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The women's movement in Turkey challenged: the AKP factor

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Abbreviations

AKDER	Ayrımcılığa Karşı Kadın Hakları Derneği (Women's rights organization against discrimination)
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)
EU	European Union
GONGO	A government-organized non-governmental organization
ICAN	International Civil Society Action
KADEM	Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği (Women and Democracy Association)
KA-DER	Kadın Adayları Destekleme Derneği (Association for the Support of Women Candidates)
KSGM	Kadının Statüsü Genel Müdürlüğü (The State Women's Machinery)
MPs	Members of Parliament
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
TKDF	Türkiye Kadın Dernekleri Federasyonu (Federation of Women's Associations of Turkey)
TURAP	Türkiye Aile Platformu (Turkish Family Platform)
UN	United Nations
WWHR	Women for Women's Rights

Abstract

Although Turkey has signed various international treaties on women's rights, significant setbacks in human rights for women still persist. The ruling AKP government's patriarchal attitude towards women have indirectly determined the agenda of women's rights NGOs, when Islamically rooted groups took the place of the former secular ones and the approach to women's rights shifted towards assigning to the women the function of cultivators of a "*pious generation*". Along with the struggles for improving women's life, women's movement in Turkey fight for changing mindsets and cultural values and for the recognition of women as individual human beings.

The present thesis seeks to explore the different positions taken up by organisations working with women's rights in contemporary Turkey, with regard to the government's practices of restrictions posed to women and to the movement in general. I argue, that even though, women's rights NGOs share the commonality of being part of the women's movement in Turkey and fighting for female citizens' well-being, their working fields, approaches and perceptions are often dissimilar, and even conflicting in some areas. These contradictions, on the other hand, greatly impact their relation with the AKP government. However, according to my findings, all of the interviewed NGOs are positioned under the same umbrella of a politicized and a very controversial reality, in which they are running their activities. As a result, I assume that their success of still being able to sustain their existence with regard to the current challenges they undergo, de facto unites them, rather than divides.

The thesis builds its research on both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Three semi-structured interviews were conducted and two self-administered questionnaires were filled out from Turkish women's rights NGOs. The study covered opinions of *Kemalist*, *Islamist* and *Leftist* women's organizations. Additionally, in order to comprehend and support my findings, I unfolded two theoretical phenomena. Firstly, the phenomenon of NGO-government relationship and, secondly, the phenomenon of Social movement.

The findings of this thesis contribute to the better understanding of relationships between NGOs

and governments in the particular context of Turkey and concludes that generalizations of relations between NGOs and governments are problematic, due to their high dependence on the contemporary state of affairs in the countries.

Key words: *Turkey, the AKP government, the women's movement, women's rights NGOs, NGO-government relationship, political reality*

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CHAPTER 1. Introduction

“Women’s human rights have been, and still are, a major issue of contention in the so called conflict between “West” and “Islam”, and between “universal” and “cultural” views of human rights, between secularist and Islamist elites” (Kardam 2014, p. 2).

Women’s rights and the roles, which are designated to women have diverse reflections in societies throughout the world. While certain countries claim for women’s equality and non-discrimination and implement women’s rights in the core of their legislation system, other nation-states demonstrate lack of interest regarding women’s issues, either influenced by their traditionalist views on women with no incentives to change these positions, or being unable to eliminate discriminatory practices and abuses against women.

Despite the certain level of progress in the reduction of gender inequality in Turkey, significant setbacks in human rights for women still persist. “Honor” killings, domestic violence, difficulties in access to labour market and education, low participation of women in political affairs, etc. define the reality of the female population in the country. Although the country has signed various international treaties on women’s rights, the ruling AKP government’s patriarchal attitude towards women proved several times in Mr. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s statements about women and their “responsibilities” within the family and the society in general. In this highly politicized environment, the women’s movement in Turkey, formerly vivid and influential in promoting legislative changes in favor of women, now concentrates its efforts rather in reacting to the ongoing processes that put the women’s rights organizations in a disadvantaged position.

In this thesis I demonstrate and explore the different positions taken up by organisations working with women's rights in contemporary Turkey, with regard to the government’s practices of restrictions posed to women and to the movement in general. Furthermore, I argue, that even though, women’s rights NGOs share the commonality of being part of the women’s movement in Turkey and fighting for female citizens’ well-being, their working fields, approaches and perceptions are often dissimilar, and even conflicting in some areas. These contradictions, on the

other hand, greatly impact their relation with the AKP government, as well as their partnerships with akin domestic organizations, with local authorities and with international actors. Most remarkably, I claim, that running their activities in such a controversial political setting, has changed NGOs' understanding of success, because, once, when their biggest successes have been substantial legislative changes from gender perspective, now their biggest success turns out to be their ability to continue their subsistence.

In order to understand the challenges, which women's rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Turkey encounter in the aftermath of the AKP government, in this thesis I will unfold two theoretical phenomenons. Firstly, the phenomenon of NGO-government relationship will help me figure out the pros and cons of these relations, and secondly, examining the phenomenon of Social movement will benefit the research by providing explanations when and in what ways the latter succeeds as a challenger of the state.

1.1 Research problem of the thesis:

Taking the point of departure that relationships between NGOs and Governments are per definition ambiguous and complex, in this thesis I explore the question of how this ambiguity and complexity is expressed in the context of the women's movement in Turkey.

1.2 Aims of the study:

- To examine the development of women's rights organizations in Turkey - as well as the political context for the women's rights violations currently taking place in Turkey
- To explore the political environment women's movement currently operates in Turkey and what brought about its success and failure during the AKP period
- By analysing their major challenges, to understand how tension between the women's NGOs and the AKP government influence the work and perceptions of the former

1.3 Objectives of research:

The implementation of the following research objectives will help in accomplishing the above

mentioned aims:

1. Review of the literature and official reports concerning existing women's rights violations in Turkey during the AKP era.
2. Describe major characteristics of women's movement in Turkey before and during the AKP period, their perceptions and attitudes towards the government, their success and failure throughout its terms.
3. Theoretically identify NGOs/social movement-Government relationships and their projections in the context of women's movement in contemporary Turkey.

The research will be implemented in the following order: in Chapter 2 it will be presented the Motivation of research, Chapter 3 will be concerned with the Historical and contemporary aspect of the women's movement, as well as the current situation of women in Turkey, Chapter 4 will display the Methods used for collecting data, as a Literature review Chapter 5 will unfold the two theoretical phenomenon, Chapter 6 will provide the Analysis of the findings, and Chapter 7 will suggest a Conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 2. Motivation for research

11th of February 2015, Tarsus, a small town close to city of Mersin, Southern Turkey, a 20-year-old university student Özgecan Aslan was travelling back home after spending the day with her friend in a shopping center. She was the last passenger in a minibus. This was the last news from her. Three days later her body was found burnt near a riverbed close to the city. The driver of the minibus confessed that he committed the murder and cold-bloodedly gave details to the police. He explained that the girl started an argue and hit him after realising that he was going to an unknown direction. After prolonged squabble the driver stopped the car, started hitting her several times in a try to rape her. As a result of her resistance, the driver took a knife and stabbed her. She lost complete consciousness. Panicking he called a friend of him and his father, who later advising him to cut her hands in order to destroy DNA evidence under her fingernails. They also helped him to burn her body.

The brutality of Ms. Aslan's death resulted in numerous protests in big cities across the country. The hashtag #OzgecanAslan was used more than 3 million times in social media, an online petition registered almost a million supporters for the heaviest sentence of the murderers¹. According to reports, around 1000 lawyers have requested to represent Ms. Aslan². This is the story of the murder, which led to public debates and unrest, and, on the other hand, reversed my perspectives towards women in contemporary Turkey. In the aftermath of the murder of Özgecan Aslan, Kemal Kılıçdaroglu, who is the leading figure of the opposition party CHP (Republican People's Party), claimed that in the period between 2002-2015 the number of women killed in Turkey is approximately 5406³. What struck me the most were the various statistics regarding all kinds of women's rights violations, including honor killings, domestic violence, difficulties in access to labour market and education, low participation of women in political affairs. On the other hand, the former Prime Minister and the current Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, leader of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) since 2002, is following a conservative social agenda based on Islamist ideology with a relation to country's Ottoman past. Government's ideological preference for traditional gender roles resonated many times in Mr. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's statements about women and their "responsibilities" within the family and the society in general. In June 2016, at a ceremony of the Women and Democracy Association (KADEM), Mr. Erdogan claimed that if a woman rejects to be a mother and makes her business life a priority, that means she is nothing but incomplete as a woman, she is half. Emphasizing womanhood is equal to motherhood, he further asserted that men and women cannot be seen as each other's opponents, that they have their strictly limited roles in the family. Similarly, at the International Women and Justice Summit in November 2014, addressing the feminists, the President said, "*you cannot make men and women equal, that is against creation. Their natures are different. Their dispositions are different (...) Our religion has given women a stature, the position of motherhood.*" This statement of Mr. Erdogan echoed in the media worldwide. "Independent" recalled to the case of a participant of the same ceremony, who was dispelled by the security guards covering her mouth, after an attempt to ask a question to the

¹ (see https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/opinion/ozgecan-aslan-and-violence-against-women-in-turkey.html?_r=0, accessed February 9, 2017)

² (see <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33108144>, accessed March 25, 2017)

³ (see <http://www.dogrulukpayi.com/beyanat/54e44aa24f8cc>, accessed January 15, 2017)

Family and Social Policies' Minister Ayşenur İslam⁴. (see). Both “Huffington post” and “Independent” referred to Mr. Erdoğan’s affirmation that Turkish women should have at least three, at the best five children. In addition, he argued that abortion is equal to murder and suggested to put more legal restrictions upon abortion rights, to make difficult the access to the morning-after pill and caesarean options, so that it will be impossible for women to take “*steps to prevent [Turkey’s] population from growing further*”⁵. While “CNN”⁶ cited Turkish President’s remark that motherhood nowadays is extremely easy in a world of disposable diapers: “*Make at least three [children], look the conditions have gotten easier. The country needs this*”, both “The Guardian”⁷ and “Washington post”⁸ summarized that the AKP government has been greatly criticized about its conservative and pro-Islamic nature, which bypasses the secular principles, set by the founder of the Republic of Turkey Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and has led to a more restrictive social environment for women, with laws that are not equally applied to protect them and that limit their civil liberties. Another striking example is the affirmation made by the former AKP Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç that women in Turkey should not laugh in public, which if done, according to him, is a moral regression. He talked of chastity, saying “*Where are our girls, who slightly blush, lower their heads and turn their eyes away when we look at their face (...)?*”. Arınç has made similar absurd statements in the past as well. For instance, he was quoted saying that a woman who has been raped must have “wanted it”; or asserting that it is perfectly fine if a 15-year-old girl is given permission by her parents to marry a 45-year-old man. These and many others are the asinine statements made by the AKP officials⁹.

Having given the most prominent examples of verbal discrimination towards women made by

⁴ (see <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/turkish-president-equality-between-men-and-women-is-against-nature-9879993.html>, accessed March 29, 2017)

⁵ (see http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/24/turkeys-president-erdogan-women_n_6211158.html, accessed March 29, 2017)

⁶ (see <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/06/09/europe/erdogan-turkey-mansplained-womanhood>, accessed March 6, 2017)

⁷ (see <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/24/turkeys-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan-women-not-equal-men>, accessed March 29, 2017)

⁸ (see https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/11/24/turkeys-president-says-women-are-not-equal-to-men/?utm_term=.f26a616cfe38, accessed March 29, 2017)

⁹ (see http://www.huffingtonpost.com/harut-sassounian/turkish-deputy-prime-mini_b_5656807.html, accessed 29 March, 2017)

the President and other AKP leaders, it is important to indicate that the Mr. Erdogan was provoked to speak up publicly mostly during campaigns and meetings organized by the women's movement's leaders and activists in Turkey. The movement has worked hard and has achieved many improvements of women's rights and women's societal status. Especially after the military coup in 1980, a more lively movement, under complex and tough circumstances has fought for gender equality, comprising topics like prevention of violence against women, women empowerment, women education and political representation.

CHAPTER 3. Women's movement in Turkey - historically and contemporary. Current situation of women in Turkey.

3.1 Brief history of the women's movement in Turkey

Women's human rights have been, and still are, a major issue of contention in the so called conflict between "West" and "Islam", and between "universal" and "cultural" views of human rights, between secularist and Islamist elites (Kardam 2014, p. 2).

The first wave of feminism in Turkey belongs to the first decades of 1900-s, when women's organizations, still small in scale, had demands projecting the Kemalist ideal of gender equality, which corresponded to the pro-Western approach of the founder of the Republic of Turkey Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Diner and Toktaş, 2010). After the military coup in September 1980, the second wave of feminism, comprised with a "new generation of middle class, left-wing, intellectual women" occurred in Turkey, accusing the state of being patriarchal, maintaining a male-dominated society (Tekeli, 2010). Women's NGOs' main purposes were legal reforms in the Civil and Penal Codes for improving women's status and equating them to men (Arat 2016). They succeeded in gaining support from the UN and other women's organizations around the world by travelling to global conferences and raising awareness through workshops and organizing national conferences to promulgate The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for action and other international conventions on women's rights (Kardam 2014). The movement advocated for the

elimination of any kind of violence against women, for resisting male dominance, as well as for prevention against virginity tests, which have been considered by the movement as a humiliation and a women's rights violation (Diner and Toktaş, 2010).

In the 1990s, the movement became more vivid by developing features with relevance to the political/ideological divisions in the political life of the country. The movement informally separated into Kemalist, Islamist, leftist and Kurdish (Bankası 2003). *Kemalist women's organizations* claim to be against the indoctrination that women should be modest and veiling, and focus on their modernization as incentives of the secularization of Turkish society. Fighting for women's education, increasing the rate of girls attending schools, and promoting women's active involvement in the labour market frame their priorities. *Islamist women's organizations'* position women as mothers and wives and give support for the improvement of their lives within the family. Through these values, they gain support not only for the maintenance of the organization *per se*, but also for the political wings they support, without having an interest in having power in the decision-making bodies. *Leftist women's organizations* struggle for recognising women as equal to men when it comes to political participation, they demand equal opportunities for women to take part in professional and political organizations. *Kurdish women's organizations'* work direction is elimination of ethnic discrimination and political violence as factors that could lead to Kurdish women's hardship (idem).

Even though these differences exist, there can be underlined some common characteristics among the variety of organizations. Most of their members are volunteers, which causes, if not complete suspension of their activities, many times institutional problems and, therefore, a lack of access to national and international funding. Not being able to mobilize international stakeholders, the organizations often experience indifference from crucial political actors when it comes to gender reforms (Acar, 2000).

However, with Turkey's official candidacy to the European Union in 1999, these trends, common to the women's NGOs, started changing. The organizations became globally oriented and professionally managed, with emphasis on fund-raising, networking and advocacy. They received assistance in organizational management from the EU, which boosted their strength and

knowledge capacity. Despite still being understaffed and having lack of resources, women's organizations grew into better organized and better funded, comparing to the previous decades. The diversity of the movement also enhanced and now it has representation "*from radical feminists to pious Muslims who tackle myriad issues pertaining to women*" (Negrón-Gonzales 2016, p. 200). Even if they possess polarized views for women and their roles in the society, when the concern is democratic rights, Kemalist and Islamist women often demonstrate solidarity, encourage empathy and help each other to widen their perspectives and to resist oppression collectively (Arat 2016).

3.2 Legislative and institutional framework on gender equality

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), was signed and ratified by Turkey in 1985, and the Additional Protocol to CEDAW was signed in 2000. The Optional Protocol (of CEDAW) was also signed by the Turkish government in 2002, which granted the right of individual petition to the Committee. Additionally, Turkey signed the Beijing Declaration of the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, and the country confirmed its commitment to act according to the Declaration's Action Plan. In 2014 the AKP government also ratified the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Regarding the national legislation of the country, the Constitution is the fundamental document, which regulates and guides all gender equality issues. The Turkish Civil Code, the Labour Law and the Penal Code are the main legal documents concerned with gender policy. In the last decade, the Turkish Civil Code and the Penal Code were completely revised. The biggest change, which worried the women's movement was Decree no 663, which in 2001 transformed a Ministry of State position for Women and Family Affairs into the Ministry for Family and Social Policies. The term 'women' was omitted from its name and the current ministry is handling matters under social policy, rather than issues related specifically to women (European Parliament Report 2012).

3.3 Women in contemporary Turkey

Despite the certain level of progress in the elimination of gender inequality in Turkey, the statistics still represent the abhorrent reality¹⁰. Turkey ranked 130 out of 144 countries as stated in the 2016 Global Gender Gap Report, provided by the World Economic Forum¹¹. According to CEDAW Report (2016) this reveals the powerful patriarchal attitudes towards women and the unalterable stereotypes, as well as the government's inability to cope with the discrimination against women.

3.3.1 Gender-based violence

According to the Family Domestic Violence Survey of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, 4 out of every 10 females in are exposed to violence, but 89% of them have never made complaints to police. Domestic violence is prevailing in certain parts of the country, mainly in the Central Anatolian region, where 42.8% of women are subjected to physical violence and the number of female murders is raising every year¹². This reflects on the assumption that women from rural regions are more affected comparing to women from the modern big cities; that being from the East, not from the West, and being Kurdish, not Turkish, bears its consequences. The honor killings debate is surely one of the most eminent examples of this tendency (Ayşe Gül Altınay et al. 2009). Turkey indicated that a total number of 137 shelters are functioning in the country with a total capacity of 3,442. However, this number seems very unsatisfactory, having an overall population of women which is approximately 39 million. The central authorities fail in ensuring the inspections and sanctions with accordance to the shelters, hence the current situation remains unchanged and even worsens - many shelters are being closed in some municipalities. Moreover, often women are pressured to return to their perpetrators without even getting the chance to reach the shelters (CEDAW 2016).

3.3.2 Access to labor market

Women's participation in the labour market in Turkey rates one of the lowest in the world. It estimates only at 30.3%, and the employment rate in 2015 is only 26.7%. Furthermore, women's

¹⁰ (UNFPA Turkey <http://turkey.unfpa.org/topics/gender-equality-6>)

¹¹ (See <http://reports.weforum.org/feature-demonstration/files/2016/10/TUR.pdf>)

¹² (See <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/al-jazeera-ozel/rakamlarla-turkiyede-kadin-olmak>)

unemployment rates are assessed to be way higher than the unemployment rate for men. Certain obstacles impede women's labour participation. The lack of education and the family values, according to which, traditionally the woman's place is to stay at home and to take care of the household and the children, whereas the man's duties are to be the "breadwinner", are prominent examples. Lower socioeconomic groups are most influenced by these trends, because in these conditions women are still often under the control and allowance of their husbands (European Parliament Report 2012). This unequal status quo has an immense negative impact over the participation of women in the labour force, thus the access to rights and resources associated with becomes very problematic (CEDAW 2016; European Commission Turkey Report 2016).

3.3.3 Women's education

2014 has rated 9.4% illiteracy ratios for women in Turkey, considering the age bracket of 25 and above. In comparison, with the same indicators, for men it was 1.9%. With regard to secondary schooling rates for girls, Turkey is one of the three lowest ranking OECD countries. With respect to their access to education, the most disadvantageous are women and girls with a different than Turkish ethnical background. Most particularly Kurdish women and girls, being the largest minority group, are unable to attend schools, because they do not provide classes in Kurdish language (CEDAW, 2016).

3.3.4 Women's political participation

Similar sets of observations could be made about the low participation rates of women in decision-making processes in Turkey. They evidently contrast to its EU member state counterparts. The Association for the Support of Women Candidates (KA.DER) made visible the grim situation for women providing statistical data, which shows that there are no females in any of the 26 undersecretariats. Out of the 81 provinces, only two are with female governors. Only 3 of the 30 metropolitan municipalities in Turkey are with female head of office. The situation in politics is even worse, where only 81 out of 550 MPs in Turkey are women, and out of 27 ministers, only 2 are women¹³.

¹³ (See <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/al-jazeera-ozel/rakamlarla-turkiyede-kadin-olmak>)

3.4 Success and failure of women's organizations during the AKP period (2002 - current)

In 2002 “*the Islamically rooted Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, a liberal offshoot of Refah*” (Arat 2016, p. 125), gained electoral success and came to power with a commitment for further democratization in the country (idem). During its first term in office, the party had considerably more constructive dialogue with the women's rights organizations. The movement took advantage of the opportunities which the EU process gave them, when the government was prone for pressure “from above”. Their work concentrated on lobbying EU actors and institutions. The biggest success for the women's movement was their campaign to reform the Turkish Civil and Penal Codes from a gender perspective, which took place in 2000-2001 and was lead by the Women for Women's Rights (WWHR). The organization mobilized a coalition of women's group from all around the country. Allies of the movement were also members of the opposition parties, the state women's machinery (KSGM) and the EU. Part of their successful strategy was also to raise public awareness through media. As a result, government officials were convinced to start negotiations, which in 2002 led to the adoption of a new Turkish Civil Code in consonance with CEDAW. A new Penal Code was also passed by the Parliament in 2004, which improved women's rights to a great extent (Kardam 2011). Two factors contributed to the success of the campaign. The first significant factor was the movement's strategy to combine international and national advocacy with domestic mobilization of women's groups. Secondly, the vulnerability of the government during this period of accession negotiations, reflecting in its fears of criticism from the EU, was a circumstance in favor of the movement (Negrón-Gonzales 2016). Additionally, secular and Islamist women's organizations managed to ignore their vision differences and “shaked hands” as a sign of readiness for cooperation, when it comes to combat violence against women and honor crimes. These and movement's implacable efforts devoted to this unprecedented achievement (Kardam 2011).

The second AKP government has demonstrated less will for negotiation with the women's movement. Particularly in the context of the new constitution that has been drafted, women's rights organizations had no response for their demands. That time their biggest purpose direction was a temporary gender quota for intra-party, municipal and general elections (Coşar and Onbaşı 2008). The leading organization in this sector was and still is KA-DER (Kadın Adayları

Destekleme ve Eğitim Derneği/Association for Female Candidate Support and Education), established in 1997 to increase the representation rates of women in all decision-making bodies that come with elections and appointments. KA-DER implemented the same strategies to achieve a 30% gender quota, as they were during the campaign for legislative reforms. Fourteen women's groups were mobilized by the organization in a campaign named 'there cannot be democracy without women' in the beginning of 2002. To benefit the campaign, feminists successfully pooled resources into securing support from media, public actors, legal experts and academics. In order to attract the attention of the public, the activist used humor and irony. For instance, "*the 'Mustache Campaign' before the 2007 national elections involved ads and billboards in which Turkish women wore mustaches and asked, 'Must I be a man to enter parliament?'*" (Negrón-Gonzales 2016, p. 204). These activities brought up controversial echoes in secular and pro-Islamic newspapers. While the former generated encouraging coverage, the latter criticized them by publishing the AKP members' statements that quotas contradict the notion of gender equality. Nevertheless, as a result of these campaigns, during the 2011 elections the number of female MPs increased with 5% comparing to the previous elections, reaching 14% of representation. However, at local administrative levels the number of female representatives remained unadvanced. It was an uneasy task for the secular segments to reach the desired quota. Firstly, the political climate was positive towards the AKP. The Party's consistent proclamation of traditional values and conservative ideology resonated in its ability to win the majority of the population support, including women voters. Secondly, without a pressure on the government from either the international arena or from the Turkish public, it is improbable for the coalition to achieve a gender quota in the near future (idem).

During the AKP's second term the Islamist women's movement achieved a considerable improvement of their rights. The headscarves ban, which did not allow women wearing headscarves to enter public institutions, was lifted. The women's organizations who "*espouse Muslim values and attires are denouncing these bans on the basis of individual rights, including the right to freedom of dress, right to education and employment, and using Western institutions such as the European Court of Human Rights to seek redress to what they see as violation of their individual rights*" (Kardam 2011, p. 18). With the referendum victory in September 2010, the AKP announced that the party will support students who have experienced discrimination or

who have been disciplined for wearing headscarves on university campuses and promised that no action shall be taken to prevent students with headscarves from attending lectures (idem). Gradually, the ban was lifted also for women in politics, judiciary system and police. In February 2017, the government has lifted the military ban on Islamic headscarf, where the military was the last Turkish institution which did not allow women to practice this freedom¹⁴.

After its third term in power the ruling of the party was characterized as majoritarian authoritarianism. The government restrictions on civil liberties and the segregation of powers in Turkey were just few of the Party's new features. Islamically rooted groups took the place of the former secular ones and the approach to women's rights shifted towards assigning to the women the function of cultivators of a "*pious generation*" (Arat 2016, p. 125). The most prominent example of this controversy was, as mentioned before, the transformation of the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs into the Ministry of Family and Social Policy. Women's organizations stated that with this change, the government's priorities in dealing with women's issues relocated from judging women as being part of the family unit, rather than as being an individual. The Prime Minister (then) Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced "*We are a conservative democratic party, the family is important to us*"¹⁵.

Another example that made the women's movement to roll up its sleeves once again, was the government's incentive to pass changes in the abortion law to restrict or ban abortions (Arat 2016). As a result of the mass rallies which were organized across the country, women succeeded in keeping the law only a draft. Women's organizations criticized the government's actions for stigmatizing women who seek abortion services. Although the bill was ceased, activists reveal that abortion has become much more impossible considering the fact that state hospitals regularly set new limits for access, such as terminating the online appointment system, or telling women that they do not have capacity to help them on that issue (ICAN, 2015).

The education system did not remain untouched as well. In March 2012 the so called "4+4+4

¹⁴ (See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/22/turkey-lifts-military-ban-on-islamic-headscarf>)

¹⁵ (See <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/06/why-turkey-is-backsliding-on-womens-rights/240547/>)

education system”, which divided the compulsory education of 12 years into three four-year stages, was approved. Educators expressed their concerns that many girls can be taken out of school after the first four-year period is completed and therefore will be discouraged to attend the school at the higher levels (Acuner 2012). What is more, the AKP’s trend of expanding and endorsing religious education and promulgating traditional gender roles for women, recalled when the Multi Purpose Community Centres were closed down. They were initially founded in cooperation with women’s NGOs and were providing women with literacy on their legal human rights. Instead, the government subsidized the creation of new Social Service Centres to educate on family matters and teach traditional gender roles (CEDAW 2016).

The government’s pro-family approach did not leave unaffected policies on women’s employment. Maternity leaves were encouraged by providing the so-called incentive packages (Arat 2016). These investments are part of the current AKP’s “three children per family” policy, which according to the Party leader President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, is a strategy to enhance economic productivity and power and will prevent the Turkish population of aging.¹⁶

Regarding the desired equal female representation in the Turkish politics, there is no avail. After the general elections held in 2015, women representation in the Parliament remained as low as 14.9%, which is almost 8% below the global average of 22.7%, presented by the Inter Parliamentary Union. Only 1 out of 26 members of the cabinet are women. The situation at local levels has also deteriorated. With the new regulations of the government, it is observed a decrease in the number of district and village municipalities. Its outcomes are deprivation of women representation at local levels, as well as women’s problematic access to local services (CEDAW 2016).

3.5 Concluding remarks

Replacing the Kemalist pillars of secular state with Islamic conservative ideology in the politics of the contemporary Turkey brought into being a new pro-family oriented counter-movement. Its

¹⁶ (See <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-govt-unveils-incentives-to-encourage-more-procreation-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=76675&NewsCatID=338>)

representing organizations not only grew in number in the last years, but they also became more qualified and skillful. Just like the women's movement, they also create joint platforms. An illustrative example is TURAP (Turkish Family Platform), founded in 2012 to promote family values, and nowadays a coalition, which consists of almost 100 civil society organizations sharing the same visions. It is confirmed that the AKP officials often visit its events, showing the friendly attitude of the government towards these organizations (Negrón-Gonzales 2016): *“President Erdogan, have claimed on numerous occasions that the feminist movement does not represent the views of a majority of Turkish women, but rather represents the views of a small minority of elite women with Western lifestyles who do not embody the spirit of the authentic Turkish woman”* (idem, p. 209).

Nevertheless, with regard to changes in the law, the hawk-eyed women's movement (with more than 350 organisations working on variety of issues) has been one of the most successful civil society movement in Turkey in the last two decades. Along with all the struggle, the women's rights organizations fight for changing mindsets and cultural values, they fight for the recognition of women as individual human beings (Tekeli 2010).

CHAPTER 4. Research methods

In the following chapter I will make a summary of the research process, I will present selected informants, I will explain how the interview guide (questionnaire) was set up, how a qualitative and quantitative data were gathered, as well as their reliability and validity. Additionally, I will describe the ethical considerations, which were followed and the limitations, which were encountered. The inductive approach to research was chosen, since it is more flexible in terms of possibilities to change directions of the study with accordance to the gathered data. Hence, all the theories used in the study were based on the collected data by conducting interviews and analyzing answers of a self-administered questionnaire.

4.1 Summary of the research process

As previously stated in Chapter 2, the background of the situation and the controversial public debates regarding the women's position in society, not only in Turkey, but worldwide, have initially tackled my choice for conducting a research in this field. An approximate direction of the study was decided at opening stage, so that there could be set up a time-based plan for constructing and managing the research. Once the historical background and contemporary character of the investigated problem were figured out, I made a thorough investigation of women's movement NGOs, operating in Turkey. After having chosen the target NGOs, they were contacted. NGOs, who have replied positively, can be separated into two groups: those who agreed on making a virtual semi-structured interview (through Skype) and those who agreed only on answering to a self-completion questionnaire.

Subsequently, defined were the two theoretical concepts that have arised as relevant to the gained information. Conclusively, the collected data from the NGOs was critically analysed, in order to supply the research with new and practical findings (Clough & Nutbrown 2012).

4.2 Sampling of informants

At the beginning, the sampling of my respondents was influenced by my motivation to do this research, namely the increased violence against women in Turkey. So I decided, firstly, to identify NGOs operating on the basis of providing support to women, who have experienced domestic or any other kind of violence. Secondly, as according to CEDAW (2016), even though, an “overwhelmingly” huge percentage of women who have been subjected to physical or sexual violence have gone to the police, *“the statements of 81% of them were not taken and 27% of them were reconciled with their husbands”*. This made me assume that there are not many options left to those women, but to seek help from NGOs, concerned with women rights violations from any kind. It turned out that the most of the Turkish women organizations deal exactly with these issues, having in hand reports and statistics, regarding the reality of women in contemporary Turkey and Turkey during the AKP term, in general.

At a later stage, I narrowed down my sampling, investigating the most prominent NGOs in Turkey, located in the capital city and in Istanbul, due to my suggestion that these NGOs, firstly,

provide support to the largest number of women, experiencing these issues; secondly, have the biggest experience in the field; and thirdly, have direct contacts with government institutions and international stakeholders, being the most influential.

Thereafter, among the singled out NGOs, I chose to contact those NGOs, who cover different kinds of issues faced by Turkish women, which were described in the previous Chapter. This was decided so in order to attain a wider range of aspects.

As stated above, the selection of the NGOs was not random, which in my study, corresponds to the Purposive Sampling technique, that according to Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003a, p. 713) implies selecting “*certain units or cases based on a specific purpose rather than randomly*”. Teddlie & Yu (2007) find that one of the strategies of this type of sampling is to “achieve representativeness or comparability”, which according to the authors involves two goals:

- To find relevant examples that are representative or typical of a “particular type of case on a dimension of interest” (p. 80), and
- To produce comparability across “different types of cases on a dimension of interest” (idem).

Additionally, the authors suggest that, by using Purposive sampling, the researcher can obtain a greater depth of information, even from a smaller number of “*carefully selected cases*” (p. 83). Regarding the frames of the sampling, they are typically informal ones based on “*the expert judgment of the researcher or some available resource identified by the researcher*” (idem).

It was not easy to approach the NGOs that were, since I had no direct connections with any of them beforehand. By contacting them via emails, I managed to get five positive answers for an interview or for fulfilling a self-completion questionnaire. Thus, the information gathered for the present thesis is based on semi-structured interviews and on self-completion questionnaires, conducted and received answers, respectively, between 24th of March and 17th of April 2017. My respondents, as representatives of the interviewed NGOs, are presented below. The description of the NGOs is based on information, provided on their official websites. It is found important to provide a detailed description, in order to be understood the differences and

similarities between the organizations regarding their missions and visions. Even though my participants did not require their anonymity, names of the interviewed/contacted persons will not be given, due to the fact that it is found irrelevant and unnecessary.

4.3 Presentation of respondents

AKDER - Ayrımcılığa Karşı Kadın Hakları Derneği (Women's rights organization against discrimination). Based in Istanbul. AKDER is a human rights organization, founded on February 15, 1999 by women in Turkey who have been deprived of their rights to education and work because of the ban on headscarf. The organization identifies legal and societal obstacles for women to exercise their individual rights and develops proposals for the elimination of these obstacles. The NGO organizes press statements, seminars, rallies and meetings against the headscarf ban. The goals of AKDER are: to prevent violations of human rights and all kinds of discrimination, to ensure consciousness and to increase the knowledge among the society and to provide assistance to women, who have experienced discrimination. The organization provides support to educational campaigns, seminars and projects for the development and settlement of social consciousness in the field of human rights and freedoms: work with Educational and Health institutions, as well as international human rights institutions (UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, Amnesty International, etc.). AKDER also organizes educational seminars on women and politics, and conducts annual and thematic reports in these areas. The organization also prepares legislative proposals to overcome existing legal obstacles and works on informing society about the changes in legislation in favor of women.

Filmmor Women's Cooperative (Filmmor). Based in Istanbul. Filmmor Women's Cooperative, established exclusively by women in 2001 and open only to women, aims to do cinema, to contest, to produce and to act for women, together with women. Filmmor, aims to increase the involvement of women in cinema and media, to enhance their communication and production areas, opportunities and empower them to express themselves in these fields, to spread women's non-sexist representations and experiences. It works in common platforms and campaigns with other women's organizations. It organizes the Women's Cinema Workshop Atölyemor/Wokshopurple, where women acquire information and knowledge and experience on

cinema. It organizes exhibitions such as “Women Through Women’s Eyes” photo exhibition, “Let’s Talk About Honour” film and photo exhibition, “Let’s Not Be Imprisoned in Housework, Let’s Go Out in Istanbul” Film, Photo and Design exhibition. Filmmor makes films on womanhood, it organizes each year The International Filmmor Women’s Film Festival on Wheels, touring different cities with films by only women directors and various activities and themes such as “Women Focusing on Violence”, “Honour,” “Films in Peace With Their Bodies”. The organization “dreams” of a life free of sexism, violence and discrimination in cinema, media and finally everywhere.

KA-DER - Kadın Adayları Destekleme ve Eğitim Derneği-İstanbul (The Association for Supporting Women Candidates-İstanbul). Based in Istanbul. KA-DER is a women's organization advocating that women and men should be equally represented in every area. Its aim is to raise the rates of female representation in all decision-making bodies, as a necessity of democracy. KA-DER, is founded in March 1997 with the aim of contributing to the participation of all citizens in decisions, and the ability to involve women in social and political fields. KA-DER sets as the main objective to ensure the equal representation of men and women. The organization’s work areas are: raising the awareness of equality between men and women in social and political life, against male domination; the abolition of economic, social, cultural and legal obstacles that impede women's participation in politics; removal of discriminative expressions against women in laws and regulations; legislation to ensure the rights and freedoms of women; empowerment of women, defending and expanding their rights; empowerment of women who are party members, making them visible in their parties and being encouraged to become candidates in local and general elections; lobbying, advocacy, campaigning, organizing and education.

Kadının İnsan Hakları – Yeni Çözümler (KİH-YÇ) (Women for women’s human rights - new ways (WWHR). Based in Istanbul. WWHR-New Ways is an independent women’s non-governmental organization (NGO), founded in 1993, that aims to promote women’s human rights, equality and non-discrimination in Turkey and on the international level. The organization supports the active and broad participation of women in the establishment and maintenance of a democratic, egalitarian and peaceful social order as free individuals and equal citizens at

national, regional and international levels. It has contributed significantly to numerous legal reforms; increased rights awareness of women and the realization of women's human rights in Turkey; the advancement of sexual and bodily rights in Muslim societies, and promotion of women's human rights at the United Nations (UN) level. Issues the organization is working on: investigating problems that women experience in the sphere of human rights and devising potential solutions; influencing decision making mechanisms at national and international levels; developing and implementing national and international training programs on women's human rights; developing publications, materials and tools for women's initiatives to support their struggle against gender discrimination; contributing to the establishment and work of affectual solidarity networks among non-governmental organizations working in the fields of gender, human rights and democracy in Turkey, on the regional level (Middle East, North Africa, South and Southeast Asia) and around the world.

Türkiye Kadın Dernekleri Federasyonu - TKDF (Federation of Women's Associations of Turkey). Based in Ankara. Established in 1976, the oldest among the presented NGOs. The main aim of the Federation of Women's Associations of Turkey is to work for the material and spiritual development of the society through the development of women and to provide support and solidarity in this matter. Its aims are: providing coordination between voluntary women's organizations; creating voluntary women's associations to join the Federation by working towards the same purpose; creating a power union; educating and illuminating mother and child in economic, social and cultural directions; organizing conferences, seminars, panels at national and international level; cooperating with cultural, arts and social area; helping elderly, orphaned and poor women; volunteering for the same purpose in foreign countries through member associations; organizing commissions on various topics and working with experts who are not associations' members in these commissions; establishing facilities suitable for their purposes or to assist establishments. TKDF's newest campaign is a signed protocol between the federation and the Turkish Federation of Drivers in the beginning of April 2017 about the labeling of "Domestic Violence Emergency Helpline" numbers on the right rear window of taxis across Turkey. The two sides agreed to install 75 000 phone buttons in 81 provinces. This service will allow women, who have experienced abuse or violence, to call the phone numbers on the label and receive support from the police, a lawyer or a psychologist without paying any charges.

4.4 Reflections on sample group

My intention of interviewing NGOs with activities and goals, covering different issues related to women in Turkey, was successfully achieved. All of the five interviewed NGOs are engaged with: prevention of women's rights violations and all kinds of discrimination against women; raising awareness among the Turkish society with regard to women's rights; empowerment and development of women in all aspects of their life, as well as lobbying at national and international levels for reforms in the legislation in favour of women. Separately, the interviewed NGOs encompass in their work certain aspects affecting the well-being and the improvement of women's life in Turkey, as specified in Chapter 3. They fight: against gender-based violence and "honor" killings (for ex. TKDF, Filmmor); for equality in education and access to labour for women (for ex. AKDER); for increasing political participation rates of women (for ex. KA.DER); for reforms by advocating women's rights in Turkey and abroad at international level (for ex. WWHR), and as a result, they meet the characteristics of *Kemalist* (Filmmor, TKDF, WWHR), *Islamist* (AKDER) and *Leftist* (KA-DER) women's rights organizations as explained in Chapter 3.

Three of the interviewed NGOs have been established in the 1990s, and one (Filmmor) - in 2001. All of them carry out their activities in Istanbul, while only one (TKDF), which is also the oldest NGO, set up in 1976, is operating in the capital city.

4.5 Qualitative and quantitative data

Even though qualitative data collection does not offer the accuracy that the numeric approach would provide, it has been considered relevant to this study. Qualitative methods, as argued by Ritchie et al. (2013), are used to give answers to research questions that "*require explanation or understanding of social phenomena and their contexts*" (p.5, 2013). The authors further contend that the qualitative methods are particularly appropriate to examine complex and disputable issues. Similarly, Christensen et al. (2011) point as an advantage of the qualitative research, as being "*focused on exploring phenomena*", the chance of the researcher to expand, and possibly change, research questions in accordance with the direction to which the study is going.

Reflecting on the advantages of the qualitative data collection method, an interview guideline was prepared. The specifications of the interview guideline will be provided below. Originally, the purpose of the study was to gather data through qualitative methods. However, Due to certain obstacles, which will be further explained in the Limitations part, three of my informants have agreed on participating in a semi-structured interview, whereas the other two preferred to give their answers by filling a self-administered questionnaire. In order to be able to compare and analyse their answers critically, the same questions have been applied to both types of respondents. Although the same questions were applied, this situation has been seen as both a disadvantage and an advantage. It is viewed as a disadvantage, because, firstly, it does not allow the same kind of exploration as a semi-structured interview does - there is an absence of discussion between the interlocutors that can unfold unexpected and crucial information. Secondly, as the respondent can see the whole list of questions in advance, the reliability of the data can be challenged. Yet, there could be mentioned some advantages of the questionnaires. Firstly, they can be less time-constrained, since the respondent can separate his answer time according to his own preferences, whereas during the Skype conversations my interviewees have set certain amount of time that I had to be attached to. Moreover, not having a time limitation allows the respondent extended time to think and perhaps to correct his answers. Additionally, questionnaires are free of interviewer-bias since I could not interrupt and change the answering direction. Detailed information on how the data was gathered will be provided in the next section.

4.6 Semi-structured interviews

In order to gain a better understanding of the relationship between the interviewed NGOs and the AKP government and how the latter affects their work, I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews with my participants. Being geographically dispersed with them, the interviews were realized by using the communication program Skype. According to Berg (2007), Skype, as a communication service between the researcher and the interviewee, corresponds to the characteristics of the so called by the author “*synchronous environments*”. He illustrates them as “*real-time threaded communications*”, which allow the interlocutors to have an identical conversation and to exchange questions and answers, being as accurate as a face-to-face

interview can be. Since Skype provides a virtual face-to-face interrelation and is free of charge, it was found convenient to be suggested to my informants as a tool, connecting the researcher and the respondent, being distant from each other. As semi-structured interviews have a very flexible nature, they helped me to engage with my informants, so to derive the most significant of their answers and to lead the direction of the conversation by interrupting or by setting follow-up questions, depending on their feedbacks (Mack et al. 2005). The semi-structured interviews also contributed in observing my respondents' nonverbal cues, as they assist in evaluating the validity of the interviewee's answers, especially when a sensitive topic is being discussed (Gordon 1975).

4.7 Self-administered questionnaire

As mentioned above, two of my respondents (AK-DER and KA.DER) only agreed to complete a self-administered questionnaire, giving as a reason the lack of time for organizing a Skype interview. As a consequence, although unplanned initially, I have decided that their answers, as NGOs being prominent and very influential in the field, are equally important to my research as the responses I could receive from the semi-structured interviews. According to Lamberth (1950) a questionnaire is *“a piece of paper containing questions which is sent to an informant and which is filled in by the informant and returned to the questioner by the informant”* (p. 130). In my study, I refer to the term “questionnaire”, using the same definition, however as sent to my respondents via e-mail as an attachment. The list of the included questions was corresponding to questions comprised in the interview guide, which was used for the rest of my informants. Therefore, notwithstanding the fact that the self-administered questionnaire is a quantitative method *per se*, the questions included were open-ended, which is a typical feature of the qualitative method for data collection. Creswell et al. (2003) suggest, that *“because all methods of data collection have limitations, the use of multiple methods can neutralize or cancel out some of the disadvantages of certain methods”* (p. 164).

4.8 Interview guide

The questions used for conducting the interviews/questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1. The list of the questions was developed in accordance with the objectives and the working

questions of the study, thus the interview guide was divided into five themes. The themes are as following: Establishment and purpose of the organization, Process, Key stakeholders, Impact measurement and Criticism. The first theme is intended, firstly - in the Skype interviews, to break a tense atmosphere and make my informants more comfortable and relaxed, secondly, to obtain crucial information about what was the reason the organization was founded and if the vision and mission have changed over the years, for instance, if they were affected by the government. The second theme's focus is on the management of the organization, its weaknesses and strengths, its past, current and future projects, and the relation of these with the AKP government. In the "Key stakeholders" theme my aim is to explore any kind of cooperation of the organization with local, national and international stakeholders. The fourth theme's purpose is to understand how the NGOs evaluate their work with or without relevance to the government. The last theme's ambition is to recognize if there exists any criticism towards the operation of the interviewed NGOs or their work in general. The final question of the interview guide is a concluding one that encourages my informants to express themselves freely on the topic, and aims to see if they would like to include anything else related, but that was not initiated in the previous questions.

4.9 Transcribing

Recording the interviews was the chosen option, so to capture the most important findings during the Skype interviews. The main advantage was that it made it possible for me to go through the interviews as many time as it was needed in order to evaluate and re-evaluate the data that was gathered. Only taking notes of what is being discussed is not as beneficial as recording, because important insights might be missed out due to, for instance, loss of concentration. All of the Skype interviews have been recorded by my phone device, however due to technical issues in the Internet connections between the two sides, some parts of some of the interviews were disrupted. In these cases, I took notes on relevant information immediately after the conversations ended, in order not to forget important comments. Only relevant information has been transcribed in English, since the interviews were conducted in Turkish language, and due to a lack of time the translation of unnecessary statements has been skipped. The transcribed parts of the interviews and of the filled questionnaires can be found in Appendix 2. All of the recordings in their

original language can be also find in Appendix 3.

4.10 Ethics

As Scheyvens et al. (2003, p. 140) put it, “*the research process must ensure the participants’ dignity, privacy and safety.*”, the present study has followed certain ethical procedures, in order to avoid harming my participants in any way. First and foremost, information on the research purposes and the number of questions included in the interview guide was provided, as well as the expected duration of the interviews. This is the so called by the authors (idem) an “informed consent”, conforming to which the informants recognise that they freely and with full understanding allow the researcher to use the information, which will be gained during the interview and in what way exactly this information will be implemented. With regard to the fact that all of my interviewees were quite busy, due to variety of reasons, I assured them that I could be as flexible as needed in terms of arranging the best time in accordance with their schedule. All of the Skype interviews began with a conforming conversation with the purpose of introductory acquaintanceship. Additionally, I have encouraged my interlocutors not to hesitate to interrupt me for asking explanatory questions; or to refuse the continuation of the conversation once it has started, if they spot any inconvenient or unrelated questions. It was also emphasized that in such case the information provided by that moment will be erased and will not be included in the present study. I did not experience any withdrawal of the interviews or any critics to an extent that they will cause disruption of the conversation. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the obtained empirical material, I have notified my respondents, that the recordings and transcriptions will be used only for the academic purposes of my research and will be accessed only by relevant persons who are engaged with the evaluation of my work. Regarding the anonymity, which refers to “*the researcher’s responsibility to keep the identity of participants private*” (idem, p. 146), I explained to all of my participants my intentions of not using the exact names of the representatives of the NGOs, but rather the names of the NGOs *per se*. I have also suggested to them the possibility to be anonymous, both personally and to keep the name of the organization anonymous. However, none of my informants had troubles with giving their consent to use the names of the organizations, which has been my initial idea. Lastly, by providing my further contact details, I offered them to get in touch with me in case they wish to

delete or add something to what they said or what they gave as answers in the questionnaires. I also provided them with a copy of my finished dissertation in order to prove its reliability.

4.11 Reliability

According to Creswell (2012) whichever approach for collecting data is used, there remains the necessity to verify to what extent the research findings are credible, accurate and useful (Creswell 1998). In qualitative research, reliability is to be understood as the trustworthiness of the followed steps and achieved results (Stiles in Roberts et al 2006). It also has regard to the extent to which a generated data or measure are “*repeatable in different circumstances*” (Bryman 2001). Therefore, it is needed to confirm findings by recalling data in different circumstances. Qualitative content analysis is a way to assess the reliability of data particularly reliable approach to handling data. “*Specific codes are created to describe the data and can be confirmed by revisiting previously coded data*” (Roberts et al. 2006, p. 43). In relation to this, in my study, statements from interview transcripts, as well as answers from questionnaires, can be confirmed by recalling previously obtained data in Chapter 2 & 3. In the formulation of Peräkylä (1997), technical accuracy in recording and transcribing can increase reliability in qualitative data, however many times nonverbal cues in communication might be neglected. Another important aspect to prove reliability, according to Roberts et al. (2006) is the continuous and consistent intersection between the collected data and the interpretation of it. In the present thesis, interpretation of collected data is understood as quoting informants’ statements and critically analysing them with reference to the discussed concepts and to the background of the problem, as in Chapter 3 & 5.

4.12 Validity

Measuring validity, although being more common in quantitative studies, is also applicable in a qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003). Many authors claim that validity can be tested through triangulation (Halcomb and Andrew 2005, Williamson 2005, Creswell & Miller, 2000). They find that triangulation as a mixture of different information sources, theories, data collection methods, as well as review of “*documentary evidence and published literature*” (idem). In the

current study, the gathered data has been analysed through the lens of two different concepts; existing literature with statistical and reporting character of the issue has been also cross-checked. As Golafshani puts it “[e]ngaging multiple methods, such as, observation, interviews and recordings will lead to more valid, reliable and diverse construction of realities.”(2003, p. 604).

4.13 Limitations

4.13.1 Personal limitations

A limitation, considered personal, is derived from Chapter 3, where it is described that women from the rural regions, rather than women from the “modern, developed cities”, are more oppressed. They are specifically women from the minorities, namely Kurdish women. Therefore, not being able to contact Kurdish women’s organizations, due to language barriers, is seen as a limitation. The research could gain a way more vast spectre, if the relationship between the AKP government and the Kurdish women’s organizations could have been investigated.

4.13.2 Limitations regarding the NGOs

Reaching target NGOs was unexpectedly difficult, due to the fact that my data collection took place in a very controversial for the women’s movement period. Firstly, organizations were engaged with manifestations around the International Women’s day and the whole month of March was a very tight-scheduled period for them. On the other hand, the women’s movement was dealing with organizing campaigns with regard to the Turkish constitutional referendum, which was held on 16 April 2017. All this I got to learn through my inexorable attempts to reach the NGOs and the dozens of exchanged emails between me and the organizations. Therefore, I found myself quite restricted by time, and I believe that had this not been the case, I could have gathered much more data and more detailed reflections.

4.13.3 Technical issues

Last but not least, as mentioned previously, due to the fact that my interviews were Internet-based, a few times I have experienced technical delays and interruptions, either by my side or by my interviewee’s side. Thus, rather than having everything recorded, I ended up with notes on

some parts of the interviews, which might have caused losses of important insights.

CHAPTER 5. Literature review

In order to explore the challenges, which the women's movement (NGOs) in Turkey encounter in the aftermath of the AKP government, I have looked into how the relationships between NGOs and governments can be characterised in general and how they could reflect on the success or failure of the organizations. Unfolding this phenomenon, by reviewing the existing literature on the topic, helped me figure out and clarify what kind of relationships can arise and under which conditions this relationship could have beneficial or damaging effect.

Secondly, according to the objectives of this study, it has been set as a goal to target those NGOs, which cover different issues experienced by women in Turkey. Even though their foci and purposes in some cases are very different, they are all part of the same social movement - the women's movement and they all fight for changes in the legislation in favour of women. Therefore, it was also found highly relevant to delve into what a social movement is, in what ways social movements challenge states and when social movements are considered to be successful or not.

The exploration of these phenomenon could have been made, for instance, from a psychological perspective, concerning the behavioural approach of both sides. However, the contemporary situation of women, and thus women's movement, is highly politicized, therefore a political approach has been found relevant. I rely on political science in a way that it gives ground for exploration of how political power and the decisions of political actors can influence apolitical agencies and how they interact with each other in a political environment.

5.1 The NGO-government relationship as a theoretical phenomenon

5.1.1 Growing importance of NGOs

According to Clarke (1998) NGOs are professional organizations, independent from national states, non-for-profit, having a distinctive legal character, and public welfare being their primary matter. Additionally, he asserts that NGOs have become influential actors on their own, as well as an institutional tool for attracting foreign donors. While Doh et al. (2006) recognise that since the 1980s NGOs, by and large, have increased in number and power, Gautney calls this process “the mushrooming of NGOs” in the last decades of the century. In this context, Teegen et al. (2004) examine the notion of “social purpose NGOs”, which arise from social movements, and give them a definition, closer to the one that Clarke (1998) gives to the NGOs in general, however with the distinction that they serve particular social groups and concentrate their efforts in goals like human rights, equity of people, education, environment, etc. The authors further indicate, that due to their technical expertise and large experience in working with complicated issues related to particular groups of people, they obtained proficiency in providing specific services, which the governments are not able to provide. By way of explanation, their role in the society is to fill in the gaps, where states have failed to meet citizen needs (idem). During the same year, Kamat (2004) also argues, that NGOs represent the interests of underserved and handicapped parts of the society, who are unlikely to be represented in the higher levels of national politics. They are generally understood to be new institutions engaged in revising the way the state functions and its processes (idem).

5.1.2 NGOs as main challengers of the state

Edwards’ approach (2004) recognises, that in their political role, civil society organizations are determined as a main equilibrium to states, especially when citizens’ rights are not met. NGOs establish a safe ground for the unprivileged populations to be noticed and their demands to be heard. As the author puts it “*A strong civil society can prevent the agglomeration of power that threatens autonomy and choice, provide effective checks against the abuse of state authority, and*

protect a democratic public sphere in which citizens can debate the ends and means of governance.” (idem, p. 15).

Two decades ago Lester Salamon (1987a) claimed that in the absence of "a firm theoretical basis for government-nonprofit relations", existing tensions between government and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) suggest that it becomes impossible to outline positive lines of interaction between the two sectors (Coston 1998). Undoubtedly, there could be pointed out both advantageous and disadvantageous aspects of these relations, however it has been widely recognised that between governments and NGOs persist an unavoidable strain (Clark 1998). In an earlier study Clark (1991) notes that the activities of the two sides can have coordinative or oppositional character, but they can never ignore each other. Najam (2000) maintains a similar notion, asserting, that the scopes of activities, purposes of action and resources of the NGOs and of governments many times overlap, either in concord or in disharmony. Tension between two is always perceptible, even when they manifest an affable attitude to each other (idem).

Salamon (1989) illustrates the role of the non-governmental sector, being a counterweight to the modern welfare state, as “a paradigm of competition” and “a paradigm of partnership”. The paradigm of competition is assumed to give a rise to a distinctive conflict between the NGOs and the state, whereas the paradigm of partnership is understood as a possible alliance between the former and the latter.

Ironically, despite being non-governmental in their definition, these groups of organizations constantly sustain their activities in direct or indirect contact with governmental spheres. *“That they are not governmental is seen by most NGOs to be a badge of honor; this, however, does not imply that they are not interested in the government—far from it”* (Najam 2000, p. 380). Regardless the level of development of the countries - industrialized or developing, much of NGOs’ ambition can be summarized, firstly, as incentives to offer assistance where the state is not capable of, and secondly, as persuasion of changes in the government ruling that can favor the marginalized groups they support, especially when the state refuses to do so (idem).

In this relation, Doh et al. (2006) observe that NGOs have developed integration skills in order to be actively involved in the institutional setting in which they operate. The institutionalization of the NGOs, according to the author, can contribute to boosting their influence and, therefore, achieving success (idem). Similar sets of observations can be distinguished in Michael Barnett's (2005) study of humanitarianism, where the author suggests that with the institutionalization of humanitarian organizations, the latter actually start losing their neutrality and independence. The author argues that this transformation has been caused due to variety of processes and pressures that led also to the professionalization, bureaucratization and rationalization of the organizations. This outcome, according to the author, reflects through the mechanisms, which the NGOs developed, for instance, to prove the accountability of their actions in front of foreign donors, to calculate possible results and to implement strategic options with respect to the different situations. With this leavening, however, it became easier for the states to intervene and to regulate the actions of the organizations, which can be sometimes objectionable (idem). Anheier et al. (2005) indicate, that with the heightened significance of NGOs presence in the area of politics, new challenges that require more competence and power, appear on the surface. Experiencing criticism and competition becomes a daily routine to the organizations.

The biggest competition, according to Clark (1998), comes from governments, which tend to be repressive, thus will be cautious towards NGOs that represent the poor or mistreated populations. In this case, according to the author, cooperative relations are seldom, considering the ingrained mistrust and hostility between the two, mainly as a result of the worries of the governments that NGOs can undermine their political power. In such scenario, NGOs often choose the option of isolation, since they consider an eventual interaction with the state as ineffective, or even worse, that it can provoke undesirable or unpredictable interference. Similarly, Bebbington et al. (1993) emphasize, that when the citizens' participation in politics is sabotaging the state, the government can set restrictive regulations in order to control NGO activities. "*Where governments equate civil society with political opposition and create regulations to dampen or repress civil society, NGOs face severe limitations on their ability to act as agents of progressive social change.*" (Banks et al. 2015, p. 711).

Teegen et al. (2004) find that certain governments can criticize the work of NGOs claiming, that their potential in finding long-term durable solutions to issues like poverty or inequality is extremely low in comparison to the capacities that the government has *per se*. On the contrast, Anheier et al. (2005) understand the relationship between the nongovernmental sector and the state as depending on the type of organization (large national organization or small local association), field of expertise (social services or international development), and levels of administrative bodies involved (e.g. national, regional or local). In line with this, the authors divide the NGO-government relationship as: *adversarial* (NGOs advocating the rights of unprivileged people), *complementary* (cooperative character supported by contracts and partnerships between the government and NGOs), *supplementary* (voluntary services such as counseling, shelters, etc. in response to government deficiencies).

Adil Najam (2000)'s prominent typology of third sector - government relations, provides a detailed explanation of the latter. His Four-C's Model of *cooperation*, *confrontation*, *complementarity*, and *co-optation*, reveals the possible projections in NGO-government relations. *Cooperation* exists when an issue occurs, the two sides act unambiguously and use the same tactics and strategies to eliminate it. *Confrontation* usually appears when NGOs disapprove particular governmental policies or feel threatened that state's actions can impede their work. In this case, in order to eliminate oppositional forces, the government starts pursuing tactics to move them away from the political center. *Complementarity* emerges when both sides share similar goals but prefer different strategies. *Co-optation* materialize when the goals of the state and the goals of the NGOs are contrasting, but they implement similar strategies.

When NGOs carry out activities, controversial to the state, like confronting government decisions or empowering traditionally oppressed social groups, government's engagement with NGOs is very low, if not absent. However, solicitous of funding from international donors, such governments encourage the establishment of government-oriented NGOs (GONGOs), through which it can be guaranteed the state will not miss out these charities. Hence, bearing in mind the possible financial support that can be granted from "outside" actors, an expected consequence could be the substantial tension that will arise between such GONGOs and "the more legitimate, people-oriented NGOs", who will compete for these resources (Clark 1998). Heurlin (2009) also

notes that GONGOs appear when “*personalist leaders, more vulnerable to elite defection, feel threatened by truly independent grassroots NGOs promoting participatory and democratic values and behavior*” (p. 223).

5.1.3 How and when NGOs gain support within a politicized reality

Clark (1998) contends that an eventual cooperation between NGOs and governments can be prosperous when taking into account factors such as to what extent central and local governments are inclined to collaboration or whether reform-oriented ministries support their initiatives. Likewise, Heurlin (2009) states that a possible partnership is more feasible if NGOs manage in securing liable allies within the narrow circles of local governments, since rarely they can convince state structures or national leaders to take part in their activities.

Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink’s in their prominent study “*Activists beyond borders*” (1998) demonstrate how simultaneous interactions between international actors, national and local NGOs and nation states bring into being the so called by the authors “*transnational advocacy networks*”.

In the authors’ definition domestic NGOs operate where there is a lack of attention to their issues, therefore they often concentrate their efforts into advocating international actors. Advocacy networks’ main strategies of lobbying are providing the international actors with information regarding the current status quo of the social groups they facilitate, as well as ideas for achieving certain policy changes. This, according to the authors, lie at the root of the transnational advocacy networks. Keck and Sikkink (idem) provide a typology of tactics that networks use:

Information Politics Telephone and Internet-based circulation of up-to-date and eye-catching information, often having technical and statistical characteristics, that aims to reach geographically distant potential allies. Examples are E-mails and newsletters, brochures and posters, articles and publications, that explicitly aim to attract powerful affiliates. However, to legitimate this information, there exists the need to access information which is not easily

obtainable. Here it comes the task for the networks to secure “like-minded groups at home and abroad”, which can assist them in finding information necessary to their work.

Symbolic Politics Activists use certain symbolic events as exclamations that can lead to the growth of their networks. Their task is to justify their importance in order to provoke changes and participation.

Leverage Politics is about leveraging influential international actors, such as EU institutions, UN bodies, so to empower weak domestic groups that can pressure state agencies directly.

Accountability Politics are the activities associated with ensuring government’s commitment to the matters the networks support, for example, by signing international conventions and declarations.

The authors conclude that networks are mostly successful when they are “*dense, with many actors, strong connections among groups in the network, and reliable information flows. Target actors must be vulnerable either to material incentives or to sanctions from outside actors, or they must be sensitive to pressure because of gaps between stated commitments and practice.*” (idem, p. 28).

5.2 The social movement phenomenon

"The interest of many scholars in social movements stems from their belief that movements represent an important force for social change" (McAdam et al. 1988)

5.2.1 Towards a definition of “social movement”

According to Helmut (2005) social movements are informal structures that consist of groups united around a common social goal, that when successful can mobilize masses of people and organizations and contribute to changes in government policies by turning private concerns into publicly recognised issues. In Melucci’s formulation (1985) social movements are solidary action systems, operating collectively, consolidated by shared ideas and ambitions, and having an interest in conflicting the system in which they emerge. Similarly, della Porta et al. (2006) maintain that social movements possess a distinctive identity, are associated with dense informal networks and have explicitly determined opponents.

The statement that social movements bring about or fight against social changes has been supported by various scholars. For instance, Burstein et al. (1995) claim that social movements call for social and political change, but they do not have the characteristics of political institutions. However, even established apolitical, della Porta et al. (2006) identify social movement actors as being actively centralized in political and/or cultural conflicts to endorse or prevent social change. By conflict the authors mean an confronting interaction between actors, characterised with disapproval of certain actions of each other's and who pursue control over definite power. McCarthy et al. (1973) also recognise that social movements as collective of activists that lobby for social changes and differ from "*radical and all-embracing, aimed at totally changing the structure of society*" to "*specifically focused reform attempts*" (p. 2). Giugni's (1998) study of the outcomes and consequences of social movements confirms this notion by affirming, that in their nature, social movements target political leaders and institutions in the interest of instigating significant changes. Melucci (1985) expands this context of definition by contending, that social movements speak on the behalf of the entire society, occur only upon explicit circumstances, such as issues concerned with promoting peacebuilding, abortion bans, against nuclear proliferation, etc., and oppose political systems, aiming to trigger beneficial reforms. Tarro (2011) emphasizes that movements claim for fundamental social changes that will reflect their innovative beliefs, remove from power their rivals and invert the social order – but rarely just a "reform".

5.2.2 Social movements as challengers of the state

Social movements activists as private actors of change have a designedly counteractive relation with governments, due to their capacity of achieving policy changes, when successful (Helmut 2005). Tarro (2011) observes that with the substantial expansion of these voluntary networks, their potential of influencing governmental bodies, rather than only local or private ones, also grew up. Becoming more advanced in the methods they use to challenge the state, provides them with greater opportunities to produce legislative changes. Most importantly, they employ strategies for gaining support from powerful allies within public agencies at administrative levels, as well as from political parties, interest groups and NGOs (idem). Giugni (1998)

addresses them as “powerholders”. Additionally, he brings into attention the notion of the “general public” as part of the alliance structure of the movements. According to the author, if a movement succeeds in sensitizing the population to their cause they are more likely to weaken their enemies.

5.2.3 How and when do social movements achieve success?

Taking into consideration the characteristics of the different actors and environments, involved in the processes regarding the social movements, is a key to analyze their success. It is also important to examine the factors that can impact them. By definition, anything can be successful if the initially set goals have been achieved. However, considering that a movement is constituted of lots of elements, such as numerous social movement organizations, a “goal” in its essence can be highly relative. Diverse components of the movement may experience disagreements related to the variety of their goals and their approaches to realise them (Burstein et al. 1995). The authors define goals as “*the formally stated objectives of political movement organizations: those goals publicly presented in speech or writing to non movement actors such as movement targets, the media, or bystander publics*” (p. 282).

Schumaker (in Burstein et al. 1995) problematizes this notion arguing, that success for the movement should be framed according to the levels of responsiveness of the targeted political individuals or institutions. He organizes them into five stages: *access responsiveness* is the first incentives of the target to give ear to the demands of the movement organization; *agenda responsiveness* is the target's keenness to raise attention to their claims on the political agenda; *policy responsiveness* is the target's proposal for policy changes (mostly reforms) corresponding to the requests of the protestors; *output responsiveness*, is the stage when the target implements the new policy effectively; and *impact responsiveness* is the extent to which the change has reduced the complaints of the population that the movement has fought for. The author states that in order to reach a higher level of responsiveness, the movement should pool more and more resources at each of them. This distinguishment, according to the author, provides insights about whether the movements lead to real social changes or “win only symbolic victories”. Bearing in mind the complexity of the context in which the movement organizations operate, for the success

of their causes can contribute their professionalization and centralization, multi-organization and bureaucratization (idem).

According to Milbrath (in Burstein et al. 1995), social movement organizations need to narrow down the issues they aim to resolve, so direct lobbying could be more resultant. Burstein et al. (1995) suggest that groups that aim to overthrow a government or to bring about broader structural changes that can overbalance the whole political system, are seldom successful. Therefore they need to set realistic goals, which can reflect their resources and potential of action. As stated in the study (idem), if the targets or the countermovements (for ex. supported by the government) are more organized and well-positioned and if the movement makes tactical mistakes, such as daily activities planning or loss of public backing or allies, the likelihood of movement success considerably can decrease.

A main contribution to movement success can have the “openness of the policy-making system”, which Burstein et al. (1995) relates as the advantageous situation, when the political structure *per se* is weak and vulnerable to interventions from “outside” actors. For instance, when the political regime is characterized with moments of instability, social movement organizations can mobilize oppositional powers to “penetrate” the system and achieve reforms. Having the backing of strong political parties, who disagree with the current status of the government, can play a significant role in obtaining movement success.

Gamson’s (in Giugni 1998) definition of success summarizes what has been discussed above. He finds that success is “*a set of outcomes that fall into two basic clusters: the acceptance of a challenging group by its antagonists as a valid spokesman for a legitimate set of interests, and the gain of new advantages by the group's beneficiary during the challenge and its aftermath*” (p. 382). Giugni's (1998) critics to this definition, however, overlaps with what Burstein et al. (1995) indicate in their study. Similarly to what was mentioned above, the author concludes that the degree of success and its evaluation can vary with respect to the participants in the movement processes, as well as to their perceptions of success, because certain action that has been assessed as a success by some, can be a failure to others.

5.2.4 Women's movement as an example of success

Most eminent examples of successful social movements are the women's movement, the civil rights movement, and the environmental movement, which each of them procreated into hundreds of formal legal entities, such as advocacy organizations that are engaged in lobbying the government, various NGOs that deal with human rights violations, or direct service organizations such as shelters, counseling services, etc. (Helmut 2005).

Sperling et al.'s (2001) study identifies women's movements as a far-reaching category of activism, through which women no more just represent the female part of the population, but their image turns into a highly-politicized concept. Women's identity and social status change, when their actions generate reconfiguration of gender hierarchy. In its nature, women's movement challenges gender relations and, therefore, sets its political and social goals according to this viewpoint.

In Moghadam's (2009) vision women's movement seek to breach the traditional family laws and to defend the individualism of women; they strive to eliminate "*religious observance and tight controls over women*", which the states use as "*ostensibly to protect the nation or culture from alien influences and conspiracies*". In many cases, according to the author there is a "*collusion between states and the religio-political movements, usually to the detriment of women's rights*" (p. 67). The author further asserts that women's rights movement has been a focus of research to various scholars and argues that nonetheless women's movements may have different cultural and national backgrounds, there are witnessed particular similarities, for instance, in the ways they elaborate their claims to the states or develop networks. One of these common features is that women's movement organizations usually rely their arguments on international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and other international treaties on women's rights. Guidry et al. (2000) also note that international conventions on human rights assist to local groups in forming their demands in ways, that allow these groups to strengthen their potential for influencing national policies. Another common feature is that the women's movement groups

often coalesce into coalitions with other organizations in pursuance of enhancing their powers (idem).

5.2.5 Women's transnational advocacy networks

Globalization brought about the proliferation of the so called “transnational advocacy networks” which, according to Sperling et al. (2001), have become essential component of the contemporary social movements, including women’s activism. They consist of elite and social professional networks, which encourage local women groups to take part in international conferences and forums, where they can exchange knowledge and connect with activists from all around the world. “*Women's transnational advocacy networks, organized around principles of challenging gender hierarchy and improving the conditions of women's lives have been among the earliest and most influential of such global mobilizations*” (idem, p. 1157). These networks are evidently successful in issues like violence against women, abortion, protecting their political and social rights, such as women’s suffrage and employment rights.

CHAPTER 6. Analysis

In this chapter, I will outline the main findings from the collected data in order to answer the research question and implement the initially set aims of the study. I aim to show the different positions, which NGOs take in the multifaceted political landscape, in which they operate, consisting of the women’s NGOs themselves, the Turkish government and local authorities, as well as international actors. This I do by dividing the analysis into three parts under three overall headings. They are as following:

Finding 1. Work field, approaches and perceptions of the women’s rights NGOs as main prerequisites to their relation with the AKP government.

Finding 2. Importance of domestic (local) and international partnerships.

Finding 3. Changes in the understanding of success with regard to the current challenges, posed to women and women’s movement in contemporary Turkey.

6.1 Finding 1. Work field, approaches and perceptions of the women’s rights NGOs as main prerequisites to their relation with the AKP government. This finding is related to the dominant characteristics of the NGOs that I observed in regard to their relationship with the AKP.

I divided these characteristics into:

- (1) Sufficient/satisfactory cooperation with the government
- (2) Government’s negligence
- (3) Isolationism from the government
- (4) Neutrality regarding the government
- (5) Mixed dominant characteristics

I would like to emphasize that this division is based only on the NGOs’ dominant characteristics, because they all carry mixed nuances of their relationships with the AKP government, bearing in mind the variety of aspects their work includes.

6.1.1 Sufficient/satisfactory cooperation with the government

With respect to the question whether the AKP government affected the organization's vision and mission throughout its terms, AKDER answered that with the AKP’s ruling significant improvements positively influenced citizens’ economical, cultural and social life. AKDER explicitly mentioned that, first of all, better salaries and social facilities for working mothers, reinforced their self-confidence and social well-being. Secondly, the organization realised its main purpose of resolving the headscarf issue. With the ban lifted in 2013, previously limited to obtain further higher education, now headscarved women can get the education they want, therefore their participation in business life has also enhanced. According to its response, my interlocutor also believes that the country is much more democratic than before, a country, *“where women are not fired just because they are wearing headscarves”*. These positive changes, according to AKDER, expanded their work field and now they *“need to do more NGO work in order to help a working mother to be treated with a positive discrimination, and to have the necessary knowledge for her social and labor rights”*. (Appendix 2.1).

Within this answer, I have noticed that the organization has alluded the notion of the “mother” and how its work is concerned to a large extent with the well-being and fundamental rights of the “mother”. This, on the one hand, reminds me of how Bankası (2003) described *Islamist women’s organizations*, which position women as mothers and wives and give support for the improvement of their lives within the family. On the other hand, the answer directly echoed Mr. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s statement that womanhood is equal to motherhood and that women have their strictly limited roles in the family: “*We are a conservative democratic party, the family is important to us*”¹⁷. The intersection of AKDER’s and Mr. Erdoğan’s approach towards women reflects on Najam (2000) assertion that the scopes of activities, purposes of action and resources of the NGOs and of governments many times overlap, either in concord or in disharmony; which in this case seems to tilt the scale in favor of the option of concord.

The biggest success of AKDER, namely the reverse of the headscarf ban, has been achieved during the AKP’s second term (Kardam 2011). With the referendum victory in September 2010, the AKP announced that the party will support students who have experienced discrimination or who have been disciplined for wearing headscarves on university campuses and promised that no action shall be taken to prevent students with headscarves from attending lectures (idem). Gradually, the ban was lifted also for women in politics, judiciary system and police. In February 2017, the government has lifted the military ban on Islamic headscarf, where the military was the last Turkish institution, which did not allow women to practice this freedom¹⁸. This, as a consequence, turns out to be the most prominent example that proves the successful cooperation between AKDER and the government.

Another salient example that leads me to the prospect that AKDER and the AKP share a satisfactory cooperative relationship, or as Salamon (1989) calls it “*a paradigm of partnership*”, understood as a possible alliance between the NGO and the state, is the organization’s answer to the questions of its short- and long-term projects with relevance to or against the AKP government and its advocacy strategies and activities. The NGO stated that they are invited to

¹⁷ (See <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/06/why-turkey-is-backsliding-on-womens-rights/240547/>)

¹⁸ (See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/22/turkey-lifts-military-ban-on-islamic-headscarf>)

meetings with the government on a regular basis, where they give to the Party advices and recommendations on maternity and women's labor rights, as well as they communicate their negative or positive opinions. This on the other hand, resonates with how Arat (2016) describes the AKP government and its pro-family approach that initiates policies for encouraging maternity leaves by providing the so-called incentive packages.

Lastly, the response that supports my observation of an existing cooperation between the AKP and AKDER, is the organization's answer to the question whether they face any criticism from the government or other organizations (GONGOs). AKDER unequivocally answered that they haven't experienced this, which contrasts to the answers of the rest of the interviewed NGOs to the same question. Negrón-Gonzales (2016) notes that the Islamic conservative ideology in the politics of the contemporary Turkey brought into being a new pro-family oriented counter-movement, which promotes family values. The author also claims that AKP officials' frequent visitations to headquarters of these organizations show the friendly attitude of the government towards them (*idem*). What these organizations promote and the fact that they often meet with the government's officials, I assume, are very common with what characterizes the vision of AKDER and its experiences with the AKP in general, which, on the other hand, may serve as an explanation why AKDER has not encountered any criticism from government-oriented NGOs (GONGOs).

6.1.2 Government's negligence

As described by a few scholars (Coşar and Onbaşı 2008, Arat 2016) the second and the third AKP governments demonstrated, and still do, a considerable decrease in their will for negotiation with the women's movement. Women's rights organizations had no response for their demands. Islamic rooted groups took the place of the former secular ones and the government's priorities in dealing with women's issues relocated from judging women as being part of the family unit, rather than as being an individual (*idem*). The authors' recognition of the changing shifts in the AKP's approach towards women's movement, mirrors in Filmor's answer to the question whether there is anything they would like to change about the organization, but cannot, regarding the AKP government. *"In the past we were able to work*

together with other women's organizations in preparing media reports, in lobbying for legislation changes related to violence against women. We were able to cooperate with the relevant departments of the state, for instance with the Ministry of Women, which is now closed down. We were able to discuss with the Ministry of Women, to pressure it, to ensure certain laws as we wanted. However, in the last period, especially the last 3-4 years it is not even possible to have a dialogue with the AKP government. There is no such work with the women's organizations. It has no chance of any influence, there is no channel left" (Appendix 2.2). My interlocutor reiterated the same notion of response, while giving her answers to other questions, as well. To the question of the organization's projects with relevance to or against the AKP government, Filmmor explained that it was not possible for them to make an appointment neither with the AKP, nor with the Family Ministry, regarding one of their Action plan projects. This explains the NGO's eagerness for collaboration with the government, however, according to Filmmor, all channels for women's organizations are blocked: "*the dialogue is blocked, all channels regarding women's issues are blocked*". I address to this non-relation as "negligence". By its law definition "negligence" is "a failure to behave with the level of care that someone of ordinary prudence would have exercised under the same circumstances"¹⁹. The behaviour usually consists of actions, but can also consist of omissions when there is some duty to act". I argue that the notion of "negligence" utterly matches to the description, which Filmmor gave regarding its relation with the AKP government. The government's negligence, in this case, can also refer to the *adversarial* character of the NGO-government relationship, which according to Anheier et al. (2005) emerges when NGOs advocate the rights of unprivileged people, which is evidently the case of Filmmor and women's movement in general.

In Najam's (2000) projection of *Confrontation* in NGO-government relations, the author contends that *Confrontation* appears when NGOs disapprove particular governmental policies (...) and, then, in order to eliminate oppositional forces, the government starts pursuing tactics to move them away from the political centre. What I find relevant in this case, is that in Filmmor's explanation, the secular women's organizations do not approve the transformation of the Ministry for Women and Family Affairs into the Ministry of Family and Social Policy. The government's tactics to oppose these organizations resonate in the reality that Islamic rooted

¹⁹ (See <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/negligence>)

groups took the place of the former secular ones, as well as the occurrence of pro-family, close to the government, organizations.

When I asked my interlocutor if Filmmor faces any criticism from the government or other organizations (GONGOs), she answered sarcastically: *“I don’t know, surely there is, but I believe criticism is also a kind of dialogue. Right now we have absolutely none of such.”* (Appendix 2.2). Since this answer was given at a face-to-face interview through Skype interview, I was able to sense both despair and anger in the voice of my interlocutor. This observation I can particularly associate with, firstly, what Clark (1998) affirms, that between governments and NGOs persist an unavoidable strain. Najam (2000) maintains a similar notion, asserting that, tension between two is always perceptible, even when they manifest an affable attitude to each other. Secondly, this example of government’s negligence, I correlate to Clark’s interpretation, that when NGOs carry out activities, controversial to the state, like confronting government decisions or empowering traditionally oppressed social groups, government’s engagement with NGOs is very low, if not absent.

6.1.3 Isolationism from the government

Within the context of my study, I understand “isolationism” as a chosen option of NGOs, which consider an eventual interaction with the state as ineffective. This applies particularly to one of my respondents - TKDF. Below will be unfolded why and how.

To the questions “What are your advocacy strategies and activities?” and “Do you meet with government institutions regarding the services and support you provide?”, TKDF unambiguously replied that the government is against their work, therefore any kind of cooperation with the government, is out of the question: *“After Mr. Erdogan said that women and men are unequal, for us is not appropriate even to try to collaborate with them as a government, which insist on their own perspectives. For me a government that passes an abortion ban reform, that does not raise voice against cases like physical abuses against women in the public transport, a government that claims that one-time-raping is acceptable [a case of 45 pupils raped in Karaman, Turkey], a government that does nothing towards women being domestically abused,*

and an approach of the government that causes many women's rights decrease - we cannot work with such institution!" (Appendix 2.5)

This proclamation recalls Clark's (1998) indication, that the biggest competition comes from governments, who tend to be repressive, thus will be cautious towards NGOs, which represent the poor or mistreated populations. In this case, according to the author, cooperative relations are seldom, considering the ingrained mistrust and hostility between the two.

Within this answer of my interviewee, I can also make a relevance to some authors, concerned with the conflicting nature of social movement actors and their opponents. For example, della Porta et al. (2006) identify social movement actors as being actively centralized in political and/or cultural conflicts to endorse or prevent social change. Similarly, Sperling et al.'s (2001) study identifies women's movements as a far-reaching category of activism, through which women do not just represent the female part of the population, but their image turns into a highly politicized concept. Therefore, the fact that the government did not raise its voice to such unacceptable cases related to women, visibly becomes the biggest catalyst for the conflict between the NGO and the AKP.

In Moghadam's (2009) vision women's movements seek to breach the traditional family laws and defend the individualism of women; they strive to eliminate "*religious observance and tight controls over women*", which the states use as "*ostensibly to protect the nation or culture from alien influences and conspiracies*". This trend has been observed by CEDAW (2016), reporting the AKP's tendency of expanding and endorsing religious education and promulgating traditional gender roles for women, recalled when the Multi Purpose Community Centres were closed down. They were initially founded in cooperation with women's NGOs and were providing women with literacy on their legal human rights. Instead, the government subsidized the creation of new Social Service Centres for education on family matters and traditional gender roles. Moghadam's formulation and CEDAW's reports reverberate in the comments of both TKDF and Filmmor regarding the AKP government, which, according to them, increasingly imposes religion in the educational system, as well as, in the private sector. Filmmor said, "*especially in the last years, it [religion] even crawled from the educational system into many other spheres of our lives. Religion was not in our lives as it is now [...]. The last 10 years have*

been so tense and polarized that the AKP has begun to relate to masses on religion and has begun to produce politics over it” (Appendix 2.5). Not differently, TKDF pointed out, “if you are wearing a headscarf, it will be easier [to work in the private sector] and yes you will be more respected. If you are wearing the headscarf it can directly be made connection to your religiousness, or if you are praying or if you are fasting, you are advantageous. For me those things are very wrong!” (Appendix 2.5)

In these statements one can actually sense TKDF’s strong resentment towards the government and the conflicting environment between the two. As della Porta et al. (2006) explain, the conflict is a confronting interaction between actors, characterised with disapproval of certain actions of each other’s.

6.1.4 Neutrality regarding the government

KA.DER’s diplomatic answers with respect to their relation with the AKP government gains the upper hand over the notion of “neutrality”. Throughout their responses to different questions, KA.DER often expressed their position of "equal distance to all political parties". The organization claimed that its mission and vision, since its establishment in 1997, have never changed regardless the ruling party. According to my respondent, the organization follows certain work principles, such as supporting "every woman from every party" and working together with women's branches and women's parliamentarians of all political parties, and communicates with every party in power to lobby for a 50% gender quota, which is the main demand and work field of the NGO. KA.DER suggested: *“We do not have a special position with regard to a particular political party.” (Appendix 2.3).*

6.1.4.1 A “neutral” or “cooperative” relationship with the government?

To the questions regarding organization’s main advocacy strategies and meetings with government, KA-DER said that they are having meetings with political party headquarters to establish relations with the women’s branches and centres of the political parties. As stated by the NGO, the organization is in a constant communication with government officials, especially

during election periods.

From these answers, it is plausible to confuse the organization's relationship with the government as *Sufficiently Cooperative*, as in the case with AKDER. However, from KA-DER's answer to the question of the strengths of the organization it seems as if these meetings and communication are result of the *Neutral* relationship of the organization with the state, rather than a *Cooperative* one. My informant expressed that the organization has a thorough "*reputation at home and abroad, meetings, invitations to seminars, media and opinions of governments. Our 20 years of experience puts us in a special place in women's affairs.*" Although all of my respondents affirmed to be unique in their work field; and although their visions and missions correspond to the main characteristics of NGOs: to fill in the gaps, where states have failed to meet citizen needs (Teegen et al. 2004), to represent the interests of underserved and handicapped parts of the society, who are unlikely to be represented in the higher levels of national politics (Kamat 2004) and to establish a safe ground for the unprivileged populations to be noticed and their demands to be heard (Edwards 2004).

Organization	Uniqueness
AKDER	I believe that providing help to the students who lost their educational rights in the period after February 28, with the necessary financial and moral support, language education, translating the lessons they have not taken, trying to reduce the lost years - we are unique in these
Filmmor	In our field there is no other organization working with the media tools we work with. There is no other women's organization that works in the cinema field
TKDF	We are operating for 41 years now, we are a very reliable and plausible organization, this is very important. I have travelled all around Turkey 5 times, have seen municipalities, provinces, therefore I believe our experience can be taken as an example from other organizations.
KA-DER	Our main goal is an equal male and female representation in politics. Among the women's associations there is no other association working on this issue.

WWHR	Our national and international advocacies. We actively took part in reforms regarding the Turkish criminal law, the Civil law, the Penal code and we follow the EU agreements on Women's rights and Agreements against Women's discrimination.
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Table 1. Uniqueness of NGOs regarding their work fields

What I assume from KA-DER's answers regarding its reputation and regarding its success, *"the results of these negotiations can be evaluated by the increase in the proportion of women representation. Of course, not the point we want, but the female representation of the Parliament reached 14.7 percent"*, is that for the success of the organization does not only contribute that it is the one and only in their field, since this applies to all of the interviewed NGOs, but also its neutral position to all of the political parties. I argue that if the organization has had an *isolationist* position (TKDF) or if it had been completely *neglected* by the government (Filmor), the percentage of women, represented in the politics would be unlikely to change. On the other hand, if the organization has had a *sufficiently cooperative* relationship with the state, the results could be higher. Therefore, my assumption is that keeping a *neutral*, "equal to every political party" position, is a comparatively successful strategy for KA-DER.

Another point, supporting this perspective, is that, according to KA-DER's response, the organization does not experience any criticism from the government or GONGOs, because *"as a non-governmental organization, we work independently from the authorities. For this reason we are not working against or with governments [...] We are in communication with GONGOs, but we are not cooperating with them."* (Appendix 2.4). This can be a justifiable evidence about KA-DER's perception as being positioned in "neutrality" with regard to its relation with the government.

6.1.4.2 Is *neutrality* a realistic option?

Although, above I have supported the statement that the *neutral* position of KA-DER is a good strategy to the organization, I contend that a complete abstraction from the ruling Party is unrealistic. First of all, if a certain organization aims at producing legislative changes, it shall

deliberately engage into a steady communication, particularly with the government in power, in order to ensure a significant support for its demands.

Secondly, even though, the organization manages to keep a relatively *neutral* position as a tactic of resting its reputation on a safe ground, I argue that this position will shift when the organization's goals are achieved and when they are not. My proposition is that when an organization is successful, the organization's relationship with the government will gravitate to *Sufficient cooperation*, while when not successful, it will incline to *Government's negligence*. Therefore, being *neutral* to the government is a very debatable term and should be viewed under the spectre of variety of conditions.

6.1.5 Mixed dominant characteristics

“The absence of a firm theoretical basis for government-nonprofit relations”, identified by Salamon (1987) two decades ago, is still applicable nowadays and proves the complexity and ambiguity in the relationship between NGOs and governments. In this part of the analysis, I will unfold the suggestion that NGOs in Turkey can have also mixed dominant characteristics in their approaches and perspectives towards their relations with the government.

The most prominent example NGO of this trend is WWHR. From the conducted interview with WWHR, I can recognise that the organization's relation with the government is both *neutral* and characterised by *negligence* from the government.

Regarding changes in the mission and vision of the organization with relevance to the AKP government, the former indicated that “*we are not changing our mission and vision according to any government, therefore AKP is not something that can change our mission and vision. It will persist like this. We are a feminist organization that fights against male-dominant society, and it will persist like this no matter which government is ruling*” (Appendix 2.4). Here I notice WWHR's intention of being neutral to all political powers, regardless who is ruling. Moreover, while discussing eventual religious obligations of the government, WWHR concluded saying that staying in the framework of the women's organization is most important to them and “*this*

will not change according to or with relevance to governments” (idem). This, however, according to Clark (1991) is not possible. The author notes that the activities of the two sides can have coordinative or oppositional character, but they can never ignore each other. “*That they are not governmental is seen by most NGOs to be a badge of honor; this, however, does not imply that they are not interested in the government—far from it*” (Najam 2000, p. 380). Indeed, WWHR itself demonstrated that a complete *neutrality* from the government is not possible, although they proclaim to be independent from the state. The NGO admits that the AKP has its own path and politics towards women, which has influenced the work of the former. I was told by my interlocutor that particularly the government’s pro-family approach, which undermines the individualism of the “woman”, has put lots of constraints on their work and on the women’s movement, in general.

In a complaining manner the NGO shared with me, that despite having a lot to offer, “*in the AKP period we cannot make partnerships with many of the public authorities, we cannot do educational programmes with them*”. Here once again I observe the notion of *negligence* from the government, as it was the case with Filmmor.

6.2 Finding 2. Importance of domestic (local) and international partnerships. In the following section I will analyze how important it is to NGOs to establish partnerships with local and international authorities and institutions, as well as their attitudes towards cooperation with similar NGOs. Even though my initial expectation was that such partnerships are equally important to all NGOs, from the collected data it turned out that this assumption could be problematized. Therefore, with respect to the responses of my informants, I split the level of partnership importance into two:

- (1) Vital - Filmmor, TKDF, WWHR
- (2) Blurred / Contentious - KA.DER / AK-DER

6.2.1 Vital importance of partnerships

Table 2. illustrates which of the NGOs’ statements prove the essentiality of their partnerships

with similar NGOs. An evaluation will be provided below the table.

	NGO	Key indicators
Partnerships with similar NGOs	Filmmor	<p>- We work in every field, so we usually work in coalitions. Actually I don't know the exact number of the partnership we have. This is the only way we have power, when we are together, this is the only way we can do.</p> <p>- Women's organizations were closed down. We lost partnerships, we lost close friends that we worked with. We are becoming less and less and we are experiencing the enervation of this impairment. There are so few women's organizations left in Turkey and there is so much need.</p>
	TKDF	<p>- With other women's NGOs we established coalitions regarding reforms in the Turkish criminal law, Violence against women law and worked altogether towards changing reforms, without any ideological or occupational separations among us. Honestly, when we work altogether, we are very powerful and we always gain success.</p> <p>- The last years were really tiring to us, against our expectations, our job became even more and more, many NGOs have been shut down, therefore now we have way more weight on our shoulders.</p>
	WWHR	<p>- Regarding the Penal Code Article 103 of the Children's Sexual Abuse Crime, we, as women's rights organizations, came together very fast, we did huge protests and succeeded in changing the existing amendments.</p> <p>- We are also going to make advocacy work with other women's organizations regarding the Istanbul Convention Action against violence against women and domestic violence - Turkey will be reported.</p> <p>- Many women's rights NGOs were closed, even with part of them we were having partnerships.</p>

Table 2. Partnerships with similar NGOs

A common feature of the women's movement groups, as indicated by Moghadam (2009), is that they often coalesce into coalitions with other organizations in pursuance of enhancing their powers. This affirmation particularly echoes in my interlocutor's answers. All of the three NGOs, mentioned in the table, were interviewed through Skype and I could notice how convincing and excited they were while talking of their connections with other women's organizations. They all expressed their pride of being successful when they unite forces. Tarro's (2011) observation that with the substantial expansion of these voluntary networks, their potential of influencing governmental bodies also grew up, mirrors in the positive results that the NGOs achieve when they pressure the government altogether. This multi-organizational character of the movement is a parallel to what Giugni (1998) notes about the more advanced methods, which the organizations have begun to use to challenge the state and provided them with greater opportunities to produce legislative changes.

Alongside, however, Helmut's (2005) claim that successful social movement activists, who achieve policy changes and, therefore, have a counteractive relation with governments, and Banks et al.'s (2015) assertion, that "*where governments equate civil society with political opposition and create regulations to dampen or repress civil society, NGOs face severe limitations on their ability to act as agents of progressive social change.*" (p. 711), can provide explanations why the presence of women's rights NGOs in Turkey has been limited; in this case, as all of my respondents specified, by government's closing down of many partnership NGOs. Additionally, Anheier et al.'s (2005) indication, that with the heightened significance of NGOs presence in the area of politics, new challenges that require more competence and power appear on the surface, criticism and competition become a daily routine to the organizations, can further unravel this trend.

In Table 3. I examine if a cooperation between the participant NGOs and local authorities exists, and if yes, to what extent this cooperation reflects on their work.

	NGO	Key indicators
Cooperation with local authorities	Filmmor	- With regard to the Film Festivals, we are still able to do a dialogue and work together with the Ministry of Culture and we constantly have meetings with it when it comes to the festivals.
	TKDF	- AKP government is against us, we don't work with them, it is not possible for us to work with them. However we always meet and keep connection with local authorities.
	WWHR	- Local authorities are more independent from the government and we try to do and we actually do cooperation with public authorities. Local authorities are completely different, but it will be a lie if I say we can work with all of the province municipalities regarding our educational programmes.

Table 3. Cooperation with local authorities

As seen from my informants' replies, although they lack of a dialogue with the upper spheres of the government, they still manage to keep a decent level of cooperation with local authorities. Heurlin (2009) explains this phenomenon by stating, that a possible partnership is more feasible if NGOs manage in securing liable allies within the narrow circles of local governments, because rarely they can convince state structures or national leaders to take part in their activities.

Taking into account what Heurlin states and the fact that my participants separated their responses, when I asked them about their partnerships in Turkey, into national and local levels, I assume that NGOs' alliance direction starts undoubtedly at local levels, and furthermore, I consider that ensuring the support of local agencies can guarantee to a large extent their subsistence, especially when the communication with national agents is controversial. Moreover, given the fact that the ground for the continuation of the women's NGOs' activities in Turkey is so unstable and unpredictable, the extent, to which central and local governments are inclined to such collaboration or whether reform-oriented ministries support their initiatives (Clark 1998), becomes a key factor.

As stated by Moghadam (2009), nonetheless women’s movements may have different cultural and national backgrounds, there are witnessed particular similarities, for instance, in the ways they elaborate their claims to the states or develop networks. In Table 4., where I outline what my interviewees revealed to me regarding their international allies and the importance to them of having such, I find particular similarities in the way they advocate their demands.

	NGO	Key indicators
Lobbying international actors	Filmmor	<p>- We have international partnerships, as well as partnerships with the Women Films Festivals, with the European Women's Lobby, with the Women's Coalition in Turkey, there is a Platform of Women's Priorities for Constitutional Reform</p> <p>- The European process was a very positive process for us. That time we were able to influence legislations processes for women. However, when Turkey turned its back to Europe, and specifically after the Gezi protests, the AKP got completely withdrawn, especially towards women’s organizations.</p>
	WWHR	<p>- More specifically we follow the EU agreements on Women's rights and Agreements against Women’s discrimination. For ex. CEDAW, which every 4 years prepares a report, for instance, last year CEDAW reported Turkey. Also we go and meet directly with officials. In addition, every year we participate in the annual two-week session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which is held in New York), we participated this year as well.</p>

Table 4. Lobbying international actors

Scholars, who have done research on the women’s movement’s strategies in lobbying the international arena (Guidry et al. 2000, Moghadam 2009), recognised that women’s movement organizations usually rely their arguments on international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and that international conventions on human rights assist to local groups in forming their demands in ways that allow these groups to strengthen their potential for influencing national policies. Kardam (2014), which has made a similar research, but on the case of Turkey, sustains the notion that women’s movement in Turkey succeeded in gaining support from the UN

and other women's organizations around the world by travelling to global conferences and raising awareness through workshops and organizing national conferences to promulgate CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for action and other international conventions on women's rights. These tendencies Sperling et al. (2001) justifies with the proliferation of the so called "transnational advocacy networks" which according to the authors consist of elite and social professional networks, which encourage local women groups to take part in international conferences and forums, where they can exchange knowledge and connect with activists from all around the world. Thus, it comes with no surprise that my informants also referred a big part of their advocacy work to following the international community on women's issues, keeping themselves updated regarding international agreements and treaties in the field of women's rights, and participating to conferences held worldwide.

What is more complex and the most intriguing to me, however, is what Filmmor said: "*the European process was a very positive process for us. That time we were able to influence legislations processes for women*". Authors (Negrón-Gonzales 2016, Kardam 2011) illustrate the EU process as a bearer of significant change in the women's movement, which concentrated its efforts on lobbying EU actors and institutions and, as a result, achieved its biggest success - reform of the Turkish Civil and Penal Codes from a Gender Perspective, which took place in 2000-2001 and was lead by WWHR. The movement had two main strategies:

- 1) It combined international (the EU) and national (the opposition parties, the state women's machinery KSGM) advocacy with domestic allies (mobilization of women's groups);
- 2) It took advantage of the opportunities which the EU process gave to the movement, when the government was prone for pressure "from above" - the government was vulnerable of accession negotiations, reflecting in its fears of criticism from the EU during accession negotiations.

Strategy 1) overlaps with that Keck and Sikkink (1998) call *Information Politics* and *Leverage Politics*, where *the former* is telephone and Internet-based circulation of up-to-date and eye-catching information, often having technical and statistical characteristics, that aims to reach geographically distant potential allies, and *the latter* is leveraging influential international actors, such as EU institutions, so to empower weak domestic groups that can pressure state agencies

directly. With no doubt women's organizations in Turkey managed to implement these strategies and to receive critical backing from the EU;

By the same token, both strategies 1) and 2) can be related to the “*openness of the policy-making system*”, which Burstein et al. (1995) defines as the advantageous situation, when the political structure *per se* is weak and vulnerable to interventions from “outside” actors. Furthermore, they can be also related to what Keck and Sikkink (1998) claim about the success of movement networks: they are successful when target actors are “[...] *vulnerable either to material incentives or to sanctions from outside actors*” (idem, p. 28).

Surely, adhering to these tactics, the women's movement in Turkey gained incomparable success in the first term of the AKP. However, Filmmor continues, “*when Turkey turned its back to Europe, and specifically after the Gezi protests, the AKP got completely withdrawn, especially towards women's organizations*”. How did this *withdrawn* reflect on the movement's understanding of success and failure, will be investigated in the last section of the chapter.

6.2.2 Blurred / Contentious importance of domestic (local) and international partnerships

The reason, that I use the term “blurred”, is KA-DER's short and relatively vague answer to the question of its strategic partnerships with other organizations: “*We are in cooperation with many non-governmental organizations and consulates from Sweden, USA, Holland, England, Germany, based in Turkey, and we receive support from them on different projects*” (Appendix 2.4). It will be exaggerated, if I assume that key partnerships with similar NGOs in Turkey or UN/EU institutions are not with a high importance to the NGO. My supposition is rather, that KA-DER's central alliance structure is the government itself, and the fact that the organization is engaged with lots of media advertisements and constant meetings with governmental agencies during electoral periods. Furthermore, I believe that if the NGO replied to this question not through a questionnaire, but during an interview, I could delve into more details and obtain further information.

More puzzling are AKDER's controversial comments regarding its experience with national and

international actors. I will outline the most eminent ones in Table 5 (Appendix 2.5).

1.	During the headscarf ban debates, I still remember the NGOs, which ignored our right to education.
2.	The Istanbul Convention and the agreements with the EU were enacted and signed without considering the structure and dynamics of our country in matters concerning the women's rights. This, in my personal opinion, increased violence to the woman. For example, it may be more effective to try to understand the problem with a family counselor, such as a pressure for psychological treatment for anger control, instead of the expulsion penalty given to the man at first place, which actually increased the violence.
3.	Extraordinary circumstances such as July 15 [2016 Turkish coup d'état attempt], and interventions from outside, of course influenced the country. No matter if it's the AKP or other party ruling the state, such tensions are reducing the efficiency of women's rights and the workings in the field of social issues.
4.	At the 28th February Coup, the European Court of Human Rights said to us that this is our very private concern and supported the taking away of our educational rights.

Table 5. AKDER's comments regarding domestic and international partnerships

In my interpretation of 1., AKDER here refers to the secularist women's organizations as *"the NGOs, which ignored our right to education"* (Table 4). As Arat (2016) contends, even though islamist and secularist organizations can show solidarity to each other, for example with relevance to issues like violence against women, they still possess polarized views for women and their roles in the society. The outcome of these views could be a clash of interests, when secularist women do not support initiatives of Islamist women, that can harm the former's social groups of support.

2. and 3. comments, I assume, are interconnected. First of all, in *"it may be more effective to try to understand the problem with a family counselor"*, relates once again to the organization's pro-family approach, that also evidently corresponds to the AKP's pro-family approach. Secondly, the fact that AKDER refers to the 2016 Turkish coup d'état attempt as *"interventions from outside (...),reducing the efficiency of women's rights and the workings in the field of social issue"*, I interpret as a correlation of: interventions from outside -> instability in the government -

> instability in the organization.

Comment 4. It is justifiable that AKDER, which is an organization that has emerged as a consequence of a particular event, that is to say the 28th of February 1997 Post-modern Coup, causing the headscarf ban, does not determine as an ally or a target of cooperation an institution that has supported the decision to ban headscarved women from attending public institutions.

As a result of these assumptions, I named the importance of domestic (local) and international partnerships to AKDER “contentious”. Despite these statements, AKDER keeps its democratic tone, responding “*as an organization with a high percentage of physicians and healthcare professionals, of course we would like to negotiate with international organizations and work on behalf of humanity, especially with those who do not have a secret agenda and who prioritize human beings*” (Appendix 2.1).

6.3 Finding 3. Changes in the understanding of success with regard to the current challenges, posed to women and women’s movement in contemporary Turkey.

When I included in the Interview guide Question Nr. 12, my purpose was to evaluate what accounts for success for the organizations. My prediction was that their answers will be connected to what every single organization has set up as its mission, its goals. Table 6 will demonstrate to what extent my predictions came true.

Goals, as described in organizations’ official websites		Success, as described in the answers of organizations	
Filmmor	Aims to increase the involvement of women in cinema and media, to enhance their opportunities and empower them to express themselves in these fields, to spread women’s non-sexist representations and experiences.	Filmmor	We will be successful the day we stop operating. We will be successful when women do not need us anymore, when there is no sexism or discrimination in the field.
TKDF	Aims for the material and	TKDF	On the one hand, to reduce the

	spiritual development of the society through the development of women and to provide support and solidarity in this matter.		issues, related to women, and to raise awareness in the society with regard them. On the other hand, to be able to reach victims. Also, to be able to implement a good dialogue with the public sector, i.e. with the government.
WWHR	Aims to promote women’s human rights, equality and non-discrimination in Turkey and on the international level.	WWHR	Feminist government like the one in Sweden, a feminist world could be a success.
KA-DER	KA.DER is a women's organization advocating that women and men should be equally represented in every area in all decision-making bodies.	KA-DER	Success is when the Turkish Grand National Assembly of Turkey and local governments are represented at 50% of women.
AKDER	Aims to prevent violations of human rights and all kinds of discrimination, to ensure consciousness and to increase the knowledge among the society and to provide assistance to women, who have experienced discrimination.	AKDER	A society where the woman creates a happy and strong and peaceful nest. It is a society where peace and justice prevail. Living in peace and tranquility is a necessity for every country.

Table 6. Goals of the women’s rights NGOs, as described in their official websites versus Success, as described in their answers

By definition, anything can be successful if the initially set goals have been achieved. Burstein et al. (1995) define the goals of social movements as “*the formally stated objectives of political movement organizations: those goals publicly presented in speech or writing to non movement actors such as movement targets, the media, or bystander publics*” (p. 282). Most of what “success” means for my interlocutors overlaps with what they have stated publicly as their goals, as shown on Table 5. However, as stated by the authors (idem), considering that a social movement is constituted of lots of elements, such as numerous social movement organizations, different actors, environments, factors that can impact them, is a key to analyze their success. Therefore, as a next step I found it crucial to examine what prevents the movement of achieving success in contemporary Turkey, in other words to explore the current challenges, which are

posed to the organizations.

According to my informants' responses, the biggest challenge, which they are facing in the aftermath of a government's decision, is the closing down of women's movement NGOs. Additionally, as most of them indicated, a dialogue with governmental agencies is almost impossible, since most of the channels for communication are blocked: *"the AKP got completely withdrawn, especially towards women's organizations"* (Appendix 2.2). WWHR reflects on this situation as a *"period, where if a certain NGO acts in an inappropriate to the government way, the latter can easily shut down its operations"* (Appendix 2.4). The oppressive approach of the AKP government towards the movement is clearly visible in this comment. The reality, in which NGOs operate mirrored in their answers, as following:

<p>Filmmor</p>	<p>- While the name of our first movie was "What is clitoris?", the last movie we filmed is called "Femicides". That is to say... while we were hoping that women live the life of their dreams, in fact, we experience a reality, in which women are being murdered. In this scenario, we do our posters, research and work in general around these problems. Of course, what women experience in Turkey indirectly determines the agenda of all of us.</p> <p>- We did festivals even when the environment was the worst. We will go on in every circumstance, but if I have to say the truth, we experience difficulties in maintaining our own health, our own soul health, so to say ... we are very exhausted. (...) we talked about whether we have the energy to make the festival this year. Because we really did not have energy left. On the other hand, there is such a huge demand, so we continue, because if women say we have to go on, we do. But we are tired, we are so exhausted, because it is very difficult, especially now when so many women's organizations were closed down (...) We are becoming less and less and we are experiencing the enervation of this impairment. But on the other side, we have to continue, for now we can still do it.</p>
<p>WWHR</p>	<p>- Changes in the government's perceptions towards women influenced women's movement, the feminist movement, as to we are now restricted in choosing our paths of work and to apply these choices. Especially the last years, with the government's negative escalations towards women, lead the women's movement to work more reactively. We have won lots of fights, and it appears that the government wants to take back these victories from us, as a result, it seems like</p>

	our work is mostly concentrated in reacting to this. Therefore, there are a lot of backwards steps in our agenda.
TKDF	- The last years really tired us. Against our expectations, our job became even more and more, many NGOs have been shut down, therefore now we have way more weight on our shoulders. - For sure our work will continue long time in the future, since this situation seems to have no end.
KA-DER	- We are trying to react to the AKP government's practices against women's rights, equality and generally to all rights.
AKDER	- We keep on our tries to solve the situation within the country structure, in the living. Right now, we are working full time, trying to catch up, but we can not show the performance we want.

Table 7. Contemporary conditions under which women's rights NGOs operate in Turkey

In his prominent work “Was it worth the effort? The outcomes and consequences of social movements” (1998), Giugni concludes that the degree of success and its evaluation can vary with respect to the participants in the movement processes as well as to their perceptions of success, because certain action that has been assessed as success by some, can be a failure to others. This statement very closely describes my interpretations of the changes in the understanding of success with regard to the current challenges, posed to women and women’s movement in contemporary Turkey. Even though, for my respondents their biggest successes were the legislative changes in favor of women they contributed to in the past, what in my understanding is their biggest success, is, the fact that they do not give up, the fact that they continue their work even “when environment was the worst” (Filmor). Their current success is reacting to “the AKP government's practices against women's rights” (KA-DER), and even though their work is “mostly concentrated in reacting to this” (KA-DER) and despite the presence of a government that “wants to take back these victories from us” (WWHR). It seems that they will continue to stand up for their positions, as TKDF states “for sure our work will continue long time in the future, since this situation seems to have no end”, similarly AKDER says “we keep on our tries to solve the situation within the country structure, in the living” and Filmor concludes “we have to continue, for now we can still do it”.

I summarize this Finding by saying that, although their work fields and perspectives towards women might be dissimilar, and even conflicting in some areas, all of the interviewed NGOs are positioned under the same umbrella of a politicized and a very controversial reality, in which they are running their activities. What is more, I assume that their success of still being able to sustain their existence with regard to the current challenges they undergo, de facto unites them, rather than divides.

CHAPTER 7. Conclusion

Within the last Chapter of this thesis I will present the key findings of this study, I will conclude on what I am proudest of, I will elucidate which was the hardest part and how did I solve it, and I will provide recommendations for further research.

Key findings of the research:

- ➡ The agenda of the women's rights NGOs have been indirectly determined, due to extraordinary changes in the life of women in Turkey
- ➡ NGOs brought about legislative changes in favor of women's rights mostly when they were in coalitions with partnering organizations and when the government was vulnerable to sanctions from outside actors (the EU process)
- ➡ NGOs' working fields and perceptions towards women determine their relationship with the AKP government, their cooperation with similar domestic organizations and with international actors
- ➡ NGOs have been closed down in Turkey → loss of partnerships → challenges for the continuation of the activities of the rest of NGOs
- ➡ Success for women's movement turned out to be no longer "a reform", it is "the ability to keep on running their activities", albeit at a more limited scale

This thesis set out to explore how the ambiguity and complexity in the relations between NGOs and Governments is expressed in the context of the women's movement in Turkey. What my biggest pride is, first, that I succeeded in collecting data from target NGOs despite of the sensitivity of this topic, and secondly, that although, my sample size is relatively small, the fact that my respondents are representatives of women's rights organizations, which differ with relevance to their ideological features and the work areas they are engaged with, has contributed to obtain a more general picture illustrating distinctive points of view. The study covered opinions of *Kemalist*, *Islamist* and *Leftist* women's organizations. Finally, the combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods has augmented the research's reliability and validity.

What was the hardest part, however, was to identify a solid theoretical background that can support the findings of this thesis. My approach of research was inductive, therefore I curtailed the existing literature by tracking down the most prominent studies on models of NGO-State relations, on Civil society and on Social movements.

The findings of this thesis contribute to the better understanding of relationships between NGOs and governments in the particular context of Turkey, as well as provides variations of these relationships with accordance to the political environment, in which NGOs operate. The deficiency of existing studies on typologies of relations between governments and NGOs, according to the present study's findings, is explained as a fact that generalizations of these relations are problematic, due to their high dependence on the contemporary state of affairs in the countries. Hence, within the context of this research, there is a need for continuation with the present investigation in order to formulate extended propositions and definitions. According to my recommendations, an improved research is possible when taking into consideration a broader spectrum of women's organizations, e.g. Kurdish organizations.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1. Interview guide

- **Establishment and purpose of the organization**

- 1) Why and when was this organization established? (event)
- 2) In terms of what do your mission and vision change? Did AKP government affect your vision and mission throughout the years? If yes, how?

- **Process**

- 3) How would you describe the organizational culture? For example: your way of working, your work attitude
- 4) How do you manage and run your organisation? What kind of inquiries are you dealing with the most?
- 5) How would you describe the strengths and weaknesses of the organization? What kind of advantageous or disadvantageous situations would mostly affect them?
- 6) Is there anything you would like to change about your organization, but you cannot, regarding the AKP government? If yes, what would it be?
- 7) What are your short- and long-term projects with relevance to or against the AKP government? For ex. in 3 months, 3 years?
- 8) What are your advocacy strategies and activities?
- 9) In which way is your organization unique regarding the support that your offer? What makes this organization different from similar organizations?

- **Key stakeholders**

- 10) Do you keep any strategic partnerships with other organizations? For example, international organizations?
- 11) Do you meet with government institutions regarding the services and support you provide? If yes, what are your main purposes of it and how have they changed throughout the years (Throughout the AKP's government). What are the results of those meetings?

- **Impact measurement**

- 12) How do you evaluate your work with relevance to or against the AKP government?
- 13) What accounts for success within the organization?
- 14) What are the creative and innovative things that you have done within the AKP government? For example projects, demonstrations, protests.

- **Criticism**

15) Do you face any criticism from the government or other organizations (for ex. “GONGOs”- government-oriented NGOs)? If yes, how do you respond to it?

- **Conclusion**

16) Do you think the AKP government imposes religious obligations? Do you think that Islam is taking women's rights backwards or onwards, for example: by giving religious people better opportunities to be employed in the public sector?

17) Would you like to say something in addition regarding the AKP government?

Appendix 2. Translations of answers

Appendix 2.1 AKDER

1) Why and when was this organization established? (event)

After the Post-modern coup on February 28, 1997, we were forbidden to take the examinations of the courses that we have been enrolled since the middle of the semester. The only reason that was given to us is that we were wearing a headscarf. We were forbidden to continue our courses due to our religious belief, given the fact that 60 percent of women in our country are wearing headscarves. We have made progress on the legal aspects of the students, teachers and faculty members. We tried to explain the situation to the party representatives, the journalists, to the public. Then we went to international meetings. As of February 1999, we continued these activities under the roof of the organization. The ban, which began in 1997, was unofficially resolved in 2010, officially in 2013 with a regulation. However, the headscarf ban still continues in private companies.

2) In terms of what do your mission and vision change? Did AKP government affect your vision and mission throughout the years? If yes, how?

The purpose of our organization was to remove obstacles to the education of the conservative woman who was to enter her working life. After the AK Party government came to power, there were many changes in the field such as improvements in the economic, cultural and social rights in Turkey. A better salary of a mother with a disabled child raised her mother's self-confidence, social well-being. Participation of their children in rehabilitation centres has enabled the mother to spare time for herself. School books were free, and the sports and social facilities that were opened by the municipalities made it possible for the woman to be more positively involved in society. There were improvements not only for the underprivileged ones, but for mothers from the whole society. So there were, of course, changes in our vision and our mission, even though they remained the same in their foundations. Previously limited to obtain further education due to her headscarf, now the headscarved woman can get the education she wants, therefore her participation in business life also enhanced. This led to the need to do more NGO work in order to help a working mother to be treated with a positive discrimination, and to have the necessary knowledge for her social and labor rights.

3) How would you describe the organizational culture? For example: your way of working, your work attitude

I think we are a typical human rights organization but since we have been discriminated for so long, we don't have empathy towards this inequality anymore. We keep on our tries to solve the

situation within the country structure, the living, and to decide what kind of stance we are going to take.

4) How do you manage and run your organisation? What kind of inquiries are you dealing with the most?

- We have regular monthly board meetings, we discuss our views on different topics and the social media daily agenda.
- Mobbing in the workplace, violence against women, problems of refugee families, etc.

5) How would you describe the strengths and weaknesses of the organization? What kind of advantageous or disadvantageous situations would mostly affect them?

The strong and advantageous aspect is that we always keep on the line we believe, we don't follow someone else's ideology, but we never insult anyone, as long as the individual rights are respected. During the headscarf ban debates, I still remember the NGOs which ignored our right to education.

Weak and disadvantageous aspect is that due to our right for education and work was taken away from us, we were late .. our schools were late, we were late in life. Right now, we are working full time, trying to catch up, but we can not show the performance we want.

6) Is there anything you would like to change about your organization, but you cannot, regarding the AKP government? If yes, what would it be?

After February 28th, despite the fact that our rights were taken away from us, it hasn't been made enough from the AKP to compensate for all these. We wanted these rights to be granted.

Another important aspect, are the Istanbul Convention and agreements with the EU that have been enacted and signed without considering the structure and dynamics of our country in matters concerning the women's rights. This, in my personal opinion, increased violence to the woman. For example, it may be more effective to try to understand the problem with a family counselor, such as a pressure for psychological treatment for anger control, instead of the expulsion penalty given to the man at first place, which actually increased the violence, because men who have been expelled are already prone to violence.

7) What are your short- and long-term projects with relevance to or against the AKP government? For ex. in 3 months, 3 years?

To give advices to my party on maternity and employee rights, particularly applicable to working

women.

8) What are your advocacy strategies and activities?

We participate in the meetings we are invited and express our opinions in written and oral form. We always try to give our positive or negative feedbacks.

9) In which way is your organization unique regarding the support that you offer? What makes this organization different from similar organizations?

I believe that providing help to the students who lost their educational rights in the period after February 28, with the necessary financial and moral support, language education, translating the lessons they have not taken, trying to reduce the lost years - we are unique in these. We also helped many Syrian children to go to school. We are very sensitive about education.

10) Do you keep any strategic partnerships with other organizations? For example, international organizations?

As an organization with a high percentage of physicians and healthcare professionals, of course we would like to negotiate with international organizations and work on behalf of humanity, especially with those who do not have a secret agenda and who prioritize human beings.

11) Do you meet with government institutions regarding the services and support you provide? If yes, what are your main purposes of it and how have they changed throughout the years (Throughout AKP government). What are the results of those meetings?

Until 2010 AKDER has repeatedly kept in contact with government officials about the solution of the headscarf problem. But the problem was solved only after a presentation at the United Nations in 2010. We communicate our recommendations and opinions at the relevant meetings.

12) How do you evaluate your work with relevance to or against the AKP government?

Extraordinary circumstances such as July 15 [2016 Turkish coup d'état attempt], and interventions from outside, of course influenced the country. No matter if it's the AKP or other party ruling the state, such tensions are reducing the efficiency of women's rights and the workings in the field of social issues.

13) What accounts for success within the organization?

A society where the woman creates a happy and strong and peaceful nest. It is a society where

peace and justice prevail. Living in peace and tranquility is a necessity for every country.

14) What are the creative and innovative things that you have done within the AKP government? For example projects, demonstrations, protests

By 2013 we succeeded in ensuring the education for every women in Turkey.
In the following year we also pioneered the preparation of a documentary.
We formed a council with NGOs in Europe and Turkey.

15) Do you face any criticism from the government or other organizations (for ex. “GONGOs”-government-oriented NGOs)? If yes, how do you respond to it?

No, we do not.

16) Do you think the AKP government imposes religious obligations? Do you think that Islam is taking women's rights backwards or onwards, for example: by giving religious people better opportunities to be employed in the public sector?

No, 99% of people living in Turkey are Muslim. Every human being should live as he believes. If you are praying, what is the problem with showing that your are praying? A politician or another professional. We need to look for ways of living with different cultures in the same place, with peace and tolerance. We saw how much damage can a group of people who do not live as they believe, and who constantly stigmatize, do to the country with their coup attempts on July 15 and before. We live in a democratic country and the AKP is a Party with a 50 percent vote of the population. If people do not like their actions, they shall share this with MPs and party representatives. We are living in a much more democratic country than before, where women are not fired just because they are wearing headscarves. At the 28th February Coup, the European Court of Human Rights said to us that this is our very private concern and supported the Coup in taking away our educational rights.

On the contrary, we do not believe that the AKP has such a strong influence in the society, 15th July Coup proved that. Every government needs to create its own staff. If people are unsatisfied, they will show it at the next elections. The right thing is to leave the politics to politicians. As a non-governmental organization, we want to work towards human and social issues and women's rights.

17) Would you like to say something in addition regarding the AKP government?

We, as a non-governmental organization, always follow what people of our country have experienced in their life in the past 30 years. No matter what is said in the international arena, the people observe and understand and what they live, their opportunities, what they they accept or

not. For this reason, we believe that every person who believes in democracy must respect the choices of the people.

We are trying to understand why there exists the perception that NGOs' activities, which in their essence should not be political, are carried out by the AKP. There are so many more issues to be concerned about, like ISIS, for instance. Even Asad, who left millions of people homeless, doesn't have such a negative outlook, as the AKP has.

Appendix 2.2 Filmmor

1) Why and when was this organization established? (event)

Filmmor Women's Cooperative was founded in 2003, but we are working since 2001. In fact, we started with something very basic, so we started to do cinema work in cinema and to work with cinema. We established movie workshops, we produced movies for women. In the meantime, a film we shot became famous worldwide around the world, then we started a festival for women movies, and there is the movie festival since 2003. We want to intervene and criticize sexism in the media and cinema, but at the same time we want to produce and reproduce this area. Media is a very large field, we work against sexism in the field of communication. But of course, as a women's organization, we are trying to work for everything that is happening to women.

2) In terms of what do your mission and vision change? Did AKP government affect your vision and mission throughout the years? If yes, how?

We are working with certain means, we work in the name of women and with women, we have a slogan "For women and with women". We always use visual tools, we work with certain methods using the images and videos we get from the film festival. Actually, we do not change, we still have the same work areas, but the changes are actually inevitable, because, for instance, when the name of our first movie was "What is clitoris?", the last movie we filmed is called "Femicides". That is to say... while we were hoping that women live the life of their dreams, we in fact experience a reality when women are being murdered. In this scenario, we do our posters, research and work in general around these problems. Of course, what women experience in Turkey indirectly determines the agenda of all of us.

3) How would you describe the organizational culture? For example: your way of working, your work attitude.

I do not really believe in something like an organizational culture, it is something that applies to more capitalist companies. Civil society organizations have their certain aims and in the end

there is the feminist ethic for us that we try to behave accordingly.

4) How do you manage and run your organisation? What kind of inquiries are you dealing with the most?

We have a team for every different project. There is a coordination in every area and there is a formal Board of directors, of course. With regard to the inquiries, we do every kind of consultation. If a woman feels life-threatened, she will reach out every existing women's organization. There are so few women's organizations left in Turkey and there is so much need, that no one has the luxury of "Ohh Filmmor works on that field, the other one works on another... ?" No one has the luxury of choosing anymore.

5) How would you describe the strengths and weaknesses of the organization? What kind of advantageous or disadvantageous situations would mostly affect them?

It's difficult for me to answer these questions, because I don't want to sound like I am bragging our organization, but in the end we did festivals even when the environment was the worst. We will go on in every circumstance, but if I have to say the truth, we experience difficulties in maintaining our own health, our own soul health, so to say ... we are very exhausted.

At the moment, for instance, every single one of us is involved individually in the referendum campaign. At the same time, for example, we talked about whether we have the energy to make the festival this year. Because we really did not have energy left. On the other hand, there is such a huge demand, so we continue, because if women say we have to go on, we do. But we are tired, we are so exhausted, because it is very difficult, especially now when so many women's organizations were closed down. In one night, the law came out and we lost partnerships, we lost close friends we worked with. We are becoming less and less and we are experiencing the enervation of this impairment. But on the other side, we have to continue, for now we can still do it.

6) Is there anything you would like to change about your organization, but you cannot, regarding the AKP government? If yes, what would it be?

In the past we were able to work together with other women's organizations in preparing media reports, in lobbying for legislation changes related to violence against women. We were able to cooperate with the relevant departments of the state, for instance with the Ministry of Women, which is now closed down. We were able to discuss with the Ministry of Women, to pressure it, to ensure certain laws as we wanted. However, in the last period, especially the last 3-4 years it is not even possible to have a dialogue with the AKP government. There is no such work with the women's organizations. It has no chance of any influence, there is no channel left. Therefore, like every citizen, we are trying to make our voices heard from the "outside" through campaigns,

where we can announce our criticism. Since the Ministry of Women was closed down, there is no such thing as a dialogue between us and the government. I don't know, I guess they are meeting with the pro-family organizations now.

7) What are your short- and long-term projects, for ex. in 3 months, 3 years? With relevance to or against the AKP government?

Lastly, we made a research on eventual protests against femicides and in 2016 we prepared the so called "Emergency action plan". Around 10 women's organization participated. Femicides worldwide are unlikely to stop, firstly the male-female inequality needs to stop. However, we believed that the number of femicides can be significantly decreased and therefore we created this Action Plan, but we have not been able to make an appointment with any relevant ministries and agencies to advocate it. We managed to talk with all the other parties in the Parliament - CHP, HDP and MHP. They told us that they would support the implementation of this Action Plan, however it was not possible for us to make an appointment with the AKP, the government, the Family Ministry.

8) In which way is your organization unique regarding the support that your offer? What makes this organization different from similar organizations?

I do not want to describe ourselves as one and only or unique, because all women's organizations are struggling altogether for similar purposes and they are working hard, but in our field there is no other organization working with the media tools we work with. There is no other women's organization that works in the cinema field, however all of us work on similar purposes with similar strategies.

9) Do you keep any strategic partnerships with other organizations? For example, international organizations?

Yes, we have international partnerships, as well as partnerships with the Women Films Festivals, with the European Women's Lobby, with the Women's Coalition in Turkey, there is a Platform of Women's Priorities for Constitutional Reform, campaigns that we have partnered against law amendments, a Media monitoring group. In fact, we work in every field, so we usually work in coalitions. Actually I don't know the exact number of the partnership we have. This is the only way we have power, when we are together, this is the only way we can do.

10) Do you meet with government institutions regarding the services and support you provide? If yes, what are your main purposes of it and how have they changed throughout the years (Throughout Erdogan's government). What are the results of those meetings?

All channels for women's organizations are blocked, the dialogue is blocked. But for example, we are still able to do a dialogue and work together with the Ministry of Culture and Women's film festivals. But the channels regarding women's issues are all blocked.

11) How do you evaluate your work with relevance to or against the AKP government?

Since there are no channels of cooperation, there is nothing we can do now. For example, the European process was a very positive process for us. That time we were able to influence legislations processes for women. However, when Turkey turned its back to Europe, and specifically after the Gezi protests, the AKP got completely withdrawn, especially towards women's organizations.

12) What accounts for success within the organization?

We will be successful the day we stop operating. We will be successful when women don't need us anymore, when there is no sexism or discrimination in the field. However, I do not expect success in my lifetime, because it seems this process will continue here.

13) What are the creative and innovative things that you have done within the AKP government? For example projects, demonstrations, protests.

There are so many, for instance, lastly we gained success regarding the "Rapist law", when women in Turkey went out on the streets, made movies, street actions.

14) Do you face any criticism from the government or other organizations (for ex. "GONGOs"-government-oriented NGOs)? If yes, how do you respond to it?

I do not know, surely there is, but it I believe criticism is also a kind of dialogue. Right now we have absolutely none of such.

15) Do you think the AKP government imposes religious obligations? Do you think that Islam is taking women's rights backwards or onwards, for example: by giving religious people better opportunities to be employed in the public sector?

Yes, especially in the last years, it even crawled from the educational system into many other spheres of our lives. Religion was not in our lives as it is now. Religion has always been a political argument in Turkey. I have observed that in all of the 40 years of my life. The AKP's approach towards religious has not always been like that, especially in the beginning I wasn't thinking about it. The last 10 years have been so tense and polarized that the AKP has begun to relate to masses on religion and has begun to produce politics over it. But in fact, Turkey has

never seen such a thing as secularism at all.

16) Would you like to say something in addition regarding the AKP government?

MPs in Turkey, the Ministers became all male-dominated. The state turned out to be “Men-state”. Male-domination is more than ever, because there is a conflict of women in Turkey, a conservative modern conflict. In this conflict women are playing the key role. And unfortunately, that is why women lose the most in their lives. Therefore, I really wish this conflict will be over as soon as possible.

Appendix 2.3 KA.DER

1) Why and when was this organization established? (event)

The Association for the Support of Women Candidates was founded in 1997 by a group of feminist women, which demands equal representation between men and women in politics. We have 4 offices and 4 representatives.

2) In terms of what do your mission and vision change? Did AKP government affect your vision and mission throughout the years? If yes, how?

The mission and vision of our were set up the date our organization was established in 1997. Since then, Turkey was run by different parties, but our line remained the same all the time. Since one of the most important principles of KA.DER is "equal distance", women from every party can join us and be elected as a member of the Board of Directors. Our only goal is to ensure "every woman from every party" have the equality of representation in the decision-making bodies.

3) How would you describe the organizational culture? For example: your way of working, your work attitude?

Our association is the first and only one in Turkey in the field of "workplace". As an organizational culture we can list our principles:

- We are against all kinds of discrimination.
- We stand at equal distance to all political parties.
- We are working together with women's branches and women's parliamentarians of all political parties, which is with regarding to our principle of equal distance.
- We reflect and spread the perspective of women in all of our works.
- We are working to place Gender Equality in the centre of all policies and programs.

4) How do you manage and run your organisation? What kind of inquiries are you dealing with the most?

We apply the rotation principle in the selection of the General Board of Directors and the Branch Boards of Directors. Nobody can be a board member for more than two terms. Our president, branch presidents and representatives are not party members. We are based on consensus rather than on voting when it comes to take a decision. However, in very difficult circumstances we prefer voting. We are making every effort to reach a consensus when it is necessary to reach a consensus for the values of the association, its principles and the values it defends. We base our work on volunteerism and solidarity. We organize a General meeting every two years and we choose related bodies to the General Board of Directors. Our branches make their own general meetings and determine their management on their own. Representations are made up of individuals, not legal entities.

Our most frequent inquiries are: Women and politics, women's representation in politics, women's empowerment, our views on the legislation on women, our views on practices related to gender discrimination.

5) How would you describe the strengths and weaknesses of the organization? What kind of advantageous or disadvantageous situations would mostly affect them?

The strengths of our organization are its establishment on feminist foundations, the management of good teams, the reputation at home and abroad, meetings, invitations to seminars, media and opinions of the governments. Our 20 years of experience places us in a special place in women's affairs.

Not a weakness, but our intention of development is the institutional structure of our headquarters and branches (we are doing serious work in this direction), the development of projects for access to different funding sources, our perception that we can not follow our principle of equal distance from time to time. We face difficulties in sustaining the organization, when the access to funding resources is not possible. Due to different opinions of the members of our Financial team, we can sometimes encounter tough debates, but at the same time we see it as a necessity for the increase of wealth and democracy consciousness.

6) Is there anything you would like to change about your organization, but you cannot, regarding the AKP government? If yes, what would it be?

Being the Association for the Support of Women Candidates, for many years we demanded the change of political parties and election laws. We want a 50% gender quota and a system that will allow women to be nominated at 50% of the elections. We communicate with every party in

power for these basic aims. We do not have a special position with regard to a particular political party.

7) What are your short- and long-term projects with relevance to or against the AKP government? For ex. in 3 months, 3 years?

As a non-governmental organization we work independently from the authorities. For this reason we are not working against or with governments.

8) What are your advocacy strategies and activities?

Meeting with political party headquarters and women's branches: Since the day it was established, KA.DER continues to establish relations with the general centers and women's branches of the political parties. For this purpose, visits are held to the party provincial presidencies of various political parties in Istanbul and our branches/representations before every general and local elections and they are asked to support us in taking concrete steps.

Media Campaigns; KA.DER has conducted press campaigns since its establishment: in the 1999, 2002, 2007, 2011 and 2015 General Elections, in the 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014 Local Elections, in the 2017 Referendum. These campaigns were widely broadcasted in media and have led to KA.DER's current recognition.

9) In which way is your organization unique regarding the support that your offer? What makes this organization different from similar organizations?

As I have pointed out above, "our main goal" is equal male and female representation in politics. Among the women's associations there is no other association working on this issue.

10) Do you keep any strategic partnerships with other organizations? For example, international organizations?

We are in cooperation with many non-governmental organizations and consulates from Sweden, USA, Holland, England, Germany, based in Turkey, and we receive support from them on different projects.

11) Do you meet with government institutions regarding the services and support you provide? If yes, what are your main purposes of it and how have they changed throughout the years (Throughout AKP government). What are the results of those meetings?

We are in communication with government officials. We are lobbying all parties. The results of

these negotiations can be evaluated by the increase in the proportion of women representation. Of course, not the point we want, but the female representation of the Parliament reached 14.7 percent. There is no significant increase in local administrations. The highest representation is in provincial councils with 10 percent.

12) How do you evaluate your work with relevance to or against the AKP government?

We are trying to react to the AKP government's practices against women's rights, equality and generally all rights. We are doing press releases, signing petition campaigns. We organize social media campaigns. With our projects, we are trying to strengthen women from each political parties and to increase their capacities.

13) What accounts for success within the organization?

Success is when the Turkish Grand National Assembly of Turkey and local governments are represented at 50% of women. As long as we can not achieve this, we will not be able to define ourselves as "successful."

14) What are the creative and innovative things that you have done within the AKP government? For example projects, demonstrations, protests.

With a campaign titled "Show Your Power, Go to Polls", we encouraged our citizens to vote at the Referendum on April 16th. So far we have been very effective with our campaign images, movies on the social media. Many municipalities throughout Turkey have included our campaign visuals on billboards.

In the past general and local elections, we have been instrumental in increasing the number of women nominated as a result of our creative campaigns. Our campaigns have received also international prizes.

15) Do you face any criticism from the government or other organizations (for ex. "GONGOs"-government-oriented NGOs)? If yes, how do you respond to it?

We do not experience any, because we are not such an NGO. We are in communication with GONGOs, but we are not cooperating with them.

16) Would you like to say something in addition regarding the AKP government?

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Appendix 2.4 TKDF

2) In terms of what do your mission and vision change? Did AKP government affect your vision and mission throughout the years? If yes, how?

Our mission has always stayed the same, however the government has influence our work. AKP approach towards women and women's organizations has always been the same, even since 2003, but in the last 10 years it has been even more evident and we experience this.

3) How would you describe the organizational culture? For example: your way of working, your work attitude?

I love this question, and I have always liked to answer to it. The best thing I can say is that we are an organization based wholly on volunteering. We have no funding, we make no advertisements, we have no professionalism. The only real professional partnership we have made so far is the one with the Turkey Federation of Drivers and Automobile Retailers, which for us is a big success (a signed on 03.04.17 protocol with the labeling of the "Domestic Violence Emergency Helpline" numbers on the right rear window of taxis across Turkey (a service, which allows women who have been abused or violated to call the phone numbers on the label and receive support from the police, lawyer or psychologist at no cost, they agreed to install the labels at 75 000 taxis in 81 provinces).

5) How would you describe the strengths and weaknesses of the organization? What kind of advantageous or disadvantageous situations would mostly affect them?

We are a very strong organization, however the last years really tired us. Against our expectations, our job became even more and more, many NGOs have been shut down, therefore now we have way more weight on our shoulders. As a weakness - in the past, we used to have mostly elderly women volunteering within the organization, but now young women at 26-30 age are part of it.

7) What are your short- and long-term projects with relevance to or against the AKP government? For ex. in 3 months, 3 years?

We have preparations for participating in protests in 2019. It will be difficult to talk about long-term projects, but for sure our work will continue long time in future, since this situation seems to have no end. We have preparations for participating in protests in 2019.

8) What are your advocacy strategies and activities?

AKP government is against us, we don't work with them, it is not possible for us to work with them. However we always meet and keep connection with local authorities.

9) In which way is your organization unique regarding the support that your offer? What makes this organization different from similar organizations?

We are a very reliable and plausible organization, this is very important. I have travelled all around Turkey 5 times, municipalities, provinces, therefore I believe our experience can be taken as an example from other organizations.

10) Do you keep any strategic partnerships with other organizations? For example, international organizations?

Definitely! With other women NGOs we established coalitions regarding reforms in the Turkish criminal law, Violence against women law and worked altogether towards changing reforms, without any ideological or occupational separations among us. For example, 131 women's NGOs established the Penal Code reform coalition regarding the "Rape Law" (In November, the AKP proposed a measure in Parliament that would allow rapists who marry their victims to receive lighter prison sentences), we have signed a petition that this law's functioning is not proper. During the Turkish Criminal code reform we worked for With 135 women's NGOs we came together again to work for the Turkish Criminal code reform upon the same thought. Same proceedings happened with regard to the Istanbul convention, then we were around 111 women's NGOs. Honestly, when we work altogether, we are very powerful and we always gain success.

10) Do you meet with government institutions regarding the services and support you provide? If yes, what are your main purposes of it and how have they changed throughout the years (Throughout the AKP's government). What are the results of those meetings?

After Mr. Erdogan said that women and men are unequal, for us is not appropriate even to try to collaborate with them as a government, which insist on their own perspectives. For me a government that passes an abortion ban reform, that does not raise voice against cases like physical abuses against women in the public transport, a government that claims that one-time-raping is acceptable (the case of 45 students raped in Karaman, Turkey), a government that does nothing towards women being domestically abused, and an approach of the government that causes many women's rights decrease - we cannot work with such institution.

11) How do you evaluate your work with relevance to or against the AKP government?

Definitely, we were there when 4:4 Education reform was passed and there was a very big protest which was heard nation and world-wide, we were also there when against the Rapist law and the Abortion ban. During the Soma Tragedy we were the ones presenting the fastest reports to the governments, the ones helping people in need, providing them with psychologists, meditation centres, we were there first before the government authorities. Moreover, we are an organization that stays always together, we say "this is not enough", we say "no", when women's rights are violated, therefore we are an organization, powerful enough to make our voice to be heard, we are where the women rights are.

12) What accounts for success within the organization?

On the one hand, to reduce the issues, related to women, and to raise awareness in the society with regard them. On the other hand, to be able to reach victims. Also, to be able to implement a good dialogue with the public sector, i.e. with the government.

15) Do you face any criticism from the government or other organizations (for ex. “GONGOs”-government-oriented NGOs)? If yes, how do you respond to it?

KADEM (organization of Erdogan’s daughter - Sümeyye Erdoğan Bayraktar) Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği’nin (KADEM) and KAGIDER are GONGOs. There was a case in a village close to Menderes, Izmir about a director of a school who has sexually violated female students and a teacher from that school has contacted us for advice. That time, we received a call from KADEM not to politicize this case. However we told her that there is nothing to politicize, so she came with us to court and in the end she supported us. Among women NGOs we never insult each other, it is impossible. No matter if we don’t meet them or if we do, we try to convince each other on common topics.

16) Do you think the AKP government imposes religious obligations? Do you think that Islam is taking women's rights backwards or onwards, for example: by giving religious people better opportunities to be employed in the public sector?

Definitely. I cannot say much if it helps religious women, because for me this is not real Islam. Me myself I have read Quran, I know Arabic, so according to my interpretation and the one we see at the public sphere - this is not the same. In the public sector - if you are wearing a headscarf - yes it will be easier and yes you will be more respected. If you are wearing the headscarf it can directly be made connection to your religiousness, or if you are praying or if you are fasting, you are advantageous. For me those things are very wrong. Can you imagine a female judge with headscarf - a direct feature for her preferences.

17) Would you like to say something in addition regarding the AKP government?

If AKP didn’t have the purpose of destroying the republicanism in the country, they could be leading 30 years more, because literally they have no opposition. However, with this politics, the AKP destroyed the system of Turkish values. It has introduced the ‘friend at court’ system, with the perspective of ‘it is okay if it is once’ (raping case), it is a government that tries to gain power by imposing religiousness and islamism, it has destroyed the state tradition. There has been a state tradition even within the Ottoman empire. But today, especially now, just before the Referendum, if it results “Yes”, we’ll start to hear sentences like “Now you are on duty, You are in power, etc.”

Only up to now this year 70 women have been already killed, more than 400 children have been raped. Our job is to deal with these issues.

Appendix 2.5 WWHR

2) In terms of what do your mission and vision change? Did AKP government affect your vision and mission throughout the years? If yes, how?

We are not changing our mission and vision according to any government, therefore AKP is not something that can change our mission and vision. It will persist like this. We are a feminist organization that fights against male-dominant society, and it will persist like this no matter which government is ruling.

Of course, there is an influence from the government, ofc it has its own politics towards women, the ways they use to work shows that they have their own path and politics towards women. We can see that they manage the women politics towards their own perspectives and ideology. Women's perspective within this government is a reflection of Family importance, not the women themselves, more like a women should make children, etc. Woman has been viewed as a bearer, a carrier of this mission. Not as an individual. More like a motherhood, not womanhood. Therefore this is a huge issue for feminist organizations, which previously have had different projects - especially the close of the Ministry of Women, 2012 Abortion ban, de facto it is forbidden even though the ban is not actually in power. That kind of limitations have influence our work greatly.

4) How do you manage and run your organisation? What kind of inquiries are you dealing with the most?

Our organization is not providing a service support. We don't work with lawyers or psychologists, or any kind of professionals. However we help if a women, for example, wants to get divorced after being domestically violated and if she contacts us and we usually forward her to the relevant women's organizations, mostly to Mor cati. However, according to our observations, we can see that women experience too much domestic violence and we see that they don't know exactly where to contact to.

8) What are your advocacy strategies and activities?

We have national and international advocacies. National ones- we actively took part in reforms regarding the Turkish criminal law, the Civil law, the Penal code. International ones - more specifically we follow the EU agreements on Women's rights and Agreements against Women's discrimination. For ex. CEDAW, which every 4 years prepares report, for instance, last year it was Turkey they investigated. Also we go and meet directly with officials. In addition, every year we participate in the annual two-week session of the Commission on the Status of Women,

which is held in New York), we participated this year as well. This year we are also going to make advocacy work with other women's organizations regarding the Istanbul Convention Action against violence against women and domestic violence - this year Turkey will be reported again. This year we have also done advocacy with other women's organizations regarding Sexual abuse against children (a bill about forcibly marrying a girl child to his rapist), we worked with other women NGOs on this issue. We also have a women's rights education programme, which provides them with regarding better knowledge of their rights and empowerment.

6) Is there anything you would like to change about your organization, but you cannot, regarding the AKP government? If yes, what would it be?

The fact that many women's rights NGOs were closed, even with part of them we were having partnerships, for ex. in Van. Therefore it is visible that NGO's activities have been limited, seems like we are in a period, where if a certain NGO acts in an inappropriate to the government way, the latter can easily shut down NGOs operations.

11) Do you meet with government institutions regarding the services and support you provide? If yes, what are your main purposes of it and how have they changed throughout the years (Throughout AKP government). What are the results of those meetings?

This can be separated into two: work with Central and local authorities. Local authorities are more independent from the government and we try to do and we actually do partnerships with public authorities. However, regarding a signed protocol in 1998 between us and the Social services ministry, which was functioning with no problem, in the last years, even though the protocol is valid until 2017, in the AKP period we cannot make partnerships with many of the public authorities, we cannot do educational programmes with them.

Regarding local authorities, it is completely different. Nonetheless, regarding our educational programmes, it will be a lie if we say that we can work with all of the municipalities.

14) What are the creative and innovative things that you have done within the AKP government? For example projects, demonstrations, protests and how do you evaluate your work with relevance to or against the AKP government?

Our organization does not do protests, but as a women's NGO, we were part of the protests regarding the Abortion ban, and even though the ban was not legalized, there are still huge issues at the public hospitals, de facto abortion has been limited. Also regarding the Penal Code Article 103 of the Children's Sexual Abuse Crime, we, as women's rights organizations, came together very fast, we did huge protests and succeeded in changing the existing amendments (the lower limit of the penal sanction is increased if the victim is under 12 years of age). However, changes

in the government's perceptions towards women influenced women's movement, the feminist movement, as to we are now restricted in choosing our paths of work and to apply these choices. Especially the last years, with the government's negative escalations towards women, lead the women's movement to work more reactively. We have won lots of fights, and it appears that the government wants to take back these victories from us, as a result, it seems like our work is mostly concentrated in reacting to this. Therefore, there are a lot of backwards steps in our agenda.

13) What accounts for success within the organization?

Feminist government like the one in Sweden, a feminist world could be a success.

16) Do you think the AKP government imposes religious obligations? Do you think that Islam is taking women's rights backwards or onwards, for example: by giving religious people better opportunities to be employed in the public sector?

It is more about the relationships within the AKP, so we think it is not our field of interest and we don't have opinion towards this.

17) Would you like to say something in addition regarding the AKP government?

I think we need to stay in the framework of the feminist organization, as we are. And this will not change according to or with relevance to the government's. It is not about if the government is Islamist or not, for us it is more about that it is male-dominated and our mission is to change this system.