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The Societal Roles of Women`s Organizations: Illustrations from Transforming Turkey

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Abstract

Recently, a high degree of political polarization has been identified within the body of civil society organizations corresponding to the socio-political climate in Turkey. From this viewpoint, this thesis characterizes, presents and analyzes the societal roles of women`s organizations in the transition process. The study consists of six principal chapters, each of them dealing with intertwined and complementary themes pursuant to gender politics and women`s place in the society. These themes are investigated through Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory, together with the post-structuralist scholarship. The author employs two methodological approaches which are netnography and discourse analysis. Following, the study provides a set of analysis through three structural domains: family & society, workforce and politics. Subsequently, the main purpose of the thesis is to address the strategies, functions and objectives of women`s organizations that play a Cartesian role in the formation of social realities through practices.

Key Words: women`s organizations, gender politics, Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory, the state transition in Turkey, Twitter.

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List of Abbreviations

AFAD	(Turkish Abbreviation of) Disaster and Emergency Management Authority
AK.DER	(Turkish Abbreviation of) Women's Rights Organization against Discrimination
AKP	(Turkish Abbreviation of) Justice and Development Party
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSW61	The 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women
EU	European Union
GONGO	Government-Organized Non-Governmental Organization
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
IKADDER	(Turkish Abbreviation of) İstanbul Women and Women's Organizations Association
ILO	International Labor Organization
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IWS	Internet World Stats
KA.DER	(Turkish Abbreviation of) Association for the Support and Training of Women Candidates
KADEM	(Turkish Abbreviation of) Women and Democracy Association
KASAD-D	(Turkish Abbreviation of) Women Healthcare Professionals Solidarity Association
KIH-YC	(Turkish Abbreviation of) Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
OECD	The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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1. Introduction

1.1. Problem Definition

> *"Politics of gender in Turkey is intrinsic rather than incidental to a characterization of its ruling ideology." (Kandiyoti, 2016, p.105)*

No matter how much time has passed, no matter how many political ideologies have had a voice in the state there are constant figures accompanying Turkish political culture which is the implacable power relationship between politics and gender, women in particular. This argument is principally based on the religious origins and socio-cultural practices of Ottoman Period[1] that lasted over 600 years in the region. By means of this, on the one hand, women have been traditionally perceived as the desired subjects of private sphere, family and home in the social contract. On the other hand, gender and women have been positioned at the heart of political power to receive a political sphere of influence, within the sharp boundaries of public domain (Pateman, 1988, cited in Yuval-Davis, 2007). It is important to highlight that referred dichotomy does not merely pertain to Turkish political history. Perception towards women fundamentally accommodates certain kinds of contradictions and tautologies all over the world. In spite of the diversity of the global samples, this thesis is an attempt to address the case of Turkey.

Since the county has experienced a set of socio-political, cultural and economic *changes* in the last decade, the perception towards gender and women`s place in the society has been carried one step further by articulating new social realities along with social practices. The current process of socio-political transition in Turkey is classified as *a paradigm shift* (Çelik and İşeri, 2016, p. 432), from secular principles to conservative essentials in other words from a Westernist to a post-Islamist model (Sunata, 2014, p.2). This political alteration is enabled to impose and construct new truths as well as values via key social actors such as interest groups, the media and

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[1] The period refers to the Ottoman Rule (1299-1922) which is precedent of Turkish Republic.

civil society organizations (CSOs) who have the capacity for influence to societal dynamics. The aim of this thesis is to clarify the questions or confirm the answers in the following: in what aspect is politics of gender used in the changing Turkey? Can it be anticipated as a chronic mentality or radical political maneuver? Most importantly, what is the roles and reactions of CSOs and in particular women`s organizations towards gender politics in the changing Turkey?

1.2. Purpose and Research Question

The primary concern of this thesis is to examine the ongoing paradigm shift in gender and women`s identity. In doing so, I concentrate particularly on *the societal roles of women`s organizations* in the view of changing dynamics of the country. Even though the state transition, reorientation or transformation process under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the axis of old and new Turkey is discussed in the ensuing *background chapter,* the main premises behind the political shift can be briefly portrayed here in order to lead in the subject matter. Since the 1920s, the Republic of Turkey has undergone Western-type and state-centered modernization processes. Secularism as a key principle was designed to neutralize Ottoman Empire`s politico-religious culture and separate the state affairs from religious power by *Kemalist ideology*, namely Kemalism[2] (White, 2003, p.145). Throughout the years, this foundational principle concerning *secularism* has always been assured pursuant to constitutional order in effect by the former governments.

However, the AKP rule contests this predetermined identity which can be evidently observed in the state implementations and practices (Yeşilada, 2014). From a vantage point, Turkish state transition processes under the AKP rule correlates with this paradigm shift (Sözen, 2010). Scholarly speaking, Turkey`s transition process previously discussed from several aspects to resolve diplomatic ambiguities as well as locate the country`s politics into a canon. The scholarship, dealing with the topic,

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[2] The term refers that the secular founding principles of Republic of Turkey which are implemented by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic.

mainly addresses the issue from three main perspectives: (1) foreign policy, (Adısönmez, 2016; Pilch, 2012; Sadık, 2012; Sözen, 2010), (2) EU-Turkey relationships (Çınar, 2006; Yeşilada, 2014), and (3) the political Islam framework (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008; Somer, 2004). Moreover, several studies have completed in the field of gender and women`s studies while analyzing ongoing Turkish political transition (Kandiyoti, 2016; Sunata, 2014). Nonetheless, the roles of women`s organizations as well as the interaction between the state values of these organizations remain as an unexplored research area which is open to further investigations particularly for empirical studies. Hence this thesis formulates the below research question in order to fill this literature gap and contribute to the unresolved paradox on one level.

Research question of the thesis is;

In which ways can the societal roles of women`s organizations and their interactions with the state be surveyed through gender politics in the Turkey`s transition process?

1.3. Disposition of the Thesis

This thesis is organized as follows: The first chapter is an attempt to provide relevant information about the problem definition and purposes of the study by formulating a research question. The second chapter introduces the main themes and concepts which guide the study, consisting of three respective sections: gender politics, state transition processes and civil society dynamics in Turkey. The third chapter covering theoretical framework enters into a dialogue with Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory in the sense of theoretical clarifications, critiques as well as adaptation to my case. The fourth chapter presents research design under four main sections: case selection and data collection, method of analysis, research ethics and methodological limitations. The fifth chapter which is analysis elucidates the relationship between provided research materials and the study objectives with regard to the current socio-political atmosphere in Turkey while addressing the societal roles of women`s organizations under three main domains family &

society, workforce and politics. Ultimately, I finalize with the sixth chapter that focuses on the concluding remarks.

2. Background

The Annales School attaches importance to long-term structure of social reality which is recognized as *longue durée* approach in the social sciences. That is to say that the historical background is key to understand current developments and future trends regarding the conceptual and comprehensive thinking (Nederveen Pieterse, 2012). Taking longue durée as a point of departure, this section aims to provide a brief historical overview as well as appropriate terminological clarification on the key concepts of the thesis while consisting of three sub-sections.

2.1. A Survey on Gender Politics in Turkey

In the first half of the 20th century, the Republic of Turkey got under an early nation building process after the collapse of Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) in the region. Ottoman`s traditional Islamic form of government and the caliphate system were abolished also Sharia law was replaced with European legal codes in the establishment of the Republic of Turkey (1923) (Sayan, 2013). A set of legal, socio-political, cultural and economic reforms aiming to create a *secular* nation state was introduced to the citizens by the founder of Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. It is important to note that the Western-type of modernization was the central concern of the Republican Movement that was observed in gender politics as well (Arat, 2009). Even though the state transformation process from religious empire to democratic nation state was composed of several interrelated dynamics, this section is structured to briefly present gender politics and the role of women in this process.

To begin with, a woman who was the symbol of the secular state was expected to adopt the Western manners in terms of way of living, dressing and behaving in the daily life (White, 2003). Under Atatürk`s secular modernization process, women in Turkey embraced also the basic rights and liberties such as a right to elect and be elected and receiving a compulsory eight-year primary education (Sayan, 2013). As Atatürk himself points out "everything we see in the world is the creative work of women" which displays his affirmative attitude towards women in the society. The

recognition of women as the equal members of the community visibly affected positively gender politics from several aspects such as in the context of gender mainstreaming, women's leadership and female political participation. This process is called the era of *state feminism* developing a conceptual model of women in politics (Sunata, 2014). "Feminist scholars of today (Arat, 2009; Durakbaşa, 1998; Tekeli, 1982) think that during the constitutional period of the Turkish Republic, Kemalism served as feminism where women's role in society was delineated by the Kemalist ideology" (Duman, 2006, p.78). However, despite acknowledged rights and humanitarian ameliorations led by Kemalism, a woman was still in the *patriarchal bargain* as the privileged objects of politics (Kandiyoti,1988).

A similar point was indicated by social anthropologist Jenny White:

> The ideal Republican woman was a "citizen woman," urban and urbane, socially progressive, but also uncomplaining and dutiful at home. Modernity, as defined by the Turkish state, included marriage and children as a national duty for women (2003, p.146).

Stated in other words, the status of Turkish women is obviously developed in comparison to the previous Ottoman rule when considering applied legal, social and political rights but still gender politics and the perception towards the place of women could not elude from patriarchal or male-dominated rules. After the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, 57 government took office during the years between 1938 and 2002[3] (Prime Minister's Office, 2017). As mentioned in the introduction, women have been always a crucial player as well as a key pillar of the country`s political agenda.

It is important to highlight that over the years; several women have challenged to this male-dominated political spectrum while actively participating in politics. To give a notable example, Tansu Çiller who was the first female Prime Minister of Turkey (1993-1996) was elected head of the government against three male contenders (Reinart, 1999). Thus, the election of a female prime minister may be evaluated as a milestone for gender politics of the country which has given rise to

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[3] 2002 was the year when the AKP was elected as a ruling party in Turkey.

contest the deep-rooted perception towards women in politics. During the years, gender politics in Turkey experienced mixed processes concerning positive and negative aspects. In a nutshell, it can be argued that the rights of women were deliberately improved particularly under the Kemalist ideology and a number of women took advantage of being part of socio-political life within the years. Yet, those enhancements could not be hinder the predominant mentality which has perceived women as the qualified objects for politics but not as competitive as their male counterparts in the political arena.

Prior to the AKP rule, gender politics in Turkey would be summarized as the above. The birth of the Liberal-Muslim political principles in other words "the revolutionary experiment with Islam in liberal democratic politics" (Arat, 2009, p.3), with the AKP rule, has obviously started a new era for women in the country. The emphasis on "women' s principal and preferably sole vocation – homemaking and motherhood-" (Kandiyoti, 2016, p.104) has been commenced to articulate as a (partially new) discourse which penetrates gender politics in the contemporary Turkey.

2.2. State Transition under the AKP Rule

The AKP, a party embracing neo-conservative values, enters the 15th year of polity in the Republic of Turkey. The Party came into power while winning a two-thirds majority of parliament seats in 2002. During the last decade, new social, political and foreign policy implementations have been introduced and these changes have been seen as a *state transition* journey (Adısönmez, 2016; Yeşilada, 2014; Ruff, 2016; Sadık, 2012). The concept of state transition can be defined as the sequence of dramatic changes in politics and public affairs which well suits the current Turkish political structure. The marriage between neo-liberal policies and Sunni Islamic principles prevails as one of the most notifiable political transformation processes across the society. *Liberal Conservatism* or *the Conservative Muslim Democracy* perception developed by the AKP aim to create a *New Turkey* in line with a pious generation (Kandiyoti, 2016). The previous stage of the AKP rule,

referring to the 1923-2002 period, can be identified as *Old Turkey* that is motivated predominantly by Kemalist secular ideology.

From the early beginning of the AKP rule, the supporters of Old Turkey known as secularists and New Turkey known as conservatives have experienced a high degree of ideological confrontation and corresponding polarization (Çarkoğlu and Toprak, 2006). To illustrate, specific incidents such as headscarf issue[4] have seriously occupied the agenda of both groups and sometimes increased tension among them. The main themes dominating the AKP`s fifteen years of political program may be seen as the Kurdish question, a new constitution and the Gülenist movement[5]. (Çınar, 2006). In all of these particular subject matters, the AKP have indicated its determined stance towards the issues with the harmony of transition process characteristics.

In detail, the rule of the AKP can be separated periodically into three parts in order to have a better understanding of political shifts. According to Tolunay, during the first period between 2002 and 2007, the AKP mostly dealt with European Union (EU) integration policies and a democratic atmosphere with the objective of increasing its political sphere of influence. Throughout the second period between 2007 and 2012, practices and policies of the government aimed to collaborate key mechanisms of the state as legislative, executive, judicial and military powers. During the third period between 2012 and the present, the AKP has secured its position and put a signature to more radical socio-political changes with the help of interest groups, the media and CSOs (2014). Fundamentally, the third stage has been the most observable area of the transition process in the light of several changes from the area of foreign policy to domestic affairs including gender politics. The ruling ideology has repeatedly appealed to the discursive recalling of

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[4] The concerned issue is related to prohibition of covering one`s head in the public spaces including educational institutions and the parliament in Turkey. Headscarf ban was implemented in 1980 and lifted in 2013 by means of the AKP rule.

[5] The movement refers an Islamic international social group led by imam Fethullah Gülen. The movement, which was classified as a terrorist group by the state in 2015, was also in cooperation with the AKP prior to this date.

Ottoman Empire legacy while depicting the AKP as the *civil democrats* solely serving the Turkish nation (Sadık, 2012, p.303).

To illustrate, in the third stage, former Prime Minister of Turkey, current President and one of the founder leaders of the AKP, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have assumed the Arab countries as the new Muslim allies/brothers and correspondingly criticized European Union (EU) as well as Western countries as a threat against the conservative entity of Turkey.

This mentality actually would not be seen as the unique political maneuver of the AKP rule. In fact, the principal reference of the current ruling party is Ottoman Empire which had similar politico-religious objectives as a consolidative power of Islamic World. Thus, the AKP in the axis of Sunni Islamic objectives re-interprets the *Ottomanist discourse* in the domestic politics besides international relations for the identity construction process of transition (Çelik and İşeri, 2016, p.431). At this point, I would like to clarify a terminological concern of this thesis: when the extreme socio-political atmosphere within the county is considered, the vital distinction between state and government is no longer valid to define political structures in Turkey. Hence this study intentionally employs *the state* statement in order to portray the AKP rule in relation to the scope of the research.

The next section presents the main patterns of Turkish CSOs while narrowing down its scope around women`s organizations, the main domains are: (1) a brief historical review of the organizations, (2) the prominent views on the roles of CSOs in the society, and (3) the effects of the current transition process on civil society settlements which bring about the organization-based polarizations.

2.3. Civil Society: History, Views and Polarization

The relationship between CSOs and the state is essential to the understanding the progressing paradigm shift in the country owing to the fact that these organizational establishments are strategic actors when their sphere of influence is considered at the societal level. The early roots of Turkish civil society can be traced to the late

20th century with the formation of waqfs and endowments[6] (Bükmen and Meydanoğlu, 2006). And, the modern-day definition of civil society in Turkey is primarily based on the years between 1980s and 2000s when the globalization phenomenon has penetrated the whole world concerning impacts, effectiveness and legitimacy (ibid).

After the 1980s, the numbers of active CSOs have been in the tendency to increase. According to information received from Turkish Republic Ministry of Interior Department of Association (2017), there are 110.365 organizations containing associations and foundations. Furthermore, %92.62 of these bodies function actively in the country (General Directorate of Foundations, 2017). Three OECD (the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) metropolises; Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir are home to majority of these organizations and the field of activities of the associations vary greatly in different mission definitions such as "social aid, education, health, religious services, sports, business and professional organizations, development, democracy, law, and human rights (including women`s rights)" (Doyle, 2017, p.248). Taking into account of variety in CSOs, this thesis is concerned with the question of how do women`s organizations behave within the mentioned political transition process. Yet, prior to subject-specific inquiries, it may be beneficial to take a glance the views at CSOs, including women`s organizations in the context.

In the academic spheres, a great deal is being written and said about the definition of CSOs regarding their roles, functions and relationship with the ruling ideology. There is a huge debate happening on the issue that hosts two prominent views; On the one hand, one group perceives CSOs as independent and civic settlements that serve a bridge between state and citizens. In other words, the role of the civil society is interpreted as protecting the rights of individuals and constituting a communication channel to the state authority (Erdoğan, 2016; Keysan, 2016). On the other hand, second group disagree with this traditional liberal perspective of the

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[6] These institutions emerged as a result of Ottoman Empire`s state policy under Islamic law with the charitable objectives, religious principles and regarding social functions.

civil society due to the advanced control mechanisms of the state. According to them, CSOs are the dependent on the state authority and their area of activities/roles are predetermined by the state (Stumpo, 2006). When these arguments are examined in the light of the relevant literature, it can be said that while the arguments of the first group is mostly associated with the conceptual viewpoints of Western welfare states, the claims of the second group are mostly visible in the politically underperformed countries especially who have authoritarian regimes such as several the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries (Al-Ali, 2003). However, generalizations may still be inappropriate when the absence of related empirical studies is conceived.

The terms of *civil society* and *polarization* can be interpreted in the different contexts. First, the concept of civil society or the third sector refers to "a political space where voluntary associations deliberately seek to shape the rules that govern aspects of social life" (Scholte, 2011, p.1). Second, the (political) polarization is considered as "the increased levels of political gridlock" which is associated disintegration and disorganization (Campante and Hojman, 2013, p.1). In this thesis, I would like to present that these two terms; civil society and polarization get attached to each other and contribute to engendering new truth formations in the contemporary Turkey. Since the state transition process is visible in the almost all layers of society, it is possible to encounter a huge degree of polarization in women`s organizations as well. In this vein, as gender identity and women are the key pillars of this paradigm shift in the new Turkey, organizations working with women are the most suitable socio-political engagements to practice the power and respectively reach more people with the aim of constituting new realities in line with social practices. Before to the AKP rule, women`s organizations were predominantly identified according to their social mission such as Feminist initiatives, Kemalist movements or Kurdish organizations in the country (Bükmen and Meydanoğlu, 2006). Now, the current designation is mostly related to being a

government approved organization (GONGOs)[7] or not (Doyle, 2017). This situation escalates a tension among groups and polarizes their members and ultimately, society because the transparency principle of the organizations has been interrupted in the direction of the politically constructed mentality.

To recap, women`s organizations in Turkey reasonably face the risk of being infected from the current political atmosphere and taking a political side as the proponent or the opponent towards the ruling ideology. Thus, the relationship between state and women`s organizations in Turkey is quite complicated and partially unexplored that should be scholarly investigated to fill related research gap. Therefore, in the following chapters, (1) the main theoretical assumptions is presented in the context of discourse theory, (2) the research design of the thesis is elucidated while indicating central methodological tools, and (3) the case-related analysis is contributed to the literature in the area of women`s organizations` interactions with the transforming Turkish state.

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[7] The term denotes an organization which is established, funded and supported by a government in an attempt to promote government`s interests at the local, national and international levels.

3. Theoretical Framework

In this section, first, discourse theory is clarified in the light of principally Laclau and Mouffe`s contributions to the field (1992). In doing so, central themes which are *discourse, identity* and *politics,* consisting of theoretical sub-concepts, are defined. Also, the historical developments, as well as academic efforts in relation to the theory, are discussed together with Laclau and Mouffe`s explanations on the discursive domain (1992). Second, the critiques of the theory are elaborated in order to embrace more logical reasoning and intellectual values. Last but not least, the specific concepts of discourse theory are adapted to my research while illuminating Turkey`s current transition process in the axis of gender politics.

3.1. Discourse Theory by Laclau and Mouffe

The purpose of this section is not to anatomize the complex poststructuralist paradigm that links the Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory (1992), but to survey the basic understanding of the theory and, more particularly, to demonstrate key concepts, specifically those which might be adapted to analysis of this thesis.

Preparatory to proposing my chosen framework that is Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory (1992). It merits to mention other prominent theoretical contributions in the field as the alternative voices are the complementary pieces of Laclau and Mouffe`s work. The initial questioning of discourse is called as *linguistic turn* in the terminology (Karlberg, 2011). In this case, the concept of discourse can be defined as *the use of language* in the most basic terms (Chilton, 2004). In addition to the above-given relationship between language and discursive practices, the concept also accommodates more complex and comprehensive insights developed by Ferdinand de Saussure, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Foucault (Rorty, 1992, cited in Karlberg, 2011). One can safely contend that discourse theory does not *merely* deal with the representation of linguistic statements in the articulation processes but also indicates and contributes the reality constructions in the light of diversified discursive actions (Torfing, 2005). Hence the basic premises of discourse theory may provide ample opportunities to social scientists who aim

to observe the diverse social practices belong to a particular group as in this thesis. Discourse Theory came into use in the early 1970s and has become widespread in the several academic disciplines over the years. Particularly, scholars who practice in the area of humanities and social sciences have actively employed discourse theory to make sense of power relations (Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002). Jacob Torfing has additionally argued that discourse theory "offered a new analytical perspective which focused the rules and meanings that condition the construction of social, political and cultural identity" (2005, p.1). In brief, prior to Laclau and Mouffe (1992), discourse theory mainly emphasizes that the interaction between the social construction mechanisms, such as language, and human knowledge which is exceptionally important for the theory in relation to constructing new realities. It means that language, expressions, cognitions, symbols and practices have a central role in the truth formation of discursive processes.

In addition to these insights, Laclau and Mouffe`s work is able to provide different perspectives to the theory. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (1985 and 1992)* is the principal source to gain a clear understanding of their writings on discourse theory along with Laclau`s individual works (Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002). The main assumptions of the theory are mainly rooted in the post-structuralist tradition and Marxist philosophy simultaneously (Chilton 2004, p.4). According to theoreticians, although *text and talk* are the essential instruments of the theory, these two are not considered as the single analytical tools to scrutinize the social phenomenon.

Furthermore, as Jørgensen and Phillips specify that "discourse itself is fully constitutive of our world" in other words, the discourse lends itself to be suitable for the creation of the *new discourse* (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, cited in 2002, p.19). In this regard, Laclau and Mouffe`s theory may be evaluated under the third generation of discourse theory in terms of initiating novel assessments to the existing literature, this classification is created by Torfing with the objective of analyzing discourse tradition in the social sciences. The theoreticians of the third generation as Derrida, Lacan, Laclau and Mouffe focus on the importance of *covering all social phenomenon* rather than a single aspect such as linguistic-based

assumptions. Therefore, while the usage of language is strategically *key* to clarify social constructions, it is not enough to comprehend and get a grasp on the big picture alone concerning the multidimensional segments of social constructions.

Taking this understanding as a point of departure, one of the key assumptions which are investigated by Laclau and Mouffe is the deep relationship between *linguistic signs* and *differential identities* which are core to tease out their comprehension of discourse theory (Laclau and Mouffe, 1992, pp.106-109). This statement can be interpreted that the meanings of social structures and signs have not fixed yet, also will not, in the articulatory processes based upon the non-fixed and relational natures of the discursive action. Their emphasis on the *change* is visible over the course of discourse theory and related supporting materials. Consequently, it is important to highlight that several concepts of the theory are strongly interrelated with each other and involve other concepts in itself such as in the case of differential identities (Rear and Jones, 2013). In order to elucidate the links between discourse theory and the study objectives of this thesis, the below concepts are introduced under three main headings; *discourse, identity* and *politics* prior to *reading Turkish Case through discourse theory section* which is about the roles of women`s organizations in the political transition process in Turkey.

3.1.1. Discourse: Moments, Elements, and Floating Signifier

Laclau and Mouffe (1992) as the leading representatives of the post-structuralist tradition, attach particular importance to linguistic signs together with the wider phenomenon in the articulatory practices (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p.25). It is important to highlight that there is a similarity, even identicalness, between Laclau and Mouffe`s understanding of articulation and Foucault`s perception towards discourse formation. Both key the concepts of theoreticians imply that a series of statements are in connection with logical and psychological ties in the semiotics (Torfing, 2005). In addition to the mentioned analog recognition of the *discourse*, Laclau and Mouffe prefer to adapt Saussure's definition of *signs* rather than Foucault's elucidation of the *sentence* to clarify existing conjuncture (Dabirimehr, 2014, p.1286). For this reason, this thesis refers to discursive units as signs based

on Laclau and Mouffe`s insight (1992) instead of any other structuralist descriptions. In this respect, the concepts of *signifier* and *signified* are crucial as their usage area in the discourse verbalize particular meanings to the external world regarding social constructions of social practices. Discourse can be seen as a unit of both *linguistic* as well as *non-linguistic* materials accordingly Laclau and Mouffe`s characterizations (Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002). As a corollary of this inclusionary and convenient approach, discourse theory enables to ingenerate the methodological analysis in line with the theoretical investigations on the subject matters.

Three vital and interconnected concepts of discourse, *moments, elements* and *floating signifier* plays a fundamental role to materialize my research objectives and respond to the research question of the thesis that can be particularly found in the ensuing *reading Turkish Case through discourse theory section.* To start with the explanations of the terms, first, all linguistic signs in the articulation concerned as *moments* (Laclau and Mouffe, 1992, p.111). Thus moments can be perceived as "knots in the fishing net and their meaning being fixed through their differences from one another" (Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002, p.26). Each moment interrelates and ultimately makes sense of each other`s denotation in the articulation. On the other hand, *elements* being another central theme in Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory can be outlined as unfixed signs in the discursive network (Boucher, 2009). In other words, elements do not have any particular relation to other signs in contrast to moments in the discursive diagram. The position of moments and elements contributes to grasping daily articulations and triggers the construction of new meanings (Laclau and Mouffe, 1992, p.110).

In addition to moments and elements, *floating signifier* similarly, provides a better understanding of discourse theory concerning the social actions. Since the meanings of linguistic signs cannot be ultimately fixed in the field of discursivity. (ibid, p.113), the term also refers to this relational and antistatic nature of the discourse. It means that a sign as a floating signifier implies different meanings

according to its applied context and formation. Despite the fact that floating signifier can be initially considered as the elements, there are still certain distinctions among terms because floating signifier may also transform into *nodal points* which indicate the partial fixations and privileged signs in the articulation process (Torfing, 2005). All in all, these three key concepts together with many others are essential to figure out the basic premises of *discourse* and grasp the suggestions of the following identity and politics sections.

3.1.2. Identity: Subject Position

The process of "the creation, transmutation and fixation of meaning through discourses within a hierarchical, relational and situationally contingent structure" generates new realities and regulates discursive patterns as stated in Laclau and Mouffe`s theory (1992) (Müller, 2011, p.28). If the mentioned discourse formation is considered as the first step of the articulation process, the second stage may be related to the genesis of *identity*. It is not incidental, thus, this section aims to clarify the relationship among the creation of identity while emphasizing on the *subject positions*. In detail, each individual, group and social entity have a certain kind of commitment to address and construct the identity based on this subject apparatus (Laclau, 1990).

Also, all discourses have particular implications for the subjects and notably, there are different potentials that the meanings of subjects are established in varied discourses. Seen in this light, identity has a *relational character* implies the formation of different subject positions in reference to diversified group formations (Laclau and Mouffe, 1992, p.113). It is important to feature that according to formed subject positions of agents, specific expectations such as behaviors, attitudes and speech forms are defined at the societal level. Together with these social expectations, agents may still have the simultaneous subject positions based on their gender, ethnicity, class and similar paradigms.

As noted previously, all signs have definitive boundaries in terms of their difference from each other which constitute their positions in the discourse. This system of

thought is also visible in the formation of subject positions concerning the identity (Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002). To be specific, we can briefly take a glance at *us* and *them* dichotomy which are obvious subject positions for agents. The value of us can only make sense with the formation of them, in other words, these two identity values are an inevitable part of each other`s meaning processes in the articulation. Hence the subject position is premised on the assumption of identity formation as well as provided a basis for the ensuing politics section.

3.1.3. Politics: Hegemony and Logic of Difference

As the last ring of the chain, the assumptions of discourse theory towards *politics* have prime importance for categorizing the analysis of this thesis. In the context of politics, the terms of *hegemony* and *logic of difference* are the key instruments to rationalize motivations behind the political articulation processes. Typically, the post-structuralist tradition, including Laclau and Mouffe`s considerations (1992), which relates to power relations tends to associate *hegemon* with "political logic that creates a `consensus´ and transforms power into reality" (Dabirimehr, 2014, p.1285). In other words, hegemonic discourse may be evaluated as an authorized social mechanism, organizing social structures (Muller, 2011).

Moreover, hegemony is strongly connected with the *antagonistic force* which is also vital to Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory. The ontological relationship among the terms is quite complex due to the fact that antagonism is able to create its own partial fixations to guide hegemony and form a new discourse. That's why hegemony is a part of the antagonistic structure in the discursive process, being also a significant agent for "the construction of consciousness and identity" (Rear and Jones, 2013, p.4). It can be argued that Laclau and Mouffe (1992) benefit from Gramsci`s hegemony understanding (1971) which is a widely used theoretical assumption in the political science field (Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002). In this vein, Gramsci and implicitly Laclau and Mouffe perceive hegemony as a super-structural, in other words, an ideological element which has an authority to create and influence other discourses within in the societal level.

From a vantage point, all the aforementioned terms under discourse theory may be concluded and connected with the Laclau and Mouffe`s *logic of difference* (1992). This theoretical concept mainly complies with the understanding of differentiation in discourse concerning the *plurality* of the related signs. (Laclau and Mouffe, 1992, pp.127-131). Furthermore, the term may be associated with the another concept which is *otherness* aiming the disintegration through subjects (Dabirimehr, 2014, p.1285). In this pattern, the *logic of equivalence*, which focuses on the similarities in the articulation, is also central to elucidate the discursive framework. Thus, when the logic of difference particularly gets together with the hegemony and antagonistic behavioral patterns, subsequently promotes the polarization among the groups in the discursive processes and corresponding social practices in contrast with the logic of equivalence. The adaptation of logic of difference and equivalence to my case may provide a better insight regarding us/them distinction, being an observable situation, while the current political atmosphere and the settlements of women`s are considered in the changing Turkey.

To sum up, all these three groups of notions which are *discourse, identity* and *politics*, along with their illustrative sub-concepts, constitute a certain amount of Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory (1992). Since the goal of this thesis is to analyze the relationship between the construction of new social realities and societal reflection/transmission on it, the aforementioned terms remain highly efficient and capable of enhancing the study objectives. By doing so, next chapter represents the existing scholarly criticisms towards Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory (1992) in the axis of social consequences.

3.2. Criticisms of Discourse Theory

Laclau and Mouffe`s suggestions (1992) to discourse analysis in relation to theoretical and methodological assumptions reveal a particular knowledge on how would language statements, as well as a social phenomenon, be evaluated in the discursive processes. The theory has been prominent in the social science discipline since the 1970s and widely employed by several scholars to investigate the truth

formations in the societies. That is to say, discourse theory catapults the relationship between social reality and articulation process to a new height. Indeed, the growing popularity of the theory gives rise to certain criticisms and possible alternatives regarding theoretical proposals. Thus, even though discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (1992) maintains its importance in the academic circles, not everyone equally perceives that their contributions to the theory are a perfect achievement providing an impeccable model to discourse scholarship. In this regard, I would like to center upon two main critiques which are related to *change* and *social practice* in order to integrate with the previous theoretical discussions.

First, Laclau and Mouffe`s reflections are criticized based upon their overstatements regarding the concept of *change* (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Boucher, 2008; Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002). As it well-known fact that Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory principally stresses on the importance of *change* in the discursive practices with the diversified signs. In detail, the emerging new discourses reproduce (new) social realities on the *relational* basis, in other words in the harmony of constant change (Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002). Furthermore, the created identities of agents are part of this changing circulation regarding their subject positions (Torfing, 2005). In this stage, Laclau and Mouffe`s assessments (1992) are rebuked in terms of overrating the option of change owing to the fact that each agent might be deprived of taking the initiative which is connected with the Laclau and Mouffe`s principle of change (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999).

As a reminder, Laclau and Mouffe (1992) consider that the concept of change, in other words, flux is a mandatory as well as an easy stage for all discursive actions. However, they do not specify this process: what I intend to say and clarify the existing criticisms about this approach that while some individuals/groups are able to change their existing discourses and reconstruct new ones, many are lacking in this ability due to the structural and external powers which are upon themselves. That`s why Laclau and Mouffe (1992) encounter the critiques of overestimating the probability of change in the field of discursivity. (Boucher, 2008; Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002)

Second, another critique of Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory is based on the ground of "undertheorizing the aspect of social practice" (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, cited in Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002, p.55). Since the understanding towards social practice, having a differential position is one of the key assumptions of Laclau and Mouffe`s descriptions, there should be more clarifications on the issue. Yet, Laclau and Mouffe do not fully justify how should be social practice is analyzed and correlated in the body of discourse analysis. The perception towards social practice is still essential to understand meaning constructions including moments, elements, signifiers and many other concepts concerning Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory (Torfing, 2005). For this reason, this alleged situation led to empirical vagueness as well as material shortcomings, in particular when the discourse theory is adapted to methodological analysis, because while social practice constitutes the big portion of Laclau and Mouffe`s theory, there is no comprehensive empirical supports and further clarifications regarding the process of social practice.

In this stage, I agree with the mentioned voices as this thesis also employs discourse analysis as a methodology besides theory while scrutinizing the strategic truth formations of women`s organizations in the transformation process of Turkey. In order to not be affected from plausible delimitation on the concept of change as well as social practice, I collaborate with the works of other post-structuralist theoreticians in the area of discourse. To illustrate, Foucault's ideas regarding social reality is connected and complementary to Laclau and Mouffe`s social practice understanding for the scope of the study.

In a nutshell, it is important to elaborate these existing critiques for not only revealing different opinions but also understanding the connection among authors. Each piece of critique harmonizes and creates a dialogue between discourse theory and Laclau and Mouffe`s statements (1992), including the next section.

3.3. Reading Turkish Case through Discourse Theory

Turkish political transition is a crystal ball that makes statements on numerous counts. While the political maneuvers under the AKP rule have been supporting by a large social group, the number of anti-government agencies cannot be quantitatively underestimated in the country (Arat, 2009; Çarkoğlu and Toprak, 2006). Interestingly, it seems that there is no option rather than to become a party dedicated to transition. In other words, the roles of CSOs appear like either supporter or opposer position in this extremely polarized political environment. If the scope of the research is narrowed down step by step, the mentioned political polarization is also visible in the settlements of women`s organizations. Since this thesis aims to delve into the roles of these organizations in the corresponding transition process, this section is an attempt to clarify the links between theoretical assumptions and the Turkish case while focusing on the question of why are discourse theory, based on Laclau and Mouffe`s assumptions (1992), the most suitable theoretical framework for the roles of women`s organizations. Three empirical sub-sections which are *discourse, identity, politics* are respectively investigated and provided a basis for the *analysis chapter*.

The understanding of ephemerality in other words *constant change* is key to understand Laclau and Mouffe`s theory (1992). Correspondingly, the phenomenon of *paradigm change* is the driving power of Turkish state transition process aiming to construct new realities/identities conforming with the AKP`s political line. Thus, discourse theory`s general assumptions and particular concepts well address the research objectives when the strategic positions of women`s organizations are particularly considered.

Before proceeding the *research design chapter*, I would like to briefly mention an imperative methodological concern which is related to data collection. This thesis gathers its dissertational data mainly from the official Twitter accounts of six prominent and the most active women`s organizations that can be divided into two groups as the government approved organizations and independent organizations -

the details of this classification as well as organizations` full names are given in the *research design chapter*. - In addition to Twitter data, publications, activity reports and similar official documents found on the authorized websites of organizations have a complementary role to see the links. In this section, the collected materials such typed texts, documents and activity logs are briefly interpreted with the objective of showing the suitability of the Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory into my case.

As a beginning, the concept of *discourse* accommodates certain kind of stages that can be summarized under three main phases: creation, maintenance and change. According to theoreticians, these three interrelated steps generate everyday discourses (Dabirimehr, 2014; Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002; Torfing, 2005). In Parallel, individuals living in Turkey observe certain kind of *paradigm shift* in politics, economy and social life in the last couple of years. This situation led to arise a new discourse or truth formation in the field of women`s and gender dynamics in the societal level (Çelik and İşeri, 2016). In this respect, Twitter accounts of mentioned women`s organizations appeared the most practical and accessible research area to observe the formation, evolution and alteration of codified discourses that are the tools for influencing masses.

As claim that the progressing change is able to take through the meticulous construction of *moments, elements* and *floating signifier* in the articulation process. One can safely content that these two group of women`s organizations employ a different kind of linguistic statements or codes in their daily Twitter posts. It means that both group of organizations systematically practice a set of words as the knots in the fishing net in other words *moments* (Jorgensen and Philipps 2002, pp.25-26). For instance, while the state friendly women`s organizations mostly routinize the words of `women, family, children and motherhood´ together, independent and somewhat anti-government women`s organizations prefer to combine predominantly the words of `women, freedom, equality, economy and solidarity" in their Twitter accounts. This intentional usage of linguistic terms together and their reflection to general phenomenon correspond to Laclau and Mouffe`s theory

(1992) from certain aspects. Moreover, the new terms such as "a conservative Muslim woman" as a new moment created by the AKP rule are popularized by state friendly organizations and criticized by independent ones in the social media networks.

In addition to moments, the positions of the number of terms set an example for *elements* such as the concept of *paternity leave.* the existence of this kind of elements is also central in terms of guiding to the articulatory processes. Lastly, the meanings of former and current expressions can be differently perceived in relation to the political position of these organizations. Laclau and Mouffe (1992) define this kind of discursive indications as *floating signifier* (Rear and Jones, 2013). For instance, on the one hand, the independent women`s organizations recognize the definition of woman as a female being concerning the sexual orientation. On the other hand, the state friendly ones identify the characterization of a woman who is married and loses her virginity. This argument can be proved with the activity reports of state friendly organizations when they deliberately make a distinction between a girl and a woman based marital status rather than age-specific standards. In this situation, the perception towards a woman appears as a floating signifier in the context. The detailed version of these word groupings and their reflection to the societal dynamics are deeply discussed in the *analysis chapter*. But for now, it is important to gain insight into their general perception towards the gender-specific issues.

As indicated previously, created discourses form a basis for the *identity* formation. Countries who have experienced a socio-political transformation frequently appealed to a new identity construction process in order to increase their sphere of influence in the society (Yeşilada, 2014). Turkey`s transition process under the AKP rule also serves as a model for the creation effort of a new religious generation in harmony with the state`s conservative values (Arat, 2009). In this regard, the ruling ideology needs a number of instruments to realize this identity/truth construction. Indeed, women`s organizations play a crucial role to construct mentioned identity with their concerning *subject positions* because gender and

women are always on the populist agenda to consolidate power (Kandiyoti, 2016). As Laclau and Mouffe (1992) suggest that the subject positions are strongly related with *group formation* dynamics that is one of the necessities of the transition process in Turkey. Thus, it can be assumed that state friendly women`s organizations propagandize the AKP`s political line towards gender-based issues as well that is visible on their Twitter accounts.

As a matter of fact, independent women`s organizations go against and strength their stance against this newly constructed socio-political identity with their activities and awareness campaigns. To recap, all groups act accordingly their subject positions that have been created in the discursive processes. In an attempt to clarify this argument, the additional example below may be illustrative: while state friendly organizations attach particular importance to February 28, postmodern coup,[8] and memorialize this day with specific events, independent women`s organizations place similar emphasis on March 8, International Women`s Day, due to the fact that each group of organizations play along with their subject positions as expected (Laclau and Mouffe, 1992). Moreover, if Twitter posts of these organizations are reviewed, it is not possible to encounter any materials which pertain to counter views, to exemplify, February 28 thematic posts on the independent women`s organizations accounts or vice versa in accordance with the societal roles assumption of discourse theory.

In the last place, the effectiveness of both discourse and identity is connected with *politics*. Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory (1992) explains the notion of politics on the basis of *hegemony* concept that refers to a "process of meaning production" with respect to "stabilization of power relations" (Dabirimehr, 2014, p.1285). For the Turkish case, hegemony understanding may be directly associated with the most influential political power, the state, in the country with the reason of being entitled to control the majority of discourses. Several actors serve to the state power to

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[8] Also called 1997 Turkish Military Memorandum implies a process which initiated to resignation of Islamist prime minister and carried with several limitations towards religious community in the country.

legitimize as well as practice its authority across society such as political elites, media bosses and representatives of CSOs (Akser and Baybars-Hawks, 2012). In this vein, the relationship between state/hegemon and civil society, women`s organizations in particular is essential to understand the foundational level of current changes in the country in the axis of gender politics.

In proceeding segments, it is also vital to highlight that even though ultimate hegemon is the state or governmental rule, there is a multiple levels of hegemony which have a say in women`s space in the society such in male actors in the family/private domain (Kandiyoti, 1988). It can be concluded that that hegemony is directly related to who those have the power to guide concerning discourses. In addition to the above terms, the *logic of difference* is another fundamental concept addressing difference among groups and separating individuals as in the case of the contemporary Turkey. In fact, the all theoretical concepts such as the *logic of difference*, the *logic of equivalence*, *subject positions* and many other similar terms are interrelated on several counts. To exemplify, two group of women`s organizations distinctly act according to us/them distinction in their activities concerning their subject positions. It is totally acceptable that each organization protects and advocates its own values but the actions of these organizations in line with the state transition may create a hostility within the society while mobilizing the logic of difference mechanism.

To sum up, this chapter is featured in the direction of: (1) Laclau and Mouffe`s explanations on discourse theory (1992) together with sub-sections which are *discourse, identity* and *politics,* including particular discursive concepts (2) the existing scholarly critiques towards the theoreticians in the axis of the concept of *change* and *social practice*, and (3) the brief exploration of the Turkish Case through the main premises of discourse theory prior to *analysis*. In the next chapter, I introduce the research design with the objective of operationalizing as well as elucidate the methodological approaches which guide my thesis.

4. Research Design

This section aims to give an overview of research strategies and employed research tools to constitute the methodological framework of this thesis. This part is divided into three main sections. They are: (1) *case selection* and *data collection* are clarified in two concerned scopes; why does Turkey serve as a model regarding Internet-based studies and in what ways are the thoughts of the civil society polarized through cyber world; (2) *method of analysis* is explained in the light of netnography and discourse analysis methods; (3) *research ethics* is explored and evaluated while giving particular importance the principles of online research; and (4) *methodological delimitations* are surveyed through three main channels.

4.1. Case Selection and Data Collection

This thesis is partially designed as a comparative study while investigating the roles of two different group of women`s organizations in Turkish political transition process. The country is a suitable research material providing relevant information to qualitative research. In detail, statistics confirm that while Turkey has a total resident population of 78.666 (The World Bank, 2015), 59.6% of the population are currently recorded as active internet users; it means that demand for the Internet is relatively high, compared to a world average of the Internet penetration which is 46.4% (Internet World Stats –IWS-, 2015). More than half of the citizens follow news from the Internet and socialize via popular social media platforms (Radcliffe and Dogramaci, 2015).

Starting from this, Turkey sets a good example also for the methodological scope of this study in relation to prospective Internet-based mode of analysis. The usage of the Internet cannot be limited only to the individual domain. Government agencies, semi-official bodies as well as civil society organizations, also have the intention of embracing the facilities of the Internet in their activities. Needless to say, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are the most common types of interaction spots between the mentioned groups and society (Ibid). To illustrate, President Erdoğan`s Twitter account has more than 10 million

followers, send 20-25 tweets per day, receive thousands of likes, retweets and replies on a daily basis. (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 2017a).

All these illustrations suggest that the Internet and especially social media networks are an inseparable part of the contemporary social realities and important tool for influencing the masses. In this regard, developing communication technologies and new media also provide assistance to CSOs in terms of expanding their sphere of influence at the societal level. Particularly, social media platforms such as Twitter are the essential apparatuses of the third sector while considering the power of digital technologies in the 21st century. Within the scope of existing literature, scholars studying the role of new media mainly point out the mobilization and activism aspects considering social movements (Burford, 2013; Gerbaudo, 2012; Halupka, 2011). In addition to these, new media has another profound role which is the social construction of truths through the layers of society that is particularly central to this thesis.

As noted earlier, women`s organizations have a strategic role of this thesis while mediating between theories and practices into social realities. For this purpose, the roles of women`s organizations and their presenting attitudes towards government can be investigated via one of their social media accounts in order to observe their interaction with the state values at the societal level. *Twitter* has been identified as the most explanatory and demonstrative platform to excerpt necessary data. As previously mentioned that while there are approximately 100.00 organizations are active in the country (General Directorate of Foundations, 2017), 389 of them particularly registered as women`s organizations in the database (Doyle, 2017, p.249). Out of this population, this thesis specifies *six leading women`s organizations* as a sample.

Three of them are known as state friendly organizations and three of them are independent of the state ideology, serve as the primary source to investigate the issue. The ideological classification among two group of organizations is carried out in the light of their official websites, social network accounts and additional information gathered from the media rather than a personal conclusion. In fact, all

of these six organizations deliberately express their political attitudes in their activities, projects and daily posts in relation to the extreme social polarization in the country. Now, I would like to briefly mention to selected six women`s organizations who are the most recognized and operative entities in their fields which can be supported via their social network accounts and participation level of full-scale activities.

In the first place, three state friendly women`s organizations that provide an empirical evidence to this thesis are: (1) Women's Rights Organization against Discrimination (AK.DER); (2) İstanbul Women and Women's Organizations Association (IKADDER); and (3) Women and Democracy Association (KADEM). In the second place, three independent women`s organizations that similarly contribute to the empirical foundations of this study are: (1) Association for the Support and Training of Women Candidates (KA.DER); (2)Women`s Studies Association (Turkish: Kadın Çalışmaları); and (3) Women for Women's Human Rights– New Ways (KIH-YÇ).

In this vein, this thesis compares and contrasts their goals, objectives and activities of these six organizations via their public Twitter accounts. Also, the study surveys their overall profile in terms of mainstreaming and mirroring the state values to society in the following *analysis chapter*.

Two-month (February-March 2017) research is carried out in order observe, record and archive Twitter posts of these organizations. The time frame of the study is intentionally preferred with two main reasons regarding the current extraordinary political transition atmosphere which penetrates all layers of the society. Firstly, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey announced a three-month *state of emergency* after the failed July 15 Coup (2016)[9] to arrest the suspects. Now, the country`s state of emergency has been extended for a further three months including February-March 2017, namely time period of this thesis. The referred legal process provides

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[9] This coup attempt took place on 15 June 2016 on the abolishment state institutions under the AKP rule as well as presidency of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey. The suspects were identified as the members of Gülenist movement by Turkish government.

extraordinary authorization to President Erdoğan and the cabinet in terms of legislation, investigation and interaction at the societal level. Hence this extra-ordinary environment enables me to observe the real interaction between the state and women`s organizations in the axis of gender politics.

Secondly, an important presidential referendum was held on 16 April 2017[10] in Turkey. Prior to the referendum, a huge political campaign was organized by the official authorities all around the country. It is interesting to witness that all of these six women`s organizations also participated in this process as a supporter or an opposer via their Twitter accounts. That`s why, the period of time is preferred with consciousness in order to witness mentioned power relations.

In a nutshell, the strategic roles of these women`s organizations need to be addressed in the academic spheres concerning the new truth formations that accompany the state transition process and current developments on women`s sphere in the society. Thus the projected time is applicable to witness the polarizations among civil society with the help of the below-mentioned research methods.

4.2. Method of Analysis

Two key methodological ambitions guide this thesis: (1) to investigate the depth and comprehensive characteristics of the research phenomenon, and (2) to reveal a systematic texture behind multifaceted the social facts. In this environment, qualitative research design is more suitable than quantitative and mixed method approaches due to the fact that the understanding of values and perceptions are essential in comparison to statistical findings for this study. Moreover, it is preferred to conduct a digital qualitative research via Twitter rather than qualitative traditional research with the aim of reaching more participants when the time frame of the thesis is considered. As a corollary of these insights, two methods of analysis

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[10] Turkish Constitutional Referendum was arranged on 16 April 2017 which included bylaw of replacement of existing parliamentary system to presidential system along with additional 18 amendments to the current Turkish constitution.

are adopted, *netnography* and *discourse analysis,* to elucidate the roles of the women`s organization in the society and their relations with the state on the basis of selected six women`s organizations` Twitter accounts.

4.2.1. Netnography

To begin with, Robert Kozinets, who is the leading figure in the netnography literature has recently been identifying this method of analysis as a qualitative research method as well as a new tool for understanding online interactions among groups of people (2010, pp.3-6). Participant observations, interviews and structural network analysis constitute the backbone of this type of online ethnography (Mateos and Durand, 2012). The method has initially appeared in the field of marketing for the purpose of investigating the relationship between "consumer culture and media consumption" (Kozinets, 2010, p.150). In proceeding years, other major branches of the social science discipline benefit from this method of analysis while designing particular research typologies (Correll, 1995; Turkle, 1995, cited in Kozinets, 2010).

Netnography as a fertile and innovative methodology (Mateos and Durand, 2012) can be effective for the scope of this thesis due to three main reasons: (1) social network analysis, which is one of the analytical tools of the netnography is the basis and guideline of the methodology section to analyze "structural relationships among and between communities", namely organizations (Kozinets, 2010, p.193); (2) netnography, gives special place to the concept of interaction. Along similar lines, the interaction is more than just a lexical item for this study; interaction between women`s organizations and government ideology is a central theme connecting the research question; (3) the particular research strategy of netnography, social behavior analysis and the implications, corresponds to theoretical assumptions of the research in line with Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory (1992).

All in all, this method provides a stable basis as well as a guide to carrying out an observational research on the social media network. In parallel, the below table

represents certain numbers/analytics concerning Twitter accounts of these organizations in line with netnography`s main assumptions.

Table 1: Twitter Analytics

Organizations	Followers	Following	Tweets	Tweets During the Period of Study (February-March 2017)
State Friendly Organizations				
KADEM	23,500	201	8,689	570
IKADDER	1,246	100	1,638	95
AK.DER	724	171	574	26
Total				691
Independent Organizations				
KA.DER	8,171	771	2,843	216
Kadın Çalışmaları	6,029	733	7,873	247
KIH-YÇ	5,789	634	5,822	131
Total				594

Source: Author`s elaboration

The aim of this table is displaying the interaction between these six organizations and the community. Particularly, the numbers of *followers* and *Tweets* may give some clues on their sphere of influence in the societal level.

Furthermore, the number of *Tweets during the period of study* belonging to these two group of organizations are measured as highly close to each other (691-594), this similarity provides a reliable basis for empirical investigations together with the following discourse analysis.

4.2.2. Discourse Analysis

In addition to netnography, discourse analysis as a method is also employed within the scope of this thesis. This method of analysis is highly popular research technique in the social science discipline owing to providing a wide range of conclusions on particular social realities (Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002). Laclau and Mouffe (1992) interpret the discourse analysis from two noticeable perspectives: linguistic statements and more broad phenomenological foundations (Dabirimehr, 2014). This comprehensive approach complies with the study objectives that emphasizes on the operationalization of linguistic statements as well as the advanced structure of created discourse itself. Addressing discourse analysis is also essential for the integrity of this study because as many scholars point out, discourse analysis should be considered as "a complete package" of theory and methodology in other words "method and theory cannot be separated" in discourse analysis research (Gee, 1999; Gill, 2010; Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002).

Since the theory section of this thesis is designed accordingly Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory (1992), the chapters complement each other in the established context. That's why, discourse analysis has a particular and strategic position for this thesis in relation to communicating between theoretical assumptions and methodological considerations. Empirical data gathered from public Twitter accounts of six women`s organizations are subject to review through the discourse analysis method to explore social construction mechanisms and normalization process of values. In the larger context, the roles of these organizations in the Turkish political transition process, as a social phenomenon can be investigated through the main assumptions and tools of discourse analysis (Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002) in line with the parallel theoretical insights.

The next two sections purpose of demonstrating the *research ethics* and *methodological limitations* of this thesis in order to elucidate as well as conclude the *research design chapter.*

4.3. Research ethics

Social media research provides certain advantages to researchers in terms of three main domains: (1) it is easier to access ideas and actions of participants via innovative tools of the cyber world; (2) it is an effortless alternative to traditional research methods in the way of population/sample investigation; and (3) conducting a social media research is obviously more operational and practical, in particular for financial matters (Moreno et al., 2013). However, this feasible way of research also accommodates a set of complexities in terms of ethical perspectives.

This section aims to briefly present and examine fundamental ethical principles which have an important role in the formation of this thesis. The initial ethical concern that addressed in the study is related to confidentiality and privacy in reference to Twitter accounts of six women`s organizations. In this vein, when their official websites and concerning contact information were examined, all of the organizations have referred their official social media accounts, including Twitter as a *public* research material. As a standard procedure, while social media users have an intention to create a public Twitter account, they need to confirm the particular terms and conditions consisting that "data may be accessed by third parties, including researchers" (Townsend and Wallace, 2016, p.5).

This validation provides an ethical clearness to social network analysis. Moreover, during thesis period, the identities of the individuals who shared posts in the organizations` Twitter accounts, are intentionally kept private, *namely anonymous* to protect the confidentiality of the private individuals in the society. In addition to these, another ethical consideration of this thesis is connected with establishing a constructive and respectful dialogue when assessing social media accounts of organizations. In order to preclude possible risks of harm, photos, videos or any other visual identifiable materials towards similarly individuals were not

straightforwardly had coverage by this study. Instead of that, public posts, including Retweets as well as hashtags are used in the discussions. Consequently, *confidentiality, anonymity* and *considerateness* are three fundamental ethical priorities of this thesis to survey on the roles of women`s organizations in the changing Turkey.

4.4. Methodological Delimitations

In addition to these, this study also accommodates certain kinds of methodological limitations which might be ameliorated in the further research. They are: (1) generalizability of findings, (2) the issues concerning self-reported data, and (3) time-related delimitations. As noted earlier, the objective of this research is to deduce the conclusion mainly from Twitter accounts of six prominent women`s organizations during to two-month observations. When the size of the concerning civil society population is considered in the country, a sample size of the research, as well as gathered data from their social media accounts, may generate certain kinds of generalizability problem for the analysis. Furthermore, self-reported study model is employed while collecting data from Twitter accounts of six women`s organizations. In this kind of studies, there is always a question mark over researcher`s bias and reliance on data. In the last place, the central subject area of this thesis is the roles of women`s organizations in Turkish political transition processes which is still a work in process and we are not able to detect all links. Nevertheless, this thesis is designed as a qualitative research based on social media observation, the aforementioned three key delimitations are tried to be minimized with the objective of providing more concrete study results.

To conclude, this chapter is designed with the aim of demonstrating the methodological concerns which guide this thesis. All four respective sections; *case selection* and *data collection, method of analysis, research ethics* and *methodological delimitations* serve to clarify employed research tools prior to start *analysis chapter.*

5. Analysis

The aim of this chapter is to address the research question which focuses on the societal roles of women`s organizations and their relationships with the state concerning the issues specific to women in Turkey`s socio-political transition. Thus the chapter`s central objective is to investigate the roles, functions and purposes of two groups of women`s organizations in Turkey under three identical sub-categories with illustrative cases. To recapitulate, Twitter accounts of six prominent women`s organizations, three of them are identified as the state friendly and three of them are independent of the state ideology, serve as a basis for empirical analysis. In addition to data collected from Twitter, supplementary documents such as project reports, publications and official catalogues of organizations have a complementary role in the discussions.

5.1 Roles, Strategies and Objectives of Women`s organizations

There has been a huge discussion on the roles of women`s organizations in the last couple of years in relation to the state`s political transition process. The key subject of disputes is predominantly rooted in the position of the organizations towards women`s rights and gender equality. On the one hand, many believe that the roles of the current women`s associations are protecting women`s rights rather than advancing it by the reason of the state`s extremist attitude towards gender politics (Doyle, 2017). On the other hand, a number of people advocate that women`s rights have been exacerbated via the activities of several women`s organizations (ibid, p.251). Indeed, these arguments have not been empirically proved yet. Given this literature gap and centrality of the issue to the *women`s scholarship* in Turkey, this thesis aims to contribute to this subject matter while categorizing all Twitter data on the basis of three main categories: *family & society, workforce* as well as *politics* as in the empirical basis.

While findings are investigated through these channels, Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory (1992) is revisited with the objective of creating a dialogue

between theory and practice. It should be taken into consideration that even though each of these six organizations have different kinds of social mission, function and purpose indicating in their mandates, it is still beneficial to group them under two principal categories as state friendly organizations and independent organizations due to the fact that the extreme political polarization enables them to meet on a common ground according to their priorities and political attitudes. Following sections will provide a discussion as an aforementioned order.

5.1.1. State Friendly Organizations

In the period between February 1 and April 1, Twitter posts, namely Tweets and Retweets of three state friendly women`s organizations: AK.DER, IKADDER and KADEM are investigated. And, collected data in addition to supplementary documents provides a basis for the below analysis with three respective domains: *family & society, workforce* and *politics.*

5.1.1.1. Women in the Family & Society

State, religion and family are three key determinants of gender politics which have had a deep-rooted history in Turkish political culture (Arat, 2009, cited in Tomen, 2016). As noted before, the place of women in the society has been mostly associated with the components of the private sphere, in other words, *family domain* (Yuval-Davis, 2007, p.78). In this environment, the actions/roles of CSOs, in particular women`s organizations, are crucial to explore this longstanding mentality which places women mainly into the family`s home. This subject matter concerning the place of women in the family & society is also in the schedule of these three state friendly organizations. Their approach to the issue merits to be mentioned from three main perspectives.

To begin with, KADEM appears as the most active and instrumental women`s organization that can be confirmed via *Table 1*. That`s why, its activities also inspired other two organizations under this category. In this regard, yielded data support the view that these three organizations together traditionally identify women in relation to family and children. It means that women are still perceived

as an inseparable element of household by these organizations. Since the conventional relationship between gender roles and familial canvass has not been challenged, this standpoint is reflected their activities, projects and campaigns from certain aspects. To illustrate, in the `Marriage and Family Values Conference´, arranged by Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Jeddah (2017), president of KADEM gave a speech on the subject of women and family focusing on the imperative responsibility of female members in the family formation (KADEM, 2017a). Moreover, it was also recorded that this organization participated in a social media campaign that uses these Tweets as in given order: powerful woman, powerful family, powerful society and ultimately powerful state (KADEM, 2017b).

As discourse theory suggested that these word groupings play a crucial role in the reality constructions. The given words together constitute *moments* in other words knots in the fishing net (Laclau and Mouffe, 1992, p.111-113). As each sign which has a particular meaning contributes to forming the meanings of others, the simultaneous usage of these words such women and family is imprinted on people`s mind in the process. Needless to say, each generation experiences and correspondingly takes an example of existing socio-cultural structure. In the proceeding segments, today`s minor, but future`s large groups of individuals may gradually recognize women as a part of a private sphere in line with the AKP model of social relations.

Apart from Kemalist ameliorations towards female identity, women have never been recognized as fully independent from house/family divisions but also women have certainly not experienced this kind of powerful perception management or paradigm change which is exposed by both the state and CSOs. In the light of these analyses which are illustrative of the rest, I can argue that these three state friendly women`s organizations interpret the position of women the society as a *symbol of national collectivity* and a *protector of the next generations*.

According to Yuval-Davis:

Women`s membership in their national and ethnic collectivities is of a double nature. On the one hand, women like men are the members of the society. On the other hand, there are always specific rules and regulations which relate to women as women. (2007, p.37)

This argument raises another question on the subject of motherhood within the scope of this section. All three state friendly organizations also would not separate the function of women from the cultural motherhood which can be easily observed via their social media networks. To exemplify, many workshops, trainings and conferences coordinated by these organizations served predominantly mother`s interests such as a mother-child home design program, children`s religious training and similar activities (IKADDER, 2017a; KADEM, 2017c). These family-based practices emphasizing the role of women as primarily a mother and their attitudes towards this general phenomenon may contribute to the normalization of traditional values with regard to familial citizenship which refers to "a sovereign husband and his dependent wife/mother" (Kandiyoti, 2016, p. 107).

One of the key concerns of this thesis is investigating the roles of women`s organizations in the political transition of Turkey under the current AKP rule. In this vein, while each transformation needs an identity to secure its place in relation to *subject positions,* the embodiment of mother-women was preferred and mainstreamed as women`s obligatory identity by these organizations (Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002). In fact, the roles of these organizations` towards aforementioned puzzle followed the President Erdoğan`s lead. In addition to Erdoğan`s traditional three children recommendation to families, the President also announced that "childless women are deficient and incomplete" (The Guardian, 2016, p.1). Although his point of view was highly criticized in relation to controlling over women`s bodies by several groups, his perception still summarizes the contemporary frame of mind which is adopted as an identity for the state transition process.

The same effort regarding identity construction is also valid in the following illustration. In the context of women in the family & society, Twitter data indicates that while all these three women`s organizations gave particular importance to

protection of customary Turkish family structure, at the same time they maintained a stance against Western values concerning familial issues in particular. In order to consolidate this approach, several activities were arranged, including consciousness-raising meetings, certificate programs and knowledge contests. The Oriental or Eastern character was also defined as a new *identity* or sustained character of Ottoman times, influencing gender politics as well. Indeed, this viewpoint should be evaluated within the broader perspective that is strongly connected to the country`s current political climate. The tension between Turkey and the West has accelerated in the last couple of years (Sadık, 2012). President Erdoğan`s irreconcilable attitude towards the European Union in particular and amicable maneuvers to Arab World have had an effect on domestic relations, including CSOs activities in the society.

One of the Twitter posts of KADEM summarizes above arguments, it was written that "we (Turkish society) should protect our familial values and protect respecting marriages with our own mentality rather than Western-centric solutions" (KADEM, 2017d). Not unexpectedly, this Twitter post and like many others may carry certain risks in terms of polarization of groups and individuals at the societal level. Based on Laclau and Mouffe`s assumptions, these linguistic foundations and general West-East phenomenon, including the position of women, give rise to the *logic of difference* while labelling the East as *us* and the West as *them*, namely *the other*.

All in all, the roles of three state friendly women`s organizations on the family-based issues which are importance given to traditional family institution and motherhood, seems like to mirror the AKP rule`s values and contribute to state transition process while injecting ideas to society in the framework of constructed new conservative identity.

5.1.1.2. Women in the Workforce

Latest statistics show that female labor force participation (FLFP) has increased in the last couple of years (International Labor Organization-ILO-, 2017). As Madenoglu points out:

Patterns of female LFP in Turkey should be interpreted within the many social and economic changes that the country has experienced. As Turkish people become more educated, as the country`s middle class expands and as the country urbanizes: families and women in particular facing new challenges and new ways of life (2009, p. ix).

In addition to augmentation in FLFP, there are also fundamental issues have remained unsolved for women in the job market such as inferior quality of the jobs, imperfect social security rights, long working hours and low wages (ibid). In this environment, the roles of women`s organizations towards working women regarding incentives, assistance programs and more comprehensive projects is key to address women`s empowerment and guarantee gender equality within the country.

The most important trend identified in the Twitter accounts, belonging to these three state friendly organizations, was their affirmative attitude towards women`s participation in the labor market. During two months of research, several events were launched with the objective of introducing business lines from engineering to academia for women`s interests (KADEM, 2017e). Furthermore, the systematic focus on the importance of working women for Turkish economy was another common theme which took place in their daily Twitter posts. In spite of this positive and encouraging events, the real scenario may be much deeper than it has been estimated due to the interrelated socio-cultural reasons.

I would like to propose that although these three state friendly organizations have a supportive role about working women in the society, they are still under the influence of the state`s dominant discourse which associates women`s main responsibility as household-based occupations instead of other options. As stated in KADEM´s Twitter account, "even if we (women) have a career and social life, our primary responsibility remains always family" (KADEM, 2017f). This quotation has revealed the governing idea of the organization as well as constituted a contradiction for women who aim to have an independent career from the family life in the contemporary Turkish society. As discourse theory explains that while "identity comes from identification with certain subject positions", respectively

personal values, behaviors and attitudes of actors are defined conforming to these articulatory characters (Rear and Jones, 2013, p.10). In other words, individuals in the society are expected to act in their defined roles. According to proposed identities by these organizations, a woman should rank the motherhood in the first place due to her subject position which is related to being a woman.

Along similar lines, President Erdoğan announced in the KADEM`s building opening ceremony (2016), "a woman who says 'because I am working I will not be a mother' is actually denying her feminity" (The Guardian, 2016, p.2). As a deduction, the concept of motherhood was delineated as a superior and definitive discourse by these women`s organizations together with the state power. Lacan`s *master* (1977) as well as Laclau and Mouffe`s *nodal points of identity* understanding (1992) which are privileged and designator signs in the discourse, is perfectly in accordance with motherhood perception in the activities of these organizations (Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002, p. 52).

Apart from these findings, Twitter posts of these three state friendly organizations did not cover the areas of working women`s rights such as social security rights and maternity rights in the job market. However, these topics are recognized as the most important area of concerns that every woman should be kept informed of her right, title and interest. Some scholars correlate this approach to the state`s policies and ultimately desired Turkish family structure. According to Yazici, "neoliberal objective of diminishing state responsibility for social protection came with a discursive shift to strengthening the family" (2012, cited in Kandiyoti, 2016, p.106). In detail, several pregnant women who are deprived of basic employment rights such as paid maternity leave have to quit their jobs and return home as not a preference as an inevitable obligation in line with the aforementioned motherhood perception being associated Laclau and Mouffe`s proposed nodal points. Furthermore, it is also identified that there is a certain need for more empirical studies on the issue to clarify the relationship between gender norms and the AKP ideology in the axis of women`s organizations in the Turkish context.

According to data collected from Twitter, these three women`s organizations also dealt with the economic integration process of refugee women residing in the country. This issue has a vital importance with regard to life quality of refugee population, as most of them are women and children. Currently, while Turkey hosts more than 2.5 million Syrian refugees (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees –UNHCR-, 2016), Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) report reveals that about 77 percent of refugee women have looked for a job in Turkey (2014, pp.63-65). In this regard, these three state friendly organizations engaged in activities in order to address this need while focusing on language courses and information campaigns about the job market in the country. In order to gain international recognition and acceptance, this awareness raising activities on Syrian women`s economic empowerment was presented in the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) taking place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York (2017) by KADEM.

The existing studies show that state friendly women`s organizations have adopted a manner pursuant to state *approved issues* (Doyle, 2017; Keysan, 2016; Kaya, 2015) such as aforementioned refugee theme. In detail, receiving the huge number of refugees have been a central policy goal of the AKP government since 2012 (Öktem and Akkoyunlu, 2016). Correspondingly, these organizations have more opportunity to participate in internationally recognized events and civil society-based activities as a result of close state relations. To illustrate, I may give the example of *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, namely Istanbul Convention (2011) which is an important international action plan, being initiated by Council of Europe, aiming to prevent domestic violence against women. In 2014, Group of Experts on Convention (GREVIO) started to monitoring program with the cooperativeness of CSOs to supervise the signatory states´ implementations and practices regarding the agreement. In this regard, three women`s organizations were identified by Ministry of Family and Social Policies for this task: KADEM, AK.DER and KASAD-D

(Women Healthcare Professionals Solidarity Association) in other words all state friendly organizations (Kandiyoti, 2016).

To recap, although the roles of these organizations was introducing and supporting women who are in the working life, the relationship between women and motherhood is still recognized as the most privileged sign, nodal point, in the discourse according to their point of view. Furthermore, the results show that these organizations preferred to stay connected approved issues owing to the mutual interests.

5.1.1.3. Women in Politics

Political participation and representation of women are two key determinants of gender equality and human rights according to international standards (UN, 2014). Women in Turkey received full universal suffrage, alongside Atatürk`s reforms in 1934. Yet, the rates of women in the parliament have not passed twenty percent since the early Republican era owing to invisible barriers (Yenilmez, 2016, p.21) in other words, glass ceiling (Fraser, 2013, p.221). The obstacles like family responsibilities, lack of education and corresponding unconsciousness have hindered women from the political arena. In this context, little attention has been devoted the roles of state friendly women`s organizations who are the key actors when their special relationship with the state is considered. The strong interaction between these organizations and public institutions such as ministries, government agencies and state-funded institutions is an incontrovertible phenomenon in Turkey. In this regard, the roles of these organizations warrants research attention for two following reasons.

First, research indicates that the issue of women`s political participation is partially embraced by these three state friendly organizations being associated to their roles and function in the society. More clearly, instead of acting in an integrative manner, these organizations preferred to cover the concerns of a particular group, namely conservative women. Typically, veiled/headscarfed women`s representation in local and national government was one of the most visited themes by these

organizations. In fact, headscarf issue has been always contested and sensitive subject in Turkish political history. Headscarf restrictions was implemented towards the use of the veil in public spaces, including parliament and educational institutions after 1980 Turkish coup d'état[11]. The AKP rule lifted this controversial headscarf ban in 2008 in harmony with its socio-religious principles. On the one hand, a particular social group have advocated the significance of the state`s liberating movement towards oppressed covered women. On the other hand, another group have perceived the veil as a symbol of political Islam which threats country`s secular foundational basis (Çarkoğlu and Toprak, 2006).

In this critical and highly polarized political environment, the functions of women`s organizations are of vital importance to safeguard both parties` rights in the society. However, the general attitudes of these three analyzed organizations stayed focus on the conservative women who are the desirable members of New Turkey. This disjunctive perception can be analyzed in the light of Laclau and Mouffe`s *logic of difference* understanding as well. The linguistic statements/Tweets of these three organizations` social media accounts obviously draw a line among individuals among the country. To put it in a different way, the special emphasis on the political rights of conservative women, not all women, in the example of veil issue, has polarized and separated people on the basis of their differences. What I think is that CSOs, women`s organizations in particular should embrace activities relying on more complementary and integrative manners in order to maintain amicable relations in the environment in which carries risk to accommodate antagonistic and discriminatory discourses.

Second, it was also observed that the issues related to women in politics were mostly addressed in the framework of the latest referendum campaign during our two-month research. On 16 April 2017, Turkish citizens went to the polls not only for deciding 18 proposed amendments to the existing constitution but more importantly they also voted for the increasing authorization/power of President

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[11] This occurrence is associated to seize power of Turkish Armed Forces on 12 September 1980 aiming to terminate ongoing ideological, economic and social problems in Turkey.

Erdoğan within the new presidential system as an important step of the state transition process (QU4TRO, 2017). Needless to say, all three state friendly organizations were the active participants as well as promoters of the Presidency Campaign. I may argue that the principal roles of these organizations was the publicize the new constitutional system to women in particular. Actually, this certain behavioral pattern aiming to reach predominantly *women`s interests* can be evaluated in the framework of discourse theory in relation *to group identity formation* (Torfing 2005). In other words, the activities of these women`s organizations symbolize their general outlook which is based on the *gendered division of labor* is the result of hegemonic discourse.

Particular social media operations, hashtag campaigns and introductory seminars were arranged to spread knowledge about the new system (IKADDER 2017b; KADEM 2017g). As stated previously, discourse theory correlates the state which is entitled to exercise power in other words, with *hegemon.* In this regard, the roles of these three organizations was defined by hegemonic discourse as convincing more people to vote in favor of the AKP rule. To be specific, one of the most illustrative events is recorded as *Women and Democracy Meeting* which was held on 5 March 2017 by KADEM. The broad participatory meeting also hosted President Erdoğan and his family together with 20.000 additional guests (KADEM, 2017h). The main theme of the meeting is noted as the emphasize on women`s predefined role in the democracy. In addition to this, several social media hashtag campaigns such as #itistimetosayyes or #yesforadvanceddemocracy[12] appeared in Twitter accounts of these organizations.

Likewise, one of the most interesting parts of their social media campaigns were noted as the active usage of female identity for the new political system. Indeed, women have been traditionally perceived as an election propaganda tool by male actors in the country. However, together with this deep-seated commodification of

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[12] In the Turkish Constitutional Referendum (2017), there were two options to select: while `Yes´ vote means support constitutional change, namely, the AKP`s objectives, `No´ option means vote against the constitutional amendment.

women, the existing situation had highly differed from the mentioned occasion due to the fact that the organizations consisting of principally female members could prefer to commodify their fellows as the objects in politics with several campaigns. To be specific, women were primarily presented as the mandatory guardians and guarantors of the new political system by these organizations` Twitters accounts.

In a nutshell, the roles of state friendly women`s organizations in relation to politics can be identified under two central categories. They are: (1) polarization of individuals according to their belief schemes while activating logic of difference, and (2) being part of a political campaign while contributing to the commodification of women in line with hegemon`s will.

5.1.2. Independent Organizations

In addition to, the aforementioned roles and functions of state friendly organizations at the societal level. This thesis would also like to investigate Twitter accounts of three independent women`s organizations which are KA-DER, KIH-YÇ and Women`s Studies Association (Turkish: Kadın Çalışmaları) with the purpose of crystallizing their roles in three respective areas: *family & society, workforce* as well as *politics*. On logical grounds, even though these three organizations are identified as independent from state ideology, their position which is feminist standpoint, typically poses a challenge to the existing political power due to the extreme polarization which penetrates all the ins and outs of the society. Hence these organizations may appear as the anti-government organizations when their Twitter accounts are predicated on.

5.1.2.1. Women in the Family & Society

As have been noted earlier, there has been a dominant perception which defines women within the solely family domain, looking after children and husband in addition to household responsibilities. It can be argued that these predefined gender roles are primarily based on religious origins and socio-political practices in Turkey (Kandiyoti, 1988). Obtained data demonstrates that these three independent organizations strongly disagree with this characterization femaleness and

concerning women`s societal roles that can be externalized from three perspectives, as detailed below.

To begin with, there was a clear difference of opinion between state friendly organizations and independent organizations in terms of approaching to family-based issues. While state friendly organizations maintained and reproduced the traditional gendered discourse towards women such as in the instances of caregiving and domestic duties, the independent organizations preferred to stand against this conventional way of acting that can be observed in their conferences, seminars, projects and similar activities. To be specific, Kadın Çalışmaları started a workshop program aiming to challenge division of household labor: cooking classes are held on every Sunday only for father and children in an attempt to redefine gender roles in the society (2017a). Furthermore, several Tweets of these three organizations purposed to raise the awareness level of children on gender issues. In this regard, feminism modules were initiated by similarly Kadın Çalışmaları targeting the participation of 9-16 years old children (2017b).

Actually, all of these initiatives may be indicative of new discursive actions, explaining by Laclau and Mouffe. The mentioned activities of these organizations contributed to the emergence of *new signs* or *moments* as well as combined unmatched signs together such as fatherhood and cooking. In proceeding segments of these linguistic constructions, formed moments would transform into social reality in the people`s mind. That`s why, the usage of words carries huge importance in relation to the deconstruction of linguistic signs which is linked with the general phenomenon (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Although this thesis seems to validate the view that these organizations intentionally dealt with the new linguistic constructions about women` societal roles, more research is needed to tease out the interaction among social practices. In this regard, the first trend concerning the roles of independent women`s organizations in the society may be associated with the challenging existing gendered discourse and offering a new perspective supported with both their activities and linguistic-based Twitter posts.

In the second place, the results reveal that women were perceived as equal members of Turkish society. Unfortunately, these organizations *had to* adopt this kind of equitable attitude when the high rates of violence against women, including sexual harassments, forced marriages, honor killings and femicides are considered. In 2016, 317 women were killed mostly by their male counterparts as husbands, fathers and male relatives (Umut Foundation, 2017). Furthermore, Turkey was ranked as 130th out of 144 states according to the latest Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2016). In this trivializing environment, women`s organizations` engagements have been central to address the problems that directly influence women`s well-being in the society. Almost all actions practiced by them served the purpose of protecting women and their rights from the male supremacy, encapsulating gender-based violence. Evidently, women`s Human Rights Certificate Program and Gender Equality Seminar Series by KIH-YÇ (2017a) as well as Self-defense Workshops by Kadın Çalışmaları (2017c) were some of the events in order to improve women`s status and rights in the contemporary Turkey.

Third societal roles of these organizations were logged as their integrative attitudes towards all groups in the society. In their Twitter posts, there was a systematic focus on inclusion of individuals who come from any ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. Particularly, LGBTQ rights, that are plausibly the most *invisible* area of concern in Turkish society, were an important subject for these three independent organizations. All of them gave place their announcements, activities and events in their Twitter accounts. All in all, these organizations embraced the activities for all layers of society without any ideological separation. It can be deduced from one of KA.DER`s Tweet which stated that "freedom is essential for everyone. Religion, language, nationality, ethnicity and preference-based discriminations offend against the human rights" (2017a).

At this juncture, discourse theory may elucidate the above explanations. According to Torfing, "within discourse, meaning is constructed either in terms of *difference* or *equivalence*. In some situations, the logic of difference predominates, in others, the logic of equivalence prevails" (2005, p.14). As far as this research is concerned,

while the logic of difference was employed by state friendly organizations to construct their subject positions, independent organization preferred the logic of equivalence in the way of identifying social rights for all as an integrative manner. Therefore, the study found out that the logic of difference was essential to address the current political, whereas the contrary concept which is the logic of equivalence was also important to comprehend these actions of independent organizations in the light of current political transition process in Turkey.

To recapitulate, three main societal roles of these women`s organizations attracted the attention of this thesis: (1) traditional gendered discourse was revisited and proposed alternative solutions as new signs regarding the issue; (2) significant topics for women`s rights were covered and introduced to society; (3) integrative as well as consolidative attitudes were adopted on the basis of logic of equivalence understanding of discourse theory.

5.1.2.2. Women in the Workforce

The vital importance of female labor force participation has become apparent when the activities of three independent women`s organizations were taken into consideration. Even though each of the three organizations pursued diversified activities via their Twitter accounts, their shared strategy was observed pertaining to promote business opportunities for women and provide a reference point to female solidarity in the job market.

In the first place, identified inequalities between male and female employment standards prompted to have a high degree of consciousness on female employment that influince their social media campaigns. Several activities were designed in order to raise public awareness about the economic development of women and overcome traditional woman`s place perception at the societal level. Some notable examples can be summarized as follows: *More and Better Jobs for Women Project* with the partnership of ILO was supported and advertised by KIH-YÇ (2017b). This project particularly has aimed to foster FLFP while focusing on "creating decent work opportunities for women through active labor market policies and building

awareness on gender equality and labor standards" (ILO, 2016, p.2). Additionally, this kind of projects also carries importance in relation to heighten awareness of unpaid domestic sector, being one of the most vexed questions of women`s double shift. Furthermore, *The Goerdeler Kolleg Training Program* which has been organized by German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) was actively introduced by Kadın Çalışmaları Derneği (2017d). The program has mainly dealt with the empowerment of young generations with the leadership emphasis. In this respect, this organization had an important mission regarding the equal inclusion of girls and women into this kind of leadership development programs rather than the participation of just male actors.

These public awareness activities can be further evaluated in the light of the assumptions of discourse theory. As Laclau and Mouffe suggested (1992), the relationship between signifier and signified such as these performed projects and programs are also the exemplification of discursive action besides linguistic statements. The way I perceive that a woman who is financially independent is proposed by these organizations as a desired *identity,* particularly for young women. It is well-known fact that the interaction between *social identities* and *subject positions* guides the truth formations in the articulatory processes (Rear and Jones, 2013, p.14). Hence the persistent stance of these three organizations should be interpreted as a critique of women`s traditional subject position which is predominantly "homemaking and motherhood" in the changing Turkey (Kandiyoti, 2016, p.104). Research findings reveal that concerning activities of these organizations aimed to contest this traditional female social identity as well as invited women to be active members of business lines such as the decision makers, entrepreneurs and leaders with their instructive acquisitions.

Several themes in relation to women in the workforce were explicitly employed by these organizations. The issue of *gender pay gap* between male and female individuals have been identified as the most visited subject matter in this context. The main motivation of this collective action towards gender-based wage differential lie behind these statistics: "in 2014, 48% of female workers have

informal jobs compared with 29% for men. Women also earn almost 15% less on average than men" (OECD, 2016). This gender pay gap arouses the interest of these organizations and gave rise to engage with UN (United Nations)-based social media campaign consisting of pay gap hashtags in Twitter. Particularly, Kadın Çalışmaları compiled the stories of working women who suffer from concerning the negatives effects of gender pay gap (2017e). All in all, during two-month social media research, promoting and increasing public awareness on FLFP have been observed as the most central role of these three independent organizations.

In connection with aforementioned findings, protecting professional rights of women was also a significant subject for these organizations. The study results show that women in the academy were the most investigated occupational group to defend their rights when the country`s extraordinary political climate is considered. In 2017, more than 4.000 academicians were ostracized from the profession with the reason of supporting the Gülenist movement. In this regard, the statements of Economist Özlem Albayrak who has been currently dismissed from the university draw the attention within the scope of displaying academic freedom in the country:

> The AKP government was never happy with an academia out of its control, and sought to interfere in this realm ever since it came to power. First, they opened countless new universities and staffed them with Gülenist, trying to create their own universities (Al-Monitor, 2017, p.1)

This example highlights how is the hegemon/state power connected with all domains of the socio-political matrix and why do women`s organizations need to take an action about the solidarity in the workplace. According to Jorgensen and Philipps, hegemon has a power to change discourses as well as designate moments and elements in the articulation while using antagonistic structures (2002). In our case, individuals who were expelled from the academia have not lost only their jobs but also their prestige and reliance were shattered at the societal level due to the created new discourse by the state power. As the hegemonic discourse announced them as the actors of academic terrorist organization associatively failed July 15 Coup (BBC 2016). In consideration of this example that is linked to the wider phenomenon, findings indicate that the extreme political atmosphere within the

country encouraged these independent organizations to collaborate with each other on human rights, including women`s solidarity as a unified body against hegemonic practices in the contemporary Turkey.

To sum up, areas in which awareness raising projects based on contesting traditional subject positions of women and action plans regarding women`s solidarity in the job market are recognized as the most visited themes in the topic of women`s employment. Consistently, these two primary objectives reflect the roles of these organizations at the societal level.

5.1.2.3. Women in Politics

Three illustrative organizations of all such as Feminist, Kemalist and Kurdish backgrounds shared collective mentality about women`s political participation, representation and leadership. Their perspective suggests that women should be located in politics as the active decision makers rather than passive objects of political power/hegemony. Research findings also show that since KA.DER was established with the principal objective of supporting and training women candidates for elections, this organization is observed as the most influential and notable organization in our sample (Tomen, 2016). In this vein, KA.DER`s large scaled projects also inspired and exemplified for two organizations in the axis of advancing women`s political rights which are discussed in the below. The roles of these three organizations are analyzed in the light of three directions: (1) women`s representation, (2) awareness campaigns towards the political participation of women, and (3) current state critiques towards the issue.

In the first place, the latest statistics provided by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) indicate that 14.6 percent of Turkish Parliament deputies are women, in other words, 80 Member of Parliaments out of 549 in 2017. In this situation, Turkey has ranked 132nd out of 194 states concerning the numbers of women in parliament (IPU, 2017). Twitter posts show that these three independent women`s organizations interested in this low percentage and labored over the issue in order to increase the number of women in politics with the emphasis on politics of

equality, being stated in their mandates. Previously, KA.DER took several initiatives such as gender quotas for elections to promote empowerment of women by way of political participation (Rasmussen, 2014, p.9). However, according to Tomen, the campaigns towards gender quotas contradict KA.DER`s foundational principle which is *politics of equality* because gender quota implementation focuses on gender-based differences among individuals rather than perceiving them as equal members of the society (2016, p.26). In addition to this, KA.DER`s main argument in relation to numbers of female politicians is based on the perception that women certainly represent and protect other women`s interests, objectives and rights better than male counterparts which also implies *politics of differences.*

All in all, the point of departure of KA.DER is based on the understanding of women`s equal participation and equal representation in politics while perceiving them as different from male actors. It is important to highlight that this study has not recognized any kind of discriminative attitudes and practices towards a particular group such as males, Yet, all of these three organization preferred to deliver solution along with female solidarity rather than as being represented in politics only by a privileged group. Moreover, theoretical examination of aforementioned viewpoint belonging to KA.DER and ultimately all three organizations is important to understand links between ongoing practices and constructed social reality. As discourse theory argues, social field is composed of interrelated discourses, not only text and talk but also these constructed discourses are the part of truth formations in the social field. In this regard, the perception of these organizations which primarily stresses the politics of difference can be seen as a product of previous discourses suffering from patriarchy and their concerning instruments (Jorgensen and Philipps, 2002). Therefore, it can be said that on the one hand, these organizations are influenced by existing discourse via interactions of social realities. On the other hand, they influence groups in the society while (re)constructing new discourses as signs or moments in the articulation process.

By incorporating Laclau and Mouffe`s interpretation of the discourse (1992), one may argue that KA.DER has maintained its steady position in defiance of political power, and even, influenced other women`s organizations in the field. The concept of (political) power is defined as an empirical r generating *the social* in the field of discursivity (Laclau, 1990, pp.31-33). That`s why KA.DER`s exemplary position brought into being a threat against political power holder who is able to create, transform and reproduce the social relations. The interaction between KA.DER and other two women`s organizations were observable when the Twitter accounts of these three organizations were investigated. Several links such as Retweets, referring KA.DER as a model organization, took place in their social media networks. The interaction among these three organizations can be found in the International Women`s Day activities as well as purple economy social media campaigns (KIH-YÇ, 2017). In these events, these three organizations took joint action and contributed to women`s solidarity as a unified body while criticizing the state`s antagonistic power or hegemon`s will.

In the second place, informational campaigns for political participation, as with family and employment sections, were the initial concerns and roles of these three women`s organization in relation to political rights of women. To be specific, KA.DER participated in the fifteen-week-certificate program in agreement with Bahcesehir University towards the new generation women leaders. This event was propagandized via their Twitter account during the research period (2017b). Together with this event, several social media hashtag campaigns were conducted such as #equalrepresentation and #womenstrongtogether to provide awareness on women`s rights and encourage women`s political participation.

Similar to the above theoretical analysis, these organizations also purposed to create an *identity* for women who have the ability to participate in the political life and take leadership features in the society. These incentives actually encouraged women to challenge their traditional *subject positions* as well as related societal expectations. In fact, the following tweet summarizes the main motivation behind activities of these organizations in the area of politics: "women are half of Turkey`s

population, women will be half of the parliament" (KA.DER, 2017c). By the same token, it is observed that all three as well as additional feminist women`s organizations built consensus and publicized each other via retweets, comments and another type of interaction materials during two-month research.

In the third place, another significant role of these organizations in the societal level is a critical approach to the state`s policies dealing with women`s issues. The findings suggest that a conflicting viewpoint between these organizations and state authority initially came into prominence when Turkish government made a decision about the name change of *Ministry for Women and Family* replacing as *Ministry of Family and Social Policies* in 2011 (Kandiyoti, 2016) This extinguishment (the name of women) was perceived as misogyny and worsening conditions for women by particular groups, including these three organizations. During our research period, name change repeatedly found a voice and maintained lobbying activities towards the issue in their Twitter accounts.

Also, independent women`s organizations were also active participants of the Turkish Constitutional Referendum Campaign as the representatives of the opponent front. According to our findings, their central objective was strongly related to new powers of President Erdoğan over female identity. Thus, "women go against one-man company" Tweet may reveal their standpoint towards hegemonic discourse (KA.DER, 2017d). In this vein, the illustrative hashtag campaigns such as #no, #womensayno, #gotovote and #womenpioneerno are actively propagandized along with the other referendum-based preparations. In fact, these attitudes may similarly be evaluated in the axis of *polarization* of people on the basis of political ideologies.

As explained in the discourse theory, hegemon has an authority to make changes not only institutional level but also in the cognitive stages. Hence the demonstrated issue is important to have an opinion on the future implementations of hegemon and correspondingly normalization process of issues in people`s mind. Furthermore, women`s shelters issue was another hotly debated issue and posed a problem between the state and these independent, almost anti-government

organizations. More precisely, the state-funded women`s shelters are established in order to provide physical, psychological and juridical support for the individuals who are mostly women exposed to violence. Notwithstanding that these three organizations believe in misfunction of women`s shelters under the state power. Hence their action plans embraced this subject matter to ameliorate the status of women`s shelters in the country.

To brief, the roles of these three independent organizations in the area of women`s political engagement can be summarized in three particular areas: (1) the representation of women in politics while focusing predominantly the objective of female solidarity, (2) awareness campaigns with the aim of increasing number of women in local and national political bodies, and (3) performing a critical attitude towards the state implementations and setting an example for CSO polarization based on ideological grounds.

The below illustration aims to present the empirical findings on roles of women`s organizations in the joint pool.

Table 2: The Key Societal Roles of the Organizations

Organizations	Family & Society	Workforce	Politics
State Friendly Organizations	1) Promoting the conservative/gendered family values 2) Addressing women`s priority as motherhood and wifedom	1) Introducing business lines and supporting working women, also refugee women 2) Still, promoting motherhood as the most privileged sign.	1) Polarizing individuals based on their beliefs 2) Addressing the state-approved issues 3) Spreading state values
Independent Organizations	1) Challenging traditional gendered discourse 2) Improving women`s status concerning regressive conditions 3) Presenting an integrative manner to all marginalized people	1) Encouraging women for being part of job market 2) Supporting the rights of women in the workforce and increasing awareness on the importance of financial independence	1) Promoting female solidarity in the field 2) Conducting awareness campaigns for women`s political participation 3) Polarizing individuals in terms of political ideologies and criticizing the state

Source: Author`s elaboration

In the light of this table, I conclude that when the sphere of influences of these six organizations are considered (*Table* 1), their societal roles towards women`s rights and gender equality may be interpreted as *mostly regressive, relatively stable,* and *scarcely progressive* in the transforming Turkey.

To recap, the purpose of this chapter is to present as well as elucidate the societal roles, strategies, and objectives of six leading women`s organizations in the transforming Turkey, if their activities, campaigns and projects, based on Twitter accounts, are taken into consideration. The main findings of this thesis are categorized under three illustrative domains: *family & society, workforce,* and *politics*, each of them containing relevant investigations as *Table 2* recapitulated. Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory (1992), together with post-structuralist scholarship is employed as a central theoretical and methodological tool in the concerning analysis. The next chapter aims to provide a concluding discussion on the basis the main findings of the study, the interpretation of results besides suggestions for further research and development.

6. Concluding Discussion

This thesis has particularly concerned with the societal and behavioral roles of women`s organizations in response to the political transition in Turkey. There are *five intertwined arguments* that have provided an opportunity to develop this thesis: (1) women have traditionally been perceived as the subordinated members due to the religious origins and socio-political practices in Turkish political culture; (2) politics of gender in the axis of women have been integral part of the political agenda and implementations of the ruling powers in the country; (3) women, who were the new political symbols of the secular state, were entitled to receive basic rights in the modernization of Turkey with Atatürk`s reforms; (4) under the AKP rule (2002-present), gender politics and the perception towards women have undergone a different stage as an element of *wider socio-political transition* process across Turkish society; and (5) since the current ruling ideology needs the collaboration with the CSOs in order to materialize this transition at the societal level, women`s organizations have been identified the most appropriate channel to reach more people in terms of use of gender.

In the light of this roadmap, this thesis has attempted to review, investigate and discuss the aforementioned phenomena through the Internet-based study model. Concordantly, public Twitter posts of six prominent women`s organizations have been archived, categorized and analyzed during two-month research, from February to March. The data has identically been coded/sorted for two group of women`s organizations pursuant to three main themes: *family & society, workforce,* and *politics.* In this vein, the study findings are notably important and illustrative acknowledging the absence of empirical studies in the field are considered.

Theoretically speaking, these themes have been surveyed through Laclau and Mouffe`s discourse theory (1992). The employed theoretical assumption has been classified under three principal sections; *discourse, identity* and *politics*, each of them consisting of particular discursive concepts/terms which have a paramount importance for addressing the socio-political transition on the basis of linguistic and

non-linguistic signs. Methodologically speaking, this thesis has featured two imperative research techniques that are *discourse analysis* and *netnography* with the objective of revealing the relationship between the state and the organizations in the axis of gender politics.

The study findings have implied that the societal roles of women`s organizations, CSOs in the broader context, are repeatedly *mostly regressive, relatively stable,* and *scarcely progressive* for advancing women`s rights. That is to say, on the one hand, state friendly organizations mirror the AKP`s morals and correspondingly, handle *the state approved issues* such as supporting conservative family values and prioritizing motherhood discourse at the societal level. These practices have mostly been associated with the *regressive* findings of the study towards women`s rights and gender equality. On the other hand, independent organizations portray themselves as the challengers of the predefined gendered discourse which penetrates women`s wellbeing in the community. Even though these exercises would answer the classification of *progressive* roles of the study, their actions remain highly limited, as none of their initiatives have received the governmental support and found a legal ground to enhance women`s status. Hence the roles of these organizations towards women`s rights have been recognized as *stable.*

In a nutshell, the study results have also revealed that there is a high degree of political polarization among the CSOs in the transforming Turkey. The activities, campaigns and trainings of the organizations highly contrast with each other and set an example for an antagonistic society structure while promoting us and them dichotomy.

While this study has represented the societal roles of the CSOs and their interactions with the state power/hegemon through discourse scholarship, the subject area of this thesis can be expanded and developed in the further research under two major domains: (1) the larger sample size of the organizations, (2) the lengthened research period in order to reveal the novel path for the intertwined relationship between women`s literature and CSO discourse in the transforming Turkey.

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