.... [When we ask] what role does religion have and does it have a driving force in these issues [child marriages]? etc. Projects either avoid answering such questions in the name of political correctness or,...come from a very Islamophobic place, saying "anyway, that's how Muslims are". We felt the need to explore whether there is a place in between. We designed a research based on it. Indeed, the results of the research were very exciting for us. Because we thought that religion was a very important factor...that motivate people to marry at child age. Probably because of our own Islamist backgrounds, because we thought that Islam had a determining power in daily life, especially in Türkiye.... However, we basically have seen that this is not the case. We have seen that it does not have a determining power, but if people do it, it has a legitimizing power.... It was a representative study of Türkiye.”

Third, as discussed earlier, translation does not necessarily mean that accepting or agreeing on the epistemic privilege of *hegemonic secular ideology and discourse* which falls short to see the different needs and claims of Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists. It is apparent in the interview with the participant from Havle Women’s Association (4) that in the communication between secular and veiled Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists, it is seen that secular women have an implicit expectation of consensus and “enlightenment” from pious women that women should not be covered. In other words, at the end of the “translation” process of liberal feminist values into a religious discourse, there is an implicit expectation of concluding with the liberal values and adopting a “secular” and “modern” lifestyle. The interviewed participant expressed this expectation as an “advice” received from secular women who implicitly do not consider veiled women as autonomous individuals and understand their free-will for wearing headscarf. She
also expressed that the matter of giving “advice” and the implicit belief on the epistemic supremacy of their own ideology is not something peculiar to secular women but to pious women as well who feel themselves responsible and authorized in terms of giving advice to the ones who did not fulfil their expected role as a woman in the society. As Benhabib argues, many secular states disregard pious women’s own understanding of their (autonomous) actions and mistakenly consider them as the extension of their own communities (2002). Besides, this autonomous action and identity claims of Muslim women is considered controversial to the normative expectations of a secular republican view, however according to Habermas, the normative expectations of the secular republican view can be overcome through a deliberative action between secular and pious individuals (1994). On the other hand, as Flyvbjerg points out, Habermasian public sphere which is based upon public deliberation is not released from power relations in the social and political world and is not sensitive enough to different needs and demands of marginalized groups (1998: 219). Thus, Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists need to conduct “cultural translation” from within their own religious culture which provides them an epistemic tool to understand and explain power relations in the society.

**Havle Women’s Association (4):** There is the trauma that still persists in our mothers. I witness it very closely, that complex of not being able to study, not being able to work, not being able to earn money, that feeling of being stuck…. And…[they were] fighting with more educated, middle-class feminists and white feminists. It is incredibly self-confident when I think about it, and they are more vicious because of that…. I think that they [educated, middle-class, white, secular women] really learned feminism through contacts with Muslim feminists, Kurdish feminists, Kurdish women…. For instance, they say “there is nothing I can share with a woman wearing a headscarf”…. It is written in “Kaktüs” and “Pazartesi” Magazine…. They [say] “I can only communicate with her to explain how this headscarf turns her into a sexual commodity, how it humiliates her and condemns her”…. For example, Muslims…have preaching…. [A similar preaching is also visible in the approach of educated, middle-class, white, secular women]…. This approach seems very well-intentioned….[however, put one in a position]…of “weak-willed” [or] “closed up by her family”…. I haven't seen it again after 2015, it might be abandoned very recently…. When one is walking in Fatih [one of the conservative neighbourhoods of Istanbul] [a similar preaching is also visible] women warn each other because their hair is visible….”

It was largely argued that, the modernization process, which is mainly based on Western civilization and European secular public life that is advised not to dismiss
Christian spiritual sources and reason has always been in clash with Islamic signs and symbols, while Islam has never been considered as “a claim of identity” or cultural politics, but has always been considered as “anachronic” non-secular practices (Göle, 2011). Second, as Habermas argues, the rise of worldwide religious fundamentalism and revitalization of religious communities is a consequence of the crisis of postmetaphysical and nonreligious self-understanding of Western modernity and secularization through nation-state authority (2008:1-2). The discussions raised by Habermas and by other scholars, such as Benhabib, regarding the legitimacy of liberal democracies, shows that liberal democracies should not be considered as compliant entities in terms of understanding and protecting human rights and liberties and should be challenged by the dialectic of rights and identities through democratic dialogue (Benhabib, 2011). Similarly, religion, not only as a belief but as a social institution, also harbours the same controversies as liberal democracies in terms of understanding of human rights. As expressed by the interviewed participant from Havle Women’s Association there is an expectation among secular groups from Islamic feminists to make a “statement” about “true Islam” and about the definition of “Islamic feminism” while it is not possible to make such a statement due to the reason that religion is not something purely consistent and static and has different interpretations as both being a comprehensive doctrine and a social institution (Benhabib, 2002). She also underlines that secular women’s – or secular feminists - tendency of “not establishing an equal relationship” with “others”, was inherited from what is called “state-feminism” - which refers to a centralized and authoritarian configuration of gender policies (Tekeli, 2010) - however is not peculiar to secular women but to also applies to all different political and religious ideologies.

Havle Women’s Association (4): "They invite me a lot here and there to talk about Muslim feminism…. The last time I was asked to talk about Muslim feminism, was in a hotel, in the backyard of the Swiss Hotel with champagne and canapés, and I was horrified…. It has become such a popular thing that everyone is curious about this issue…. I realized that they expect me to explain only one uniform Muslim feminism. Again, they expect you to preach a message, to say that “the real Islam is this and that”. But it is not anything like that, there is no such thing as real Islam. They are not satisfied when I say that we believe in something and we are trying to solve it, like everything in life that is complex and full of contradictions. They want clear answers, correct answers, correct Islamic feminism and so on…. They always wanted to establish something unequal with us. But I think this is the mentality in Türkiye, the left in Türkiye, feminism, Islamism, everything…. We do not know
how to build something from the beginning…. So, I do not think that it is specific to feminism.”

Similar to the Islamic feminists who provide a new understanding and interpretation of gender equality and feminism, beyond the previous discussions on the challenges and ideological/political cleavages between women’s organizations, the interviews with young women (both secular young women and young Islamic feminists) opens a new page on the discussions regarding the future of women’s movement – or feminist movement - which blurs the lines between different identities, ideologies, political standings and different conceptualizations of the terms “feminism” and “Islamic feminism”. As I discussed in the research methodology chapter, before conducting the interviews with women from different women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings, I purposefully took young women as one of the subjects of inquiry in order to see whether there are ideological and political difference between “older” and “younger” generation of women, both within the same women’s organization and between different women’s organizations. What I found out is quite significant in terms of the main objectives of this dissertation which focus on the dynamics behind communication and cooperation between women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings. It is an important fact that young women apparently adopt diverse mode of organizations and diverse understanding of women’s movement and feminism which is distinct from previous generations and which I think quite promising in terms of the transformation of women’s movement – or feminist movement – into to a new understanding of meta-politics which I will discuss in the following chapter entitled, “Intergenerational Difference and Future of Women’s Movement”.

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CHAPTER 9

INTERGENERATIONAL DIFFERENCE AND FUTURE OF WOMEN’S MOVEMENT

9.1. Intergenerational Difference Between “Older” and “Younger” Generations

It has been largely discussed by the scholars working on generational theory, young people constitute a certain social category and a separate generation unit - not simply defined by an age category but a more complex and important social category – who have common experiences shaped by common national, international and technological developments and influenced by the same socio-historical context (Lüküslü, 2023; Mannheim, 1952). In the interviews held with women’s organizations with diverse political standings, intergenerational difference emerged as an outstanding feature between “older” and “younger” generation of women’s approaches towards understanding of gender identity, feminism, intersectionality and organizational culture of women’s organizations. As discussed in the research methodology chapter, considering youth as a social category and taking differing approaches and discourses adopted by “older” and “younger” generation of women as a subject of inquiry in this dissertation, made it possible to identify and reveal the changing attitude, understanding, organizational culture and discourse between women who belong to different generations.

In order to analyse a potential intergenerational difference both between women from the same women’s organizations and women from different women’s organizations, I intended to interview with at least three representatives of the same women’s organization (possibly with a board member, an employee and a young woman, depending on the organizational structure of the women’s organization) and tried to scrutinize how differently “older” and “younger” generation of women interpret their organization and women’s movement in Türkiye. Besides, in order to scrutinize
whether women’s organizations take into consideration the participation of young women, I asked one direct question to all participants related to the age distribution within their organization and whether young women take an active part in their work. In addition to that deliberate question, intergenerational difference revealed itself, although not deliberately asked, within the scope of the other questions related with “how do they evaluate the history of the women's rights struggle in Türkiye?” and “what are the strengths and weaknesses of the women's rights struggle in Türkiye?”.

In this respect, the interviews held with “older” and “younger” generation of women reveals four distinguishing facts. First, although the majority of the interviewed women who represent relatively “older” generation do understand the inclination of younger generation to get organized in more flexible and less institutionalized organizational models, some of the interviewed women explicitly criticise the reluctance of young women to take a long-term role in women’s organizations and to engage in conventional/traditional way of advocacy, such as negotiation with the government or lobbying in the Parliament. Second, young women problematize hierarchical and highly institutionalized organizational structures in women’s organizations as well as hegemonic secular discourse in women’s movement, have less “red lines” than the “older” generation in terms of being inclusive, and adopt a more liberal and “Queer” approach - in Butlerian terms - in terms of understanding of gender equality. Third, the outstanding common points among the interviewed young women are their strong emphasis on “intersectionality” and the way in which they identify themselves as “feminist” which goes beyond the normative and discursively “Western” hegemonic understanding of “feminism”. Fourth, although there is no difference between the approach and discourse adopted by secular young women and young Islamic feminists, the intergenerational difference between “older” and “younger” generation of Muslim women from different women’s organizations is elaborated separately due to their unique feature of taking religious doctrines as a central context and addressing religious doctrines in their advocacy for women’s rights and gender equality. It is important to note, I identify “older generation of women” as women who are over the age of 30 and have been working in or a member of women’s organizations for a long time period. On the other hand, I identify “younger generation of women” as women who are below the age of 30,
volunteering or recently started to work as an employee in women’s organizations. In addition to that, I relied on how interviewed women identify themselves and thus, deliberately name the interviewed young Muslim women as “Islamic feminists”.

One of the outstanding common facts that is articulated and acknowledged by the interviewed “older” generation women regarding the “younger” generation is “younger” generations’ distance towards conventional mode of women’s organizations and advocacy, and their need for more flexible, less institutionalized and mixed organizations to engage in struggle for gender equality. Second, the interviewed “older” generation of women split into two different groups among themselves in terms of their understanding of young women’s inclinations. While the first group of women do understand the tendency of young women to distance themselves from conventional forms of women’s organizations, the second group of women describe this as a “deficiency”. One of the interviewed women from Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (1) expressed that she observes both a “decline period” for women’s movement, but also a potential revitalization and recovery with the new generation, in a new way, through street activism and a “counter activism” against violence against women. According to her, young women deliberately avoid engaging in “politics” which they see “unchangeable” and aim to transform the civil sphere through more aesthetic, more artistic, art-culture and literature-based means. By expressing that she takes the “changing agenda” and new tendency of young generations very seriously, she underlined that young women mainly prefer more horizontal and less institutionalized structures and mainly would like to be more on the street. On the other hand, although having respect to the “way of doing” of younger generations, she emphasized her concern about the fact that “no rights-based movement can take a single step without changing the political sphere”. She also acknowledged that young women are in a way aware of this fact, however, prefer to take another path to realize their ideals.

Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (1): “At the moment, on the one hand, I see a serious period of collapse, and on the other hand, I see a serious recovery, a new recovery with a new generation, in a new way, through street activism, etc., in the women's movement, in feminism, especially in the form of joint action against violence.... The "agenda" is changing, that is, the state, public institutions, political parties, etc. are no longer taken too seriously by the new
...generation of feminists. [New generation is more likely to] transform individual differences into the civil world, acting more through art-culture, more aesthetic, more artistic, more literature-oriented, caring less about the public, and what is political…. Young feminists do not want to do big things. They want small, beautiful and stylish things. The young feminist generation…like structures that are more horizontal, more on the streets and less institutionalized. Therefore, I take it very seriously, I attach great importance to it and try to follow what they do. But I am also sure that no rights movement can take even one step without a change in the political sphere. I think they [young women] see it somehow. So, the current situation of the women's movement is a bit like this...

Another interviewed woman from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2), who represent relatively younger generation of women in Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association, similarly took attention to young women’s inclination of massively being present in the street protests on 8 March International Women’s Day, however being distant from participating into women’s organizations. She presumes that young women do not need to organize [in the form of conventional organizations] and if they would do so, most probably they would prefer to get organized in places where they are, such as universities, and in mixed organizations instead of women’s organizations. According to her, one possible reason of being distant from women’s organizations might be the small number of “non-institutional” feminist organizations, which young women could associate themselves. Another interviewed woman from Capital City Women’s Platform (1) similarly underlined that there is a huge gap between the way in which young people would like to engage in civil activism and “old fashion”, conventional civil society organizations. Young people deliberately stay away from building up a dependent relationship with a civil society organization and prefer to be involved in more flexible structures, such as, initiatives and platforms.

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2):** "Young people are beautiful people, we love them (laughs). One of the issues that we have been talking about for a while…with feminist friends…is that 8 March is incredibly crowded, the feminist night march, very enthusiastic…. It is very crowded, especially occupied by young women and this is a very good thing…. That is, feminism is becoming mainstream in many places, the emphasis on gender equality is increasing….. But when I look at women's organizations…. There are very few independent feminist organizations [and] I honestly think that young women do not need to organize, and when they do, they try to cover this need…with mixed organizations…. I have not conducted any such study, if we did, I would be very curious about the results…. But when we look at the ratio, it seems that the need for mixed organization would be higher."
Capital City Women’s Platform (1): “Actually, we did not have much problem reaching out to young women. More precisely, young women were finding us..... But there is a gap between the civil society activities of young people and our old-fashioned, I guess I should say conventional, civil society activities. Young people want to be associated with looser ties, collaborate on an issue-based basis, and then go back to their own work.... They do not want to be in a structure that requires dependent membership and loyalty. They prefer initiatives, platforms. By turning into a platform, our chances of keeping them on our side have increased again.”

On the contrary of the women who “respect” and “would like to scrutinize” the changing attitudes and organizational needs of young women, another interviewed woman from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1), who represent relatively older generation of women in Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association, consider this changing attitude as a “deficiency” of younger generation of women in terms of protecting and sustaining the legacy of women’s movement in Türkiye. According to her this “deficiency” mainly derived from “being apolitical” and “being ignorant” against the historical achievements of women’s movement, especially in terms of improving and amending the legal framework related to women’s rights and gender equality, and being reluctant to learn about and hand over the profound legacy of women’s movement. Similar to the interviewed woman from Association for Monitoring Gender Equality, the participant from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association took attention to the “inevitable” necessity of fighting against the patriarchal and repressive policies of the government within the same political arena and by using traditional means of advocacy and lobbying in order not lose the achievements over the years.

Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1): "I think that the young generations are weak..... I think that their minds are not clear about taking over and continuing these works,...they cannot read well, they are very self-oriented, they do not attach importance to the issue of organization.... A kind of apolitical state of being..... I think this is one of the biggest problems of the women's movement.... But I do not want to generalize too much, there are wonderful young women.... They do not attach much importance to the...legacy of the women's movement.... They have a strange self-confidence. [They think that] they know everything. And this is a huge problem for the women's movement.”

As largely been discussed by scholars researched on youth and using “social generation” as a theoretical tool, labelling young people as “apolitical” involves a certain level of prejudgement against young people instead of trying to understand
their distinct positioning themselves towards “traditional politics”. As Lüküslü (2009) discusses, considering young people as “passive citizens”, “apolitical” and “living in an imaginary world” does not match with the reality experienced by young people and implies a reductive approach which overlooks the socio-economic and political conditions to which young people are subject to. Besides, according to her, having a distance towards traditional politics cannot be simply regarded as being “apolitical” but can be regarded as a “political standing”. Similar to the approach adopted by Lüküslü, when I asked why young women do not prefer to participate into more institutionalized structures and particularly to women’s organizations and what are the reasons that keep young women away from women's organizations, two different interviewed women from Women’s Coalition and Capital City Women’s Platform underlined the traditional organizational structures and cultures which “do not allow young women in” and the structural obstacles such as limited incentives for volunteering and internship which are important for young women’s personal development and career planning. It was underlined by the participant from Women’s Coalition (3) that, women’s organizations are mainly “closed” and “traditional” structures which do not allow for the establishment of an inclusive organizational culture. Thus, a specific effort should be put in order to attract young women and enable a “youth friendly” environment within women’s organizations. On the other hand, the participant from Capital City Women’s Platform (2) acknowledged the need of young women to find a reason to stay in women’s organizations, such as volunteering or internship, which might contribute to their personal development and career planning. However, she also drew attention to the fact that volunteering is not recognized as an added value by the state, where there are less incentives to promote volunteerism in civil society organizations and voluntary activities remained unrequited in the market which makes it less attractive for young people.

Women’s Coalition (3): “….. These are more closed organizations and they do not create a culture that can include people…. Their organizational structures do not allow this…. I would say it is very traditional….., so I think young people do not feel very passionate in that thing, although there are those who make a lot of effort….. It is necessary to make a lot of effort [to include young people]…. That culture is not always very open to innovation…. There is a traditional organizational structure, that…does not change much…. [And] this does not fit in to young people.”
Capital City Women’s Platform (2): “There were those [university students] who were coming for the courses such as Arabic, etc. English courses or [young] people who wanted to do their internships in a women's organization.... There were young girls we somehow hired as secretaries..., they were studying at university and working part-time at the same time. There were young people who attend our meetings where we talk about theology.... But... there are very few people who want to stay and continue their activities in the women's movement... Why? Because there is nothing to attract young people in civil society organizations in Türkiye, because they constantly volunteer while planning a career for themselves... In other words, there is no reward for volunteering. One might have worked as a volunteer in a civil society organization for 15 years, but this does not count as experience when one applies for a job anywhere.”

The inclination of the young women to be organized in a more flexible, non-hierarchical and more inclusive organizations is definitely not because they are not concerned about taking care of the legacy of women’s organizations, but because of the need for not being stuck in the traditional and hierarchical structures of women’s organizations which they deem not inclusive and intersectional enough. Another important finding of the interview with young women is that, regardless of their ideological dispositions, they adopt a common approach and understanding in terms of being inclusive and taking into consideration differences in ethnic and religious identities, socio-economic status and gender identity. The interview with a young woman from Association for Supporting Women Candidates clearly illustrates the emphasis they put on the notion of “intersectionality” and being inclusive both in discourse and organizations which might make the efforts of women’s movement more meaningful and effective. When I asked the question “what is the most fundamental problem of women's movement?”, the participant young woman from Association for Supporting Women Candidates (3) underlined the lack of comprehensive discourses, which speaks to everyone and sensitive to the ethnic, religious, class and gender identity differences, due to lack of heterogeneity within women’s movement. In addition to that, according to her, one of the prominent principles of developing comprehensive discourses is the involvement of different subject groups into the process and not being limited with certain profile of women who belong to same social class.

Association for Supporting Women Candidates (3): ”...I think we need to be very careful about who we include and who we do not include.... I think this is again about the absence of intersectionality.... [If] only people from a certain profile come together, it is naturally not possible to say anything about the experience of people
who have completely different experiences…. Therefore, unless [we] create a space in which class differences, ethnic differences, religious differences, differences in gender identity, differences in sexual orientation, those without disabilities and those with disabilities can all be represented as much as possible…[our] discourses will of course remain limited to certain people.”

There are two prominent outcomes come to the fore from the interviews with young women. First, regardless of their ideological standings, all of the interviewed young women underline the lack of and need for “intersectionality” within women’s movement and the need for being more inclusive in terms of ensuring the involvement of LGBTI+ movement into women’s movement. This common discourse adopted by young women clearly reveals that they draw a picture of “ideal” women’s movement with feminist principles in terms of not being limited with women’s rights and women as a normative gender category (within the framework of binary definition of sexes). One of the interviewed Muslim young women from Havle Women’s Association (2) underlined that one of the weaknesses of women’s movement is the lack of “intersectionality” within the movement and not sufficiently address differences among women, while the other one is the women’s organizations distinguishing themselves from Queer - in Butlerian terms - and LGBTI+ movement and not being inclusive enough in terms of gender identity.

**Havle Women’s Association (2):** “There are maybe two points where I see [the women's movement] fails. First, I think it fails a little more on the intersectionality issue…. I am not only talking about Islam specifically, but there might be different kinds of intersectionality…. No movement, no project, [do something] for women with disabilities, for example, is a great deficiency, a failure. Also, the fact that women's organizations, in general, separate the Queer movement, the LGBT movement from themselves…actually seems like a failure to me. Because the starting points are very similar…… But there are still….some conflicts. I also consider this a failure.”

Second, without any exception and regardless of their ideological standings, all of the interviewed young women identify themselves as “feminist”. Besides, they disregard the normative assumption of “feminism” and “being a feminist” which refers to a certain stereotype and do not care about how “feminist” is perceived in the society. When I asked whether they identify themselves as “feminist”, one of the interviewed young Muslim women from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity
Association (2) underlined that she identifies herself as “feminist”, but it does not refer to certain category who think and advocate in the same way.

**Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (2):** "There is a very stereotypical feminist [perception] in society,...[and] there is something that is portrayed as "this is what a feminist is". I think this is not right. When I define myself as a feminist, I might not think the same as all feminists. Likewise, I do not have to advocate for women's rights in the same way. I do not have to defend everything that people who identify themselves as feminists defend, or the way I defend it might not be the same. I just feel the need to make this distinction.... But apart from these, I can say “Yes, I am a feminist” in society.”

Moreover, as discussed earlier under “Islamic feminism” chapter, most of the interviewed young women describe “feminism” as an “umbrella” concept which both covers “women’s rights” and all different identities and not limited with the normative definition of “women” as a gender category. When I asked “how they define the conceptual difference between “feminism” and “women’s rights”, the same interviewed Muslim young women from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (2) underlined that feminism is not limited with women’s rights but also should include LGBTI+ rights.

**Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (2):** ".... When I say feminism, we can also include the advocacy of LGBT rights or the empowerment of LGBT people. Therefore, feminism is taking shape in my head as a umbrella concept. I see women's rights advocacy as a concept that takes women as its basis and aims to empower women and equalize them with men in society."

Similar discussions are made by young women who were supported by The Young Feminist Fund (FRIDA) and who were interviewed within the scope of the research conducted by FRIDA on how young feminists are innovating at the grassroots to tackle many of the structural and systemic issues they face and what kind of innovative and creative strategies they employ to challenge the status quo. There are

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76 FRIDA focuses on activism led by feminists under 30 years of age. FRIDA, The Young Feminist Fund – is an international young feminist-led organization that began in 2010. It aims to provide young feminist leaders with the resources they need to amplify their voices and initiatives as well as bring attention to their work. The organization mainly provides support to young feminist groups working for women’s rights and LGBTI+ rights from different countries all over the world. FRIDA is committed to provide both financial and non-financial resources (such as, capacity strengthening activities and online learning programme) and aims to provide “core grants”, which is not “project-oriented” and is based upon supporting the core activities of the organizations.
two important points that is prominent and consistent with the discussions held above. First, FRIDA uses the term ‘feminist’ broadly to refer to individuals and collectives working within women’s movements or in other social movements to promote and work towards the safety, equality, justice, rights, and dignity of girls, women, and other marginalised groups\textsuperscript{77}. According to FRIDA’s view, ‘feminism’ is composed of set of principles which includes \textit{non-hierarchy, collectivity, participation, diversity} and \textit{inclusion} and there are multiple feminisms adopted by feminists expressing those principles in their work. They define young feminist activists as individuals from across the gender spectrum committed to advancing gender equality and women’s rights through explicitly feminist means. Second, the definition of feminism made by young feminists is away from a theoretical, academic, ‘Western’ or ‘bourgeois’ definition of feminism and involves a broader perspective which applies to all aspects of their life as a way of living and as a practical answer to daily problems. In addition to that, one of the most distinctive features of young feminists from the older generations is expressed as their greater emphasis on intersectionality and inclusion of other groups, such as LGBTI+ people into the feminist movement. Some of the interviewed young women articulate that they are more aware of the needs of the younger generations, are more intersectional and are in favour of more radical interventions to the needs of the society.

\textbf{Respondent from Gordas sin Chaqueta, Colombia:} “I experience feminism in my daily life: when I walk in the street, when I travel in public transportation, and not through books or concepts. For me feminism was healing. Then I discovered its political dimension. Feminism saved my life, and I hope it can save other people’s lives.”

\textbf{No Tan Distintas, Argentina:} “My approach to feminism was by experience and following intuitions. It was a natural, genuine, and autonomous evolution. The theoretical and conceptual framework came later.”

\textbf{A young feminist from Tunisia:} “Younger feminist groups are much more aware politically, are much more intersectional, and more radical … I believe that young feminists adopt these new strategies because they are more aware of the needs of the younger generations, because the needs of the society have changed and making the change becomes much more urgent and sometimes needs strong, radical, interventions. But also, because they have witnessed the emergence of new

\textsuperscript{77} Bashi, G.; Martelotte, L.; Modungwa, B. & Olmos, M. E.; 2018; “Young feminists’ creative strategies to challenge the status quo: a view from FRIDA”, Gender & Development, 26:3, 439-457
movements and have been part of them, their intersectional understanding is broader.”

On the contrary of the criticism directed to young feminists in terms of not protecting and sustaining the legacy and disregarding the historical achievements of women’s movement in Türkiye, almost all of the interviewed young feminists acknowledged the success of women’s movement and describe women’s movement as one of the strongest movements which cannot be suppressed in most periods. Even now, when the basic rights and freedoms are significantly restricted women’s movement still stand strong in terms of getting organized and make their voices heard. According to them, since Ottoman Empire, women’s movement has been one of the profound movements in Türkiye and even in Ottoman Empire period their demands and advocacy for women’s rights and gender equality can never be described as “timid”.

**Association for Supporting Women Candidates (3):** When I look at the history of the feminist movement in Türkiye,… I honestly think it is a very strong movement. Because I think the women's movement is one of the rare groups whose voice cannot never be suppressed…. I am not very familiar with the history of feminist movement in Türkiye starting from the Ottoman Empire…. But even now, in a period when freedoms, democracy and civic space are so restricted,…there are very few organizations that can really come together in an organized way and make so much effort to make their voices heard and produce so much policy, other than women’s movement."

**Havle Women’s Association (2):** "After the [foundation of] the Turkish Republic, women have many different problems…. What I can call a more discontinuous movement regarding the women's movement…. However, I see that it has been on a slightly higher rise recently, perhaps more rapidly in the last twenty years, in Türkiye."

**Reçel Blog (1):** "It is reflected as if it [women’s movement] is something new from the West, but we know that there has been a women's movement since the Ottoman period. And when we look back at that time, we see that the demands of those women were not very timid demands. Therefore, I think there is a strong tradition of a women's movement. Even now, because Türkiye continues its course with serious democratic problems and the women's movement is very strong in this environment."

The intergenerational difference between the interviewed Muslim women from different women’s organizations stands in a distinct position in terms of addressing religious doctrines in their advocacy for women’s rights and gender equality, instrumentalizing religious doctrines, and the way in which young Muslim women -
or Islamic feminists - adopt a feminist identity. On the other hand, the interviews with young Islamic feminists pose a similar approach with secular young women in terms of “intersectionality” and understanding of “feminism” and gender equality. One of the founding members of Capital City Women’s Platform (4) who is among the early representatives of the Muslim women’s rights activism in Türkiye, express that there is a considerable difference in their discourse between their (older) and younger generation of Muslim women’s rights activists which she finds more aggressive and “vindictive” and closer to the discourse adopted by the Muslim women’s rights activists of their own generation. Thus, she finds the younger generation more distanced to religion and religious doctrines due to the discourse and arguments they use, which she also finds “understandable”.

**Capital City Women’s Platform (4):** "Younger feminists and older feminists of our age already have language problems. Feminists of my age do not accept the slogans of hatred they [younger generation] chant during the 8 March marches. They criticize them [and] they even fight with them, and so on and so forth. Therefore, the new generation has a good relationship with feminists of their own generations. But the issue [is that], what the relationship of this new generation of [Islamic] feminists with religion. Let me put it this way, for example, the clothes of these friends show their religiosity right now. There are also friends who have left that outfit…. After leaving that outfit, the question of what religiosity is and what feminism is remains very ambiguous. Therefore, what I see is that…there are new organizations [of younger generation of Muslim women] who both contribute to and support the feminist agenda [through] their own special stances…. It is normal for this to happen (laughs). I do not see any abnormality. That means this [new] generation will have that style."

On the other hand, the majority of the interviewed Muslim women representing the younger generation criticize the older generation of Muslim women’s rights activists for only problematizing domestic division of labour and for ignoring LGBTI+ rights and “right to abortion”. It is also important to note that, as mentioned before, without any doubt, the representatives of the younger generation of Muslim women identify themselves “Islamic feminists” or “feminists” and also identify their organization as a “feminist” organization, while the early women’s organizations, such as BKP, adopted a more moderate approach towards “feminism” and did not identify their organization as a “feminist” organization in order to be “respectful” to some of their members who do not want to identify themselves as “feminist”. As expressed by the representatives of Havle Women’s Association, although they still find the
hegemonic secular discourse in feminism problematic, during the foundation of Havle Women’s Association they identified certain principles including the principle of calling themselves “feminist” without any exception. This attitude apparently reveals the difference in approach between the “older” and the “younger” generation and illustrates how, as time goes on, being distanced towards hegemonic secular discourse in feminism has turned out to expanding the scope and challenging the hegemonic secular discourse in feminism. It is evident that, the interviews with the younger generation of Muslim women clearly reveals that they adopt a more liberal and “Queer” approach - in Butlerian terms - in terms of understanding of gender equality and trying to expand the deliberative spaces without being stuck in hegemonic secular feminist discourse and the “red lines” drawn by the “older” generation of Muslim women in terms of rights and liberties (Benhabib, 2011; Butler, 1990). The digital public sphere created by the younger generation of Muslim women also represents an example of deliberative discursive multicultural spaces (Benhabib, 2011) and a more “mixed” organization which brings together not only Muslim feminists, but also more conservative women from different socio-economic backgrounds who do not identify themselves “feminist”. As expressed by one of the founders of Reçel (Jam) Blog, although they do not identify Reçel (Jam) Blog as a “feminist” platform, it is a platform that was born out of the need of Muslim women of the younger generation to create a space where they can talk without being stuck with certain boundaries or “red lines” which were identified by the “older” generation of Muslim women’s rights activists.

Havle Women’s Association (4): “The reason why Reçel [Jam Blog] was released is a little bit about our inner concerns. There were two separate attempts of organization in KŞKMİ [Muslims Initiative Against Violence Against Women]. First of all, there were Islamist women who did not call themselves feminists at all, who found it very problematic to discuss things through feminism, and who actually spoke in more Islamist jargon. For example, discussing LGBT and discussing abortion was a problem there. Only, it was not a problem to discuss domestic roles…. There was a serious distancing from feminism....”

Havle Women’s Association (1): "We started by defining ourselves as feminists while we were establishing the association. We did not have such a thing in previous structures. Reçel [Jam] was not a feminist blog, for example. But...it was very tiring to try to talk about certain issues over and over again from scratch in the internal structures…. We had four things...we included them in our organization. One is that one needs to call themselves a feminist.... We all have reservations, we all have
question marks in our minds, but...we said that one need to define themselves in a way that is identical with feminists and feminism... Second one... in terms of financial resources, we will receive foreign funds... we said that “if you have problems with this, you are welcome not to join us if you do not want to”. And the third one, we [will] employ some people, which means some people would make money, some would not.... Also...one should not have any red lines. If one will refrain from talking about certain issues, which are their red lines, then it is against the structure of the association, because we want to be able to talk about everything. I mean, we don't have to agree, but we didn't want to do what the women's groups of previous generations did... We said that a person who says "privacy is important to us, honor is important to us, that is our red line, the LGBTI issue is my red line" or something like that cannot be within the structure of our association, we wanted to talk about everything freely. So, the relationship we establish with feminism was about being able to talk about these, a woman who called herself a feminist already approached us in a way that she was able to talk about all these and that really increased our level of being able to talk about some things..."

It is also important to note that the so called “intergenerational cleavage” between the “older” and the “younger” generation has blurred together with the increasing interaction not only between women from different women’s organizations and political dispositions but also from different generations. The interviews with another founding member of Capital City Women’s Platform (1), who is also among the early representatives of the Muslim women’s rights activism in Türkiye, show how interorganizational and intergenerational communication challenged the “red lines” of the “older” generation and widen the efforts of Muslim women initiated in the 1990s. The interview reveals that 1) the “older” generation of Muslim women’s rights activists have been following and supporting the activities of the “younger” generation of Islamic feminists and 2) make a distinction between other “conservative” women’s organizations and themselves in terms of advocating for LGBTI+ rights and trying to convince “conservative” women’s organizations to adopt a human rights-based approach beyond their comprehensive doctrines.

**Capital City Women’s Platform (1):** "When I look at the young people, it seems to me that they are much more consciously coming from behind with an Islamic feminist team.... In my opinion, they know the West better, they read foreign sources, etc. they compare it with Islamic knowledge..."

“...We are in contact with both women's organizations and human rights organizations. We were already in close contact with Amnesty International and local and national human rights defender organizations of Türkiye. Our relationships with them enabled us to act as a bridge. In many actions, we ensured that conservative organizations participated in, and in some actions, for example, LGBTI organizations joined us. This was something important. Some very conservative organizations initially said that if there were LGBTI people, they would withdraw
their signature.... We fought a little harder and they did not withdraw their signatures.... So, I think the platform is successful in providing these confrontations."

What is quite crucial in the interviews with young people is that their understanding of intersectionality both covers all diversities and not exclude transgender experience, however on the other hand does not exclude categories such as “woman” as an agent of women’s movement and feminist movement as long as they are not normative and essentialist. This means that their emphasis on intersectionality mainly derives from their need for a more comprehensive understanding of gender identity. Second, their emphasis on the need for intersectionality in women’s movement reveals their position towards all discriminatory approaches resulting from the dominant position of white, middle-class, secular and Republican women in the women's movement which marginalize and exclude some women with different identities. As a response towards discriminatory approaches and the dominant position of white, middle-class, secular and Republican women within women’s movement, young women do not prefer to “keep a distance” towards feminism as it was done by older generation of women, but they explicitly claim the right to have a say on feminism by articulating that feminism does not belong to any particular women group. Third, young women’s inclination to organize in more flexible non-hierarchical and more inclusive organizations does not imply their “apolitical” standing, however reflects their political standing towards traditional and hierarchical forms of women’s organizations which does not give enough space for the presence of different generations and women from different religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. What is also evident in the interviews with young women is that they seem as the main agents of reconciliation between the “older” and “younger” generation of women together with their inclusive approach, which at the same time, respects to the profound legacy of women’s movement and aims to break through the “red lines” of women’s movement in order to be more comprehensive and diverse.

9.2. The Way from “Antagonism” to “Agonism”

It is evident in the interviews with women’s organizations with diverse political standings that there is a prevailing “antagonism” and clash between women with
different identities, different “feminist” positions within the movement. On the other hand, this prevailing “antagonism” among women harbour “agonism” which is considered by many of the interviewed women as “necessary” for the development of women’s movement. As Chantal Mouffe discusses, “antagonism” is a necessary feature of democracies in order to challenge all established social institutions which are “inevitably” hegemonic and to turn the contingency inherent in social institutions into a potential for building up a new model of democracy, which she calls “agonism”. Thus, according to her the ever-present antagonism not necessarily should be considered as a negative feature for societies but is of great importance for challenging the normative understanding of liberalism based on “consensus”. Similar to the theory of Chantal Mouffe several interviewed women emphasized that they do not consider prevailing “antagonism” and “disagreement” within women’s movement – or feminist movement - as a problem, acknowledge the fragmented nature of women’s organizations which is highly heterogeneous and underline the need for being more comprehensive in women’s movement in terms of including diverse forms of organizations and diverse ideologies. One of the interviewed women from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1) expressed that women’s organizations “don’t need to agree on everything”, but should be able to build up alliances among women’s organizations. Both the interviewed participant from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association and young women from Havle Women’s Organization (2) took attention to the increasing heterogeneity among women’s organizations and this apparently is a fact that comes out of necessity of being organized with women who have similar experiences, similar ideologies and belong to same habitus. Moreover, another interviewed woman from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2) underlined that “feminist movement” is fragmented by nature, which does not necessarily cause a negative impact on feminist movement and anticipate that it will continue as it is.

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (1):** “Whether it is about the Istanbul Convention,…whether it is about violence, whether it is about the Turkish Penal Code, Law No. 103 on protection of children, I think we should be able to respectfully stand side by side and make an alliance on whatever issue we can stand together on. Apart from that, we cannot agree on certain issues anyway.”
**Havle Women’s Association (2):** "Not every women's movement is the same, not every woman’s organization is the same. And in fact, the fact that there are so many of them is probably something that arises from a need."

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2):** “There is no leader in the feminist movement, it is fragmented. This is expressed in many platforms that, we are very fragmented, we cannot say a single thing. I do not see this as a problem. The feminist movement is fragmented, it has always been fragmented until now, it will continue to be fragmented....”

The interviewed woman from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2) also added that when it comes to produce a common word together with women representing different women’s organizations, it might be difficult to end up with a consensus on producing a common word within the highly fragmented nature of women’s organizations. This might be important and necessary to create a greater impact in terms of advocating for women’s rights and gender equality.

**Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2):** "......From a result-oriented point of view, [the fragmented nature of the feminist movement] might be hindering in terms of taking a rapid action, or it may be the case that very weak voices are being raised. A small group has made a campaign, distributed leaflets, how much noise can this make? It is not possible.... This can also be considered negative.... However,....it is important for the women who participated in the campaign and somehow read that declaration. I think it is important to be able to make this statement politically.”

As it was underlined in the interview held with the participant from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association, the prevailing antagonism within the women’s organizations and women’s movement introduces both an opportunity and a challenge for women’s movement where building up a collective action inevitably depends on consensus even if it always includes contingency. On the other hand, another interviewed woman who is a volunteer, emphasized that while it is easy to be a “feminist” against patriarchy, ensuring feminist ideals within a women’s organization is quite difficult considering the different understandings of feminism by different women and the structural limitations of building up a feminist organization model within women’s organizations. It is important to note that trying to build up a feminist organization model is also a political standing which tries to avoid hierarchical and patriarchal way of thinking and way of working.
The Foundation for Women's Solidarity (3): “It is very easy to be a feminist against this patriarchy, but it is very difficult to maintain feminism against each other and within an...organization.... Where does a feminist friendship begin and end? For example, within the organization, where does feminist organization begin and where does it end? What will we do if our feminism and our friendship intersect, which one will we choose, or how much will it be understood or not understood by the other party when our feminism clashes with the organization or our own egos?.... Since feminism is based on a very free space, a very free communication and the individuality and uniqueness of all of us, this also creates a situation for us.... Sometimes it really takes a little courage to talk about anything, and this courage is actually [something] we women acquired much later.”

While the prevailing contingency and agonism between different women’s organizations are welcomed by women and is not considered as a threat, it is not the end of the story for women’s movement – or feminist movement – which resulted with the adoption of an agonistic politics as a new understanding of democracy as introduced by Chantal Mouffe. By taking the ever-present contingency within women’s movement for granted and acknowledging the need for the existence of counter-publics, women’s movement does not simply aim to establish counter-hegemony as an end for itself. The world that women in the women's movement dream of is much more than establishing a counter-hegemony against the power. It is apparent in the interviews with women that, the most important element that nourishes this dream is “feminism”. However, here “feminism” also does not imply an ideology that is predominantly echoed by Western, bourgeois, white women. It mainly refers to an understanding of feminism which is not limited with the demands and priorities of certain women’s groups and which informs a new understanding of politics which I will discuss in the following section.

9.3. Future of Women’s Movement: Reinterpretation of “Feminism” as “Meta Politics”

The increasing interaction among women from different women’s organizations and representing different generations apparently makes a difference in women’s movement in terms of becoming more inclusive and reconciling with feminism - not in a sense of adopting a dominant “Western” and middle-class understanding of feminism, but challenging and expanding the borders of “feminism”. As both expressed by many scholars and articulated by the interviewed women, feminist
principles which compose of non-hierarchy, collectivity, participation, diversity and inclusion applies to all women and “agents” of feminism with different identities. Unlike the “post-feminism” account in the Anglo-Saxon context, which proclaims feminism as “passé” and which asserts that women’s movement and feminism is outdated and is no longer relevant and necessary to women, the interviews with women from different women’s organizations and representing different generations shows exactly the opposite. As mentioned before, within the scope of the interviews held with women, almost all of the interviewed women, although they do not identify their organizations as a “feminist” organization and although they articulate certain criticisms against feminist movement, identify themselves as “feminist”. This signify a process of “becoming a feminist” through not only being inspired by “feminism” but also contributing to the evolution of the concept. Beyond the criticisms highlighted, almost all of the interviewed women agree on the idea that women’s movement is one of the most rooted, profound and strong movements in Türkiye and will – in a way - sustain this success and grow further. When I asked “how do they see the future of the struggle for women's rights?”, one of the interviewed woman from Havle Women’s Association (3) expressed that, if women still today have been taking the streets to march against women’s rights violations and advocate for women’s rights and gender equality despite all the repressive policies of governments and increasing violence against women, she is quite optimistic about the future of the women's movement. Another interviewed woman from Socialist Feminist Collective (2) underlined that women’s movement – or feminist movement - not only in Türkiye but in the world is the only “remained” strong movement not only in terms of ensuring gender equality but also in terms of anti-racism and anti-government movements such as in Poland, Hungary, America, etc. According to her, women’s movement – or feminist movement - provides a comprehensive approach regarding being against all kinds of inequality, discrimination, subordination, exploitation and patriarchal policies and will continue to be the strongest movement in the world and will lead more people become “feminist” – not in a normative but egalitarian sense.

Havle Women’s Association (3): "Well, I am quite hopeful. I think that it is the women's struggle that will save Türkiye.... In other words, feminist friends of ours who are fighting for women's rights. It will develop further and multiply further.
Especially in this period, if we still manage to be together, if we still crowd İstiklal [Istiklal Street in Istanbul] on 8 March, if we still pack the streets on 25 November.... if we are still be together......against violence against women..... I am hopeful about women's organizations. It will be much better.”

Socialist Feminist Collective (2): "Well, I see it well (laughs). In Türkiye, even in the world, the feminist movement or women's movement is becoming more and more like a movement against the governments.... Because, for example, it is something that is shaped through anti-racism, or anti-governments when you think about Poland, Hungary, America, etc. Gender inequality is not just a matter of gender inequality; it has evolved into something more holistic. I think it had to be like this in Türkiye, when everything was banned and the women's movement and the feminist movement were left behind. So, I think it will continue like this in the future... Both in Türkiye and in the world, it makes more women and people to become feminist.”

The anti-government movement arose from within worldwide feminist movement is an important indicator of the extent to which women’s movement – or feminist movement – is associated with struggling with inequality, discrimination, subordination, exploitation and patriarchal policies and increasing conservative and authoritarian regimes. On the other hand, as many interviewed women underlined, due to the conservative and authoritarian gender policies of the governments, not only in Türkiye but also in other Western, Middle East and Latin America countries, such as Poland, Hungary and Brazil, paved the way for women’s movement – or feminist movement – to become more reflexive to protect its own space instead of being more pro-active for identifying its own agenda. As emphasized by one of the interviewed women from Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2), the changing dynamics of women’s movement worldwide should be analysed along with the political regimes dominant at that specific time period. This would definitely not harm the interviewed women’s belief to women’s movement – or feminist movement. The interviewed woman also underlined she anticipates that feminism and gender equality discourses will become more mainstream worldwide and strong over time.

Women’s Human Rights – New Ways Association (2): "In recent years, not only in Türkiye, but also in the world, we…observe the spread of a power system that has become authoritarian and conservative, and the women's movement should of course be considered together with this, with the life and lifespan of authoritarian regimes. In other words, after the end of authoritarian regimes, we could talk about a much more pro-active women's movement that sets its own agenda. But now we are talking about a women's movement that is more reflexive, trying to protect its own space. However, feminist and gender equality discourses…not only within the
movement but among the ones who are not organized, are becoming mainstream in some places, [and] will continue to strengthen the movement."

Another interviewed woman from Socialist Feminist Collective (3) took attention to the fact that there is a relationship between even the most distinct women groups and organizations with diverse political and ideological standings and women’s movement in Türkiye has always been successful in terms of “breaking through the cracks” of the conservative and authoritarian block of the government. Besides, she acknowledges the fact that none of the women groups, even the ones who support conservative governments such as AKP, are homogeneous and fully content with the conservative and patriarchal gender policies of the governments. Against the government's efforts to divide the women's movement over women's different sensitivities, she emphasized that women’s movement should define their own agenda in order to be more powerful against conservative and patriarchal policies of the government.

Socialist Feminist Collective (3): "We actually need to determine our own agenda…. I am not desperate, because we have a relationship even with the most distant women's group…. The women's movement is the only social opposition group or social group in Türkiye that establishes relations between various different politics can enter through the cracks…. The sexual abuse law or the abortion law is something that not only the [feminist/reformist] women's groups, but also the women's groups within the AKP [Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)] itself have objections to… Similarly, the Istanbul Convention [in the same way] …. What does the government do against this is? They are bringing LGBT issue [onto the agenda] targeting various sensitivities of society, religious sensitivities…. They are trying to [polarize women] such as veiled, unveiled, anti-religious, etc. But I think the women's movement is very strong, in terms of entering through the cracks, filtering their demands and concentrating on the main demand.”

Third, the increasing diversity within the women’s movement - or feminist movement - has resulted with diverse interpretation of feminism by its agents – regardless of whether they identify themselves as feminist – and ambiguous and diverse definition of feminism as well. However, this diversification from time to time might result with the prevailing antagonism within the women’s organizations or women’s movement and even this inherent antagonism in the social movements, sometimes might become disruptive if the process of “questioning” stops and women’s organizations become closed structures which are intolerant to differences (Butler, 1990; Hall, 1996; Inglehart, 1977; Offe, 1985; Melucci, 1985; Taylor, 1989).
The interview with one of the members of 5 Harfliler digital platform, reveals the need for always “having a distance” towards feminist movement, which implies adopting an objective point of view and continuously “questioning” the state of inclusivity and diversity in feminist movement and which is necessary in terms of feminist principles which are described as non-hierarchy, collectivity, participation, diversity and inclusion.78

5 Harfliler (1): “I think it would be good to get rid of didacticism a little more. So I hope that different feminisms are not just words. [A movement] where different feminisms are actually accepted in practice….. The feminist movement has always been, and continues to be, a tremendous source of hope and inspiration. I don't think this will ever change….. I think we need to talk more about feminist organization and structuring….. We need to look more closely at our own mechanisms of domination, that's for sure. But my faith, trust, and commitment to the feminist movement is infinite…. But in order to keep that commitment and hope... it is necessary to keep a distance. I know that distance is a need for myself, and it is something I need to protect.”

What is apparent in the interviews with women from different women’s organizations, regardless of their political standings and apart from traditional political theories, feminism provides a reference point for their political standing. One of the interviewed women from Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2) expressed that, according to her feminism is beyond advocating for equal rights for women or asking for equal participation or representation of women in public institutions and in decision making mechanisms, but refers to a complete rejection of all hierarchical and “by nature” patriarchal institutions and systems. She expressed that feminism is “the way and method for the non-hierarchical establishment of society as a whole” and does not necessarily refer to extending the “agents” and representation of different identities within women’s movement – or feminist movement, but to “the rejection of all those hierarchical relationships”. Moreover, by taking attention to the subjectless nature of feminism, which refers to the unnecessity of identification of a certain identity category derived from gender, ethnic or religious origin, another interviewed woman from Women’s Coalition (1) also stated that “the subject of feminism are feminists”.

78 Bashi, G.; Martelotte, L.; Modungwa, B. & Olmos, M. E.; 2018; “Young feminists’ creative strategies to challenge the status quo: a view from FRIDA”, Gender & Development, 26:3, 439-457
Association for Monitoring Gender Equality (2): “…I cannot…define feminism exactly…. I do not think of it as something just fighting for women's rights…. If you ask me, it is a way and method of establishing society as a whole in a non-hierarchical way…. In my opinion, feminism is not an ideology, a structure that fights for there be a female president…. [or] 50% women in the military. I think the rejection of all those hierarchical relationships actually defines feminism…. It is about changing the social system as a whole. It is not about…people of different genders should be visible within that hierarchy, including women, LGBTI individuals, men, etc. This…does not seem like feminism to me…."

Women’s Coalition (1): "The subject of feminism are feminists, for instance, for me.... Is it enough to give definitions of feminism? I don't know. I have questions like this. I come from a philosophy background. I look at questions rather than answers.”

As expressed by one of the interviewed women from Havle Women’s Association (1) and as it was discussed before under “intergenerational difference between “older” and “younger” generations” section, there is a growing tendency among young women to identify themselves as “feminist” where feminism apparently feeds their political standing. On the other hand, there is an apparent detachment from all traditional political theories and ideologies and tendency to seek for *right to life, equality* and *freedom* for not only women but for all living things.

Havle Women’s Association (1): "The audience of Reçel [Blog] is predominantly conservative women, women who relate to women's issues but do not compromise their conservatism... But those who leave Reçel and join Havle are more radically positioned, both on political issues and on issues directly related to feminism... Women who are more oppositional and who already see feminism as a part of themselves are joining Havle. We are actually more comfortable when talking and discussing many things."

A young woman from Havle Women’s Association (2): "I see feminism as a way of thinking that offers freedom for everyone, even though everyone associates it only with the women's movement or women's freedom. I mean, reading about feminism and researching something about feminism really liberates me. It makes me see new thoughts.... I definitely do not think it [feminism] recognizes gender, language, religion or race.... I really think that feminism has a dimension that is more in the minority and tries to give those rights to people...not only human beings, but also living things... that provides liberation and solidarity."

As evident in the interviews with women from different women’s organizations, *feminism* as being distant from all existing classical and normative political theories and political ideologies has the potential to offer a new understanding - which I would like to introduce as *meta-politics* - that is distinct from not only the existing
traditional political theories, but also from post-modern, post-structuralist and radical political theories. What is new in feminism is that it cannot be merely understood on the contrary of the traditional political theories, cannot be merely analysed through new social movement theories, cannot be merely restricted within the scope of agonistic politics and cannot be – simply - introduced as a new way of doing politics. 

Within the scope of the interviews held with women’s organizations, establishing a horizontal hierarchy between women, being inclusive as much as possible – even in the times when it is not possible to strike a balance between different political standings and ideologies – and fighting against not only gender inequality but also all kind of discrimination, subordination, exploitation and inequality in society are articulated as the main objectives of feminism. Feminism does not have a subject who might be identified – or identify themselves with a normative, unitary, essentialist identity, does not have certain kind of organizational structure, does not want to end up with the development of a new political entity.

Moreover, on the contrary of the existing definitions of “meta-politics” as “a discipline that studies the relationship between the state and the individual”, feminism does not look for a better way of governing a state or a better relationship between the state and the individual, however, looks for the alternatives of a more equal and egalitarian life which would apply not only to the state structure or political institutions, but would apply to whole humanity regardless of their state, nationality, ethnic origin or religion and all living things. Although women’s movement – or feminist movement – sometimes use traditional advocacy and lobbying methods and produce “feminist policy” for advocating for women’s rights and gender equality, feminism is identified as meta-politics that comprise all different political standings and political struggles – including the identity politics – and that is tasked to avoid primarily gender inequality and gender discrimination as well as all kinds of discrimination in society. Gender equality is both the objective and source of equality and feminism is the meta-politics which provides ideological, theoretical, methodological tools and approach to the individuals not for establishing a new way of politics but searching for a more egalitarian and sustainable way of living.
CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

Vis-a-vis prevailing patriarchal nature of the state, traditional gender roles attributed to women from the very foundation of the Turkish Republic, and neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies adopted by the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP (Justice and Development Party) government especially in the last decade, women’s movement in Türkiye has always been the rightful bearer of the great success in terms of the development of women’s rights and gender equality, while at the same time always harbour ideological and political cleavages within itself. By looking at the profound history of women’s movement, this thesis aimed at to analyse the complex relations and ideological cleavages among women’s organizations. As it is evident in the interviews held with women from different women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings, the ideological cleavages among women’s organizations both pose a great challenge to women’s movement in terms of building up sustainable alliances among different women’s groups, however on the other hand, important in terms of the development of women’s movement as the most enduring and successful movement in Türkiye. In this respect, the discussions regarding the collaboration practices of women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings were held within the framework of 1) the historical development of women’s movement which includes diversity and cleavage within itself; 2) discussions on “identity” politics which provides the ground for the discussions on “who is the subject of women’s movement – or feminist movement; structural and ideological obstacles that prevents women’s organizations to establish an overarching public sphere for all different identities; 3) women’s organizations diverse relation with and interpretation of “feminism” and 4) intergenerational difference among women. The main outcome of the interviews with women from different women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings is that, the way in which the interviewed women position themselves within the
women’s movement, the way in which they identify themselves and perceive “others”, the way in which they question women’s movement – or feminist movement – both as an ideology and as a movement, the way in which they distance themselves from their own traditional political standings and the way in which they define and reinterpret “feminism” paves the way for a new understanding of “feminism” as “meta-politics” which will be discussed in the last part of the conclusion chapter.

As it was explained in the Research Methodology Chapter, I took “women’s movement” and “women’s organizations” (within the binary definition of sexes) as the subject of inquiry of this dissertation, due to women’s distinct position within all social and political institutions which put them in a subordinate position in society and exclude from political power. The reason why “women’s movement” and “women’s organizations” (within the binary definition of sexes) was taken as the subject of inquiry of this dissertation is because of the fact that modern form of identification of gender roles still prevails in all social relations, embedded in all modern modes of productions and universally put women in a subordinate position in labour market and against state structures (Pateman, 1988).

Since the driving point of this dissertation is based upon the empirical evidence acquired by recent qualitative researches and statements of women’s organizations who claim addressing “all women” varying in their political framing, the interviews with women’s organizations was dedicated to identify the ideological and structural obstacles that preoccupy the agenda of women’s organizations and prevents them to establish an effective unity and identify their own agenda. What was discovered that there are certain ideological and structural obstacles that hinder women’s organizations to build up a strong movement which includes all diversities, however, on the other hand, there is also the need for the presence of diverse counter-publics which would enable a certain group of women to discuss the issues which are considered as their priority. One of the most prominent obstacles that prevents women’s movement to establish an overarching ground for “all women” with diverse

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79 Çağatay, 2018; Somersan, 2019
identities, is the dominant position and dominant discourse occupied by white, middle-class, urban, educated women which resulted with the exclusion of women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and diverse discourses (such as Islamic discourse). Majority of the interviewed women expressed that “feminism” provides a ground for non-hierarchy, non-discrimination, diversity and inclusion, and in this respect the dominant position of white, middle-class, urban, educated women is not because they intentionally would like to stand in a dominant position among all women’s groups, however depends on the fact that 1) they have the necessary resources including time, energy, values and capabilities to determine the direction of women’s movement’s agenda and discourses 2) their lifestyles entail an “image of feminism” which is presumed that it represents all “feminists”. The interviews with women from different women’s organizations leads us not to overlook the materialist dimension of the ownership of necessary resources including both financial resources as well as time, energy, values and capabilities which determines the limits of feminism as an ideology and which entails the illusion of “image of feminism”.

It is the discourse and lifestyle adopted by white, middle-class, urban and educated women which stand in a dominant position among non-white, non-urban, non-Western and non-secular women and which intentionally or unintentionally creates an epistemic privilege among women and determines what a feminist should think, what a feminist should say and how a feminist should live – which I conceptualized in this dissertation as hegemonic feminism. As expressed by some of the interviewed women, first, the dominant position of “older”, “knowledgeable” and “experienced” women in women’s organizations and women’s movement create an “unintentional” hierarchy over the new comers or young women who consider themselves as “not experienced yet” or “not sufficient enough” to talk about “feminism”, which entails hierarchy of knowledge and experience within the movement. Second, unless women have the necessary time, energy, resources and capabilities to engage in activism they can never get involved into the discussions and activism in women’s movement which resulted with the dominant position of middle-class, urban and educated women in women’s movement. As pointed out by many studies, women’s movement

80 Delmar (in Herrmann and Stewart, 2001)
fell short to bring the problems of lower-class women onto the agenda while there is a problem of lack of organization among lower-class women as well as lack of time, financial opportunities and organizational capacity among those groups. Third, constant visibility of certain women, who usually speak in the name of women’s movement – or feminist movement – and who are described by some of the interviewed women as “women who are constantly on the stage”, overshadows the articulation of different ideas and discourses adopted by different women’s groups or women’s organizations which creates a kind of elitism within women’s movement.

Another widely articulated problem of women’s movement is expressed as lack of intersectionality which fell short in terms of the representation and inclusion of different women in the women’s movement. One of the significant challenges that the third wave of feminism posed to the second wave of feminism was its critique of normative, heterosexist and essentialist categorization of “woman” and the post-structuralist turn in terms of the understanding of “subject”, “identity” and the notions of “common needs” and “common oppression”. As articulated by many interviewed women, women’s movement experienced a significant progress in terms of abandoning the unitary character of “women’s demands” and ensuring plurality, diversity and intersectionality within the movement and has become more heterogeneous than it is before. On the other hand, there are still prevailing political cleavages among different women’s groups. Two of the most significant cleavages are between the republican/nationalist and Kurdish women’s organizations as well as modernist/secular republican and Islamic women’s organizations which restrict the establishment of a non-white, non-heterosexist, non-hegemonic “we” within women’s movement. It is evident that the subordination of the identity claims of Kurdish women and Islamic women through a dominant republican secular literary canon prevents women’s movement to uncover the multiple discrimination that is experiences by Kurdish women and Islamic women just because they are Kurdish, Muslim and woman and do not comply with the republican secular discourse dominant within the women’s movement. Another important cleavage within the women’s movement is grounded on the homophobic and discriminatory perspective posed by certain group of heterosexist women against LGBTI+ people that ignores their sexual identity claims.
Professionalization and issue-based activism are identified two other obstacles against women’s movement to become an inclusive and overarching movement. First, although international funding opportunities that has a strategic importance for women’s organizations in terms of enabling them to evolve as independent organizations are widely welcomed by the interviewed women, it also fosters the institutionalization among women’s organizations which accelerated in the 1990s and led to professionalization of women’s organizations on certain issues, such as awareness raising or struggling with violence against women. As expressed particularly by the interviewed women from secular, liberal, feminist/reformist and socialist women’s organizations, professionalization both have positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, it enables women’s organizations to engage in cooperation with international women’s organization and follow up “international gender agenda”. On the other hand, it entails women’s organization to be subject to the structural and mainly project-based framework drawn by the donor organizations and the thematic priorities identified by the donor organizations. In addition to that, the need for complying with the technical requirements of donor organizations to be eligible for the available funds brings out the problem of domination of middle-class, educated and urban women within women’s movement who have the necessary cultural and social capital to reach out resources and articulation of the concerns of middle-class women while leaving out the needs and demands of women from different socio-economic status. Second, rapidly changing political agenda as well as political authoritarianism that started in the 1980s and transformed into conservatism and authoritarianism during the rule of Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi – AKP (Justice and Development Party) urge women’s movement to engage in issue-based activism focusing on certain issues such as violence against women and juridical decisions.

As widely emphasized by the interviewed women, especially after the 2000s, women’s movement can hardly go beyond struggling with the conservative and discriminatory gender policies and continuous attacks against women’s and LGBTI+ rights of the AKP government, and discuss the fundamental issues of women’s rights activism, gender equality and feminism. Professionalization and issue-based activism, which are not considered simply as a ‘choice’ of women’s organization but as a kind of ‘structural’ and ‘political’ obligation of women’s organizations, were
described as a *threat* against *activism* that prevents women’s organizations to develop their own agenda and a feminist political stance beyond the limits of the political agenda.

The structural and political framework that - to a certain extent - identifies the limits of activism of women’s movement also bears the problem of “*localization*” while women’s movement stays as a “metropolitan city movement” or “middle-class movement” that can hardly address the problems of women deriving from their socio-economic status. This has three prominent reasons. First, as expressed by some of the interviewed women it is quite difficult for lower class women to participate into the theoretical and legal discussions held within the women’s movement while their priority is to satisfy their basic needs, struggle with poverty and look after their children. Second, increasing institutionalization and professionalization among women’s organizations requires an intellectual and technical capacity and skills to engage in the “project-based activism” which only middle-class women can afford. Third, the main agenda of women’s movement has highly been occupied with conservative attacks of the government to women’s rights and gender equality which requires women’s organizations to quickly get organized and respond to the legal changes. This causes women’s organizations to devote most of their energies to fighting against rising conservatism and patriarchal inclinations of the government and “having no contact” with lower-class women living in the periphery of metropolitan cities. It was underlined by the interviewed women that lower-class and disadvantaged women are mainly considered as the “objects” of the activities of women’s organizations based in city centers and they cannot be able become active participants of the women’s movement since they do not have equal access to resources and communication technologies. In response to that, many interviewed women underline the need of sharing not necessarily financial resources but their cultural and social capital and “*know-how*” in order to enable lower class women to establish their own grassroots organizations and become the subjects of their own needs and problems.

As explained in the research methodology chapter, during the design of the questionnaire for women’s organizations, I deliberately asked specific questions
regarding their organizational structure and financial resources in order to reveal the problems that might derive from “compulsory” institutionalization and lack of sufficient resources for women’s organizations to reach out their targeted ends and to ensure a sound cooperation among women’s organizations. Many interviewed women expressed their need and objective to establish a “feminist”, non-hierarchical, participatory, youth friendly organizational model in order to be consistent with their feminist ends. However, when it comes to the structural obligations they need to fulfil, many interviewed women underlined that the legal obligations framed by the legal ground for civil society organizations in the form of legal entities (such as, associations and foundations) impose predetermined hierarchical structures (such as the obligation to establish a “governing board”). As expressed by the interviewed women these legal obligations confine their flexibility to establish non-hierarchical and horizontal organizational structures and to become more democratic and inclusive within their own organization. Some of the interviewed women underlined that in order to overcome the legal obligations they have to fulfil, they are trying to find out alternative solutions to establish participatory and horizontal mechanisms within their own organizational structures. It is evident in the interviews with women’s organizations that, in a legal environment that imposes heavy bureaucratic obligations and hierarchical organizational structures to civil society organizations it might not be possible for women’s organizations to establish feminist organizational models in line with their priorities and principles. Aging and not having inclusive mechanisms for young women seems like another crucial problem for women’s organizations. While majority of the interviewed women articulated that the average age in their organization is quite high, establishment of participatory mechanisms for young women becomes a necessity. Some of the interviewed women emphasized that “closed” and “traditional” structures of women’s organizations and limited incentives for volunteering and internship which are important for young women’s personal development and carrier planning do not allow for the establishment of an inclusive organizational culture within women’s organizations. What is needed is to put a specific effort for the establishment of inclusive and “youth friendly” mechanisms which would be attractive for young people. As seen in the interviews, some of the women’s organizations have established specific units for young women to enable them actively take part in the activities of their organization.
Moreover, structural obstacles such as availability of sufficient financial resources for women’s organizations might also be restrictive for women’s organizations to achieve their objectives. The interviewed women took attention to some important facts regarding the available financial resources for women’s organizations. It is an important fact that the main financial resources of the women’s organizations are based upon international funds (mainly European Union, United Nation funds, embassies and international foundations), while there is limited and non-transparent public funding strategy of the government. It seems like international donor organizations are the only sources of the women’s organizations in an environment where public institutions do not provide transparent and accountable funding opportunities for civil society organizations and foster polarization among women’s organizations. Apart from the limited public funding opportunities, immature donation culture and restrictive legal framework for income generating activities of CSOs are listed among the obstacles against the fund-raising activities of women’s organizations. It is another important fact that, beyond the availability of sufficient, transparent and accountable funding opportunities, particularly women’s platforms and coalitions who do not have a legal entity and composed of various women’s organizations adopt a more strategic position and deliberately stay away from “raising funds”. Instead, they aim to use their own resources in order not to act in a limited framework of a project and identify their own agenda independent from the priorities of the funding institutions. The fact that it is mainly the international funds that consists of the financial resources of women’s organizations resulted in the domination of institutionalized, capacitated, large scale women’s organizations based in city centers while local and small scale women’s organizations can hardly afford to access international funds and implement big scale projects. It is recommended by some of the interviewed women that “core-funding” instead of “project-based” funding would be a more appropriate way of supporting women’s organizations through providing support to the core activities of women’s organizations and simply supporting their raison d’etre. It is obvious that providing core-funding and making available more simplified, in-kind and ad-hoc supports for CSOs both would facilitate the access of local and small scale women’s organizations who have limited capacities to funds and might provide them the flexibility to quickly respond to the rapidly changing political agenda of Türkiye.
In addition to the legal and financial obstacles against women’s organizations, women’s organizations’ level of cooperation with public institutions and political parties was also scrutinized in order to better understand their ideological and political standing towards the state institutions and political parties, their level of involvement to the development and implementation process of laws and regulations, to what extent ideological differences among women’s organizations is decisive in cooperation with public institutions and to what extent they have effect on public policies to ensure gender equality. Women’s organizations cooperation practices with public institutions reveals that while there has been a positive approach towards secular, liberal, feminist/reformist and Islamic women’s organizations and a constructive cooperation between women’s organizations and public institutions until 2010s during the first period of AKP government, this sound cooperation between women’s organizations and public institutions considerably disrupted together with the authoritarian conservative shift of AKP government in 2010s when the concept “gender equality” was removed from the policies and strategy documents prepared by the ministries. It was underlined by some of the interviewed Islamic women’s organizations, even though they have made a significant contribution in terms of the development of party policies of Islamic parties, they have been excluded from decision making mechanisms once they started to oppose to increasing authoritarian-populist gender regime adopted by the AKP government during their second period of rule after 2010s (Aldıkaçtı Marshall, 2013; Müftüler Baç, 2012). Establishment of pro-government organizations was also expressed as one of the most important reasons of deepening cleavages between especially secular and Islamic organizations and marginalization, systematic suppression and silencing of many secular and Islamic women’s organizations who stand in an opposition position towards the conservative policies of the government. Besides, many interviewed women’s organizations articulated that especially after 2010s public institutions only started to cooperate with adherent women's organizations who were “accredited” by the ministries while leaving secular, liberal, feminist/reformist, socialist and Kemalist women’s organizations out of the cooperation mechanisms. Only the interviewed women from Hazar Education, Culture and Solidarity Association (representing a reformist women’s organization who does not identify itself as a feminist organization) expressed that they can both work in cooperation with and get support
from ministries while they can also benefit from European Union funds due to the reason that they do not get caught in the prejudice barrier developed by public institutions against feminist/reformist organizations and they adopt a relatively similar religious discourse as public institutions. Since many dissident women’s organizations do not consider cooperation with central governments as possible, they have turned to cooperation with local governments who adopt a more reformist approach. However, as expressed by some of the new generation Islamic women’s organizations, it is only the women’s organizations who do not identify themselves as “feminist” that can be able to cooperate with local municipalities governed by the ruling party, while women’s organizations who identify themselves as “feminist” or “Islamic feminist” can only be able to cooperate with democratic local municipalities mainly governed by the opposition parties. Thus, apparently in the current political context, for women’s organizations calling themselves “feminist” becomes a choice where all feminist organizations are marginalized and excluded from decision making mechanisms. On the other hand, this considerable conservative shift in the policies of the government and their inclination to establish state-sponsored policies regarding equality between women and men through state-sponsored women’s organizations, stand as a significant problem against women’s movement in Türkiye which continuously deepen polarization between dissident and pro-government women’s organizations.

In terms of women’s organizations cooperation with political parties, all the interviewed women articulated a similar approach towards political parties which does not exclude dialogue and cooperation with political parties, however standing at equal distance to all. Without any exception, all of the interviewed women stated that they do not find political parties sincere about adopting a gender equality perspective within the party and take it seriously to ensure equal representation of women and different gender identities. Even the interviewed women who express a certain level of sympathy to the efforts of Halkların Demokratik Partisi – HDP (People’s Democratic Party)81 and partially İYİ Parti82 in terms of supporting women’s

81 A pro-Kurdish party
82 A centre-right political party that was established in 2017.
political participation stressed that these efforts are far away from being sufficient and cannot go beyond ensuring the presence of women only in sight. The only exception among the interviewed women’s organizations is the Women and Democracy Association (KADEM), who is one of the pro-government organizations established during the rule of Justice and Development Party (AKP). KADEM expressed in their written statement that, as being a civil society organization, they have no affiliation with political parties and although AKP has carried out many positive reforms in terms of women's political and social participation, women's political participation is still not at the desired level. However, on the other hand, AKP is left out of their criticisms directed to political parties in terms of ensuring women’s political participation and taking into consideration of gender equality in their policies.

What has widely been discussed by scholars that feminism does not simply refer to an ideology, a movement or politics, but also associated with “the image of feminists”. It is an important fact that making a definition of “feminism” is a quite controversial issue based on the fact that feminism has diverse conceptualizations and understanding as a movement, as an ideology and as an identity. As historically started and associated with women’s rights activism, “feminism” basically refers to women’s worldwide struggle for social, economic and political equality. Throughout its historical process feminism has been widened and challenged with the inclusion of different women with diverse identities. As being hardly detached from its Western, white, middle-class, urban origin, feminism is mainly associated with the dominant discourse adopted by Western, white, middle-class, urban, educated women which provides them an epistemic privilege within feminist movement in terms of making the definition of what feminism is and what are the demands of women. It is well known fact that the third wave of feminism has emerged as a strong challenge towards the normative and heterosexist understanding of “woman” category which was assumed unite under “universal” needs and demands of “all woman”. Increasing diversity within feminist movement and diverse challenges posed by women with different identities (such as black and Islamic women) apparently widened and transformed the definition of “feminism” and “feminist” which makes it more complex and controversial then before. Many theorists of “post-
feminism” argue that the contemporary discussions on “feminism” do not derive from the practices of discrimination or political discussions grounded on overlooking the needs of women with different identities, but from different manifestations of feminisms (Banet-Weiser, 2007:207). As discussed before, diverse reactions against the dominant discourse and lifestyle of white, middle-class, urban women within women’s movement – or feminist movement were posed throughout the historical evolution of “feminism”. One of the explicit examples of this is the black feminists who reject using the term “feminism” and used the term “womanism” instead (Walker, 1984) and Muslim women’s rights activists in South Africa who do not identify themselves as “feminists” due to the hegemony of the European intellectual heritage in feminism and they do not associate their activism with this dominant ideology (Seedat, 2013). Extended its border together with the inclusion of more contemporary manifestations of the politics and with the increasing multiplicity of identities, feminism has become the politics of contradiction and ambivalence which harbours a broader understanding of feminist principles and diverse feminist self-identifications (Baumgardner and Richards, 2000; Findlen, 1995).

In this respect, for the purpose of this dissertation it is important to understand how the interviewed women conceptualize “feminism” and to what extent feminism informs their objectives and activities and to what extent the way in which they define feminism is decisive in their cooperation with other women’s organizations. What is striking in terms of the findings of the interviews with women, except two of the interviewed women, all of the interviewed women regardless of their political standing, identify themselves as “feminist”. In addition to that, majority of the interviewed women from different women’s organizations made a broader definition of “feminism” which cannot be simply reduced to equality between women and men and gender equality, however as a kind of philosophical ideology that informs their main principles and everyday practices. Apparently, all of the interviewed women avoid making an essentialist definition of feminism which is confined within the limits of binary definition of sexes and based upon a common identity of “woman”. Although the primary and most basic definition of “feminism” is identified as “gender equality”, none of the interviewed women reduced the definition of “feminism” to only gender equality or equality between women and men. On the
contrary, “feminism” is described as something beyond a struggle for gender equality and is associated with struggle with all kinds of inequality and patriarchy which is deeply embedded in all aspects of social and political life. Besides, feminism is explicitly associated with being against “status quo” and struggling with prevailing patriarchal structure of politics and offering simply reformist political views to challenge it. The way in which the objectives, form and participants of “feminism” is described by the interviewed women points out a broader understanding of politics and consequently a shared agenda which derived from women’s own reasoning that I will further discuss in the last part of the conclusion chapter. There are two outstanding definitions made by the interviewed women concerning feminism. First, some of the interviewed women describe “feminism” as something that informs their priorities and principles in their lives and as the resource ideology that leads them to deconstruct and reconstruct their relations with other people in a more democratic and egalitarian way. Second, apparently “feminism” not only provide the ground for detecting inequality between genders, but it also leads its agents to identify all other forms of patriarchy, oppression, discrimination, exploitation and violence which manifests itself in all areas of social and political matters, such as, militarism, socio-economic issues, class, ecology etc. It is evident in the interviews that, feminism provides women – or its agents – with a gendered lens which make them sensitive towards power relations embedded in all social/political relations and also inform a feminist methodology to transform these power relations and inequalities.

When it comes to the conceptual difference between “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s movement/women’s rights activism” the way in which they describe the difference between these two concepts becomes more clear cut in the interviews with women from different women’s organizations. While some of the interviewed women expressed that they see no difference between feminism and women’s rights by asserting that who fights for their rights and inequality are “feminists” by nature, majority of the interviewed women articulated that feminism cannot be confined within the limited scope of civil, political and economic rights of women. According to the majority of the interviewed women, feminism is something broader than the rights of a group of people and gendered identity claims, and refers to a “way of life” which is against all kind of inequality, domination, subordination, exploitation and
patriarchy. The question of “who is the “subject” of women’s movement – or feminist movement, is one of the important questions that has been asked within the scope of this dissertation. The most challenging part of making a distinction between the concepts “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s movement/women’s rights activism” is derived from the difficulty of identifying the subjects – or agents – of women’s movement – or feminist movement. As widely been discussed particularly by post-structuralist theorists, it is difficult to identify a unified “woman” category that describes the “common identity” of the participants of the women’s movement – or feminist movement.

One of the outstanding findings of the interviews with women from different women’s organizations, is the way in which they define and distinguish the concepts feminism/feminist movement and women’s movement/women’s rights activism. Among the scholars who make a distinction between feminism/feminist movement and women’s movement/women’s rights activism there is consensus regarding the main difference between these two concepts. In this respect, while “feminism/feminist movement” is conceptualized as set of principles and a specific goal which is dedicated to challenge patriarchy and all political, social and other power arrangements of domination and subordination, women’s movement is mainly identified with its agents, namely women (within the binary definition of sexes), and as all movements led by women regardless of their goals or objectives which also includes gendered identity claims. In this line of thinking, feminism/feminist movement is placed as a subcategory of “women’s movement” – or any other mixed-gender organizations/movement which adopt feminist principles - as being a goal and a specific objective, that might be – or might not be – adopted by women’s movements. Different from these conceptualizations, when the conceptual difference between “feminism” and “women’s rights” has been asked to the interviewed women, the majority of the participants described “feminism” as a broader concept which also covers women’s movement and women’s rights, whose subject is not limited with women (within the binary definition of sexes) and whose form of organization, objectives and agents are beyond the existing forms of conventional organizations, politics and gender categories. While the majority of the interviewed women described “women’s rights” as related with civil and legal rights of women,
“feminism” occupies a much larger place in their definition which refers to a broader objective of transforming all structural inequalities and gendered roles which put women in a subordinate position. Another crucial aspect that was underlined by the interviewed women and which stands in a very critical position in terms of the activism conducted within women’s movement – or feminist movement – is not to confuse the theoretical discussion in terms of “who is the “subject” of women’s movement – or feminist movement as well as the discussions on “woman” category and the struggle of “women” (within the binary definition of sexes) still for their basic civil, political and economic rights. As expressed by one of the interviewed young women, it is important not to overlook and undermine the fact that women have still been struggling with violence against women and patriarchy embedded in all social and political structures which put women universally in a subordinate position. Thus, on the street, “feminists” and “women’s rights activists” should not be separated from each other by considering the fact that “feminism” and “women’ rights activism” are historically mutually inclusive.

Although almost all of the interviewed women regardless of their political standing, identify themselves as “feminist”, when I asked whether they identify their organization as a “feminist” organization it becomes a bit more complicated which was discussed under the section entitled “Feminism as an Assigned Identity” of the dissertation. As discussed earlier, feminism does not simply refer to a movement or to an ideology but also to an “image of feminism” which is presumed that it represents all “feminists”. Interviews with some of the “older” generation of women’s organizations reveals that they do not identify their organization as a “feminist” organization in order not to leave out women who do not describe themselves as “feminist” and not be disrespectful to their members who refrain from associating themselves with “feminism” which is deemed “radical” by both them and by the external audience. As underlined by some of the interviewed women from different women’s organizations (both secular and Islamic), there is a common perception of “feminist” identity by the general public which refers to a stereotype including a certain style of dress, looks, ways of behaving to men and women and

83 Delmar (in Herrmann and Stewart, 2001)
how to live their lives. In this respect, as a common admission, “feminists” are considered as “radical feminists”, “misandrist” and as women who “having free sex” which is considered as disruptive for the so-called “family values” in Muslim majority societies like Türkiye. Given that, one of the interviewed women from a women’s organization who is working in close cooperation with public institutions also expressed that their organization does not identify itself as a “feminist” organization due to the reason that “feminists” are mainly considered by the public institutions as the ones who “disrupt family values” and disrupt traditional cultural codes that “needs to be protected”. I believe that the way in which “feminist” identity is defined by the external audience and by public institutions well illustrates how truth and knowledge are discursively constructed through discourse and language (Foucault, 1982). In this respect, the truth and knowledge regarding “who a “feminist” is?” is constructed through ideology and discourse adopted by the external audience and institutionalized by the public institutions. Moreover, this is the way in which “subject” positions are constructed and women who are struggling for their rights and equality are “subjected to” the “feminist” identity that is understood as “radical feminists”.

“Islamic feminism” is another very controversial concept as the different definitions of “feminism”, due to the historical cleavage between secular/republican and Islamic women not only in Türkiye but worldwide, and due to the prevailing presumption that “Islam” and “feminism” are “irreconcilable”. As being one of the most heated debates in the political history of Türkiye, ideological cleavages between secular/republican and Islamic women’s organizations and the concept “Islamic feminism” was elaborated in a separate section in this dissertation in order to analyse in detail how do Islamic women position themselves within the worldwide “Islamic feminist” movement, what are the main driving points of Islamic women’s activism in Türkiye, and how Islamic and secular women describe the concept “Islamic feminism”. It is a fact that Kemalist modernization project not simply take laicism as one of the key principles that inform the founding ideology of the Republic but as one of the fundamental means of national sovereignty against religious authority (Çelik, 2006). This has resulted with the exclusion of religious symbols from public and educational institutions which prominently affected veiled women and led them
to politicize for their cultural and religious rights especially after the 1980s. It is another important fact that female body has always been positioned as the battlefield of Islamic-modern dichotomy which particularly put veiled women in a position to most visible symbols of “backwardness”. Pious women are both considered as the primary supporters of the party policies and political campaigns of right-wing/Islamist parties since the 1990s and the ones who are supressed by the “backward” traditions and “reactionary” interpretations of Islam by the republican elites (Çağatay, 2018:49). Unlike the presumption that consider Muslim women as the no strings supporters of the Islamist political parties, Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists position themselves as the autonomous agents of their own struggle with not only the republican interpretation of secularism but also with the patriarchal and conservative policies of right-wing/Islamist parties. As defined by some of the interviewed Muslim women’s rights activists, while there are “conservative” women's groups who support the government's policies, there are also “traditional”, “reformist” and “Islamic feminist” women's groups that oppose the government's oppressive policies.

Thus, as it is also emphasized by the interviewed Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists, Muslim women’s claim for their cultural and religious rights and their emphasis on their religious identity in Türkiye has another dimension than Muslim women’s struggle for their rights in a country that is ruled by Sharia or described as an Islamic republic. In line with the question that I asked regarding how Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists interpret the concept “Islamic feminism”, the interviewed Muslim women articulated two important reasons of why they identify themselves as “Islamic feminist”. First, Islamic feminists feel the need to put an additional adjective before “feminism” in order to make visible their criticism towards Western-dominated, secular and imperial feminism/s which usually interpret Islam as a backward religion and ignore Muslim women’s needs and rights claims. As expressed by some of the interviewed Muslim women, they describe “Islamic feminism” as an effort of mutual understanding for building up a link between Islam and feminism and to understand both their religious belief from the point of view of feminism and feminism from the point of view of their religious belief. On the other hand, it is important to note that, this effort does not imply that
they adopt “feminism” without questioning it, but includes their critique towards the dominant secular feminist discourse in feminism and its implicit connotation with Western, secular, white, middle-class feminists. Second, the reason why pious women in Africa, Asia, in Muslim communities and in Türkiye identify themselves as “Islamic feminists” is to put emphasis on their struggle with “male interpretation” of Islam which has turned Islam into a patriarchal structure and the reinterpretation of the Qur'an from a "female" point of view to uncover the fact that it is not Islam but its sexist interpretation by Muslim men that put women in a subordinate position. Different from the efforts of Muslim women in the Middle East countries which includes the critique of colonialism – and imperial feminism, the efforts of Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists in Türkiye are more focused on the reinterpretation of religious doctrines to challenge patriarchal religious historiography and the way in which the knowledge transferred to posterity – which has been introduced as a norm together with male interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). It was emphasized by some of the interviewed Muslim women that religion – or male interpretation of religious doctrines - does not have a decisive power in terms of the establishment of patriarchal notions in Muslim majority societies, however, has been used by Muslim men as a legitimization - or justification - of patriarchal notions embedded in Muslim majority societies. This is the reason why Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists have been struggling in two fronts. First, they have been struggling with the dominant position of Western, secular, white, middle-class women and the dominant secular feminist discourse in women’s movement – or feminist movement. Second, they have been struggling within their own Muslim communities, mainly against Muslim men, who have been trying to put their male interpretation of religious doctrines in a dominant position and marginalize Muslim women’s rights activists.

When it comes to how secular women interpret the concept “Islamic feminism”, there are three different groups of women whose approach towards Islamic feminism differs in terms of their understanding of Islam and their own interpretation of Muslim women’s rights activists’ and Islamic feminists’ efforts in a constitutional state. In this respect, while a few of the interviewed women consider Islam “irreconcilable” with gender equality and feminist ideals, some of the interviewed
women consider the insistence of adopting “Islamic” identity in a secular and constitutional state as “unnecessary”. On the other hand, the majority of the interviewed women understand and acknowledge the identity struggle of Islamic women and their need to call themselves “Islamic feminists”, and finds meaningful their struggle from within their own comprehensive doctrines and from their own reasoning. It is also evident in the joint platforms established with the participation of women from different ethnic, ideological and religious backgrounds, namely, “Birbirimize Sahip Çıkıyoruz İnisiyatifi” (We Protect Each Other Initiative) which was established after the “post-modern coup” in 1997, which have forced well-educated veiled women stay out of public institutions and higher education, both secular and religious women in women’s movement can be able to raise a collective voice against male intervention to woman body. Although there are still ideological cleavages between secular and religious women, the interviews held with women from different political standings reveals that there is a crucial potential for mutual understanding and collaboration between secular and religious women.

One of the outstanding findings of the interviews with Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists is that, what Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists are trying to do is “cultural translation” through the reinterpretation of religious doctrines to reach out their own religious communities, not only to women but also men as well. On the contrary of the assumptions that Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists aim to “translate” feminist principles into a religious discourse, Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists reject the idea that “feminism” is an invention of Western, secular, white, middle-class women which needs translation into other cultures. As emphasized by some of the young secular women, religion is not simply an individual belief but also a “social institution” and a “tool of power” which shapes the social structure in a society. Hence, the efforts of Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists should not be considered as an effort to increase meaningfulness of religion or a renewed attention to it, but should be understood as an effort to better understand the dynamics behind the social relations and to challenge patriarchal notions embedded in the society through speaking from within their own religious language. In other words, what Muslim women’s rights activists and Islamic feminists are trying to do
is not Habermasian understanding of “translation” which refers to translation of secular discourses into a religious discourse or visa versa, but trying to translate their own interpretation of feminism by using religious language as an epistemic tool and by uncovering the sexist interpretations of religious texts, which was conceptualized in this dissertation as “cultural translation”.

Deriving from the discussions on the definition of “feminism”, the conceptual difference between “feminism/feminist movement” and “women’s movement/women’s rights activism”, “feminism as an assigned identity” and “Islamic feminism”, intergenerational difference between the “older” and “younger” generation of interviewed women is one of the most significant conclusions of the dissertation which signifies an important shift in the understanding and conceptualization of feminism, gender identity, intersectionality and organizational culture of women’s organizations and the way in which young women identify themselves as “feminist” within women’s movement. As discussed by the scholars working on generational theory, young people refer not simply to an age category but to a social category and a separate generation unit who have common experiences shaped by common national, international and technological developments and influenced by the same socio-historical context (Lüküslü, 2023; Mannheim, 1952). The interviews with young women, who are below the age of 30, volunteering or recently started to work as an employee in women’s organizations, proves that there is a visible shift in the attitude, understanding, organizational culture and discourse between women who belong to different generations. What is crucial in terms of the findings of the interviews with young women is that, regardless of their secular or Islamic disposition, all of the interviewed young women adopt a similar approach and discourse in terms of how they see “intersectionality”, “feminism” and “gender equality”.

First, all of the interviewed young women, regardless they are secular or Islamic, identify themselves as “feminist”. However, this does not necessarily mean that they accept an external, normative, “Western” hegemonic understanding of “feminism” without controversy. They apparently problematize hegemonic secular, white, Western, discourse that preoccupies the discussions on feminism and establish their
own counter-public sphere through creating their own understanding of “feminism”. Second, on the contrary of the older generation of women’s organizations, who refrain from identifying their organization as a “feminist” organization in order to be more inclusive and not to leave out women who do not describe themselves as “feminist”, young women, especially Islamic feminists who established new generation of Islamic feminist organizations, choose to explicitly identify their organizations as a “feminist” organization. This well illustrates how the older generation reflexes that includes posing a distance towards *hegemonic secular discourse in feminism and thus not identifying themselves as “feminist”,* and also not identifying their organization as a “feminist” organization in order to be inclusive for women who do not identify themselves as feminist, has turned out to adopting a “feminist” identity regardless of how feminism is perceived by the external audience and who predominantly identify themselves as “feminist”. This clearly shows that young women explicitly claim a word on feminism and adopt a feminist identity without mistaken by the normative understanding of “feminism”.

As largely been expressed by the interviewed older generation of women, younger generations prefer to be organized in more flexible, non-hierarchical and less institutionalized organizational models. It is correct that young women are more eager to establish *deliberative discursive multicultural spaces* and establish their own counter public spheres not only in the form of civil society organizations but also in the form of *digital public spheres* which provides a more flexible platform to bring together women with diverse identities and from different socio-economic backgrounds. It is presumed that young women have a distance towards conventional form of organizations and prefer to get organized in massive demonstrations and places such as universities and mixed organizations instead of women’s organizations. Although some of the interviewed women criticise young women by being reluctant to take a long-term role in women’s organizations and being ignorant towards the long-term efforts of women’s organizations, it is evident in the great emphasis that was put on the notion of “intersectionality” by young women that their main concern is the traditional and hierarchical organizational structures and cultures.

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84 Benhabib, 2011
of women’s organizations that do not allow much heterogeneity, plurality and inclusivity in women’s organizations. Majority of the interviewed young women took attention to the lack of “intersectionality” within the movement, not sufficiently addressing differences among women and not being inclusive in terms of gender identity. Young women apparently criticise older generation of women for having so much “red lines” in terms of the inclusion of women with different identities and in terms of the discourses they adopt. They have less “red lines” than the older generation of women in terms of including women with different identities and adopt a more liberal and “Queer” approach\(^{85}\) in terms of their understanding of gender equality. On the contrary of the criticisms directed to young women in terms of overlooking the legacy and the historical achievements of women’s movement, all of the interviewed young women explicitly expressed their support and admiration towards the profound success of women’s movement which they describe as one of the strongest movements that can never be suppressed.

Although there is no difference between the approach and discourse adopted by secular young women and young Islamic feminists, the intergenerational difference between “older” and “younger” generation of Muslim women from different women’s organizations was elaborated separately due to their unique feature of taking religious doctrines as a central context and addressing religious doctrines in their advocacy for women’s rights and gender equality. It is important to note that throughout the dissertation I deliberately identified older generation of Muslim women as “Muslim women’s rights activists” in order to refrain from making an external definition and respect some of the Muslim women who do not identify themselves as “feminist”. In addition to that, I identified all the interviewed young Muslim women as “Islamic feminists” by relying on the way in which the interviewed young Muslim women identify themselves. While some of the older generation of Muslim women’s rights activists describe the younger generation as more distanced to religion and religious doctrines, they think that there is a more aggressive and “vindictive” tone in the advocacy of younger generation of Islamic feminists where they instrumentalized religious doctrines. On the other hand,

\(^{85}\) Butler, 1990
majority of the younger generation of Islamic feminists criticise older generation of Muslim women’s rights activists for just focusing on the problems related to domestic division of labour and ignoring LGBTI+ rights and rights related to female body. It is important to note that through the availability of international funds and rights-based Islamic discourse they adopt, younger generation of Islamic women gain a certain level of autonomy than the older generation of Muslim women’s rights activists. Besides, as a matter of fact, the interviewed young Islamic women consists of middle-class and educated women who have the necessary capacity to raise funds and extend their social capital. Another outstanding finding of the interviews with women representing different generations is that, the lines and cleavage between the “older” and the “younger” generation of women has significantly blurred together with increasing interaction not only between women from different women’s organizations and political dispositions but also from different generations. It is apparent that the confrontations among women from different women’s organizations and with diverse identities challenges their ideological and political belongings and increase their sensitivity towards diversity that better understand the agents of women’s movement – or feminist movement – with diverse identities. It is also important to note that, the interviews with young women, who are volunteering or recently started to work as an employee in women’s organizations, reveals that, it is the middle-class, educated, urban, secular and Islamic young women who engage with women’s organizations. Thus, the analysis regarding the changing approach and discourse of young women in terms of their understanding of “intersectionality”, “feminism” and “gender equality” is apparently limited with the analysis of middle-class, educated and urban young women and should be extended through a broader analysis of changing perceptions of young people including a class and socio-economic background analysis.

The cooperation practices among women’s organizations with diverse ideological and political standings shows that women, who started to interact with other women’s organizations different than their ideological and political standings, to a great extent detach from their previous political attachments. However, it is also important to note that none of the political attributions to women’s organizations signifies a homogeneous and fully consistent group without any controversies within.
It is evident in the interviews that although there are still prevailing cleavages among women’s organizations and lack of sufficient cooperation between women’s organizations with diverse ideological standings, women’s movement bears a great potential to overcome these obstacles and to go beyond the prevailing conventional political cleavages. Apparently, through continuous cooperation and communication among women’s organizations, women challenge, change and transform their perception of and approach towards each other. However, this does not require women to detach from their intersecting identities and ignore the existence of ever-present *contingency* and *antagonism* within women’s movement. As expressed by one of the interviewed women, women’s organization “*don’t need to agree on everything*” but should seek for possibilities of building up alliances among women’s organizations. As it is also underlined by other interviewed women, women’s movement – or feminist movement – is fragmented by nature, which should not sound as negative for women’s movement in Türkiye. By taking into consideration the increasing heterogeneity among women’s organizations and among women who engaged with women’s movement, there is a necessity for women to primarily get organized with women who have similar experiences and similar ideologies within themselves - which also implies the need to get organized in their own *habitus*. For instance, the secular-Islamic dichotomy not only signifies an ideological cleavage between two groups but also signifies two different *habitus* based upon different discourses, aesthetic values and tastes. Islamic women, who widely express their discontent with the ‘*predefined agenda*’ and ‘*legitimate discourse*’ adopted in the feminist meetings, which overlooks the issues that Muslim women struggle with in their own neighbourhoods, emphasize their need to get organized with the ones “*who look, live and think like them*” in order to be in a space where they feel themselves “safe and confident” away from the criticisms of secular/republican women. Besides, some of the interviewed Islamic women also expressed that they feel the need to discuss certain issues of their own concern, such as *patriarchal notions* and *male interpretation* in the practice of religion in daily life and the dominant secular discourse in women’s movement which was described as only “one version” of feminism.

86 Bourdieu (1984)
Coalition building is another crucial strategy that was deemed necessary by some of the interviewed women in terms of achieving the ends of women’s movement. As emphasized by some of the interviewed women, when it is necessary it should be possible to develop a “communicative action”, even with the pro-government organizations, in order to reach out to the “minimum standards” of gender equality and elimination of violence against women. I believe that the declaration published by Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği – KADEM (Woman and Democracy Association) in 2020 against the decision taken for withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention should not be underestimated by taking into account their possible situation of “being stuck” in between their own ideas and the ideological pressures of the government, as expressed by an interviewed women from the Academy Commission of KADEM. On the other hand, some of the liberal, feminist/reformist, socialist, Kemalist and Islamic women’s organizations who prefer to keep a distance with and stand against the discriminatory discourse against LGBTI+ people adopted by the government and by the pro-government women’s organizations such as KADEM, is quite understandable in terms of the feminist principles that many women’s organizations try to adopt such as, non-hierarchy, non-discrimination, diversity and inclusion.

What has largely been articulated by many interviewed women is the great potential of women’s movement to overcome the traditional political cleavages and build up relationship even between the most distinct women’s groups and organizations with diverse political and ideological standings. Depending on the fact that none of the women’s groups, even the ones who support conservative governments such as AKP, are homogeneous and fully content with the conservative and patriarchal gender policies of the governments, there is always possibility of contingency within different women’s groups which feed the possibility of women's organizations meeting on a common ground. Second, what is visible in the interviews is that, regardless of their political standings and apart from traditional political theories, feminism provides a reference point for their political standing. The increasing diversity in the women’s movement - or feminist movement – makes “feminism” a living concept – regardless of the fact that its agents identify themselves as “feminist” or not. It is an important fact that, what informs the ideological standing of women in women’s movement today, is not the dominant “Western”, white,
middle-class understanding of “feminism”, but “feminism” as an ever growing concept together with the involvement of different identities and different ideas. As underlined by one of the interviewed women, “the subject of feminism are feminists”, which does not necessarily refer to any specific identity category based upon gender, ethnic origin or religious belief, but refers to subjectless, timeless and stateless form of politics that does not belong to any certain group or identity, does not belong to any certain timeframe, and does not necessarily associate with any political standing. That is to say, feminism is beyond being a mere “social movement”, not limited with a group of people who could afford to participate into a movement within a certain timeframe or issue, does not necessarily imply a common understanding and articulation of the concept “feminism”, does not accommodate a certain political standing which is largely assumed as left-wing and does not belong to any social group which is organised around an “identity”. Moreover, according to some of the interviewed women, “feminism” does not simply refer to increasing diversity among its “agents” or extending the representation of different identities within women’s movement – or feminist movement, but refers to “the way and method for the non-hierarchical establishment of society as a whole” and requires “the rejection of all those hierarchical relationships”.

The outstanding conclusion of this dissertation is the considerable potential of women’s movement to challenge and expand the borders of “feminism” and go beyond the traditional political cleavages. Women’s movement apparently has a remarkable potential to develop a new understanding of living together despite the prevailing contingency among women and women’s organizations which is described in this dissertation as meta-politics.

As mentioned by Pateman (1989), feminist theory has always been part of the development of modern political theory beginning from the 17th century, although feminist intellectuals were excluded from the written history and texts studied under the heading ‘political theory’. What is innovative in feminism is that it achieved to uncover the hidden patriarchy and gender discrimination in the existing traditional political theories and liberal ideals voiced particularly in the era of Enlightenment, which entails a more structural inequality embedded in all social and political
institutions. Feminism comes to the stage as a growing ideology and as a social movement and both appears as a “new form of politics” and as a broader philosophical understanding of equality which is beyond existing traditional and contemporary understanding of politics. In fact, feminism does not exclude using the traditional means of politics in order to challenge the prevailing patriarchal structures, which is exercised in the form of “feminist politics” or “feminist policy”. On the other hand, feminism both as an ideology and in practice, goes beyond the traditional understanding and way of doing politics and includes notions that complies with the contemporary understanding of politics which were mainly introduced by post-structuralist and post-Marxist theorists.

Deriving from the definition above, what is peculiar to feminism is the fact that it is not only introduced as a movement or as an ideology that aims to transform the political institutions or society, but refers to “meta politics” which aims to transform itself by the involvement of multiple identities with different political standings, and also transforms each and every individual who are engaged with it. In fact, this is not the first time the concept “meta-politics” is articulated to explain a movement or an ideology which is beyond the classical and normative understanding or practice of politics. However, it is important to note that feminism goes beyond even the existing definitions of the concept “meta-politics” which are introduced by Alain Badiou (2009) and Jacques Ranciere (2010) and is largely identified as “a political dialogue about politics itself” or “a discipline that studies the relationship between the state and the individual”.

Different from these conceptualization, feminism does not refer to something that appears in a historical moment, or something that is in a way related with the traditional politics. The subject – or agents - of feminism refers to anyone who are looking for a more equal and egalitarian life and who reject any kind of discrimination, subordination, exploitation and inequality. It is a self-evident truth that all existing traditional political theories as well as all contemporary and radical critiques of the traditional political theories could not afford to think out of the scope of the state structure and challenge the limitations of traditional way of doing politics. All the introduced alternatives or new conceptualisations of politics as well
as *meta-politics* still plays within the same borders of state structure where politics is - eventually and inevitably - consumed or reconquered by a certain kind of structure – even if it is envisaged to be concluded with the *dictatorship of the proletariat*, as Badio argues. Even though in the political ontology of Badiou and Ranciere, *subject* is referred to historical moments which were conceptualized as *events*, as well as individuals who have a certain kind of autonomy to challenge existing power, *subject* still refers to the “opposite of power”. In addition to that, most of the philosophical, contemporary and post-Marxist critiques of the traditional political theories overlooks the gender aspect – and gender inequality – even constructing their alternative theories against the traditional ones. In this point, it might be important to turn our faces to feminism to reconsider the existing shortcomings that prevails in the contemporary critical political theories.

Independent from the political standing and different identities (ethnic or religious origin as well as gender identity) of the interviewed women, it was observed that almost all of the interviewed women unite under the umbrella of feminism – at least influenced by feminism - and identify feminism as the utmost point which is beyond all different political dispositions and/or identities. Deriving from the notion of gender inequality, feminism stands in a very critical position not only for struggling with gender inequality, but also for aiming at to eliminate any kind of discrimination, subordination, exploitation and inequality caused from the hierarchical organization of political institutions in a state structure or the exploitative nature of capitalism. Almost half of the interviewed women identified feminism as a “struggle” not only against gender inequality, but against any kind of discrimination, subordination, exploitation and inequality, when they were asked to define “what is feminism?”.

Despite the structural obstacles deriving from the restrictive legal framework, availability of sufficient financial resources, highly fragmented nature of society, continuous conservative attacks of the government to women’s rights and gender equality, and prevailing ideological and political cleavage among different women’s organizations or women’s groups, women’s movement has a great potential to overcome the traditional political cleavages among themselves, overcome all essentialist and normative identity categories, and build up a new way of “togetherness” and “living together” through both adopting and transforming
feminism. It is apparent that the notion of gender equality provides the agents of the women’s movement – or feminist movement – with a gender-lens to see the inequality embedded in social and political institutions as well as in each and every social relations – which provides them the opportunity and tools to establish a more egalitarian and sustainable way of living – which is new meta-politics.
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APPENDIX

A. CURRICULUM VITAE

Family name: KONURALP
First names: ÖZGE
Nationality: Turkish
E-mail: ozge.konuralp@metu.edu.tr

Education:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution [Date from - Date to]</th>
<th>Degree(s) or Diploma(s) obtained:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD; Middle East Technical University, (METU); Ankara, Social Sciences Institute, <strong>Political Science and Public Administration</strong></td>
<td>PhD Degree in Political Science and Public Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA; Middle East Technical University, (METU); Ankara, Social Sciences Institute, <strong>Social Policy Department</strong></td>
<td>MA Degree in Social Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA; Middle East Technical University, (METU); Ankara, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, <strong>Sociology Department</strong></td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology</td>
</tr>
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Language skills: Indicate competence on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 – excellent; 5 – basic)

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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>

Other skills: (e.g. Computer literacy, etc.): Full computer literacy in MS Office applications

Specific experience in the region:

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date From - Date To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>2004 – up to date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date from – Date to</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Company &amp; Reference person (name &amp; contact details)</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03/20 - ongoing</td>
<td>Turkey, Ankara</td>
<td>European Union Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations in the Western Balkans and Turkey 3 (EU TACSO 3) Project</td>
<td>Country Coordinator for Türkiye</td>
<td>EU TACSO 3 Project – TA for European Commission DG Near. Coordinate the Project activities of EU TACSO 3 at national level with the EU Delegation to Türkiye and other stakeholders. Monitoring conducive legal and fiscal environment in Türkiye and facilitate civil society participation in policy and decision-making processes. Organisation of meetings and training programmes in line with the capacity development needs of CSOs in Türkiye and Western Balkans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Project Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/16-02/20</td>
<td>Ankara, Turkey</td>
<td>Sivil Dişün (Think Civil) II &amp; III EU Programme of EU Delegation to Türkiye</td>
<td>Key Expert on Civil Society Sector Expert</td>
<td>Responsible for the overall management of the civil society support programme. Providing technical assistance for capacity building of civil society organizations/activists for developing right-based projects and project implementation. Empowerment of grass root organizations and activists through right-based activity development and rights advocacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03-04/17</td>
<td>Antalya, Turkey</td>
<td>Eurasia Social Change Ltd.</td>
<td>Non-Key Expert</td>
<td>TA to Ministry for Foreign Affairs Directorate for EU Affairs for Strengthening the Capacity of Grassroots NGOs and Public-CSO Cooperation at Local Level. Conducting training for local civil society organisations and public officials on Civil Society-Public Sector Cooperation and Stakeholder Analysis with a participatory approach in Izmir and Antalya localities, two times for each city with the participation of different CSOs and public officials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03-05/16</td>
<td>Ankara, Turkey</td>
<td>The Civic Space: A Technical Assistance Project funded by the European Union (EU) - Implemented by B&amp;S Europe</td>
<td>Senior Non-Key Expert</td>
<td>Support to civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Turkish Cypriot community through inter-ala tailormade assistance, trainings, capacity building and networking with Greek Cypriot and other European Union's CSO. Providing expertise, knowledge and training on Active Citizenship Mechanism - “Civic Space Programme”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>07/14-12/16</td>
<td>Ankara, Turkey</td>
<td>Sivil Dişün (Think Civil) EU Programme of EU Delegation to Türkiye</td>
<td>Project Coordinator and Non-Key Expert on Programme &amp; Grant Management</td>
<td>Responsible for the overall management of the civil society support programme. Providing technical assistance for capacity building of civil society organizations/activists for developing right-based projects and project implementation. Empowerment of grass root organizations and activists through right-based activity development and rights advocacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/15-11/16</td>
<td>Ankara, Turkey</td>
<td>Association of Civil Society Development Centre (STGM)</td>
<td>Vice Coordinator</td>
<td>Responsible for the development and coordination of capacity building trainings and meetings on civil society-public sector cooperation. Coordination of the technical assistance to CSOs and tailor-made trainings under capacity building activities of STGM. Maintaining communication with public institutions regarding the project activities on civil society-public sector cooperation. Monitoring of legal and public administration reforms especially on participation of civil society organizations in policy development and decision-making mechanisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/12-05/14</td>
<td>Ankara, Turkey</td>
<td>Association of Civil Society Development Centre (STGM)</td>
<td>Vice Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>09/11-07/12</td>
<td>Mardin, Turkey</td>
<td>“Women Friendly Cities-2” UN Joint Programme; UNFPA &amp; Ministry of Interior</td>
<td>Local Coordinator-Mardin &amp; CSO Consultant</td>
<td>“Women Friendly Cities-2” Project; joint programme of UN &amp; Ministry of Interior, implemented in 12 cities of Turkey. Promotion of gender sensitive administrative mechanisms in local authorities and public institutions. Carried out gap and need analysis for the local public institutions to improve their capacity on women rights issues. Development of Local Equality Action Plan (LEAP) to be adopted as the strategy paper. Development of capacity building trainings on particularly gender and women rights for local public institutions and women CSOs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>02-07/11</td>
<td>Ankara, Turkey</td>
<td>Community Volunteers Foundation (Toplum Côş全域leri Vakfı, TOG) - Istanbul Bilgi Uni. NGO Research and Training Centre</td>
<td>Youth Programme Assistant &amp; CSO Consultant</td>
<td>“Magnifier to the Address- Youth Area Civil Monitoring Project”; EU project implemented by Community Volunteers Foundation in cooperation with Istanbul Bilgi University NGO Research and Training Centre. Provided consultancy for the advocacy action via lobbying activities of participatory monitoring by young participants. Supported development of the activity plan and content development for lobbying activities with public institutions and EU Delegation to Türkiye.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/06-02/11</td>
<td>Turkey, Istanbul</td>
<td>Community Volunteers Foundation (Toplum Gönüllüleri Vakfi, TOG)</td>
<td>Field Coordinator</td>
<td>Consultancy for youth organizations regarding project development, team work and collaboration with local authorities and for developing local projects. Providing trainings and technical assistance for youth organizations on youth rights, project development, need analysis, monitoring, crises management and volunteer management. Coordination and organisation of trainings, workshops, advisory committees and National Youth Councils of Community Volunteers Foundation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02-07/09</td>
<td>Turkey, Sanliurfa</td>
<td>GAP-RDA (South Eastern Anatolia Development Project-Regional Development Administration)</td>
<td>CSO Regional Coordinator (Eastern, South Eastern Anatolia and Eastern Black Sea)</td>
<td>Empowerment of Women and Women NGOs in the Least Developed Regions of Turkey Project; Consultancy for the development process of the terms of reference of &quot;Empowerment of Women and Women NGOs in the Least Developed Regions of Turkey Project&quot;. Providing consultancy for youth and women projects of Humanitarian and Social Development Department of Regional Development. Carried out the need analysis for active women CSOs and women centres in the Eastern region. Provided input to the action plan of GAP RDA.</td>
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<tr>
<td>06-07/05</td>
<td>Turkey, Ankara</td>
<td>General Directorate of Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation (SYDV)</td>
<td>Impact Assessment Expert</td>
<td>Field Consultant on Project Assessment and Monitoring Team for Social Risk Mitigation Project/SRAP. Development of impact analysis report of the project as well as monitoring of the project implementation processes. Development of a methodology for impact analysis, determined indicators, developed surveys and interpreted data.</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/04-06/07</td>
<td>Turkey, Ankara</td>
<td>World Bank 'Youth Voices of Turkey' Programme</td>
<td>Civil Society Consultant/ Seminar Coordinator</td>
<td>Contributing to the policies of the World Bank on youth employment and youth rights. Coordination of seminars on youth employment &amp; entrepreneurship, rural development and youth rights in cooperation with ISKUR, KOSGEB and Private Labour Offices. Responsible for the development of the training content on 'Youth Development and Social Participation'. Carried out project assessment of the Small Grants Programme of the World Bank.</td>
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87 (Ferre ve Mueller ve diğerleri, Snow, D. A. 2004:576)
döneminde reformist “muhabazakâr demokrat” politikalarla kadın haklarının sınırlarını genişleterek imkanı bulan, ancak 2010'lardan itibaren AKP'nin ikinci döneminde neo-liberal ve neo-muhafazakâr politikalar nedeniyle ciddi bir alanı daraltmasına ve kutuplaşmaya tanıklık eden kadın hareketi için 2000'lerden sonraki dönem ayrı bir öneme sahiptir.

Araştırma sorularını analiz etmek için, kadınların sadece kurumsallaşmış tüzel kişiliklerde örgütlenmediği gerçeğini göz önünde bulundurarak, 2020-2021 yılları arasında Türkiye'de farklı siyasi duruşlara sahip (sektörel, liberal, feminist/reformist, sosyalist, Kemalist ve İslami kadın örgütleri dahil) hem tüzel kişiliğe sahip, hem de tüzel kişiliğe sahip olmayan (kadın örgütleri, kadın platformlar/koalisyonlar ve dijital platformlar) 24 farklı kadın örgütünün temsilcileriyle 55 derinlemesine görüşme gerçekleştirdim. Görüşme yapılan 24 kadın kuruluşun yanı sıra Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği – KADEM de görüşme anketinde bulunan sorulara verdigileri yazılı yanıtlar ile tez çalışmasına katılmıştır.


Kadın örgütleriley gerçekleştirilmiş araştırmaya başlamadan önce dikkate aldığım önemli konulardan biri, “arastırmacı öznesi” olarak belirlediğim “kadın hareketi”nin

Farklı ideolojik ve politik duruşlara sahip kadın örgütlerinden kadınlarla yapılan görüşmeler kapsamında, feminist bir politika yapmanın ötesinde kadın örgütlerin/koalisyonlarının/platfromlarının “feminizm” ilkeleri arasında sayılan hiyerarşik olmama, kolektiflik, katılmıcılık, çeşitlilik ve kapsayıcılık ilkelerini ne ölçüde benimsemeyi hedeflediklerini – ya da benimseyebildiklerini – ve bu ilkeler...

Araştırma sonunda, kadın örgütlerinin tüm farklılıklarını içeren güçlü bir hareket inşa etmelerinin önünde bazı ideolojik ve yapısal engeller olduğu, öte yandan belirli bir grup kadının kendi öncelikleri olarak gördükleri konuları tartışabilmesi için capsızca farklı kısa-kamuların varlığına ihtiyaç duyulmuştur. Kadın hareketinin, farklı kimliklere sahip “tüm kadınlar” için kapsayıcı bir zemin oluşturmasının önündeki en önemli engellerden biri, beyaz, orta sınıf, kentli, eğitimli kadınların işgal ettiği baskın konum ve hâkim söylemdir; bu da farklı sosyo-ekonomik geçmişlerden ve farklı söylemlere (İslami söylem gibi) sahip kadınların dışlanmasıyla sonuçlanmıştır. Beyaz, orta sınıf, kentli ve eğitimli kadınlar tarafından benimsenen, beyaz olmayan, kentli olmayan, Batılı olmayan ve seküler olmayan kadınlar arasında baskıya bir konumda duran ve bilerek ya da bilmeyerek kadınlar arasında epistemik bir ayrıcalık yaratan ve bir feminizmin ne düşünmesi, ne söylemesi ve nasıl yaşaması gerektiğini belirleyen söylem ve yaşam tarzını bu tezde hegemonik feminizm olarak kavramsallaştırdım. Görüşmelerle katılan kadınlardan bazılarının ifade ettiği gibi, kadın örgütlerinde ve kadın hareketinde “daha yaşlı”, “bilgili” ve “deveyimli” kadınların baskı konumu, kendilerini “feminizm” hakkında konuşmak için “henüz deveyimsiz” veya “yeterince nitelikli olmayan” olarak gören yeni gelenler veya genç kadınlar üzerinde “kasıtsız” bir hiyerarşi yaratmaktadır, bu da hareket içinde bilgi ve deveyim hiyerarşisini beraberinde getirmektedir. İkinci olarak,
kadınlar aktivizme katılmak için gerekli zaman, enerji, kaynak ve yeteneklere sahip olmadıkça, kadın hareketindeki tartışmalara ve aktivizme asla dahil olamamakta, bu da orta sınıf, kentli ve eğitimli kadınların kadın hareketindeki baskı konumuyla sonuçlanmaktadır.


donör kuruluşlar tarafından çizilen yapısal ve ağırlıklı olarak proje temelli çerçeveye ve donör kuruluşlar tarafından belirlenen tematik önceliklere tabi olmasını gerektirmektedir. Kadın örgütlerinin basit bir 'tercihi' olarak değil, bir tür 'yasıpsal' ve 'politik' zorunluluk olarak görülen profesyonelleşme ve sorun odaklı aktivizm, kadın örgütlerinin kendi gündemlerini ve politik gündemin sınırlarlarının ötesinde feminist bir politik duruş geliştirmelerini engelleyen, aktivizme yönelik bir tehdit olarak tanımlanmıştır.

Kadın hareketinin aktivizminin sınırlarını – belirli bir ölçüde – belirleyen yapısal ve politik çerçeve, aynı zamanda “yerelleşme” sorununu da beraberinde getirirken, kadın hareketi, kadınların sosyoekonomik statüleriinden kaynaklanan sorunlarına pek deginemeyen bir “metropol kent hareketi” ya da “orta sınıf hareketi” olarak kalmaktadır. Bunun üç önemli nedeni bulunmaktadır. İlk olarak, görüşülen kadınlardan bazılarının da ifade ettiği gibi, alt sınıf kadınların temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak, yoksullukla mücadele etmek ve çocuklarının bakımı sağlamak gibi öncelikleri varken kadın hareketi içinde yürütülen teorik ve yasal tartışmalara katılmaları oldukça zor olarak görünmektedir. İkinci olarak, kadın örgütleri arasında artan kurumsallaşma ve profesyonelleşme, sadece orta sınıf kadınların karşılayabileceği “proje temelli aktivizm” için entelektuel ve teknik kapasite ve beceriler gerektirmektedir. Üçüncüşi, kadın hareketinin ana gündeminin, hükümetin kadın haklarına ve toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğine yönelik muhafazakâr saldırılarıyla oldukça meşgul olması kadın örgütlerinin hızla örgütlenmesini ve yasal değişikliklere yanıt vermesini gerektirmektedir. Bu durum, kadın örgütlerinin enerjilerinin çoğu hükûmetin yüksek muhafazakarlığı ve ataerkil eğitimleriyle mücadeleyeányama harcamalarına ve büyük şehirlerin çerperlerinde yaşayan alt sınıf kadınlarla temas kurmaya vakit bulamamalarına neden olmaktadır. Buna karşılık, görüşülen pek çok kadın, alt sınıftan kadınların kendi taban örgütlerini kurabilmeleri ve kendi ihtiyaç ve sorunlarının öznesi olabilmeleri için kendileri ile finansal kaynakların yanı sıra, kültürel ve sosyal sermayeler ve “bilgi birikimlerinin” paylaşmasını gerektiğiinin altını çizmektedir.

Kadın örgütlerine yönelik soru formunu tasarlarken, kadın örgütlerinin kendi amaçlarına ulaşmalarının ve diğer kadın örgütler ile sürdürebilir bir iş birliği
kurmalarının önünde engel olusturabilecek, “zorulu” kurumsallaşmadan ve yeterli kaynağı sahip olmamalarından kaynaklanabilecek sorunları ortaya çıkarmak amacıyla, kadın örgütlerine örgüt yapılara ve mali kaynaklara ilişkin belirli sorular yöneltilti. Görüşülen pek çok kadın, feminist hedefleriyle tutarlı olması için “feminist”, hiyerarşik olmayan, katılımcı, genç dostu bir örgütlenme modeli kurma ihtiyacı ve hedeflerini direktiştir. Ancak, yerine getirmeleri gereken yasal yükümlülükler söz konusu olduğunda, görüşülen pek çok kadın, tüzel kişiliğe sahip sivil toplum örgütleri (dernekler ve vakıflar gibi) için var olan yasal zeminin, kendilerine zorunlu olarak hiyerarşik yapılar (yönetim kurulu gibi) oluşturmak gibi yasal yükümlülükler dayattığının altını çizmiştir. Görüşülen kadınların da ifade ettiği gibi bu yasal yükümlülükler, kadın örgütlerinin hiyerarşik olmayan ve yatay örgütsel yapılar kurma ve kendi örgütleri içinde daha demokratik ve kapsayıcı olma esnekliklerini kısıtlamaktadır.


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amaçlamaktadırlar. Kadın örgütlerinin mali kaynaklarını ağırlıklı olarak uluslararası fonların oluşturması, bu fonlara erişim sağlayabilen şehir merkezlerinde yerleşik, kurumsallaşmış, kapasiteli, büyük ölçekli kadın örgütlerinin hakimiyetine yol açarken, yerel ve küçük ölçekli kadın örgütlerinin bu fonlara erişmeleri mümkün olamamaktadır. Görüşülen kadınlardan bazıları, kadın örgütlerine “proje bazlı” fonlama yerine “temel finansman” sağlanmasının kadın örgütlerinin temel faaliyetlerini ve sadece varlık nedenlerini desteklemek adına daha uygun bir yol olacağını belirtmektedir.

sonra kamu kurumlarının sadece bakanlıklar tarafından “akredite” edilen kadın örgütleriyle iş birliği yapmaya başladığını, seküler, liberal, feminist/reformist, sosyalist ve Kemalist kadın örgütlerini ise iş birliği mekanizmalarının dışında bıraktığını dile getirmiştir.

Kadın örgütlerinin siyasi partilerle iş birliği konusunda, görüşülen tüm kadınlar, siyasi partilerle diyalog ve iş birliğini dışlamayan, ancak hepsine eşit mesafede duran benzer bir yaklaşımı benimsedikleri ve partilerin, parti içerisinde toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği perspektifini benimsemediği konusunda samimi bulmadıklarını ve partilerin, parti içerisinde kadınların ve farklı cinsiyet kimliklerinin eşit temsilini sağlama konusunu ciddiye almamışlardır. Görüşülen kadınların arasında, Halkların Demokratik Partisi – HDP88 ve kısmen İYİ Parti’nin89 kadınların siyasi katılımlarını destekleme çabalarına belli bir sempati duyanlar olsa bile bu çabaların yeterli olmaktan uzak olduğunu ve kadınların sadece görünürde var olmalarını sağlamalarını ötesine geçemediğini vurgulamışlardır. Görüşülen kadın örgütleri arasında tek istisna, AKP iktidar döneminde kurulan kadın örgütlerden biri olan Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği’dir (KADEM). Öncelikle altını çizmek gerek ki, KADEM yazılı açıklamasında, bir sivil toplum örgütü olarak siyasi partilerle bir bağlarının olmadığını ve AKP döneminde kadınların siyasete ve toplumsal hayat alyatlarını yönünde birçok reform gerçekleştirmiş olsa da kadının siyasi katılımının halen istenilen düzeyde olmadığını ifade etmiştir. Ancak bununla birlikte, kadınların siyasete katılmının sağlanması ve politikalarda toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin dikkate alınması konusunda siyasi partilere yönlendikleri eleştirilerde AKP’yı hariç tutmuştur.

Bu tezin amacı doğrultusunda, görüşülen kadınların “feminizmi” nasıl kavramsallaştırdıklarını, feminizmin kendi amacı ve faaliyetlerini ne ölçüde şekillendirdiğini ve feminizm tanınlama biçimlerinin diğer kadın örgütleriyle iş birliklerinde ne ölçüde belirleyici olduğunu anlamak önemlidir. İkisi hariç olmak

88 Kürt yanlışı bir parti
89 2017'de kurulan merkez sağ bir siyasi parti.

Türkiye siyasi tarihinin en hararetli tartışmalarından biri olan şekiller/cumhuriyetçi ve İslami kadın örgütleri arasındaki ideolojik ayrışmalar ve “İslami feminizm” kavramını bu tezde ayrı bir bölümde ele almıştır. Buna göre, Müslüman kadınların

Müslüman kadın hakları aktivistleri ve İslami feministlerle yapılan görüşmelerde öne çıkan bulgulardan biri, Müslüman kadın hakları aktivistleri ve İslami feministlerin yapmaya çalıştığı şey, dini doktrinlerin yeniden yorumlanması yoluya kendi dini


Kadın örgütlerinde gönnülü olarak çalışan ya da yeni çalışmaya başlayan 30 yaş altı genç kadınlarla yapılan görüşmeler, farklı kuşaklara mensup kadınlar arasındaki tutum, anlayış, örgüt kültürü ve söyleme gözle görülür bir değişim olduğunu kanıtlatmaktadır. Genç kadınlarla yapılan görüşmelerin bulguları açısından kritik olan şey, seküler veya İslami eğilimlerinden bağımsız olarak, görüşülen genç kadınların
hepsinin “kesişimsellik”, “feminizm” ve “toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini” nasıl tanımladıkları konusunda benzer bir yaklaşım ve söylemi benimsemeleridir.


Görüşülen eski kuşak kadınlar tarafından büyük ölçüde ifade edildiği üzere, genç kuşaklar daha esnek, hiyerarşik olmayan ve daha az kurumsallımsız örgütlenme modellerinde örgütlenmeyi tercih etmektedir. Genç kadınların müzakereci söylemsel çok kültürlü alanlar kurmaya ve kendi karşı kamu alanlarını sadece sivil toplum örgütleri şeklinde değil, aynı zamanda farklı kimliklere sahip ve farklı sosyoekonomik geçmişlerden gelen kadınları bir araya getirmek için daha esnek bir platform sağlamak için dijital kamusal alanlar şeklinde de kurmaya daha istekli oldukları.

Yapılan görüşmelerde, kadın örgütleri arasında halen hakim olan ayrışmalara ve farklı ideolojik duruşlara sahip kadın örgütleri arasında yeterli iş birliği olmamasına rağmen, kadın hareketinin bu engelleri aşmak ve hakim olan geleneksel siyasi ayrışmaların ötesine geçmek için büyük bir potansiyel taşıdığı gorulmekteidir. Kadın örgütleri arasında sürekli iş birliği ve iletişimin yoluya kadınların birbirlerine yönelik algı ve yaklaşımlarını zorlardıkları, değiştirdikleri ve dönüştürdükleri anlaşılmaktadır. Ancak bu, kadınların kesişen kimliklerinden kopmalarını ve kadın hareketi içinde her zaman var olan olumsallık ve karşıtlıkların varlığını görmezden gelmelerini gerektirmemektedir. Görüşülen kadınlardan birinin ifade ettiği gibi, kadın

91 Kahya, 1990

Koalisyon oluşturma, kadın hareketinin amaçlarına ulaşması açısından gerekli görülen bir diğer önemli stratejidir. Görüşülen kadınların bazılarının da vurguladığı gibi, gerektiğinde toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği ve kadına yönelik şiddetin ortadan kaldırılmasına ilişkin “asgari standartlara” ulaşmak için hükümet yanlışı kuruluşlara bile “iletişimsel bir eylem” geliştirme mümkin olmalıdır. Görüşülen birçok kadın tarafından büyük ölçüde dile getirilen husus, kadın hareketinin geleneksel siyasi bölünmelerin üstesinden gelme ve farklı politik ve ideolojik duruşlara sahip “en

92 Bourdieu (1984)

Bu tezin öne çıkkan sonucu, kadın hareketinin “feminizmin” sınırlarını genişletme ve geleneksel siyasi ayrımların ötesine geçme konusundaki önemli potansiyelidir. Kadın
hareketinin, bu tezde *siyaset üstü* olarak tanımlanılan, kadınlar ve kadın örgütleri arasındaki hakim olumsallığı rağmen yeni bir *birlikte yaşam* anlayışı geliştirmek için dikkate değer bir potansiyele sahip olduğu görülmektedir.


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Soyadı / Surname : Konuralp
Adı / Name : Özge
Bölümü / Department : Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi / Political Science and Public Administration

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