ACCOMODATING DIVERSITY WITHIN FEMINISM IN TURKEY: THE AMARGI WOMEN'S COOPERATIVE, 2001-2011

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

AYŞE ÜLKÜ ÖZAKIN

IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES

FEBRUARY 2012

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

ACCOMODATING DIVERSITY WITHIN FEMINISM IN TURKEY:
THE AMARGI WOMEN'S COOPERATIVE, 2001-2011

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February, 2012, 169 pages

In this thesis, Amargi Women's Cooperative in Istanbul is studied as an example of diversity feminism in Turkey. Its feminist perspective and challenges faced in realizing its objectives in this context are analyzed based on a description of the process of Amargi's formation, the course of its activities and the debates within the group and especially the in-depth interviews held with ten volunteers. The group's accomplishments and problems encountered during the last ten years in its quest for "doing politics together with women of diverse identities" are at the focus of this research. The explicit invitation for diversity is one of the Amargi's differences, as one of the prominent feminist groups in Turkey. In this study, "transversal politics" is identified as the concept underscoring Amargi's approach to feminism. Difference and diversity among women are emphasized according to 'dialogical-situated epistemology' and antimilitarist politics conducted in the Turkish context.

Key-words: Amargi, difference, Diversity Feminism, Transversal Politics, Dialogical-Situated Epistemology.

ÖZ

TÜRKİYE FEMİNİZMİNDE FARKLILIĞA YER AÇMAK:
AMARGİ KADIN KOOPERATİFİ, 2001-2011

Özakın, Ayşe Ülkü
Yüksek Lisans, Kadın Çalışmaları Anabilim Dalı
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Şubat, 2012, 169 sayfa

Bu tezde, İstanbul'daki Amargi Kadın Kooperatifi Türkiye'de farklılık feminizminin bir örneği olarak çalışılmıştır. Tezde Amargi'nin feminist perspektifi ile bu bağlamda hayata geçirmekte karşılaştığı zorluklar, grubun oluşumundaki sürece, faaliyetlerine, kendi içindeki tartışmaların betimlenmesine ve özellikle on gönüllü aktivistle gerçekleştirilen derinlemesine mülakatlara dayanarak analiz edilmiştir. Grubun son on yılda "farklı kimliklerden kadınlarla birlikte siyaset yapmak" arayışında başardıkları ve sorunları bu araştırmanın odağındadır. Farklılık için açık davet Türkiye'deki önemli feminist gruplardan olan Amargi'yi ayırt eden özelliklerinden biridir. Bu çalışmada, "çapraz siyaset" Amargi'nin feminizme yaklaşımını tanımlayan terim olarak belirlenmiştir. Türkiye bağlamında, yürütülen 'diyalog içindeki konumsal epistemoloji' ve antimilitarist siyasete uygun olarak farklılık ve kadınlar arası çeşitlilik vurgulanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Amargi, farklılık, Farklılık Feminizmi, Çapraz Siyaset, Diyalog içindeki Konumlanmış Epistemoloji

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Canan Aslan-Akman, for her support and contribution during all the stages related to the writing of this thesis. Her feedback and revisions motivated me to conduct a more complete study.

I am also grateful to my parents for their support and effort in raising me as well as their confidence in me.

I would like to thank my dear friend, Aslı Çoban, for reviewing my thesis as well as her valuable ideas, which also contributed to this project.

I appreciate the time and effort the participants, the Amargi volunteers, devoted to answering my questions.

Last but not least, I extend many thanks to my friend, Pınar Selek, for founding Amargi as part of her "search for freedom" which had the effect of changing the lives of many women, including myself.

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CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

"We are together with our differences"

From the manifesto of Amargi, 2000

1.1. Subject Matter and the Objective of the Study

The subject matter of this study is the contemporary response of the feminist movement in Turkey to rising identity politics, which has re-mapped the entire area of gender politics starting from the 1980s and culminating in the 2000s as a general trend. Hence, it aims to analyze the Amargi Women's Cooperative in Istanbul,[1] one of the newer feminist groups in Turkey that has aimed to gather women of diverse positionings and create a space for dialogue among them.

The starting point for the research question of this thesis is the question of whether in Turkey, a country of polarizations, it is possible for feminists to reconcile differences among women and organize with women belonging to all types of different identities. Feminism itself was once righteously criticized for ignoring differences among women. However, recent approaches in feminism such as diversity feminism and transversal politics offer a renewal of hope for the possibility of creating societal reconciliation by the efforts of feminist women.

This study explores the dynamics embedded in the process of producing a civil foundation for diversity feminism in Turkey. To this end, this thesis will present an analytical overview of Amargi's objectives and activities in its history since 2001 in

[1] It will be referred to as Amargi in short throughout this thesis. It is to be noted that the women in the cooperative itself, not in the board of *Amargi Feminist Theory and Politics Review*, are whom we mean by the term, women of Amargi. The latter is a theoretical-political quarterly review that emerged out of the overlapping perspectives of women from outside of the cooperative with a few women inside.

order to shed light on the successes, challenges and difficulties encountered in its engagement with the principles of diversity feminism.

Amargi, a self-identified women's academy -and formally a women's cooperative- turned ten years old in 2011. In this study, the group is analyzed with a concern to contribute to the scholarly efforts to understand the capacity and, for that matter, the constraints of the feminist movement to transform hegemonic forms of identity politics in a manner going beyond cultural-particularism and essentialism being prevalent pitfalls observed within the realm of gender politics in Turkey. Specifically, it examines the experiences of different women in Amargi, which set one of its major goals as struggling against the weakness of the mainstream feminism in accomodating women's experiences and claims, often ignoring their identities other than being a "woman." Unlike many other groups that organized with and represented a single group of individuals to defend their rights, it was declared from the beginning that any woman could join and speak her mind. By looking at the subjective experiences of women involved in Amargi's feminism, this research intends to answer other questions: How, and to what extent were the perspectives of the diversity feminism and transversal politics employed by women in Amargi to achieve their goal of non-hierarchical and horizontal organization open to differences? How successful was Amargi in achieving a model for the politics on identity that provides a liberating opportunity for the women's movement activists and putting an end especially to the mutual othering of women from Turkish and Kurdish background? Could Amargi women end prejudices towards each other and start a joint effort? What were the problems and dilemmas encountered in this endeavor? How did volunteers in Amargi feel about the way their specific problems were handled by the group?

According to many scholars, within just a century, the evolution of the feminist movement has generated three waves: the first wave was believed to be the most basic one, emphasizing equality and civil rights whereas the third was regarded as the most comprehensive approach thus far. However, while the theory becomes more

competent, the movement has not always been able to follow it with growing enthusiasm. Currently, the feminist movement -at least in the West- faces a crisis, lacking young activists and energy for the necessary interventions into various political agendas. Academics and activists continue on revising feminism in order to open new paths in the changing world. Articles and books discuss which mistakes were made and which approaches can help women to create a more complete theory and movement. New and more elaborated points of view are constantly developed to overcome the shortcomings of the previous feminisms and to include more women in the movement. For example, the criticisms made by Black women, LGBT people, academics siding with both queer and post-colonialist concerns have been taken into account when new strands were developed. The resulting approaches has been, indeed, quite different from the previous mainstream approaches of feminism that depend heavily on the similarities and commonalities between women.

In this thesis, the focus will be on the transversal politics and diversity feminism, two of the new approaches among the contemporary strands of feminism. Because Western feminism was started and conducted by white, middle-class women, it has been criticized for ignoring other women's contributions to feminism. Furthermore, the women's specific problems were not taken into account due to the unquestioned issues within the feminist movement. Following the acknowledgement of this problem, feminist activists and scholars proposed various new approaches to accommodate the issue of plurality, among them, diversity feminism and transversal politics. Diversity feminism has been regarded as one of the prominent strands within the third wave feminism characterized by a focus on "intersectionality", which refers to a paradigmatic approach within the social sciences, especially as applied to social movement activism. The approach of intersectionality holds that the systems of oppression, such as those based on race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or class within a society cannot be analyzed independently from each other. In fact, power relations are intertwined in a way creating new and complex formations of domination centering the social identities of groups and individuals. Based on the adoption of the intersectionality approach, the political principle of diversity encourages women of

different identity backgrounds and oppression histories to reveal their own accounts of experiences, thereby enriching feminist theory. This has been a particularly important challenge for feminism in Turkey since the context of its recent development was the period of rising identity politics.

As a reflection of the homogenization of identities on the basis of collectivist goals by the dominant citizenship regime in Turkey since 1923, the expression of particularistic identities such as Kurds and Islamic identities were oppressed. Especially in the post-1980 era, this collectivist, nationalist and homogenizing trajectory led, for Kurds, to the problems that were linked to discrimination that banned Kurdish. For Islamists, discrimination occurred mainly through the headscarf ban in the universities as well as interventions in democracy. Meanwhile, LGBT people also faced discrimination and violence on the basis of their sexual identities and sexual orientations. The voices of the groups such as Kurdish, Islamic and having diverse sexual identities started to be heard in politics, especially after the 1990s. New women's groups were formed due to insufficient acceptance from the feminist movement, causing fissures in the women's movement. At this point, Amargi claimed to gather women from various groups to create a democratic environment for women for a common struggle against the lack of freedoms on various grounds.

Young academics of Turkish identity, politicized Kurdish women, and transsexual women founded Amargi together in 2001. Some of these young academics were of upper-class identity and predominantly were of Turkish background. From the beginning, there were groups that increased the potential of conflict in Amargi. The group of Armenian young women, Hay Gin, also was participating in Amargi's activities, keeping its independent organization. Hence, the question that needs to be raised is whether the existence of variety of women in the same group caused problems due to conflicts and clashes of identities or did it pave the way to the implementation of a feminist approach proclaimed by Amargi as "together with our differences"?

1.2. The Scope and the Significance of the Thesis

In spite of the fact that some recent feminist periodicals[2] recently have taken up the issue of identity politics and its threats and opportunities for women and the women's movement in Turkey, there is still a significant lack of academic studies investigating the subject. Furthermore, regardless of whether academic or not in quality, those studies generally focus on the macro aspects of the problem and restrict themselves to the consequences of new styles of policy making in women's movements in the area of formal politics.

Diversification of the identities of women's groups and organizations in the movement after the 1990s in Turkey has forced the feminist movement to take up the issue of identity, difference, and identity politics critically on theoretical and political grounds. The theoretical discussions of intersectionality and the feminist principle of non-hierarchical organization in the movement, as well as the importance of the concepts of experience and difference have led some groups of the movement to create new approaches to politics on identity and difference to overcome the limitations of identity politics conducive to cultural particularism and essentialism. Amargi emerged with the claim of providing a platform for a dialogue and solidarity among differences in the realm of feminist politics. Whether this space of politics has provided an egalitarian and democratic basis in which to engage in dialogue and negotiation of identities for Amargi women, is the primary question of this thesis.

The feminist history of wealthy and rigorous discussions and practices developed around the concepts of "experience" and "identity" has recently culminated in the concept of "intersectionality." It is argued that in the experience of Amargi, the category of experience as the basis of identity stops being barely a sociological category and becomes open to be rearticulated in the political realm, creating a fusion between the social and political realms. That has been the reason why the

[2] *Amargi Feminist Review* and *Feminist Politika* are the most well-known feminist journals of the period.

Amargi experience has been significant in its aspiration to organize the diverse claims to identity differences among women on the grounds of feminist politics. Amargi has openly embraced the concept of intersectionality and suggested a theoretically informed model for "standing together."

This point attests to the significance of attracting women from various backgrounds to a feminist collectivity. The Amargi experience in Turkey started out with the concern to transcend the organization of feminists by women of similar identities. This allegedly caused the formation of a women's movement divided in various separate women's movements. According to Amargi, a single group open to all differences needed to have the duty to struggle against all sorts and structures of domination affecting women. Amargi's feminism was about the elimination of all other power and oppression mechanisms, without giving priority to any of them. The other grounds of oppression for women of different identities were racism, militarism, nationalism, homophobia, heterosexism, "classism,"[3] etc. It was argued by Amargi women that these mechanisms of discrimination worked hand in hand with patriarchal oppression and sexism, as the basic mechanisms of oppression, which enabled and legitimized many others. These systems, which were inter-related, depended on the gender inequality to achieve legitimization. According to Amargi's viewpoint, a feminist group had to start in this struggle with the request for more diversity, conforming to the aim of its feminism, to prevent "violence" -which was defined by Amargi as "putting obstacles in the self-realization of someone", by physical, psychological and economic means. Women in Amargi therefore opened themselves to learn from women who previously could not find a place in the feminist groups. By means of including their struggle against another power structure regarded generally as extrinsic to patriarchy, Amargi hoped to broaden the prevailing feminist perspective in the women's groups. It was argued that this process would strengthen the ties between women who considered each other as allies before and widen the circle of women who organized as feminists to struggle together. This sort of enlargement, both in the organizational realm, as well as in the theory of analyzing

[3] Discrimination based on the class to which the individual belongs.

patriarchy, would contribute to the efforts in making feminism a stronger movement as well as a more complete theory.

Feminist researchers have already been aware of the limitations of gender as a single analytical category. It was also argued that there should not be hierarchy of oppressions, referred to as "Oppression Olympics."[4] Women in Amargi hold that feminism was not only about women's rights; it was a holistic theory against all kinds of power relations. Therefore, Amargi adopted the concept of diversity as one of its main tools, thus, differences were handled according to the approach of intersectionality.

That opening in theory and practice should not be considered as stemming from purely theoretical sensitivities. Emergence of women's groups demanding a say in the area of gender politics at the political stage without speaking from the conventional principles of feminism have influenced feminist politics, in a way to address other types of oppression, discrimination and exploitation, such as based on class, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation. Feminist organizations and groups started to feel a pressing urge to engage with the matters of diverse groups of oppressed. At the theoretical realm, this development has found its expression in the changing perspectives on power and rule. Therefore, when we talk about domination, we cannot deal with just one group dominating another. Given that the network of domination is complicated, almost everyone would have advantageous and disadvantageous positionings relative to others based on where they stand. This way of thinking provides the methodological approach of "intersectionality" with a systematic framework of understanding power and subordination. Furthermore, the struggle against patriarchy, having many faces, would take new forms of organization, dialogue and recognition necessitated by network-like structures. Amargi intended to put these aims into practice by first eliminating the patriarchal and discriminatory approaches among women in the organization. Its manifesto

[4]In 1993, Elizabeth Martinez first used this term to criticize the competition among identity groups about who was more oppressed.

stated that, “In order to free ourselves, we need to start from ourselves.” This means that power structures constraining freedoms are internalized in the members of the society and its recognition and the struggle against these are among its priorities.

This study inquires into how Amargi, as a pioneer feminist organization in Turkey aiming at resolving the problems of identity politics within feminism, emerged and worked toward its goals; and whether it has come to be a model for those organizations and groups it has come into contact. It also analyzes the challenges that emerged in a group of diverse women who came together to struggle against patriarchy without denouncing their other identities. The strong and weak points of Amargi that this study underlines can demonstrate the problematic points in realizing intersectionality theory objectively within a feminist organizational experience.

1.3. Research Procedure

Feminist research attaches particular importance to subjective experiences of women; as such, it aims to uncover their experiences. This was a challenge to positivist science, which did not consider it as a theme worth investigating the feminist approach also considers experiences of women as a significant source of knowledge-production. Unlike previous positivist approaches, the voice of the marginal is regarded as important. The creation of empathic connections between the researcher and the women interviewed, as well as sensitivity to the relations of power and recognition are some of the properties differentiating feminist social research (Neuman, 2000). Accordingly, this study aims at contributing to the feminist literature by means of the analysis of a feminist organization, which created an alternative to conventional modes of identity politics. It both describes a process and analyzes the perceptions of the subjects of this process. Thus, this thesis’ objective also coincides with the action-orientation of feminist methodology aiming to empower women.

1.3.1 Data Collection

Feminist research has the advantage over other traditional social scientific approaches for utilization of non-quantitative research methods such as focus groups or in-depth interviews. Qualitative methods of data collection are often chosen due to their relevance to feminist principles and their appropriateness for conducting research about the emotional, dynamic and interactive dimensions of collective action, thus almost impossible to analyze otherwise.

Focus group analysis is an appropriate research technique permitting expression of diversity and discussion in the interviews. This study partly derives from data obtained through a focus group interview, comprising five volunteers. It is also based on individual in-depth interviews with five other members (three of these participants answered questions by e-mail). In the focus group interview, five participants -including one female-to-male transsexual men- were interviewed in a café in Istanbul in July 2011, for two hours. This also generated an interactive discussion.[5] These women were selected as they had been activists for a long time in Amargi and they came from different social groups in terms of ethnic identity, sexual identity, sexual orientation, social class, etc. Thus, a total of ten volunteers from Amargi were interviewed in order to understand the impact of Amargi on women with various social, political, and cultural identities. Currently, there are about twenty volunteers in Istanbul and about ten in Izmir. More than hundred women have joined Amargi during the last decade, and some of them left after a while. I paid attention the profile of interviewees as the witnesses of the different periods of Amargi, as representatives of that time, to get a complete picture of early period (2001-2006) and later period (2006-2011) of Amargi.[6] The majority of the participants were aged between 30 and 40, the average age being 35. The youngest participant was 27, and the oldest was 49 years old. We can say that it was a group of young women and the average age of

[5] Interview profiles are provided in Table 2 (see Appendix 1 in p. 129).

[6] The years of joining Amargi were: Cavidan 2001; Merve, Feride: 2002; Deniz, Ezgi, Selin, Aylin 2006; Ayla, Cemgül, 2008 Yeliz 2007.

women was below 30. Regarding marital status, the majority of the women were never married (except for three). A significant number of the informants had a bachelor's or master's degree and most of them were employed. They were mostly urbanite, middle-class, highly educated women. All informants identified themselves as feminists. Two of these women are transsexuals; one is male to female, and the other, female to male.[7] Two of the women had activism and organizational experience with Amargi for the first time, while the rest of them had done so through their previous mixed-gender organizational experiences.

In addition to the interviews, policy manifestations, several project outputs, and e-group discussions of Amargi were collected and analyzed in order to understand practical and discursive construction of the ground it gives to the activists. Therefore, the analysis draws upon discursive and experiential data collected through document analysis (manifesto, booklets, press-declaration texts) and selected published interviews with the founders, mainly with Pınar Selek, who was a central figure in determining Amargi's goals.[8] The originally intended properties of the organization found in these texts are compared to the results provided by the other data collection methods based on (focus group) interviews. That data was used to understand the significant discursive and experiential dimensions of Amargi politics on identity differences, since Amargi was a political initiative in its broader sense, where symbolic and discursive (representational) and the experiential (lived) dimensions figure in a mixed fashion.

One of the important aspects of this study was that the researcher was previously one of the activists within Amargi. As an active member of the Amargi women's organization for nearly six years, I had long-term familiarity with most of the women interviewed. Insider research refers to the case when researchers conduct research with populations of which they are also members (Kanuha, 2000). The researcher

[7] The male transsexual defined himself as a feminist but instead of calling herself a woman, he chose to say "individual." Other feminist groups questioned the place that male transsexuals found in Amargi.

[8] She is currently living abroad as an exile due to the judicial process and therefore has not been an active volunteer for the last three years.

shares an identity, language, and experiential base with the study participants (Asselin, 2003). The research conducted for this study is akin to Insider Action Research. The researcher is a complete member of the organization or community that is being studied and the output of the study, i.e. the knowledge produced, is intended to serve to the organization in its quest for development as well.

The complete membership role provides researchers both with a certain amount of legitimacy and/or stigma (Adler & Adler, 1987). This insider role status frequently allows researchers more rapid and more complete acceptance by their participants. Therefore, study participants tend to be more open and there may be a greater depth during the data collection process.

Although insider action researchers enjoy familiarity with the setting, while, at the same time they have to create distance, in order to see things critically and enable change to happen. The researcher has the duty of balancing the organizational role with the additional demands of a role of inquiry and research. She/he also has the advantage of using the appropriate "internal jargon" and can rely on her/his own experience in asking questions and interviewing participants.

Coghlan and Brannick (2005) identified some drawbacks for "insiders": When interviewing, the researcher may assume too much and not probe as deeply as an outsider; the researcher can experience role conflict, as caught between "loyalty tugs and identification dilemmas." It is also possible that the participant makes assumptions of similarity and fails to explain her individual experience fully. The researcher's perceptions might be clouded by personal experience and that as a member of the group difficulty can be experienced in separating it from that of the participants. This might result in an interview that is shaped and guided by the core aspects of the researcher's experience and not the participant's.

However, holding membership in a group does not denote complete sameness within that group. Likewise, not being a member of a group does not denote complete

difference. Rose (1985) claims, "There is no neutrality. There is only greater or less awareness of one's biases" (1985: 77). Therefore, it was presumed that there will be multiple perspectives to a question within any given community. Surfacing those diverse perspectives was the objective of individual interviews as well as the focus group interview.

In this study, the researcher, I, met Amargi in 2003 in the process of becoming a lesbian feminist activist. After six years, I started studying Gender and Women's Studies in a different city and conducted the research for the completion of this program. Although the method commands an inevitably subjective exercise as explained above, it is effective in revealing and presenting all the opinions that surfaced about an issue. The researcher maintained distance, and being as objective as possible, reflected on the diverse answers; i.e., both positive and negative aspects of the opinions of the participants. Being aware of the dangers attached to risk of the subjectivity and following a biased way of acquiring knowledge, I kept objectivity and honesty in designing writing and interpretation processes, while conducting my interviews and analyzing the results by keeping a distance. I believe that the interviewees' accounts turned out to be more open, compared to interviews done by a complete stranger, an academic conducting research. During the study, two of the participants revealed their previously undisclosed, ambigiuous sexual orientation. They both criticized and protected the organization when asked about the interpersonal relations in Amargi, giving additional information about their stance inside the group. Therefore, I believe that my contribution as an insider has turned out to be an asset for the concerns of this thesis. After all, feminist methodology accepts and encourages the researcher siding with women, and stressing the importance of *standpoint*.

1.3.2 Design of the Questions

The method of insider action research also helped the researcher in formulating the questions to be asked to the participants. As mentioned above, Amargi focuses upon struggling together with women's diversity. The first issue put under scrutiny through

interview questions was how the women identified themselves. Which identities have been more held on to? What did they experience when they met with other women of different backgrounds in Amargi? Here, many women could get to know other women they would hardly meet otherwise; prominent women, academics, Kurdish activists who were university students, male-to-female transsexuals, female-to-male transsexuals, sex workers, socialist women and lesbians worked together in Amargi. Did they really "transform" each other through "non-violent discussions" as intended and promised in the manifesto? Could an individual's specific identity-related problems be shared openly? Did everybody go on with only giving credit to her own problems? Could Amargi members free themselves from the deep-rooted prejudices in the society or were they just ignoring the encounters causing problems? Did the individuals act in-group dynamics, protecting and defending its members or was everybody void of such ties and solidarity? Was there a common reaction to an incident between groups by group members regardless of who was right? What sorts of groupings have so far occurred in Amargi, if any?

At a more concrete level, the interview questions revolved around the following issues: Have women from diverse backgrounds really come and joined Amargi? If some women were not represented in Amargi, what were the reasons for that? Has the experience of Amargi been successful in solving the conflicts that emerged among different groups of women over the issues of identity politics inside the organization? If so, how? What do the women think of the method of "non-violence training" carried out to this end? Were there closed groupings among women or every woman has entered into communication with all others?

The research focused on individual experiences emerging out of Amargi activism that aimed to produce a non-essentialist and non-particularistic version of politics on identity difference in the realm of gender politics. Furthermore, political outputs like projects, platforms and works produced with Amargi initiative were put under scrutiny. In individual and focus group interviews the instances of encountering differences and the political process they communicated were especially examined as they were narrated by the interviewees from Amargi. The analysis of the interviews

also aimed at uncovering the sort of prejudices there were initially within Amargi and which conflicts arose, and the transformations experienced by these women to overcome internalization of the power relations. Besides, the discourses of the interviewees as well as the feelings surfaced were also noted and emphasized. In other words, the focus group and in-depth interviews were useful for gathering data on the emotional aspects of movement involvement.

1.4. Organization of the Thesis

In this thesis, the diversity approach to feminism and transversal politics were studied looking into the Amargi case in Turkey between 2001 and 2011. Accordingly, Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of the theory concerning diversity feminism and transversal politics. The meaning and importance of the key concepts such as intersectionality and standpoint epistemology are discussed. In Chapter 3, a brief history of identity issues and feminists' responses to them in Turkey are provided. The short history of identity politics in Turkey after the 1980s and how this issue has been handled in the feminist movement as well as women's movement are provided. Chapter 4 details Amargi's establishment, concerns, and objectives. It also looks at the organizational structure and its activities. Chapter 5 investigates the major research questions of this thesis by making use of the data obtained from the interviews and analysis of the manifesto, booklets, press declarations and media interviews. Amargi's perspective and volunteers' responses on the diversity issue in the group were provided to analyze how diversity and intersectionality worked in practice, how successful it was in terms of its objectives of accommodating diversity, and what were its challenges and perceived accomplishments. The conclusion sums up the research questions and the arguments put forward in this study and points to other venues of research to be conducted to fully understand the dynamics and dilemmas of diversity feminism and transversal politics both in Turkey and in the world.

CHAPTER 2

2. WESTERN FEMINISM CONFRONTS THE DIVERSITY CHALLENGE

In this chapter, the brief history of criticisms to the previous feminist strands is summarized as well as the reasoning and the perspectives of academicians opting for more diversity in feminism and feminist movement. “Diversity feminism” was developed in order to overcome the shortcomings of the second wave. The emphasis on ‘more diversity’ was a response to the failure of dominant approach building upon the assumed "sisterhood" of all women, ignoring differences among them or regarding these not as important compared to the gender identity before the 1990s.

2.1. Identity Politics and the Threat of Essentialism

> All identity is constructed across difference… identity is formed at that point where the unspeakable stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history of a culture. (Hall, 1987: 44)

Identity politics is based on the idea that some social groups are oppressed in the society on the basis of their identity, and it attempts to change their situation via demanding recognition as well as representation of their identity. Having an oppressed identity such as being a woman, a Black man or a transsexual makes that individual vulnerable to discrimination, violence, exploitation and marginalization stemming from the societal perception of that identity (Young, 1990). However, according to Giddens (1979), there is space for subjectivity or agency vis-à-vis structures that force identities to appear as a result of such discrimination. Recent approaches have emphasized that identity movements do not merely demand recognition, they also demand respect for difference. Hence, they reject the idea that

difference stems from only exclusion, oppression and marginalization; but it defines a culture in a positive way (Fraser, 2000). Therefore, identity politics not only targets expanding inclusivity of the existing socio-political system, but also transforming it to be more accommodating for difference and plurality. Identity politics aims to overcome the connotations present in the society related to subordinated identities by actively claiming and valuing these identities. Thus, the empowerment around that identity and conducting politics based on that brings a transformation of that identity's image, and consequently, emancipation is the aim for those groups. However, the main danger awaiting identity politics as a political framework is essentialism. There are two common approaches conductive to essentialism. In the first case, an individual is regarded as obliged to claim one aspect as the main axis of his/her identity (Spelman, 1988); this approach forces people of a hybrid (or hyphenated) identity to choose only one of these identities. The second case stems from a similar understanding as well. Generalizations inside particular social groups engaging with identity politics may dictate a particular self-understanding to the members, hence ignoring the experiences of those individuals not fitting these stereotypes. In both cases an identity is defined in a manipulative and monolithic manner ignoring diversity "inside the identity group." Thus, the group may inhibit the individual's autonomy, replacing "one kind of tyranny with another" (Appiah, 1994: 163). Similar to the culture at large, this time, dominant sub-groups within identity politics impose their vision of the group's identity onto all its members. The experiences of individuals belonging to an identity are not the same (Brah, 1991), and there is the possibility of "the specificity of a particular experience" becoming an expression of essentialism. On the other hand, Spivak (1990) suggests the deployment of a temporary mechanism to the identity groups: "strategic essentialism." She finds it useful to act as if members of an identity were uniform while trying to achieve some critical interim political goals (1990). This strategy would help them in order to have more power in the struggle on a specific issue, in a way proposing a return to a second wave feminist understanding of radical feminists.

Finally, Castells (1997) identifies three types of identities on the basis of their relation to the power system: "legitimizing identity," which is a common feature of nationalist ideologies; "resistance identity," generated by actors in devalued and/or stigmatized positions/conditions; and "project identity," when referring to the process when social actors build a new identity, redefining their position in society and seeking the transformation of social structure. Castells (1997) argues that project identity is the case for feminist movement and feminist collective identity worldwide.

2.2. Feminism as Identity Politics and Identity Politics within Feminism

According to Nash, "previously taken-for-granted social identities" became politicized and the rise of new social movements, representing non-class identities such as gender and ethnicity challenged both the form and content of traditional politics (2000: 2). Unlike the class-based socialist movement, feminists defended rights of a group based on sexual identity. Women's problems were also omitted by the "gender-blind" Marxism, which mobilized crowds on the basis of class oppression (Walby, 1986). Although women, the subjects of feminism, were not a minority in numbers as a typical feature of identity politics, they were clearly subordinated. Thus, as a form of identity politics, the feminist movement, indeed, aimed to gain equal rights for women. According to Weir (2008), there were three aspects present in feminism: "an appeal to and identification with feminist ideals, an orientation to solidarity—identification with women and with feminists—as a "we" as well as identifications with each other, including other strangers" (116). Yet, feminism does not automatically include all women due to their gender category; political consciousness (of being a woman) was also needed to label someone as a feminist. The emancipatory and direct definition of feminism allows for the use of the term identity politics for the first wave feminism even though this notion was not in use then. However, with the development of feminism into broader theory, and extension of aspirations for a new world, feminism has certainly transcended this definition.

In the 1990s, criticism of identity politics occurred in order to discredit feminist politics as such, especially by Marxists. Feminist women claimed an oppressed identity, "womanhood," instead of, for example, discussing the irrelevance of being a woman to attain a better status in the society. They could have disowned that identity as an easier personal strategy. What is also important here is that they emphasized gender, i.e. the social roles when referring to femininity and masculinity instead of biological sex as the basis of identity. The adoption of such a basis for political action was also in accord with social construction of the identities. According to Castells, "social construction of identity always happens in the context of power relations". (1997: 7) Thus, conditions of subordination of their identities are the reasons, forcing people to realize, and subsequently to hold onto these identities in order to claim equal rights.

While the feminist movement and literature grew and became widely-accepted, other groups carried out similar struggles around race and sexual orientation, holding onto subordinated and discriminated aspects of their identities. They aimed to eliminate the perceived negativity of their identities in the society. At the same time, there appeared objections from inside the feminist movement. As a matter of fact, such voices were raised a century ago as well:

> That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman?[9]

Western, white and middle class women, indeed, pioneered the feminist movement. They started from their own experiences of sexism and theorized feminism accordingly. When the struggle and the discourse of feminism became more

[9] This speech was delivered by a Black woman, Sojourner Truth, as early as in 1851, at the Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio, showing the protests of individual Black women against the stereotyping of women, omitting their experiences.
http://www.feminist.com/resources/artspeech/genwom/sojour.htm.

widespread, these points of view based on their own accounts proved to be insufficient. For feminist women of the first wave, the quest for equality with men (without asking "which men?") was the priority for a long while. Furthermore, the Western patriarchal culture of colonialism and White supremacy were not questioned by the feminists of the time. Black women felt frustration with the generalizations about women and girls, failing to describe their own experiences. According to Spelman, first-generation feminists imposed their particular experiences and their view of gender as "a metaphysical truth." Therefore, this approach privileged women similar to them and marginalized others, due to the failure in considering the relevance of race and class in gender construction (Spelman, 1988). Spelman further argued that beginning with the book *Second Sex* by Beauvoir, feminism was not adequately attentive to ethnicity, class, and race and made unexamined heterosexist assumptions.

Although white upper-class women dominated feminism, women of color, lesbians, and working class women have long been active in feminism in the West (Rich, 1979). These women retained and kept those identifications with men and white male power. Rich blames these women for not giving up the small privileges due to their loyalty to white men in order to work for the liberation of all women (1979). According to Kandiyoti (1988), women found ways to make deals with some aspects of oppressive patriarchal regimes in order to privilege themselves instead of constructing solidarity with women against injustice. Similarly, the concept of "false consciousness" within Marxist theory applies to the situation of identifying with the oppressor instead of organizing with oppressed people alike.

However, the leaders of the feminist movement rejected the criticism of this kind in the beginning. As hooks (2000) notes:

> When women of color critiqued the racism within the society as a whole and called attention to the ways that racism had shaped and informed feminist theory and practice, many white women simply turned their backs on the vision of sisterhood, closing their minds and hearts. That was equally true when it came to the issue of classism among women (17).

Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992:80) maintain that the conceptual heritage left by radical feminist and Marxist feminist analyses was an obstacle for diversity (in) feminism. Both these strands had "significant theoretical difficulty in accounting for difference and diversity within the essentialist categories on the one hand and the functionalist and class reductionist ones that they construct on the other." Indeed, radical feminists argued that women's oppression as women was the core of feminist politics, and should not be diluted with other identity issues. For example, Firestone (1970) holds that Black feminist women against racism (especially among white women) ultimately served Black men in their oppression of Black women. Such initiatives would additionally divide the feminist movement, which properly focused on challenging patriarchy, understood as struggle between men and women, underlying dynamic of all oppressions (Firestone, 1970).

Against all those rejections, re-definitions of female subjectivity had already started to appear in various texts. Rich (1976) termed it a "politics of location" whereas Smith and the Black feminist group, Combahee River Collective, were credited with the invention of the term "identity politics." They stated that it grew out of their objective material experiences as Black women. Upon accusations of essentialism, Smith defends her position as follows: If "essentialist" meant that she saw a Black woman in the mirror, it surely meant something and was not just a representation. She shared a political status with other Black women although her history was unique (Smith, 1994).

Feminism attaches special value to experience and holds that if an identity causes a woman to face discrimination, then it should matter. Thus, Black women disputed the idea that women were a homogeneous category sharing essentially the same life experiences. This argument stemmed from the realization that white middle-class women did not serve as an accurate representation of the feminist movement as a whole when their specific problems consequent upon racism and poverty are considered. The 1990 International Sociological Association Conference included a group of sessions on gender, race and class. For instance, in the 1990s, white

feminists started to question their own ethnocentrism and racism. Walby (1990) and other feminist scholars incorporate the issues of ethnicity and gender into their analysis of patriarchy (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993). Feminism has come to accept that women from hyphenated identities experienced different faces of patriarchy and special attention ought to be given by women of "other" backgrounds in order to understand these aspects. Ending the oppression of women turnes out to be more complicated now that women are recognized to be heterogenous group, thus oppressed not only by sexism, but also by other power relations such as classism, homophobia, racism, ageism, ableism, etc. Moreover, feminism's aspirations have become more difficult to define than once believed, yet could be extended to end all oppression, that affect women. According to hooks (1989), women must struggle as a separate group in their opposition to sexism, but should also learn from other subordinated groups about similar causes of oppression such as racism. The only way to succeed against power relations is in a broad perspective recognizing the similarities among these. Otherwise, feminists would still be racists and perpetuate racism and oppress Black men and women. Furthermore, Heldke and O'Connor (2004) claim that sexist institutions are also racist, classist and homophobic. Thus, dismantling these institutions require that the other forms of domination intertwined with sexism should be considered and struggled against. It is in this context that critique of "compulsory heterosexuality" (Rich 1983) and, later, the term "heterosexual matrix" (Butler 1990) has been raised as a major issue in the critique of mainstream feminism.

Lorde (1980) suggests that it is the responsibility of feminists to see connections, as true liberation of one oppressed group could not be realized without the liberation of all oppressed people. As a Black lesbian feminist scholar, she claims that if she fails to recognize her racial and sexual identities as other faces of herself, then she is contributing to each of their oppressions. She adds, "I am not free as long as one person of Color remains chained. Nor is any one of you" (Lorde, 1980:133).

Approaching the feminist struggle from such a point of view has led to the extension of the concept of patriarchy; it would no longer be based only on sexism but also many other forms of power relations. Hence, a wider definition of patriarchy has entered the debates within feminist theory along with its inadequacy for theorizing. Pollert (1996) argues that the term patriarchy (instead of gender relations) undermines the agency of women. According to Walby (2002), the concept of patriarchy has become controversial upon righteous critique. She underlines the difficulty of dealing with the differences in the nature of gender relations between cultures, ethnic groups and historical periods, when keeping the concept. Meanwhile, some feminists include other power structures such as racism as different faces of patriarchy.[10] In response to this criticism, more nuanced analyses of patriarchy have been developed. A wider range of sites of patriarchal relations has been included than some of the early formulations, better able to deal with the complexity of different forms of gender inequality (Bhopal, 1997). A broader definition of "patriarchy" taking race into account would provide a theorization of gender relations, better focused on relations of power and on the interconnectedness of different forms of gender inequality. Walby (2002) argues that this extended concept has proven to be useful in understanding the links between globalization and gender as well. Nevertheless, Yuval-Davis refuses to use the term patriarchy altogether due to its shortcomings. More recently, Walby (2011) referred to it as "gender regime," to overcome the persistent problems in the concept of patriarchy, including its ahistorical nature. The term patriarchy is used throughout this study to refer to the power structure based on sexism, while keeping in mind that its interplay with other systems of oppression; this is how Amargi women also approach patriarchy.

2.3. Diversity Feminism, Transversal Feminism and Antimilitarism

Upon criticism from women who could not find a place in the feminist movement due their non-hegemonic identities, new priorities have been defined as feminist

[10]Some others defined a new term, "kyriarchy," for defining all power relations together (Schüssler Fiorenza, 2009).

scholars contribute to these elaborations. It would also revitalize the feminist movement by means of putting it in a more comprehensive theoretical track and simultaneously adding more inclusiveness to its practice. The voices of "other" feminists have led to the notion of "feminisms," rather than refering to a single "feminism." For example, the postcolonial criticism of mainstream feminism helped the non-Western experiences to be regarded more relevant for feminism. The challenges directed to the second wave feminism for being middle-class, White and Western have forced women to look into experiences and opinions of feminists from the Third World. Strategies to keep up with rising claims on difference and diversity on theoretical, methodological and practical and political terms have been sought. Grigsby (2002) combine two definitions, “global feminism” and “multicultural feminism” (Jagger, 1993), calling it “diversity feminism,” which became one of the new strands, sometimes called identity feminism by the second wave feminists, to indicate its divisiveness. According to Dietz (2003), there are different views within the diversity feminisms. Collins’ (1991) point of view is more in accordance with Hartsock’s (1983) standpoint theory than with Haraway’s approach. They both give huge credit to the oppressed in knowing and assume that they all see the same thing with a shared point of view. Haraway (1990) objects to the single feminist standpoint and criticizes the erasure of differences and ignorance of polyvocality in Hartsock’s theory. Nevertheless, Dietz contends that there are four points that gather all the approaches within diversity feminism: their emphasis on differences and multiplicity of women; the recognition of “the situated, specific, historically embodied condition of the female subject,” the empowerment of silenced “others” as the main concern in the practice of diversity feminism, and “the articulation, negotiation, and recognition of previously submerged, negated, or dismissed identities or subjectivities (along a range of politicized differences not simply focused on women)” (Dietz, 2003; 409)

Regarding diversity feminism, one of the key concepts that can be drawn upon is the perspective of “intersectionality,” which was developed through the challenge of the unitary “category of women” by black feminists. Recognizing that the forms of oppression experienced by white middle-class women were different from those

experienced by black, poor, or disabled women, feminists sought to understand the ways in which gender, race, sexual orientation and class combined to determine the female destiny. McCall (2007) argues that the introduction of intersectionality theory was vital to sociology, claiming that before its development, there was little research in existence that addressed specifically the experiences of people who are subjected to multiple forms of subordination within society. Being a paradigmatic approach especially as applied to activism and social work, intersectionality holds that the classical models of oppression within a society do not act independently of one another. Instead, these forms of oppression interrelate with each other in particular ways in case of a given individual.

The concept of intersectionality appeared in sociological circles in the late 1960s and early 1970s in conjunction with the multiracial feminist movement. The re-visionist feminist theory challenged the notion that "gender" was the primary factor determining a woman's fate, which was the main argument of radical feminists. Crenshaw (1989) highlights the term intersectionality for studying the relationships among various socially and culturally constructed categories such as gender, race, class, disability, etc. The term gained prominence when Collins (1996) reintroduced the idea as part of her discussion on Black feminism, also drawing on the "matrix of domination" when referring to the various power structures affecting people. Most importantly, intersectionality holds that interacting systems of power relations need each other in order to function. Hence, it follows that in order to destroy patriarchy, and eliminate sexism and hetero-normativity from the society, racism and class exploitation also need to be targeted. While some women are privileged by some of these power relations and others are oppressed, an intersectional approach shows that the privileges received are part of a divide and conquer strategy of distraction from identifying who really holds power in the society. Crenshaw (1993) differentiates between two terms: structural and political intersectionality in following way: For example, a Native American woman, subject to domestic violence, not only experiences this violence as a woman, but also as part of a racial minority with particular cultural expectations and gendered norms. Thus, intersections of gender

with cultural specifities produce complicated effects that cannot be simply added; instead, they function in a layered manner. This is called structural intersectionality. The earliest attempts to describe women of specific backgrounds used terms such as "enduring a double burden" (Amos and Parmar, 1982). However, this depiction is not appropriate because it treats forms of subordination and oppression through race, sex, and class as cumulative rather than as articulating or intersecting together to produce specific effects (Yuval-Davis, 1992: 80). Black feminist thought has rejected additive approaches to oppression. Instead of starting with gender and then adding in other variables such as age, sexual orientation, race, social class, and religion, it consideres these distinctive systems of oppression as being part of one overarching structure of domination (Hill Collins, 1990).

According to Yuval-Davis (2006), when individuals do not fit the existing stereotypes or the essentialized identities within their respective racial activism, their specific problems experienced due to structural intersectionality are likely to be omitted due to political intersectionality by all the groups to which they belong. Hence, political intersectionality refers to "the way that political and legal discourses and rhetoric 'erase' particular individuals and communities by highlighting or 'favoring' specific forms of violence or discrimination, or specific kinds of victims, at the expense of others" (Crenshaw, 1993: 115-116). In other words, the narratives of discrimination dominant in a group erase a particular individual's experience if they fall outside of that. The voices of these individuals are silenced and their differing experiences of exclusion are relegated to a place of irrelevance or even complete denial, thereby disguising the need for services that appropriately address diversity (Crenshaw, 1993). The experiences of the owners of the original narratives dominate the discourse of the politics. For instance, both feminist and antiracist politics have functioned in tandem to marginalize the issue of violence against Black women. Likewise, a lesbian feminist is marginalized both in the circles dominated by gay men and by heterosexual feminists. The narrowness of the ideologies in identity politics causes some issues and some people to be left without anyone owning them (Yuval-Davis, 2006). A specific application of "diversity feminism" is called

transversal politics, which is offered as a detailed solution of problems arising in this strand.

Rather than simply admitting existing differences without providing sufficient theorization, feminists need to specify the mechanisms by which different forms of exclusion and subordination operated as well. Diversity feminism acknowledges the importance of women's additional identities and theorizes it by means of the concept "intersectionality," but its application to activism is problematic. How would women from different identities participate in a common struggle? How would women overcome prejudices of each other? One of the more specific approaches in this context is "transversal politics." Yuval-Davis was informed about this term when invited by Italian feminists to a meeting organized between Palestinian and Israeli women in 1993. This way, she became aware of a tradition of autonomous left politics in Bologna under the name of transversal politics (Yuval-Davis, 1999). Even though this approach did not originate exclusively from women, feminist scholars such as Yuval-Davis and Cockburn elaborated upon it. Yuval-Davis defines it as follows (1999):

> Transversal politics has been developed as an alternative to the assimilationist 'universalistic' politics of the Left on the one hand, and to identity politics on the other hand. While the first has proved to be ethnocentric and exclusionary, the second has proved to be essentialist, reifying boundaries between groups and, by homogenizing and collapsing individual into collective identities, undemocratic within groups.

The term "transversal politics" conceptualizes a democratic practice of talking across difference. Recognizing the "differences," but not retreating into those differences as tightly bound, exclusivist, and essentialist, it aims to find creative ways of crossing (and possibly redrawing) the borders that mark significant politicized differences. This approach attempts to find forms of empathy not based on sameness as well as ways of "shifting," which do not involve tearing up "roots." Shifting and rooting are the processes experienced during this dialogue (Cockburn and Hunter, 1999). Cockburn defines the hypothetical organization conducting transversal politics as follows:

> The efforts to encompass difference through equality are evident in the programs effort to create a focused alliance without its "members having to to drop or deny their very real differences in tradition and political belief... [a] united feminist voice affirming difference (1999: 101).

According to Anthias and Yuval Davis (2006), transversal politics recognizes the differential power positions among participants engaged in dialogue, but it, nevertheless, regards these differences with equal respect and recognition of each participant. Furthermore, transversal politics objects to autocratic decision-making mechanisms "representing" their communities. In fact, "dialogical situated epistemology" is essential for such politics, meaning that everyone speaks from his/her standpoint in a dialogue in order to reach a broader knowledge. However, there are also current shortcomings, such as the difficulty of choosing among priorities and the mechanism of decision-making (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Cockburn, being a peace activist as well as a feminist scholar, attempts to implement this approach to bring women from countries with conflicts together following the principles of this theory. Experiments of transversal politics have been conducted for conflict resolution after civil wars to bring women from rival sides together. In dealing with ethnic conflicts, the UN Resolution 1325 acknowledges the role of women in peace processes during and after civil wars. Cockburn facilitated this in Cyprus and observed women from both sides starting a dialogue and has written about the process in her book *The Line: Women, Partition and the Gender Order in Cyprus* (2003).

Constructions of nationalism involve a paradoxical positioning of women as both symbols and 'others' of the collectivity. On the one hand, women are signifiers of the collectivity's honor (Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989; Yuval-Davis, 1997), in the defense of the notion that nations go to war "for the sake of womenandchildren" (Enloe, 1990). At the same time, they are a non-identical element within the collectivity and subject to various forms of control in the name of "culture and tradition." Women are constructed as embodiments of collectivity boundaries; yet, this construct also more easily allows women to transcend and cross boundaries and

engage in dialogical transversal politics (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Yuval-Davis & Stoetzler, 2002, Cockburn & Hunter, 1999; Yuval-Davis 1994).

Feminists argue not only that the positioning of knowing subjects is crucial in determining the acceptability of claims to know, but further that there also is an integral connection between "dominant" epistemologies and power more generally. Some feminists link this power-knowledge complex to wider capitalist and imperialist social structures. Dominant power-knowledge complexes function, in other words, both to maintain the social and economic status quo, and to reproduce the "object" position of those minority groups or groupings they tend to designate as "other." Indeed, that those who are positioned as "subaltern" in respect to dominant groups will be in a better position to articulate true emancipatory values since those values are the ones most likely to have been excluded by previous "dominant" systems of thought (Harding, 1996).

Such politics acknowledge and respect the different positionings of women from the different collectivities but operate within the boundaries of the common "epistemic community" (Assiter, 1996) of emancipatory values. Assiter defines a new term "an epistemic community," as a group of individuals who share certain fundamental interests, values and beliefs in common, for example, that sexism is wrong, that racism is wrong, and who work on consequences of these presuppositions. These individuals are particularly interested in the truth of their views and in providing evidence for their truth. Members of one epistemic community may additionally be members of diverse other social, cultural and political groupings. They may have arrived at their membership of a particular epistemic community by creative interaction, including "productive" conversations. Epistemic communities, just like real social groupings of people, will contain members who are unequal in respect of power and status, but these inequalities will stem from something other than the characteristic by virtue of which the grouping constitutes an epistemic community (Assiter, 1996:84). Assiter suggests that the viewpoint of a community committed to emancipatory values provides "radical" insights that can be called knowledge

because they enable one to see the world in new and enlightened ways (Assiter, 1996:94). She asserts that the feminist movement worldwide is such a community enabling access to a more reliable knowledge as well as smaller groups of such kind. The feminist movement has developed quite radically this perspective by proposing the concept of transversal politics.

As explained above, transversal politics is the practice of coming together across differences, understanding where each other is coming from, and understanding the different power relationships. Overcoming those differences is also needed in order to sustain the alliance as the vision of wider transformation means subscribing to a common political agenda. Transversal politics can be and was mainly used as an antimilitarist approach. In the case of Amargi, an antimilitarist approach was adopted through the analysis of gender and war. Enloe and Cockburn demonstrate when feminists refer to gender, masculinities, and patriarchy while talking about war, they are often blamed for "not looking at the big picture." The big picture has been presumed as states and sovereignty, as well as national rivalries. According to Enloe (2005), gender relations are right in there alongside class relations and ethno-national relations, intersecting with them, complicating them, sometimes even prevailing over them, in the origins, development and perpetuation of war.

At this point, Narayan (1988) extensively discusses the possibility and emotional risks of such heterogenous groups. She questions the validity of the "epistemic privilege of the oppressed" in the theory of Harding (1983), Hartsock (1983) and Jaggar (1985). She discusses that such theoretical knowledge is not automatically attained. On the contrary, it even needs more effort due to the lack of opportunities for the oppressed to access theory. However, she argues that the emotional part and non-obvious discrimination to the others are what they excell at due to facing them in their daily lives. They have to construct analogies in order to understand others' problems. Narayan points to the probable disappointments in heterogenous groups due to different perceptions of people from different identities, raised mainly due to trust issues. She uses the terms insider and outsider for people experiencing one sort

of oppression and the rest of the people for a given sort of oppression. Emotions such as confidence, empathy and solidarity are of crucial importance in a feminist political group consisting of members from various identities, trying to establish a dialogue. Outsiders trying to understand the oppression may not catch the subtle discrimination and make the insiders angry, and later get hurt. Therefore, both sides should be aware of such risks and outsiders should retain "methodological humility" (Narayan, 1988:46).

The summary above has provided a brief overview of the development of diversity feminism, mainly in the US and UK, and the concepts used in the fourth chapter to analyze Amargi's quest for strategies in dealing with the diversity issue. The concept of intersectionality, in this sense, is relevant for the analysis of the relations of women in Amargi. A broader definition of patriarchy can be traced in the Amargi manifesto, which shaped its choice for agenda as well as the myriad targets of its activities.

Feminism in Turkey was born before diversity feminism appeared in the West. Therefore, the movement depended on the principles of the second wave until the 1990s. As the following chapter makes clear, identity politics' challenge to feminism occurred at the same time as Turkey was forced to open up to address differences.

CHAPTER 3

3. AN OVERVIEW OF THE TURKISH FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN THE ERA OF IDENTITY POLITICS AND ITS PREDICAMENTS

This chapter summarized the Turkish feminist movement with a concern for the issues of difference and diversity post-1980.[11] It gives a short account of the movement's historical background and presents the challenges it has undergone upon the leap forward of previously silenced socio-political identities in the post-1980 era.

3.1. The Legacy of Kemalist State Feminism and the Feminist Movement of the Post-1980 Period

The early history of feminist movement in Turkey started with the political organization of the educated high-class women of the Ottoman Empire.[12] They demanded first and foremost access to the public sphere, especially education via publishing magazines. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the state defined visibility and participation of women in the public space as a critical requirement of modernization. Therefore, the modernist elite aimed at controlling Islam and its policies actively supported women's participation in public life. This attitude, later labeled as "state feminism," would be criticized by the feminists of the 1980s for substituting for and overshadowing the genuine dynamics of a women's political movement in Turkey, and subsequently subordinating its original and

[11] In this study, the concepts of "feminist movement" and "women's movement(s)" are used to mean different phenomena in order to point out the fact that women's groups with affiliations other than feminism have stepped in the area of gender politics and for this reason, the women's movement has expanded beyond feminist movement and, for some, even become pluralistic.

[12] For a more detailed account of the Otoman women's movement, see Demirdirek (1993) and Çakır (1996).

feminist ideals to those of the Kemalist modernization project (Çakır, 1996). According to İlkkaracan, the Kemalist position on the status of women was restricted to the framework of secularism and undermining of the Islamic way of life instead of the actual liberation of women in real life. Thus, women citizens were instrumentalized as the "protectors" of secularism and of the "new republic" (İlkkaracan, 1996:5). Although women's representation in important positions was considered an indispensable component of modernization project, the Women's People Party (founded in 1923) and the Turkish Women's Union, were not allowed to make political demands for women's emancipation; therefore, they were shut down (Toprak, 1988). An independent women's movement was regarded as a threat to the one-party administration as the male political elite allowed the Woman Question to appear only as a part of its own societal (not political) modernization project.

Mustafa Kemal, the leader of the Turkey's War for Independence and the Republic of Turkey, described the people of the new republic, "made up of the people who were fused without any privilege and class." As crystallized in this statement, the Republican regime looked upon its citizens as a collectivity that was harmoniously united. This ideal was also in line with the collectivist leanings of the time (like in Italy and Germany) and informed the fundamentals of the new regime in complex and multiple ways for the following decades, too. In the public place and discourse, heterogeneity was rejected, while collectivity, conformity/complementarily and homogeneity were ordered (Ertürk, 2006).

Meanwhile, the Kemalist Westernization project also established basic institutions ensuring formal equality between its people, irrespective of sex among other things. That urge constituted the ground where women's groups and Kemalist reformers met for some basic equality demands during the period (Tekeli, 1986). During the formation of the new society, the near mythologic memory about the distant past of Turkish society where it was argued that women were equals of men was handy in theorizing the foundations of the new Turkish society. According to ideologists of Turkism, democracy and feminism were the two main principles of ancient Turkic

life (Kandiyoti, 1989). That memory called to cement the society around a new Turkism ideology provided legitimacy for the reforms of the civil code, which instructed monogamy and secular civil rights for women. Subordination of women in the society was attributed to religion and Arab influence.

As Göle mentions, women appeared in their public roles with the support of Republican fathers as 'masculine girls' (Göle, 2004; Akşit, 2005). That model prevented those new women from taking a progressive perspective regarding diversity in civil and political life in their political activism toward further modernization. The result was near total association with the ideals of the state. Education institutions were as well complicit in the project of disseminating and instilling this ideology of womanhood as in the case of Girls Institutes (Akşit, 2005). Conservative women's organizations conveyed the Kemalist ideology until the 1960s as the only groups in the arena of women's issues (Ecevit, 2007).

During the 1970s, the socialist movement reached its historical peak in Turkey and recruited women as well. In the movement, women's problems were regarded as an issue related to traditional values and feudalism, in a striking similarity with the earlier Republican perspectives. In the leftist organizations of the time, many women, a majority of whom was university students, were subordinate to their male comrades and had to submit their rules about morality as well as politics. The prevailing patriarchy within leftist circles held that women were considered more vulnerable in the face of consumption and sexual freedom oriented values of capitalism and were, therefore, deemed in need of control in the name of socialism (Berktay, 1991). The ideals about women, such as virginity, modesty in dressing and appearance, honor and male control, were very similar to those under Kemalist hegemony. Thus, women were once again constructed as belonging to a community, in need of regulation by the communital norms. However, most women in socialist groups and parties were discussing the "Woman Question" within the framework of oppression of the working class, and an outcome of feudalism and religion, perceiving socialism as the solution for women's problems. For example, the İKD (Progressive Women's

Association) was founded in 1975 with a similar approach. Although it did not endorse a feminist perspective, it reached a membership of fifteen thousand women. It was closed down in the aftermath of the 1980 military intervention (Çakır, 2007). In the mean time, a new consciousness was developing among leftist women, which evolved to define patriarchy as separate from capitalism, not necessarily destined to fade away with the commencement of socialism. When leftist women started to focus on women's problems more intensely, they emerged as the dominant actors of the first feminist movement after the military coup in 1980 (Tekeli, 1995).

Overall, the woman's place in diverse societal projects (e.g. Kemalist, Islamist, Leftist), constituted a crucial point for societal regulation (Ertürk, 2006). Therefore, dominant and traditional political agents have always rejected the validity of all feminist suggestions.

The feminist movement re-emerged in Turkey in the 1980s (Tekeli, 1986), after the military coup of 1980 in an environment of the oppression of radical political and social movements. There was no room for any opposition movement claiming political resistance to the regime. At this conjuncture, the feminist movement stepped into the political space with a campaign against the battering of women. However, as it was a post-military coup environment and adopted a seemingly apolitical agenda, feminists were subjected to accusations from leftist circles of behaving in an opportunist manner and diluting the struggle against the state and capitalist power in general. In the political realm, in Turkey, the typical reaction of diverse political actors toward rising feminist politics was to blame feminists for taking advantage of the apolitical and pressure driven environment of Turkish politics after the military coup in 1980 and of "dividing the struggle." They defined the rising feminism in some cases as a "Septemberist" movement, blaming feminism with being apolitical as well as military-state-permitted and -encouraged movement (Tekeli, 1995:13). Many women active in women groups also identified themselves as socialists and as such they were quite sensitive to criticism from the left (Sirman, 1989). The small cadre of the feminist movement was thus denied largely from the leftist politics.

Under those conditions, these women who were not imprisoned or traumatized by the widespread state violence had the chance to reflect on their place in the leftist politics by reading feminist texts. The translation of the classical feminist texts into Turkish constituted one of the first activities of the feminists under the publishing group Kadın Çevresi (Women's Circle) (Arat Y, 2004). Not surprisingly, most of the activists were highly educated, generally academic women of considerably high status. The profile of the active women in that early phase, therefore, to an important extent determined the priorities of the feminist agenda and the course of action in political struggle for a long time. The feminist agenda of the time encapsulated the issues women faced in private areas in line with the famous political motto of the movement, "personal is political"; small group works of reading, translation and consciousness raising were combined with public demonstrations and campaigns. Feminist journals *Feminist* and *Socialist Feminist Kaktüs* appeared in the late 1980s, aiming to develop and diffuse the feminist approach (Arat, Y, 2004). There were also small consciousness-raising groups in Istanbul and Ankara. The negative experiences with hierarchy in the 1970s' leftist mass organizations, and the concerns about the repressive political environment of the post-coup period led the women to take measures: the meetings took the guise of tea parties at homes, a common practice among Turkish women (Tekeli, 1998:344). Sirman (1989:7) additionally notes the "ideological pressure coming from the more-orthodox left which branded their efforts as bourgeois deviations." These small groups organized successful campaigns, such as a petition for adoption of the CEDAW (1986), Purple Needle (Our Body Belongs to Us-No to Sexual Harassment) campaign as well as the campaign against Battering of Women.

However, Turkish feminists took over concepts from Western feminism without subjecting them to serious questioning (Sirman, 1989). It is striking that other differences and inequalities of power that separated women were not recognized by the feminists of the 1980s. Turkish feminists adopted the concept of "sisterhood" too easily for its connotations close to the "culture"; according to Sirman:

> The concept of sisterhood which Western feminists tried to promote was seen to already exist in a society that is still largely segregated along gender lines. (Of course, there were limits to this solidarity, as was evidenced by the testimonies of women recounting the role played by other women, especially mothers-in-laws, in their experience of male violence (1988:8).

As the feminist ideas of the 1960s in the West reached Turkey about twenty years later, the common problems of all women, sisterhood and consciousness-raising were still the most exciting part of the second wave feminism at the end of 1980s in the Turkish context. In the meantime, the critique of the Black women in the US and UK started to draw attention to the issues of difference among women, but these needed a few years to make it to the Turkish feminists' agenda. Hence, feminists did not sufficiently consider the connections between their and other groups' demands towards difference. They discussed which women could not be part of their movement; for some, the wives of the rich industrialists were the only women, not appropriate for joining their movement due to the activist women's background of socialism. Women were all sisters, but beneath that, homophobia, racism, ignorance, Islamophobia held by women were not addressed in a systematic way. According to Bora (2005), the first attempts to address differences could be found in the feminist declaration written in February 1989 in Ankara during "the feminist weekend":

> Feminist Declaration started with: 'We, as women,' and continued 'We may be different but we are all oppressed.' The partnership defined by feminists was a negative partnership caused by oppression. The basis of oppression, put as 'body, labour and identity' was a sign that the differences among feminists as well as women were aware of (Bora, 2005:104-105).

That was one of the first documents recognizing the importance of difference between women in the feminist movement in Turkey. However, it was soon understood that such recognitions were not enough anymore in a time of new and fluctuating demands by women of diverse political convictions. The vision of a spontaneous sisterhood among all women without the need for questioning other power structures had to be reviewed in order to enhance the feminist approach of the time largely underpinned by the second wave Western feminism. That sensitivity started to make its way into the feminist movement in Turkey.

3.2. Feminists and Identity Politics in the 1990s

During the 1990s, the women's movement in Turkey began to organize in formal civil society structures and within academia. In this context, the Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation (1990) and Library of Women's Works (1990) in Istanbul and the Women's Solidarity Foundation (1991) in Ankara were established. In 1995, feminist journal, *Pazartesi* (1995) began circulation in Istanbul. In the late 1990s, during the institutionalization phase (Çoban, 2007), the feminist movement was able to produce more sustainable and articulated political demands and could follow them up at the state level. It also managed to reach more resources in terms of money, activism and target groups as it became an institutionalized address for activists, specialists, funders, and women in general. Moreover, being able to reach female victims of violence, poverty, and discrimination of several kinds more widely, the movement enriched its base of social influence as well as of political influence. However, organizing in specialized civil bodies made the movement more issue-based, service-oriented, and professional at the cost of being political. Women's organizations became dependent on the agendas of international institutions, funders and even the state. This period of institutionalization allowed the women's movement to engage in joint activities with some other advocacy-oriented social groups and organizations; a trend of diversification in women's organizations and groups on the basis of identity, a trend that would soar in the 2000s, emerged.

In the 1990s, the rise of identity politics brought about a change of actors, rhetoric and themes in Turkish politics (Ayata 1997). The women's movement started to diversify and grow. Now it was not only feminists and Kemalist women, but religious, Kurdish, LGBT women (Daughters of Sappho, a group founded by a few women from Kaos GL) started to organize and let their voices be heard. Since their starting point was not feminism, the "women's movement" became the term considered appropriate to define the area of women's or gender politics. Meanwhile, the area of gender or women's politics has turned into an area of a proliferating project and issue based networks of knowledge and communication formed between

various groups of women. Successful lobbying projects and the platforms thereof established also contributed to increasing contact and joint work culture between different groups and organizations of women (Gönüllü, 2005). According to Bora and Günal (2002), the projects with a target group to empower caused women of lower classes to meet the women's movement and its ideas. Later, some of them started their own organizations, such as cooperatives. This view of the gender politics landscape triggered lengthy discussions and a concern about "how to stand together with differences" as women. The buzz-term used to understand this situation of civil politics in general was identity politics. Political-ideological movements such as the Islamist movement, secularist-Kemalist parties and groups as well as the Kurdish movement also started to organize around some particular and sub-identity related political causes like women's problems, ethnic problems, local identity problems or environmental issues. The specificity of the use of the term identity politics during this period stems from the fact that even those social movements, once blamed for engaging with identity politics themselves, started to accuse specific sub-groups for fracturing their movements and pursuing partial and subversive political causes.

The vigorous discussions in the conventional feminist groups due to political and personal reasons, such as internal problems due to the decision of inclusion of men in the 8 March demonstrations among feminists, led to weakening in the movement during the 1990s. The issues that emerged in the feminist conference of 1989 among socialist women and feminists were not resolved. Previous groups split into smaller groups with less energy; and many women stopped taking part in the feminist politics due to personal conflicts and disappointments. The proliferation of new women's groups, based on specific identities having other political agenda and additional aspirations, was evident.

Meanwhile, another trend demonstrated itself. Many Kurdish and Islamic women refused to be used in an instrumental way by the men of their movements. They offered their critique toward Kurdish and Islamic men who wanted to symbolize women as the sign of their social projects (Ertürk, 2006). An Islamic woman with a

headscarf symbolized the purity and merit of Islam for the movement whereas Kurdish women speaking Kurdish -and not Turkish as the language of the assimilator- would give birth to the nation with its authentic culture for their men, just as the modern Turkish woman was the symbol of the Kemalist project. However, these women did not see the feminist movement as a welcoming place for the solution of their identity-based problems.

3.2.1. The Kurdish Movement and Critique of Feminists by Kurdish Women

As explained in the previous chapter, in the West, Black women were first to question the power of the middle-class white women's dominance in the decision mechanisms. Immigrant women and women from former colonies also felt that their problems arising from double oppression were not paid proper attention and their existence was somewhat rejected in this feminist movement. They questioned racism and elitism of the feminist movement. In the Turkish case, the predicaments of the Kurdish women created a similar encounter with mainstream feminism.

In Turkey, Kurdish nationalism, present since the foundation of the republic as a Turkish nation-state for the lack of recognition of the Kurdish identity and language, entered a new phase after the 1980 military takeover. The PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) became a mass movement in the Southeastearn region inhabitated mostly by Kurdish people. As an armed movement, it demanded Kurds' cultural and political rights, although overshadowed by the utilization of violence. In the meantime, the PKK and Kurdish Question became more and more intertwined. Female militants started to join PKK as well and a feminist discourse could be discerned among them, which was also present in PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan's speeches and books (Çağlayan, 2007). This forced Turkish feminists to pay more attention to the Kurdish political movement as millions of women were introduced to a feminist rhetoric. Partly, by the PKK leader Öcalan's suggestions and partly independently from the mixed-gender Kurdish movement, separate Kurdish women's groups started to form and to draw attention to the dual exploitation that they experienced in the patriarchal tribal system within the Kurdish culture and the imperialist system that the centralist

Turkish state had imposed on Kurdish people (Diner and Toktaş, 2010).

Turkish nationalism was not dealt with properly in the feminist movement in Turkey. In fact, Turkish feminism ignored the Kurdish Question and the distinct problems of those women who lived in conflict zones populated mostly by Kurds. In the 1990s, Kurdish women coming from more peripheral backgrounds with lover socioeconomic status challenged Turkish feminism (dominated by urban, Western, middle-class, Turkish background, and educated women). According to Bora (2004), it was Kurdish women who, for the first time, enlightened feminists of the "Turkish" character of the feminist movement. Hence, the Kurdish movement, more particularly the women of this movement pushed feminists to question how they relate to the state and to Kemalist ideology.

In the second part of the 1990s, the contact between Turkish and Kurdish feminist women increased. Common agenda items like shelters for battered women provided platforms for coming together. Kurdish women had already started to organize separately. For example, an independent women's group KA-MER, consisting of mainly Kurdish women, was established, following training by the women's group WWHR.[13] This group could be considered to be the most autonomous from the ideology of ethnicity, organized in the Eastern and Southeastern Region (Çağlayan, 2007). Furthermore, the Dicle Women's Cultural Center was formed, and the magazine, *Free Woman in Life*, started to be published (it was later renamed *Voice of Free Woman*) (Kutluata, 2003). The magazines *Roza*, *Jujin* were outlets for Kurdish women who had difficult times in the 1990s due to the war and compulsory immigration from their villages. At the same time, they embraced a feminist perspective by addressing the issues of rape and sexual violence against women. The Kurdish feminist groups of the late 1990s voiced a discourse of double identity, referring to the intertwining of their gender and ethnic identities (Çağlayan, 2007). Kayhan, one of the women who were actively involved in the publication of the

[13] Women for Women's Human Rights (Kadının İnsan Hakları), one of the leading women's organizations in Istanbul, mainly known for lobbying for legislation as well as for conducting gender training for women in small cities.

Kurdish women's magazine *Roza*, wrote that as women of *Roza*, they were influenced by the ideas of bell hooks:

> To organize in our name, for ourselves was our basic principle. We were going to be independent of the Turkish women's groups and Kurdish political parties. The subordination of the Kurdish woman can only be explained when sexism is considered together with its relation to racism. We cannot understand Kurdish women if we only regard the gendered roles determined by patriarchy. In the same way, if we only focus on the racist hierarchy, we cannot analyze the situation of Kurdish women. We used to be discriminated against due to our ethnic identity. However, Turkish women ignored this with a majority and tried to cover up our difference. We opted for a feminism based on differences instead of forcing all women to meet at a common denominator. On the other hand, the Kurdish national movement required that we put our womanhood aside or postpone it. (Kayhan, 2011:34)

Their participation in feminist activities with the Kurdish identity caused the existing feminist groups to rethink many issues such as nationalism, militarism, discrimination and official ideology. Bora put it as follows:

> When Kurdish women became political based on their identity, they shook the modernization narrative from its base. They let us see how modern citizenship was defined based on Turkishness. Therefore, the relationship of Kurdish women with feminism of Turkey should not only be seen as recognition of the different but also a possibility for this feminism of looking at itself. (Bora, 2004:108)

At the same time, the feminist movement was criticized for not separating itself from the official ideology, but Amargi was exempt from this critique for discussing and putting efforts to construct the conditions of such an activism. Feminists in general did not sufficiently demonstrate their solidarity with Kurdish women in the 1990s, although the discourses regarding this point started to change.

3.2.2. Islamic Feminists[14] and the Headscarf Ban

A 1989 ruling of Turkey's Constitutional Court banned wearing Islamic veiling in

[14]I prefer to use the term Islamic instead of Islamist for these women as Islamist has the connotation of a political movement dedicated to propagating Islam. The women I mention do not harbour such aspirations.

public institutions and particularly among students on university campuses. Various political groups have manipulated this issue and the headscarf was stigmatized as a political symbol (Saktanber & Çorbacıoğlu, 2008: 519). It was perceived as a symbol of political Islam that threatened to destroy Turkey's secular democracy (Çınar, 2005). As Şeni (1995) points out, women's clothing is considered an emblem for whether one is for or against modernization, and the headscarf clashed with the official modernist ideology of the state.

Thousands of women, wearing headscarves were expelled from their universities when the ban was implemented even more strictly upon the military intervention of 28 February 1997.[15] In 1999, a veiled woman was elected to parliament from the Islamic Virtue Party list, but she was expelled from parliament after she entered it with the headscarf. She also lost her status as an elected member of parliament. Although many religious women helped the Islamist male politicians tremendously in gaining votes by working voluntarily for the party in the neighborhoods to collect votes. They also were used as the symbols of the Islamist Welfare party; yet, they could not participate in formal politics and were not promoted within the party for the seats when they came to power (Arat, 2005).

Moreover, protests by Islamic women against the headscarf ban in university campuses did not receive sufficient support from Islamist men (Gazioğlu, 2010). On the contrary, they blamed women for being on the streets; these men shared the secularists' opinion that if they were covered, their place was home (İlkkaracan, 1996). The Islamic parties that came to power also did not display genuine commitment to solve the Islamic women's headscarf problems. Upon all these developments, well-educated covered religious women started to organize separately from men. Intellectual Islamic women[16] criticized the patriarchal interpretations of the Quran, the Islamist discourse and traditional gender roles and offered alternative readings from the women's point of view, similar to that of Mernissi and El Saadawi.

[15]On February 28, 1997, the Turkish military issued a memorandum to the ruling coalition of the Islamist Welfare Party with center-right DYP and ultimately forced it to resign.
[16] Among them were Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, Sibel Eraslan, etc.

The unfair treatment of women by the Islamic political parties that were supported by religious women had alienated educated Islamic women from the male Islamic elite. They started to form their own groups such as Başkent Women's Platform and Gökkuşağı Women's Platform (Aslan-Akman, 2008). While the female body had become a major site of contestation by both Islam and secularism, during the 1990s, meaningful resistance thus emerged from religious women themselves (Özçetin, 2009). They took part in many campaigns together with other women's groups and feminists in the 2000s. However, relations between Islamic and secular feminists were not free from problems. Secular feminist women did not adequately protect and support those women who were heavily stigmatized in the 1980s (Eraslan, 2009). When the first "Islamic feminists" appeared in late 1980s, secular feminists questioned whether an Islamic feminism was possible. This was a sign of the ongoing exclusion of religious women. The perception of being an authority to decide who could and who could not be feminists and for not communicating with them to learn more about their aspirations was problematic (Bora, 2002). According to Sirman, "there should be no problem in joining forces with Islamist women for challening male society as well as its state apparatus. Other women, by contrast felt that this was carrying anti-statism too far and that feminism and Islam could not ever be compatible" (1989:8). Thus, although feminists regarded themselves as a challenge to the ideology of the state, such a coalition would make them an "enemy to the republic," reflecting the way in which Islamic feminists were perceived. After all, the Turkish state promoted a "state feminism" despite its limitations.

However, in the 1990s, some secular feminists wrote articles in magazines and attended some demonstrations supporting the Islamic women's cause. This support was appreciated by Islamic women but there was an obstacle to a deeper relation between secular and Islamic feminists in general: Most feminists still felt indebted to the republican ideals of the secular state, which enabled them to have presence in the society. They also regarded Islam as a threat to women's rights and also to a secular society (Arat, 1994). Turam's description of the difference between Kemalist women and secular feminists rightly identifies the distinction between these two groups in

the following way:

> In opposition to Kemalist women, some secular feminists in Turkey are in favour of more tolerant versions of secularisms, calling for a genuine separation between religion and politics and more religious freedom. These more moderate secularists do not cooperate with hardcore Kemalist [women] in confronting pious women and/or fighting against the headscarf. (2008: 477)

As explained, the Kemalist nation building paradigm, and later the leftist movement in Turkey, regarded Islam as a source of backwardness and a threat to the foundations of the republic. This perception prevented feminist women who had not questioned those two approaches from openly supporting Islamic feminists. Many of the women active in women groups identified themselves also as socialists and were quite sensitive to criticism from the left (Sirman, 1989). According to Eraslan, Islamic women were regarded and discarded as backward by the "contemporary" and as "fitne" by religious men (Eraslan, 2009). They did not have much choice other than carrying out their independent struggle relying on themselves in the 1990s. Therefore, the concept of sisterhood could not prevail in the context of internalized prejudices in the late 1980s and 1990s in Turkey.

3.2.3. The LGBT movement, LBT Women; Homophobia, Transphobia among Feminists

LGBT people started to organize under the roof of *Kaos GL* in 1994, a gay and lesbian periodical adopting an anarchist stand in Ankara. Lambdaistanbul, a LGBTT group in Istanbul had been established in 1993. Lesbians were a very small minority in these groups. A reason for that was partly the conservative society that did not allow young women to go out and search for women like themselves. The sexism also was present amongst the male group members, just like other realms of the society. Nevertheless, these two groups regarded feminists as their best allies and a few women started to take part in these movements. Some lesbian women wrote articles in the feminist periodical *Pazartesi* in the 1990s, to rally against homophobia among feminists in Turkey. Few lesbian women began to come out to openly challenge the homo/lesbophobia and heterosexism of the feminists of the time.

In the West, white lesbian/bisexual women were active in numbers in the feminist movement from the beginning. One of the main characteristics of feminists of the 1980s in Turkey was their opposition to political lesbianism (Tekeli, 1984 and Koçali, 1988 as quoted in Çaha, 2002). Emancipation for many feminist groups meant sexual liberty, where sexuality was experienced with men (Çaha, 2002). The reasons for this can be found in the dominant moral values of socialist women under the influence of a patriarchal-feudal culture, breeding homophobia. The feminists who gathered after the 1980s in Turkey came predominantly from socialist circles. They were, in some aspects similar to Kemalist women, quite "masculine" and void of femininity, as former "revolutionary sisters" of socialist men. Due to such a past, discussing sexuality was a difficult topic for them. However, the efforts of Turkish feminist author, Duygu Asena, for example, placed this issue on the public agenda. Finally, transsexuality and transvestites were discussed in the discourse of sex-work done by male to female transsexuals -due to being their only option- both among feminists and in the society.

3.3. Beyond Feminist Identity Politics: Contextualizing Amargi's Aim to Bridge Differences

In the 1990s, the rise of identity politics was a concern for both Western feminism and feminism in Turkey. Similar to the Black and lesbian feminists' challenge to the second wave of Western feminism for its white and heterosexual background, the Kurdish and Islamic feminists critiqued Turkish mainstream feminists for being ethno-centric and exclusionary of other identities (Toktaş, 2007). Some feminists started to question their stand in the Kurdish Question upon the critique of Kurdish women. Most of them started to regard the Kurdish issue as a problem of the foundation of the nation-state, similar to the discussions in the socialist movement.

In the struggle of LGBT people, feminists of the 1990s started to side with them. They did not particularly support lesbians as their best allies in the movement, but

they approached the whole LGBT community. Feminists of the 1990s in Turkey were not challenged by transsexuals, neither male-to-female nor female-to-male, asking to join the movement. However, one of the major issues discussed in the European feminist movement was the case of transsexuals in the feminist groups. A recent discussion about transsexual men's participation in the 2011 8 March events, as well as objections by other feminists about their involvement in Amargi as members, demonstrate that they would not have been accepted then either.

In the case of Islamic women, the majority of feminists were against the headscarf ban in the universities.[17] Although they were not organizing together, Islamic feminists recognized that feminist activists were much closer to them than Kemalist women. Well-known Islamic feminists challenged the male-domination among religious public as well as authors and had a similar discourse to feminist activists.[18]

The late 1990s brought important developments to politics in Turkey. The head of the PKK was captured in 1999. Armed conflict was temporarily put on hold on his order causing relief in the Turkish public opinion. This heightened the hopes for a lasting peace on the Kurdish Question. Meanwhile, the 1999 Helsinki Summit, which granted Turkey candidate status for membership to the EU (under the condition that it followed the given roadmap until 2004), initiated a new era in the democratization process. The EU membership candidacy made things much easier for NGOs due to the ideals of multi-culturalism and the ceasefire/peace times in the Kurdish conflict. Liberal opinions started to travel optimistically. In December 2000, Pınar Selek (one of Amargi's founders) was released from prison; in 2001, Amargi was founded. However, when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to rule in 2002, this created some unease in the secular public, combined with fears from the EU demanding structural changes from the state to become a member. Meanwhile, the EU accession process led to questioning of the hitherto-taboo issues threatening the

[17] It was finally lifted in a *de facto* manner in 2009, by means of an amendment in the bylaws of higher education institutions.

[18] For a detailed analysis of these discussions in Zaman newspaper, see Göle (2010).

status quo and generated debates about the extension of human rights. For the women's movement, this period witnessed separate organizing of Kurdish women, head-scarved women, and LBT women. These groups of women had already started to come together and organize in NGOs in the late 1990s. They sometimes blamed the feminists for being exclusionary and discriminatory. This raised the need for considering workshops and discussions to fight racism, Islamophobia and heterosexism the feminist activists may have had. Kurdish, Islamic and LBT women accomplished recognition as well, although rather than through theoretical academic books like their Western counterparts due to their separate identity politics involving demonstrations, sometimes also on 8 March together with feminists as in the case of Kurdish and LBT women.

Hence, by the 2000s, the women's movement in Turkey, which had originally been started by leftist feminist groups, expanded to include Kurdish women, head-scarved or Islamic women, LBT women, women engineers, poor women like home-based workers, in time, although usually as independent groups. All these groups of women started to express themselves, demand representation, and engage in politics through their gender identity and on the grounds of gender politics. Yet, these groups of women had diverse political backgrounds and affiliations other than feminism alone and sometimes the other affiliations brought some obstacles in achieving feminist perspectives.

It was in this context that the Amargi Women's Cooperative was founded in 2001 to become the most known example in Turkey of encounters of different women in the same group without ignoring these differences.

CHAPTER 4

4. THE AMARGI WOMEN'S COOPERATIVE

> What I really feel is radical is trying to make coalitions with people who are different from you. I feel it is radical to be dealing with race and sex and class and sexual identity all at one time. I think that is really radical because it has never been done before (Barbara Smith, 2000 as quoted by Hill Collins, 1990:222).

This chapter provides a historical overview of Amargi's actors, feminist perspective and campaigns over the past ten years since its establishment in 2001. This overview aims to present the political priorities, and political identities of the women involved in the group and the changes therein over time. A brief description of the group, as well as the distinctive features of Amargi in comparison with the other present and previous prominent feminist groups in Turkey is provided in the first section. The unfolding of its feminist perspective in the campaigns organized around certain concerns are described and analyzed with reference to the Amargi foundation manifesto. The discussion also highlights the debates surrounding the main political issues to which Amargi women have attached particular significance as they position themselves in gender politics and in the civil society in Turkey.

4.1. The Emergence of Amargi within the Feminist Movement in Turkey

The EU decision granting membership candidacy to Turkey created a liberal and optimistic atmosphere from the perspective of promoting a larger space for the defense and expression of rights starting from 1999. Moreover, there was an ongoing period of ceasefire declared in 1999. The impact of the so-called "post-modern" coup d'etat of 28th of February 1997 was still being felt in the religious public in terms of state pressure on them. As a result, in the dawn of 2000's, a relatively liberal space

for new NGO's existed inspite of the pressure on some socio-political opposition as mentioned above.

Amargi was founded in 2001 when the feminist movement, just like other social opposition actors, was in a silent stance after a period of heightened activism of late 1980s and 1990s. Enthusiasm of the feminists in late 1980s subsided and become confined to small groups. They also largely left the stage to numerous women's NGO's devoted to projects and occupied with application for funds to sustain themselves. However, women's movement consisting of diverse women's groups organised around specific politicized identities was more visible than the previous feminist movement, a new phase of feminism, "the third wave of feminism" in Turkey which recruited women more from the periphery (Toktaş and Diner, 2010:57).

As explained in the previous Chapter, those women who felt excluded from the existing feminist groups had already founded their own groups having feminist connotations. Kurdish women, LBT women and religious women had formed their own organisations in the 1990s upon problems of representation in a predominantly Turkish, secular, and heterosexual environments in the feminist movement (Çaha, 2011). Those women claimed recognition for their identities which were neither centred upon nor limited to their gender identities. This women's movement enlarged the gender activism to include women who didn't call themselves feminists but still acknowledged the need for a separate women's organization. They were still largely embedded in their own political struggles which had been waged and maintained together with the men of those particular identities, rather than in women's movement. However, having stepped in the area of gender politics, some women with other political activism background were also becoming aware of a Woman Question, which cannot be dealt without an autonomous movement, women's movement. Furthermore, as they entered in that area, they immediately found feminist women and organizations, sometimes as allies and sometimes as the long existing and experienced occupants of the political place they desired to claim. In each case, women with different political backgrounds started to encounter each

other more frequently on a political stage. Those encounters have also been considered to function in favour of political legitimacy of feminism. "As the movement came into contact with diverse women, it acquired a grasp of problems of different women and becomes the voice of struggle against these problems" (Çaha, 2011:9).

Separate organization was the only solution found for the issues of invisibility and lack of recognition for these women. However, this strategy turned out to be running the danger of essentializing their identities and failing to integrate a politics of encounter, interaction, and joint action with other women from different backgrounds, and to find a solution to the entrenched polarizations around identity differences.

That solution came later as a response to the rise of identity politics with a progressing tendency of fracturize political area along the lines of identity differences in public sphere and within social movements, whereas the need for a common cause, a common agenda and a common action appeared as compelling for women's problems. While non-feminist women's groups conducting identity politics had to come to this point generally as a result of pratical political reasoning and within eclectic political attitudes, feminist groups have reflexively acted on the outlook and raised the question of diversity in women's movement.

When Amargi Women's Cooperative was formed in Istanbul in 2001[19], it was perceived as different from previous women's groups in several ways in the media and in the public opinion as well as in the feminist circles.[20] First of all, the name of the group was interesting as a word not known to many for not being of Turkish origin. The founders later stated that if they selected a Turkish or Kurdish word, that would not reflect the multiculturalism of the group[21].

[19] The founders called the group also as Amargi Women's Academy, keeping the cooperative name mostly for legal status.

[20] Amargi yani özgürlük http://bianet.org/bianet/kadin/9283-amargi-yani-ozgurluk accessed on the 3.1.2012

[21] "Amargi means both "Freedom" and "Return to Mother" in the ancient Sumerian language

There was a common ground uniting Amargi women, even though diversity was one of the most emphasized political priorities. United over the concept of patriarchy even in the face of the mounting theoretical and political assults towards it, Amargi members accepted that all women were affected by the male domination. Moreover, a new way of defining patriarchy and a new feminist political vision, integrating diversity among women ought to be the starting point for a strong feminist movement.

It was believed by the Amargi women at this early stage that, women did share some common problems, and that none of them was immune against male domination; yet, since patriarchy as a system penetrates into the lives of all women in an explicit or implicit way and it is a direct or indirect force of oppression, operating over their bodies, labour, and identity. Moreover, the patriarchal system itself is capable of splitting and separating women among themselves even playing them against each other. Thus, a unification of different women around a feminist cause would not ipso facto take place. According to the founders, since the woman question was a political question, the subject of feminism could be any woman politicized around this issue. Therefore, approaching it as a social problem referred to as Woman Question was not enough for addressing the problem and challenging male domination. As an extension of this understanding, Amargi was not against men as individuals but was taking issue with male domination as a systemic phenomenon.

The seventeen women who founded Amargi were mostly young academicians, most of them being sociologists working at several universities in Istanbul. Among them, Pınar Selek was a prominent figure known to many people due to a prosecution over

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which was spoken 4000 years ago in Southern Mesopotamia until the first century AC.

"There are three meanings of Amargi. One of them comes from one of the oldest, patriarchal civilization. Amargi means "Freedom" in Sumerian, at the same time; "Return to Mother". These two meanings of Amargi in a civilization in which power, slavery and violence is getting stronger each day, makes us think. Sumerian is a dead language. It is neither spoken nor owned by any nation. That is why it tells us the common dream of the humanity. Not only in this land, but everywhere in this world, this name must be recalled as an exciting experience of pain and happiness. Last meaning of Amargi belongs to our land.It is not static, it is not dull. It has been interpreted continuously as the word 'freedom' in Sumerian. It points at a never-ending journey." (Manifesto of Amargi, 2000)

her alleged involvement in a bomb attack in Istanbul in 1998. There were also a number of young Kurdish women with prior active political background, mostly university students or school teachers; and there were also three transsexual women. This small group of young women had already read about feminism and feminist groups in Turkey. Early meetings of the group were held at the office of the small feminist group, Pazartesi[22] and they, first of all, tried to find an existing group instead of startng with a new one.[23] The founders stated that they visited the existing feminist groups with the intention to join if they were compatible with their aims and their feminist perspective. According to Selek (2010), there was no group with the priority to organize more women into feminism at that moment. "Project feminism" was also considered hegemonic, with no alternative present. The feminist journal, *Pazartesi* was still being published, albeit in decreasing numbers. Once the funds that the group had received finished up, the group was reduced to six members. Morçatı (Purple Roof), the women's shelter group, was also depending on funds to keep their shelter open, also with less than ten women active. So, a separate group was formed with the objective of "growing by organizing"; the aspirations of the group emphasized "learning, creating, transforming each other by discussions and finally to overcome patriarchal habits." Following Amargi Istanbul, women in other cities were also organized under Amargi roof as well. In Adana, Hatay and more recently Izmir, small groups were formed and offices were rented by means of collecting membership fees. These groups were autonomous from the Istanbul branch in that, they were free to organize their own activities and these branches would come together few times a year to discuss and communicate with each other. However, by 2011, among them only Amargi Izmir remained active due to personal problems other groups experienced.[24]

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[22] A small feminist group, which had been publishing a popular feminist journal since 1995.

[23] Interview with Seyda Selek (sister of Pınar Selek) who was one of the founders. Interview by the Oral History Group (2010). Thanks to the permissions of Gamze Toksoy, Esen Özdemir, Özge Altın and Suna Yılmaz.

[24] I mean Amargi Istanbul by the word Amargi. I also interviewed a founding member of Amargi Izmir but it is analyzed accordingly.

Also some young women with relatives active in Kurdish political groups joined for their belief and support for Pınar Selek, one of the founders of Amargi Istanbul. Several teachers with memberships in a left-leaning union of educators, and of the Kurdish, Turkish or Arabic ethnical origins also joined the group. There were also three male-to-female transsexuals who were friends of the group's most active founding member Pınar Selek, whom she met while writing her master thesis about the attacks against transsexuals in Istanbul during the 1996 Habitat Organizations.[25]

Obviously, the profile of volunteers in Amargi was striking in terms of embodying a challenge to the trend towards separation of women's groups that started in the 1990s. The difference about Amargi was that none of the former women's groups had started with such an emphasis on diversity before. According to Bora, previous feminist groups' approach to identity issue was confined to accepting sex as a category cutting the social class and gender differences horizontally. They accepted that there were class differences. However, even though they were from different social classes, they could reach a consensus when dealing with problems based on their gender. Furthermore, class differences, as well as ideological differences could be perceived as realities that could be pushed out of the gender coalition. Hence, Bora notes that, "by summarizing their approach in the motto "together with our differences", feminists continued with ideological, class and identity differences *out of the paranthesis"* (Bora, 2011:18).

At this initial stage, Amargi women also criticized the dependence of other women's groups on donor funding provided by national and international donors to social projects. The Amargi women' argument was that, Amargi would be sustained by membership fees from the volunteers as a grassroot organization. Limited funding from chosen donors could be accepted for ad hoc campaigns, yet this would not be the major tool for financing the group in the longer term. However, membership fees were usually not sufficient for in running an office in the center of Istanbul. Thus, some volunteers and friends of Amargi opened language courses for women and children, to contribute to the payment of the rent. There were also free literacy

[25] http://www.pinarselek.com/public/destek.aspx?id=45 accessed on the 15.12.2011.

classes for adult women, mostly Kurdish women living in Tarlabaşı, which was a suburb of abjected people such as Romans, Kurdish and immigrant people. These classes were more than charity, a sign of solidarity, and participants of the courses were then invited to Amargi to organize together. Moreover, a recycled-paper workshop was set up. Used paper was collected, washed, and mixed with paint to create notebooks, book separators etc. The revenue from the workshop was used to pay the rent and help the transsexual member, Cavidan, who carried out most of the work, to enable her to survive without having to do sex work. Additionally, a cafe and running of a textile (sock) producing machine were among the early initiatives to financially support both Amargi and the unemployed members, as an embodiment of responsibility and solidarity principles cherished by the organization. Meanwhile, the Amargi cafe was considered as a way of enlargement in membership and a way to reach different groups of women. This sort of organizing was in line with the features of grassroots organisations, which hold up the principle of 'organizing with the subjects of the problem'. This, however, did not mean that there were some liberated women and were not subjects of sexual oppression, Amargi women believed that every woman experienced the disadvantages of being woman in the misogynous system world-wide. However, most of the existing women's groups in Turkey were formed in a way to help women who were less educated, who were poorer, or suffering from violence, founded by women coming from higher classes. Amargi's strategy was to organize with the "subjects" of the problem, to empower them in the organisation through solidarity and by means of the transformative nature of activism turn them into more confident individuals, capable of making a change in the society with other activists. Amargi declared that the group also needed the knowledge of the oppressed based on various reasons in order to produce a more comprehensive feminist theory. (Manifesto of Amargi, 2000)

4.2. Amargi's Perspective on Feminism: Inclusiveness, Reflexivity and Solidarity

"Living itself is the most important academic activity."

Amargi's motto

Amargi based its foundational claims upon the principles of inclusiveness, reflexivity

and solidarity, and differentiated itself from former and other contemporary feminist organizations in Turkey in terms of these aspects. Amargi tried to analyze the existing social and political environment for gender politics and to develop a more inclusive theory of patriarchy and feminist organizing. There was an explicit need for a new feminist analysis and indeed, a political alternative in the area of gender politics. This would involve widening the horizon of traditional feminist agenda and changing the habituated course of action in feminist politics. This perspective was a product of the reflexive experimentation developed in some small and informal groups of women, such as the "Workshop of the Oppressed", consisting of street people, some among the founders of Amargi. There were further articulations of the complex political experiences of those a few women, Pınar Selek being the most well known among them. Because of that reflexive orientation, as well as the importance attached to feminist knowledge production, Amargi was named as an academia in itself. That was, partly, reflecting the urge to contemplate and systematically pull together the otherwise scattered experiences and encounters among women through a conscious political action and organize them around a feminist cause. Solidarity was the other link in the Amargi's political stance. Lifting off the randomness or occasionality in encounter and joint political action between different women, both in daily life and political action levels, solidarity appeared as the key principle. Redefinition of solidarity in light of inclusiveness and reflexivity principles was distinctive in Amargi's organization and political action. Solidarity was reformulated as both immediate and daily, and public and political levels. Amargi therefore sought ways of practically contributing to the living of its members and women it reached and politically producing a common ground for different women's groups. Amargi's approach to feminism integrated recent theoretical openings in the academia, nurturing the transmission of academic knowledge to the realm of activism with the mediation of some young feminist academics.

A larger definition of patriarchy, including resistance to war, to nationalism, militarism, heterosexism, and to several kinds of elitism, was regarded as vital for any viable feminist activism if a common destiny of issue or identity based small group feminism and charity like civil society behavior were to be avoided. As the

diversity was one of the top priorities of Amargi, the significance of intersectionality as a concept, which stresses the irreducibly multi-layered and intersectional character of political group and individual identity, was recognized as early as the concept started to produce its first academic works. Making use of the theoretical discussions opened up by the concept of intersectionality (though there was not any open reference to the term) Amargi set out to formulate a new analysis of patriarchy. This new version of patriarchy analysis and of feminism on the basis of the former, involved struggles against the power relations other than male dominance. The previous feminist groups of 1980s and 1990s were not as interested as Amargi in the topics such as putting an end to the war in the Southeast against the Kurdish guerilla as feminist women and putting the LGBT struggle or headscarf issue into their political agenda. Devising a new feminist theory to generate a successful and *reflexive* activism was the objective of Amargi. This would be accomplished together with women outside the academy, and even with women like transsexual women surviving on sex-work. As one of the founders put it:

> We knew that freedom could not be attained without a holistic and anti-systemical approach. We agreed upon being anti-violence. It was not only sexism that we were against, although this part was underestimated by the previous leftist movement in Turkey, therefore we keep it as a priority issue of course.[26]

Reflexivity of the Amargi enterprise generally shows itself in the most explicitly in the written documents of the organization. The founding members constantly tried to examine themselves and their positionality and means of expression and organization. This tendency extends to the work of producing knowledge and political claims substantiated by that knowledge. Before its official establishment, a manifesto was written together by the founders in 2000. The concepts of hegemony, power relations, diversity and isolation were derived from a street artists' workshop.[27] The discussions about which sort feminism to adopt and the content of

[26] From the interview of Seyda Selek, Oral History Project

[27] Ibid

manifesto started by Pınar Selek who was still in prison, during the visits of some women who will later become the founders.[28] This manifesto stated that it aimed to combine feminist research with everyday life, street demonstrations and the all kinds of politically articulated intentions for making changes in the society towards equality and liberation. As such, Amargi also targeted a direct intervention at the mainstream academic practice which does not directly use the research as a tool to solve the social problems, but rather manifest career-orientation. This took a form of a common objection to the academia coming from both academician members and other women in the organization. The intention of the usage of the alternative - or in fact real- name, Amargi Women's Academia, was to remind that knowledge is to change the society for better. They claimed that feminist knowledge in the academia remained largely behind the doors of universities and libraries, not used sufficiently for women and even not produced for the use of those outside the academia. Therefore, production of knowledge from feminist perspective outside academia and its diffusion to the society were two of the main concerns of Amargi. Amargi wanted to have an alternative academia open to all women for the production and usage of feminist knowledge.

With that strong reflexive sensitivity towards its political stance and all level of activities, Amargi decided to use the method of "non-violence trainings" to overcome discrimination and prejudices among volunteers of different identities. These trainings involved games, stories to evaluate discriminatory sides of ourselves in order to face these prejudices. The nature of these trainings allowed such questionings. Admitting the presence of internalized discriminatory approaches, they would start with the self-struggle to overcome them without getting defensive. Unlike political discussions of theoretical nature, with a drive of contest, in these trainings, women would take part in the game, unconscious prejudices get spilled, noticed and discusses but without judgement towards each other. The atmosphere became both friendly and serious, with women laughing and changing at the same

[28] Ibid

time. Three volunteers interviewed for this study[29] mentioned that their trouble in speaking their mind disappeared through these. For example, Cemgül said that she came from a family where discussion was non-existent and she was surprised to learn about this sort of communication.

The objective in coming up with those types of methods in organizing and in development of organizational communication was also stated in the Amargi Manifesto as the target of creating spaces of freedom carefully and reflexively carved in a holistic way: "We are creating our own freedom spaces against all patriarchal power structures. We are fighting against all exploitation systems including militarism, racism, and heterosexism."[30] This aim was in line with the initiative's explicit concern towards producing immediate, daily, personal, as well as political and public solutions and experiences of freesom and solidarity.

4.3. Organizational Structure and the Challenge of Leadership

Non-hierarchical, horizontal organization, equality and shifts in necessary positions, encouragement of personal initiative development in women were the main principles upon which Amargi sought a model of organizing. Horizontal and non-hierarchical organizing was a difficult target as proved by decades-long feminist experiences (Freeman: 72-73). While the liberatory effects of equal and solidarity-based relations in the organization were clearly observable, Amargi experience demonstrated that this type of organizing was also characterized with constant tension and conflict. Sometimes the danger of splitting along the lines of identity differences surfaced.

In the Amargi manifesto, the structure was defined in the following way:

[29] The participants Merve, Cemgül and Feride

[30] Amargi is our jouney http://www.amargi.org.tr/?q=node/131 accessed on 3.1.2012

> Amargi is an independent organization from government and political parties. Since we don't want to resemble the system that we are critizing, we have no leader, and we have anyone responsible. That means no one decides for any one. We bring our aims into life through work groups and ateliers. At the meetings that happen in every fifteen days, we evaluate our deeds and make debates.We make decisions in consensus. Transparency is our primary principle. A model of uniting which is in constant change and changes itself according to its needs is what we believe in.

This phrase is a sign of the different organisational models that Amargi would experiment with over the years, seeking a better one every time. According to one interviewee, Selin, this showed Amargi was a flexible group, responding to everchanging world outside. Selin thinks that this is a property to praise, comparing to other groups which are solid and therefore inflexible, even dead-like in their politics which is frozen.

From the start, it was intended that Amargi became and stayed a non-hierarchical group. This principle was inherent in the feminist understanding Amargi had adopted. Every woman in Amargi was free at the choice of her work area. She could bring an issue to the agenda of Amargi, and do research about it, present it if she wished. If other women wanted to participate to study the same subject, then they could create a working group, too. This is why the interest areas and focuses have changed from year to year depending on the women who joined, as long as it did not conflict with the founding perspective and principles of Amargi. But we cannot conclude that there was no common rule or duty for the Amargi members. Even though every member was a volunteer, discipline was a promise as searching for freedom was not a secondary hobby but a tiring aim. For example, the cooperative's office was kept open and running by the volunteers. It was necessary that Amargi office was opened, and sweeped everyday for women who would want to visit it. Food is to be prepared for lunch to be shared by women who were there, all those works were to be done by the responsible member of the day. There was equality at this duty. Every member did these jobs at least once in two weeks with a partner. It was hard work but the labour done there brought women even closer and made her feel as a part of Amargi more and more. After the enthusiasm of such a sharing

environment and the critique to the family as an institution, and its rules, some women did not want to live with their parents anymore but share a common house with other members. The women who worked as teachers rented an appartment and the students and unemployed members usually stayed at nights there instead of going home to their parents' house. The discussions, sharings, and critique continued to be experienced full time. Seyda, interviewed by the Oral History group, says that activism with such an intensity was not a sustainable situation. She said that some women left their jobs and/or studies to work more for Amargi. Sacrifices of the women in the first years were significant and caused some burnouts in the following years causing some abrupt decisions of leaving the group where they felt that there was no time left for personal life, studies or career. The structure and membership profile was explained in the manifesto as follows:

> Amargi is open to all women. Amargi is an organization independent of government and political parties. We do not want to resemble the system that we are so critical of, so we have no leader, but hold everyone responsible. That means no one decides for anyone. We implement our mission through working groups. Organizational meetings take place every two weeks during which we discuss the structure of Amargi. We make decisions through consensus. Unambiguity is very important to Amargi.

There was an administrative board for the legal reasons, which was replaced every two years. Non-hierarchy was one of the main concerns. The work was carried out divided into several commissions, namely, organizing, monetary, external affairs, etc. These were not fixed and could be cancelled if they were proven to be not useful. Sometimes there were discussions about the forming of hierarchy but it worked as aimed at most of the time. Criticism and Self-criticisms were fixed agenda of the meetings. Women talked to each other about their hesitations, questions in their minds, thanks to the Amargi environment allowing that.

As for the exclusion of men, it was stated that "men should only be there to support."[31] Men's support was accepted as a sign of their solidarity but they could

[31] Kadına Dönüş ve Özgürlük Akademisi http://bianet.org/bianet/kadin/6777-kadina-donus-ve-ozgurluk-akademisi accessed on 22.12.2011

not be accepted to be part of the feminist movement, as its subjects. Amargi did not approach feminism as an identity politics; however it was believed that men, who did not have experience of womanhood, could not be actors in it. The inclusion of a female-to-male transsexual, who was active in Amargi as a lesbian before, was an exception to this rule. This created some discussions among feminists outside Amargi.

Amargi Women also supported the forming of the separate men's group BEDI, "We are not men" initiative, who organized as profeminist men to protest violence against women. They not only demonstrated but also conducted workshops questioning themselves as men. Amargi women's struggle was not towards men as individuals but towards patriarchy which could also oppress men, forcing them to epitomize the traits of the "hegemonic masculinity" of Connell (2005).

Even though the principle of non-hierarchy was stressed, Pınar Selek was at the center of the Amargi group, with her dedication, charisma, intelligence and sincere efforts. Her academic and political life was rich in encounters with the oppressed, marginal or politically excluded people in the society like transsexuals, street children, and Kurdish political groups. Numerous experiences with different groups facing oppression in the society coupled with her education in sociology created an all-embracing analysis of power and insights towards organizing against it. From the very beginning, Selek emerged as a central figure in the circles of societal opposition and in the feminist circles, before forming Amargi. She contributed to the perspective and organization of the activities of Amargi standing at a focal point because of her political experiences and network. Her family being a respected leftwing political one, she was friends with many prominent figures, who later visited Amargi and supported her work. Inspite of all the trouble, work and anxiety, this support and media coverage of her case also strengthened Amargi.

The power of Selek's political stand led to discussions over whether it constitutes a paradox in the name of equality and horizontal and non-hierarchical organization

principles of Amargi. Handicaps of strong leadership were surfaced in some occations where the organization lacked the support of Selek. During the organization of one of the biggest activities of Amargi (Istanbul Social Ecology Project), Selek had a car accident and suffered from a brain trauma, having to stay away for six months. The rest of the members, who were under pessimism due to this event, had to prepare themselves to conduct the project without her.

Selek studied sociology and received her master's degree about the attacks on transsexual people during the Habitat meetings held in Ulker Street, Istanbul in 1996. This work was later published as a book. (Selek, 2000) The approach in this book gained her the trust of LGBT people. She was also very active in a group of people who set up a workshop for street children and people of the streets. Later, she was reflecting over the conditions of a prospective peace process between PKK and the Turkish State, as part of her Ph.D thesis. She was then taken under custody, subjected to torture in order to reveal the names she was in contact with, (members of PKK in Europe) and was afterwards prosecuted as the suspect of an explosion. This was later recognized as stemming from the explosion of leaked gas, and not from a bomb. However the courtcase still remains open after 13 years in 2012. Selek was kept in prison, waiting for the court's decision for two and a half years and was finally released in 2000. The idea of Amargi originated mainly among her friends from the university years, as well as Kurdish women who respected her stand and efforts for peace and finally transsexuals she met while working on her M.S. thesis. Having an individual as the leader, founder can contradict with the non-hierarchical organization aim. In the example of Amargi, the multiple political and social concerns of a specific individual, Pınar Selek, created a platform where coalition needs of different identity groups met and communicated. According to Gamson, "a central component of any collective action frame is a sense of injustice" (1995, 90). Thus, collective action involves some righteous anger directed toward the source of injustice. This emotion was present in volunteers of Amargi due to Selek's courtcase. There was a considerable media coverage related to the well-known leader of the group, Selek, when Amargi started with its campaigns gathering Kurdish and Turkish women. The media attention in, what Selek was doing during the foundation of

Amargi was due to the interpretation of her recent release as injustice admitted by the state to this young woman.[32] She was graduated as the best student of Sociology from Mimar Sinan University. However she was expelled from her ph.D years later, when accused of bombing by the police, thereafter starting her critique towards academia. She was not content by just learning and using this knowledge to gain academic titles, she set up workhops, lived and became friends with street children and transsexuals, sex workers during her university years. Her master thesis was about the atrocities towards transsexual inhabitants of a neighbourhood in 1996. She stayed with the victims, during the events to become observer of what was happening, to show solidarity and to report the atrocities. These efforts gained the trust of Kurdish people, transsexuals and the book published from the thesis gained that of the gays, lesbians and bisexuals with its perspective not encountered before in Turkey.

4.4. The First Years' Activities in Amargi and the Problematization of Knowledge

The earliest activities in Amargi were organization of a number of seminars on the subjects of women's movement, launching of antimilitarist campaigns, and other activities that can be categorized within the scope of peace activism. Meanwhile, the concern to organize support for Pınar Selek's trials was one of the main occupations in Amargi over the years[33].

The central plank in the activities of Amargi was the concern for establishing platforms, networks and occasions of dialogue, cooperation, and co-organization

[32] Nobody knew that after twelve years of Amargi, her case would still not be closed.

[33] Selek's courtcase still lasting after 12 years affected Amargi a lot. In Amargi, many months of work was put into organizing campaigns, getting signatures for a campaign statement for witnessing Pınar Selek's personality and mentioning that 'she was not capable of the deeds she was accused of, being a truly an antimilitarist, non-violent and feminist sociologist'. The courtcase, trials and the campaigns created an additional cause for solidarity among women of Amargi. Each time a positive verdict was reached it was a time of celebration and of sorrow otherwise. There was always a strong solidarity among members of Amargi for her.

between different women's groups. Amargi's philosophy has depended on an understanding that unless women of different identity groups form their own political stance they were destined to be splitted and undermined as a political actor by the mainstream politics of other actors. It may further be inferred from this approach that identities that are positioned against each other by dominant and malestream social and political dynamics, might find a platform of meeting if women of those identities emerge as another and new actors and may appear capable of overcoming the atrocities. Anti-militarist movement, LGBT movement, and peace movement were among the noteworthy actors with whom Amargi tried to establish bridges. Since the most heated issue in the country at the time was the conflict with Kurdish guerilla forces, the dicourses and activities of Amargi supporting the cause of the peace were the most salient ones for the state and the civil society. That was why Amargi soon came to be known as a Kurdish women's organization, creating a difficulty for the political commitment of Amargi to bringing together the identities in conflict. Amargi dedicated energy to supporting the efforts to provide a peace to the conflict between the PKK and Turkish State. The imprisonment of Öcalan in 1999 was seen as the victory ending the Kurdish Question by the state. However, there was also a big danger of reinvigorated violence from the PKK forces in the future until the day the conflict was solved on the grounds of social justice and peace. Amargi women had a strong message for peace to prevent more violence in the future. The attitude of the Kurdish movement was also centred a demand for peace for those years following the declarations of Öcalan. This parallelity in the political message as well as the Kurdish women making the majority in the organization caused Amargi to be known as a group of Kurdish women in the beginning. Hence, the discourse of peace was also seen as subversive by the state and police for the similarity to that of the Kurdish movement at the time.

Amargi Women's Academia was the name adopted by the founders. It was legally a cooperative in order to ensure that it was more immune to political pressures of the state over NGOs in 2001, before the adoption of laws in the EU accessing process.

The volunteers of Amargi made their point about the subject of Kurdish Question, the most dangerous topic in the country, from the start, siding with peace. As a measure for preventing any of official investigation on the young cooperative, the activities and declarations were organised first as a initiative, Katagi, (Kadın Tavrını Geliştirme İnisiyatifi- Initiative of Developing Women's Attitude), in order not to risk closure due to political activities. To protect the new cooperative from political pressure, and at the same time, making necessary declarations on this subject from a feminist and pro-peace viewpoint, the establishment of this initiative was a good solution.[34]

The first meetings of Turkish and Kurdish women in Batman, Diyarbakır and Istanbul[35] were organized by Katagi in 2001, bringing together mostly prominent Turkish female authors and actors with Kurdish women, who suffered from the Kurdish conflict. This found a big media coverage in the newspapers. A dialogue between Kurdish and Turkish women was the intention. Several female writers who took part wrote their impressions of these meetings, and talked about the Kurdish question. These meetings made their way to the media in a positive manner.[36]Amargi women continued with their demands for peace in other occasions such as 8th of March demonstrations. In 2004, when there were signs of resumption of armed conflict between the PKK and the Army Forces after a prolonged ceasefire, Amargi initiated a campaign to prevent new deaths. Amargi asked the armed sides to stop violence and urged the civil sides to the Kurdish Question, among them women, to sit around a peace table and talk about the solution. However, the perspective of this campaign could not be explained well to other feminists and could not get much support from them. Especially, the demonstration in Bingöl, where the clashes

[34] I remember discussions about whether use the name Katagi or Amargi, as the organiser of a campaign when it involved such risks. It was a time of restricted freedom of expression on the Kurdish Question. (Author's own observation)

[35] Kadınların İstanbul Buluşması http://eski.bianet.org/2001/09/02/haber4324.htm accessed on 3.10.2011

[36] Kadınlar Barış İçin Sözleşti http://bianet.org/bianet/kadin/4520-kadinlar-baris-icin-sozlesti accessed on 6.11.2011

started, could not attract enough feminist women to attend the campaign. In the militarist atmosphere of the time, feminists were either afraid of the reaction of the state forces, or of the opinion that it was not really a feminist issue, even a digression in the feminist agenda, even in the face of international examples of antimilitarist feminist groups such as, Women in Black in Serbia and Israel, who had organized similar campaigns within a feminist discourse. Bingöl Governorship did not allow the press declaration in Bingöl and more than hundred women, mostly Kurdish women, including women from Amargi were taken under police custody and released only the next day. A courtcase was opened against them. This antimilitarist campaign became the last one Amargi organized for peace, before the armed struggle was resumed bilaterally.

Following the antimilitarist campaigns, the second priority of Amargi was feminist knowledge and its propagation. The first motto of Amargi Women's Academia was: "Living itself is the most important academic activity". This was a critique to academia regarded as separate from life, and elitist in standing. According to Amargi, social sciences were separated from activism, the research was not conducted in order to solve the social and political problems but for the sake of careerism. It can be said that Amargi was dedicated to realize the classical aspiration of feminism for challenging the malestream perspective of social sciences. Amargi intended to bring the isolated academia to women in order to start the diffusion and creation of women's knowledge.

Hence, one of the two top priorities of Amargi was to pull academia into real life, to the service of common people and ordinary women expelled from academia. The creators of this knowledge would be women themselves. It would be obtained from life and put back into life. This was a challenge to the conventional academia as well as to the real life practices of academicians in Turkey. Selek stated that the institutionalisation of knowledge and politics were alienated from the life of society: "That's why we call life itself an academia. We, first of all, struggle with ourselves and transform our lives, at the same time we try to analyze patriarchy with all its

aspects and to come together with every organisation which is also trying to tear it down."[37]

In 2002, Amargi invited the "veteran" feminists from previous feminist groups to talk about their experience while working in their respective organizations. Seminars open to all women were held in the office of Amargi every weekend. Each seminar was attended by around 30-40 women. Doing these it added to its effectiveness as an academia committed to helping feminist activism to collect its history and have a memory as well as a discussion platform and to facilitate intergenerational transmission of its heritage. Those seminars were collected in a book called "Searching for Freedom" published as the first book by Amargi Publishing.

In 2002, another campaign was organized under the motto "We march towards each other", telling in terms of the the approach of Amargi to the relation between knowledge and feminist politics. Hundreds of women were contacted, talked to; and their letters from twenty cities, towns and villages all over Turkey were collected and brought to Konya, a geographically central city of Turkey, where the campaign ended. The booklet containing the letters was called "I am not free".[38] This campaign was also called Konya Gathering and a documentary film was produced and shown later in 2006.[39] One of the motivations behind those campaigns was the understanding that feminists should not speak in the name of other women but rather should look for spaces and mediums for them to have their own voices added to the

[37] Manifesto of Amargi, 2000.

[38] It was organized in reaction to the famous TV commercial, starring a "free girl" character depicting a woman with a cowboy hat, travelling across Turkey by herself. In Amargi, freedom is a very important concept and the illusions of it as in this case is a phenomenon to react to. The media should not diffuse false images of freedom which is a valuable concept for women.

[39] Kadından Kadına Özgür Değilim Mektuplaşması
http://bianet.org/bianet/kadin/75844-kadindan-kadina-ozgur-degilim-mektuplasmasi--2 accessed on 1.3.2011

voice of their more empowered sisters[40]. Other women's groups were invited to join the campaign just like had been done before when acted under the name of Katagi. Many women from all across Turkey took parting the campaign though one of the crucial targets was to getting in touch with the Kurdish women who had not organized with non-Kurdish women before. The overall goal was to highlight that women's suffering is an overarching problem capturing women regardless of their class, location, and ethnic background in spite of the fact that on the basis of those factors their problems may change significantly.

In December of 2002, with the initiative of women from Katagi, a women's conference with the title, 'We are organizing for our liberation' was organized inviting all women's groups, women from unions, political parties and the like to brainstorm about the future of the movement. It was a conference bringing the older and younger women in the movement as well as existing NGO's with little contact among them. It led these women to think about the issues of feminism in the various workshops together and to create a consensus about several contemporary women's issues in Turkey.[41] This was followed by an array of other seminars given by women who took part in mixed political organizations such as unions, political parties etc. Those conferences were held with an aim to share the problems, which women faced in the mixed institutions from women's point of view.

Prominent feminist academics were invited to take part as speakers in the Gender and Feminist Critique Seminars organized in 2003 and 2004 which opened the doors to feminist knowledge to women outside academia. It was also a chance for academics to breathe the air in the activist women's circles, to hear their questions and remarks. Those activities targeted activists and academicians both to facilitate their learning from each other for a more complete and developing feminist movement. By doing this, Amargi aimed to put the tension between academia/knowledge and

[40] The discussion laid down by the works of Spivak guided the discussions held during the organization of the campaign.

[41] "Kurtuluşumuzu Örgütleyelim" Kadın Konferansı http://www.savaskarsitlari.org/arsiv.asp?ArsivTipID=9&ArsivAnaID=11263 accessed on 4.9.2011

activism/practice into a productive use. Later, the Amargi Feminist Review became the most important platform for that interaction between academic and activist feminists when it first appeared in 2006. The majority of women who came to listen to those mostly theoretical seminars were younger women, generally students of the academicians who participated. It was also an opportunity for the students to get to know and join Amargi in the future. At the same time, for activist women of older age, it became harder to have a seat for listening due to this very fact. Some of the women who presented their work in the Seminars joined Amargi Feminist Review's publishing board.[42] The emergence of Amargi Feminist Review will be explained futher in this work within the scope of the parts analyzing the more literary and academic years of Amargi in this chapter.

4.4.1. ITEP project (Istanbul Social Ecology Project)

In 2004, Amargi started with a new organization called ITEP, a platform intended for the participation of oppressed social groups in Istanbul. Also a joint project was proposed to European Commision for funding. Joint activities with the organisations of some oppressed groups as well as for a joint legal service were planned. ITEP was a project reflecting the approach of Amargi on the subjects of identity, difference, diversity and joint social struggle towards equality and rights. It was not just about standing together and thus making a bigger force but, transforming each other in their areas of struggle, too. (Workshop Discussions)

The partner groups consisted of Lambdaistanbul LGBTT initiative, Rainbow Women's Association (Kurdish Women's Group), Ecological Cooperative, and Initiative for the Union of the Unemployed and Without Social Security. The aim was to explain to and listen from other oppressed people to that a coalition was formed. There was also a campaign as part of the project in the form of a street exhibition to raise awareness to honour killings (2004) called "Ne seninim ne kara toprağın"- (I am neither yours nor will go below the soil - A response to the common threat by

[42] Zeynep Direk, Nükhet Sirman, Aksu Bora and Pınar İlkkaracan were among those academicians.

men towards women who leave them in Turkey).[43] This was one of the first street actions against honour killings. A women's consultation hotline initiated by some volunteers thereafter.

The philosophy of the ITEP project was based on Murray Bookchin's Social Ecology. It was a small laboratory for his theory for small groups meeting and working with each other as the groups who had always struggled on their own in Turkey. The habit of working separately had prevented groups from effectively articulating their arguments and political stance in the eyes of other political groups, let alone of the larger society. Every minority had knew and cared about their own problems and had not not tried to learn from those of other groups. That weakness peculiar to small activist groups was tackled in the project by activities involving non-violent communication trainings aiming to change prejudices. For example, homophobia, sexism, racism, capitalism and classism etc became the agendas of such activities, directed by the subjects of the problem and others participated to learning together. Amargi stated in the manifesto of ITEP project: "We won't try to resemble each other, but we'll maintain nonviolent discussions among ourselves." This statement demonstrates that Amargi's perspective went further than diversity feminism accommodating various identities: there should be also be an environment of dialogue and interaction. The interaction of different political identities and political traditions was not a problem- and tension-free process, however. In the project, the lack of discussions on capitalism in Amargi was hoped to be covered by the members of the Union Initiative present in the project, but it was not accomplished properly. Moreover, the funding of the project also caused some discontent for some members. According to them, it conflicted with the principle of the independence from donor funding. Some socialist women who used to visit Amargi stopped this. Later in that year, the bureaucratic process, Amargi members were not familiar with, caused some unease. Hiring of four people, two of them lawyers, and two working for coordination and making them work as an organization

[43] Ne seninim ne kara toprağın**!** http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=121308 accessed on the 13.12.2011

which aims to maintain a non-hierarchical structure was another big challenge for the group. The presence of paid and professional workers was new for Amargi members. Members could not get to learn how to coordinate the work of the paid workers. Later on, the same issues appeared when some women were hired for the Amargi bookstore. Those experiences have openly shown that organizational structure is prone to produce problems if included professionalization, employment relations, and even division of labour. Once again the difficulties identified in feminist organizations targeting horizontal and non-hierarchical model were manifested and this time in the example of Amargi. The special quality of the experience was those problems long been known to feminists and peculiar to organizational aspirations of feminism were this time overlapping with the tensions arising from multiple and different identities of the groups members.

4.4.2. Theater Amargi

Women from Theater Club of Istanbul Technical University were feminist women who participated in Konya Gathering. When they offered establishing a women's theater group together with women from Amargi, four women wanted to participate and they formed Theater Amargi. After taking classes about acting on the stage they wrote a piece called "The things that dropped from the Scarf"- Yazmadan Dökülenler. It was a play acted in several mother tongues spoken in Turkey. Women spoke about women's experiences in Anatolia which affected them the most in their mother tongues. It was a play about different oppressed women telling their stories. They were stories of women whom they had been familiar with. Kurdish, Armenian, Arabic, transsexual women who usually didn't have a voice were present in the play. It was performed several times open to the public in 2005. This was a women's way of doing art resisting discouragements about women's ability to do art, feminist theater putting the voice of the unheard into the agenda. However, this activity came to an end in 2005 due to a dispute about hierarchical attitudes of some members, pointing out the mounting problems concentrating around the claim of non-hierarchical and equal organization once again. The women who were in the university and the theater group joined Amargi again in 2008. This shows that the

discussions did not result in a negative opinion about Amargi and they found Amargi important and the reconciliations were possible.

4.5. The Second Period: The more academic and literary years, 2006-2011:

Following the first years' activism, street demonstrations in the first half of the 2000s, the second priority of Amargi, knowledge production on and for the lives of women became more dominant in the later half of the decade. If we look at this process closely, it is observable that the profile of women who joined Amargi as volunteers were changing in favor of younger university students and women who were having their graduate education.

That shift of focus in activities emerged in parallel to the birth of the new feminist review also called *Amargi* with feminist academicians in the board in 2006 to discuss the theoretical and political problems of contemporary feminism. The advisory board consisted of well-known feminist academicians and feminist activists both from Amargi and outside. After 2010, this became an autonomous initiative independent of Amargi Cooperative. This product became the most important component of Amargi sometimes exceeding the popularity of the Women's Cooperative itself due to lessened activities organized by Amargi Cooperative. This turn of event disturbed some of Amargi members. They protested that Amargi became an academic place that they once criticized, that they disappeared from the streets, and this fact contradicted with the reasons why once they joined the organization. This was one of the reasons for a group of Kurdish women' leaving Amargi in 2007. Although not accepted openly, some articles published in the review criticizing the feminism of the Kurdish movement for not being independent of the mixed Kurdish movement also caused discontent for those Kurdish women.

In 2011, more than 20 issues of *Amargi Review* about many topics elaborated in each issue were published, selling over 1000 copies. The first issue was about the headscarf ban dispute. It received a big attention as it was a topic heavily discussed

by nationalist secularists and conservative mainstream political groups at that time. Amargi's point of view was that of feminist approach, bringing along a women's perspective and political agency rejecting to be defined and positioned by malestream political debates.

In 2008, Amargi opened the first and only feminist bookstore in Turkey.[44] The bookstore offered feminist, anti-militaristic, anti-homophobic books, and magazines mostly in Turkish. In the bookstore literature and movie workshops are held to encourage women to express themselves. Panels with feminist and women authors are held to discuss feminist issues and women's rights. There were meetings of women readers and writers, titled "Which Doors Do Our Experiences Open?" held. Due to financial problems, it had to be closed in July 2011. A new office was rented without the bookshop facility in October 2011.

[44] Pera'da feminist kitabevi: Amargi http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=241160 accessed on 10.7.2011

CHAPTER 5

5. DIVERSITY CHALLENGES IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE AMARGI VOLUNTEERS

This chapter outlines Amargi's internal dynamics and its approach to the diversity among women by tracing the turning points in meeting the challenge of diversity within Amargi as observed by Amargi volunteers. The difficulties and challenges encountered by Amargi are discussed to explore to what extent it has been successful in accomodating diversity within feminism in Turkey. In the study of these issues, the personal opinions of Amargi volunteers are analyzed on the basis of the data obtained during the research undertaken for this present project.

In this chapter, the issues that were raised in Amargi around the identity differences of its members and of the other groups Amargi has been in contact with are analyzed in detail in order to discern the dynamics operating in the political interaction processes within the women's movement between different identity groups and organizations and to evalueate the prospects of mobilizing of women from diverse and multiple political identities toward a feminist cause. The analysis also is derived from written materials produced by Amargi, correspondence in a number of feminist e-groups, and interviews conducted with members of the organization.

5.1. **Distinction of Amargi within the Feminist Movement in Turkey**

As explained in the previous chapter, Amargi emerged in 2001 with a radical claim of bringing together women from various subordinated identities to organize for a common struggle.[45] This can be considered an ambitious project, a radical challenge

[45]Selek was previously interested in working with transsexuals, sex workers, street children, and Kurdish people. The experience of street people coming together in a workshop to create art pieces of masks demonstrated the difficulty of the dialogue between oppressed groups.

to the problems originating from identity politics in Turkey. Amargi invited women of different backgrounds to join without denying their identities. This approach was different from previous organizations that emphasized common aspects while organizing with women from subordinated positionings. Diversity was a fact recognized in the feminist movement in the 1990s, but it was not perceived as a positive fact to learn from; it was rather regarded as divisive as an obstacle to women's unity in the feminist struggle (Bora, 2002). Amargi's founders rejected regarding diversity as a nuisance as the feminist groups before the 2000s, there was an emphasis on this aspect as a *sin e qua non* of Amargi. According to the women in Amargi, organizing with dissimilar women had the potential to strengthen the weak bonds among different women. Another aim was to enrich the feminist perspective by providing members with a window through which they could observe the myriad ways patriarchy oppressed women in cooperation with other power structures. Amargi emphasized this issue as a basic part of its feminism with its motto "We are together with our differences." Women from all backgrounds were welcome, so that women in Amargi learn about other women's experiences of oppression. Additionally, women from different backgrounds would enrich the organization adding new perspectives to the struggle with the patriarchy entagled with other power relationships.

Thus far, the distinctive nature of Amargi as a feminist organization has been described based on its manifesto, activities and campaigns. However, the characteristics that differ between Amargi and other feminist groups were also asked of the participants to gain insight into their own perceptions. Yeliz answers my question about the aspects distinguishing Amargi from other feminist groups as follows:

> Amargi being open to LBT women as well as women from various ethnic backgrounds and classes could be its difference; however, I believe that this experience of diverse identities organizing together is becoming more

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For example, street children hated the "faggots" and "whores," i.e transsexual women. Yet, the persistence of creating a common sphere worked in overcoming prejudices. Later, this became a model for Amargi as well.

> common nowadays. Amargi focuses on empowering women, creating possibilities of expressing themselves and diffusing feminist politics… The other point is the peace activism Amargi conducts…

Non-hierarchy and antimilitarism were identified as the most important distinct features. One of the volunteers, also a founder of Amargi Izmir, held a somewhat different view about hierarchy:

In the beginning, I would have said, non-hierarchy but now I can say individuals being able to talk to each other and its antimilitarism. Hierarchy is related to many things, such as labor and experience. We cannot simply say that there is no hierarchy. It is understood differently depending on the person. As long as we can talk about existing or perceived hierarchy, it is not a big problem.

Similarly, another interviewee, Selin, states that the flexibility and ease in adapting to new conditions are important:

> I believe that Amargi's most important property is that it contains change inside. It does not only believe in and defend change and transformation, but it also changes and transforms itself. The organizing culture in Turkey is based on creating a structure and fixing it. The ones who join also struggle to keep the existing fixed structure. However, everything in life is changing so fast. Such fixed organizing has very little probability of leading life's direction. Don't organizations start out of such a claim? Inflexible organizations forget about their claims and exist as clumsy and deadlike.
>
> What makes an organization real is the degree of overlap of the organization's ideals with daily life practices. The more there are similarities, the livelier the organization. Amargi tries to be a lively organization and, unfortunately, there are very few such organizations in Turkey. Amargi has a feminism approach of not excluding certain groups, but embracing all entities, requesting freedom and justice for all entities. In this sense, it does not construct its feminism through women, through their relation with labor, family and patriarchy. I find this very meaningful.

In this context, this volunteer underlines the significance of the Konya gathering:

> The Konya gathering is a good example of Amargi's approach to feminism, how it welcomes differences and its effort of creative interference in life. Also, the literature workshop's products (the books *When Women Start to Speak*, based on workshop writing that encourages women to write, and *Among Women*, the product of discussions about "which doors do our experiences open?" give women the opportunity to write their own stories and create a relation with art and the world) are good examples.

One of the volunteers expresses that she didn't expect to be admitted into Amargi right away. Feride explains:

> For me, it was very easy to join Amargi. I was looking to join a group for years and went to Purple Roof, etc. but could not succeed. When I went to Amargi, I joined the same day because Amargi opens a space for you, saying: 'we need this, can you do that?' It makes you feel important. You say, 'Yes, I can.' It gives you power, what is needed is not something hard to do, in fact.

She also states that even though she was not Kurdish, like many other women in the group then, she felt welcomed. Inspite of some problems with this ethnic majority in the groups later, she was provided space from the first day.

Cavidan believes that the habit of discussion and openness to changing minds about issues were very important:

> Amargi is an open place. We discuss if men can be feminists, too. Even I am convinced; at least, I cannot say "never possible" anymore. We discuss feminism continuously. The other groups are harder, you cannot go, they seem too solid, inflexible; they seem very feminist, but there is leftist masculinity. Amargi discusses and breaks it. Feminism must be like that, it should be able to change all the time. For example, there is "I am not men" platform. Recently, it seems feminist to me, whereas before it did not.

Other women also underline that Amargi's flexibility and non-hierarchical structure is different from other feminist groups when German trainee, Charlotte Binder, asked them about this issue.[46] A volunteer replies:

> In Amargi there are many things unique, especially the culture of questioning oneself and relationships and trying to prevent hierarchy and power inequality. At Amargi, I could be myself and still be a member of the organization. I didn't have to give up my independence. I didn't come to Amargi because I thought it was the perfect organization for me, but I was convinced that I had to start at some point.

5.2.The Question of Subordinate and Hegemonic Identities within Amargi

Amargi started as a grassroots NGO; therefore, the disadvantaged women were strongly encouraged to participate and there was no specific requirement for joining. In fact, having an oppressed identity was interpreted as a plus, having an opportunity

[46]Meaning of Amargi http://amargigroupistanbul.wordpress.com/2011/01/06/meaning-of-amargi/ accessed on 04 March 2011.

of experiencing disadvantages so that she would have the ability to understand others' oppression more easily by establishing empathy with them. According to Castells (1997), these are called "resistance identities." Being of Kurdish or Armenian ethnicity, or likewise being a transsexual or lesbian/bisexual woman usually created additional problems for these women and their identities situated them in the intersectionalities of either sexism and racism/nationalism or sexism and homophobia/transphobia. These women were welcomed with more enthusiasm when joining Amargi. However, Amargi volunteers bearing hegemonic identities in Turkey, such as being ethnically Turkish, heterosexual, prosperous or well educated, perceived themselves under scrunity of the group so that they did not exercise any discriminatory attitude toward women of subordinated identities. According to interviewees, it was more difficult to gain the trust of other women in these cases and such participants sometimes felt blamed for no reason. As Selin, Merve and Feride, who were from an ethnically dominant identity and who did not belong to any oppressed sexual minority explained that their identities made them somewhat "privileged" in the society but not in Amargi.

Moreover, Amargi claimed to welcome any woman. It was not required for women to be knowledgeable about feminism or to be valuable for activism; on the contrary, as explained above, women having no subordination experience did not feel comfortable in the group. In this context, it differed from other women's organizations, for example of Kemalist ideology, which organized with women representing the well educated and elite groups to help other women. Also, small groups of women, who could speak English well and could apply to and conduct a project supported by funding institutions, were present in the women's movement in early 2000s (Bora, 2002). Amargi in this sense was clearly different from those, as it aimed to organize with women coming from oppressed groups. One of the reasons for that choice was that these women were assumed to relate to other women's experiences of oppression more easily. The second reason was that they needed the empowerment and freedom Amargi intended to achieve the most. As the interviews revealed, Amargi women were eager to organize with more women. For example, Feride was made to feel capable of helping the group with her presence. Therefore, a

newcomer was not made to feel like a victim to be helped by the group; on the contrary, she left with projects in her mind to carry out while in Amargi, feeling empowered. The empowerment of women who felt alone with their problems before joining Amargi was the group's main objective. The power and confidence of organizing in a women's group was visible in these women. Women are never helpless vis-à-vis patriarchy according to the structure/agency theory because of the subjectivities they possess (Giddens, 1979). Giddens recognizes the ways individuals can resist and struggle against established systems. Amargi's aim was to empower women in order to change the partriarchal approaches in the society for more freedom.

Prevailing hierarchies and forms of discrimination in society would not to be operative within Amargi's framework.[47] For example, the women who were financially better off had to face their elitism, classism, maybe racism and transphobia i.e. the probable causes of discrimination among people. For the Amargi members, such discrimination toward the weaker is an obstacle to freedom in that it perpetuated the logic of male-domination.

As another volunteer, Selin, points out in her interview, in contrast to the larger society outside, "the more disadvantaged a woman, the better she was received in Amargi." The Armenian women's group, Hay Gin, for example, had close ties with Amargi when the Armenian Question was considered a taboo and a sign of subversiveness toward the state. These women wanted to keep their small group separate but enjoyed the diversity and energy they experienced within Amargi. Melissa, an Armenian woman who once participated in this group, wrote about this experience as follows:

> On several occasions, we, Armenian women, were invited to the Amargi Women's Academia Initiative in order to discuss the Armenian women's history and feminist activities during the Ottoman period, about the

[47]Thus, the women who do not fit the grassroots definition had to try harder to be a part of it. Some of the women interviewed mentioned this trouble. For example, Selin, the daughter of a richer family, and Feride, who is Turkish, heterosexual and married, explained how they felt excluded at some point due to these identities.

> discrimination non-Muslim minorities encountered throughout the republican history in Turkey and about our family stories of surviving the 'genocide.'[48]

In this context, Amargi is portrayed as addressing one of the most difficult issues facing society in those years. The Kurdish Question, the Cyprus Question, LGBT rights, and religious freedoms were also other sensitive issues of that time, despite the relative expansion of the freedom of expression on the eve of the EU accession process. These issues questioning the structure and the history of the nation-state have generated debates in the public at the same time.[49] In spite of the pressure, Amargi did not back down from commenting on these issues in support the freedoms and peace, although, sometimes, it used the informal name Katagi in order not to threaten the future of the young cooperative.

For Amargi women, feminism needed to involve more women from all walks of life and to provide them with a place to gather and communicate. The target group for Amargi to organize with was not only those who had already been politicized, either as feminists or as agents involved in identity politics. According to Amargi, the oppressed groups had very little impact in the decisions for society, in spite of making up a majority in the society together due to not being political subjects. What was needed was their inclusion in a political struggle to empower them and challenge the status quo. Women who visited Amargi were encouraged to be vocal so as to make their points about their experiences. By means of dialogue with other women, explaining their point of view and listening to their 'Other,' they could abandon their previously internalized prejudices towards women different from them. With the empowerment and liberation these processes fosstered, the newcomer would have the motivation to organize with the women she met. For the transformation that Amargi aimed to create in the society, volunteers had to start by working from within

[48] Women's Solidarity as a Resistance Strategy against Liberal Identity Politics in Turkey, Melissa Bilal, University of Chicago, May 2006
http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=925666.

[49] This period also overlaps with the rise of nationalism, creating an environment of harsh reactions to these discussions, and the court cases punishing people with the laws such as Insult to Turkishness, Clause 301 of the Penal Code.

themselves. Therefore, the concept of freedom Amargi women pursued had both external and internal components, freedom in the society and freedom from internalized discrimination.

5.3. Amargi Experience as an Implementation of Transversal Politics

As explained above, the approach Amargi adopted was beyond diversity feminism. The discourse of the group was more in line with transversal politics in dealing with differences among women. Because the dialogue among women of different backgrounds was central to the dominant perspective in Amargi, it bore the potential of going beyond the diversity feminism's approach, which accepts women as agents of identity politics.

According to Cockburn (1999:16), three basic principles define transversal politics:

> The First is standpoint epistemology, which recognizes that from each positioning the world is seen differently. There are several partial truths and their reconciliation, or approximation is to be achieved only through dialogue. Secondly, respect for each other's realities and their perspectives. Acknowledgement of the unequal power inherent in different positions is needed. Third, what you are likely to want cannot be read off from your positionality or 'name', and it's only on the basis of common values (not shared 'identity') that alliance for action becomes possible.

It can be contended that Amargi's aim is going beyond identity politics, for it did not accept organizing on the basis of a single identity group. It also transcends diversity feminism where differences are allowed to exist side by side. In contrast, Amargi's perspective calls for interactions, empathy and transformations among different groups. Therefore, the concept of transversal politics seems appropriate to characterize its position. As explained in the second chapter, this approach has been used mainly in the context of overcoming conflicts between sides of armed conflicts and civil wars. Nira Yuval-Davis and Cockburn elaborate the idea as 'transversal politics' (Yuval-Davis, 1997 and 1999; Cockburn 1998; and Cockburn and Hunter 1999). Cockburn identifies the implementation of this approach among "the feminist anti-war activists in Serbia attempting to sustain meaningful connection with women in other parts of the former Yugoslavia in defiance of the ethnic othering perpetuated by nationalist war-makers" (Cockburn, 2007:100). In another context, Palestinian

female citizens of Israel and Israeli Jewish women address racism, oppression and the effects of armed conflict as well as the difficulties they encounter in sustaining alliances as women regarded as enemies. This could only be done by "refusing inimical nationalist 'names' and negotiating difference and belonging on their own terms" (Cockburn, 2007:9). Cockburn asserts that, "the women in Yugoslavia were inventing transversal politics throughout the war" (Cockburn, 2007:101). Thus, implementation of transversal politics is an instrument for conflict reconciliation between women who face obstacles with their dialogue.

A similar armed conflict also has existed in Turkey, causing divisions among women. For example, the mothers of the killed soldiers serving the Turkish Republic and those of the PKK members could not come together to protest against the war killing their children. Amargi tried to foster communication between Turkish and Kurdish sides for several years, especially in its early period as explained in the fourth chapter. This concept was put into practice particularly when Kurdish and Turkish women were brought together in order to reconcile prejudices and foster the peace process led by women. During the gatherings in Diyarbakır, Batman and Istanbul in 2002, Turkish women from a non-Kurdish background, most of them well known authors, felt empathy for the Kurdish women's suffering due to the war. Kurdish women also realized that there were Turkish women who understood them and supported them in their struggle for peace. Melissa Bilal, a young Armenian woman, who used to participate in Amargi, interpreted this process later in a paper as "the dialogue between women of different identities that come together to create networks of solidarity for struggling against violence and talking about peace."[50] Similar encounters occurred at Amargi on a daily basis between Turkish and Kurdish women. The prejudices and the differences diminished following the teamwork in the same group for a common struggle.

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[50]Women's Solidarity as a Resistance Strategy against Liberal Identity Politics in Turkey, Melissa Bilal, University of Chicago, May 2006
http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=925666.

It is essential for Amargi that women do not have to hide or give up their identities. This can be observed in Cockburn's definition of transversal politics, who defines transversal politics as a form of cooperation that is well grounded in mutual knowledge

> It is an "effort to create a focused alliance without its "members having to to drop or deny their very real differences in tradition and political belief... [a] united feminist voice affirming difference" (Cockburn, 2007:101).

There are two trans-border activism terms employed Italian feminists: *rooting* and *shifting*, which are central to the implementation of transversal politics, meaning 'that each of us brings with her the rooting in her own memberships and identity, but at the same time tries to shift in order to put herself in a situation of exchange with women who have different memberships and identity.' (Cockburn, 2007:101). Instead of the concept 'shifting' used in transversal politics, Amargi volunteers refer to the same phenomenon as "transformation," i.e leaving prejudices aside. The concept "rooting" also is crucial for Amargi, as volunteers are encouraged to explain their specific problems related to their oppressed identities instead of leaving them aside, as in the case of previous feminist groups emphasizing common problems of women.

"Living itself is the most important academic activity."

Amargi's Women's Academy motto

As explained in the previous chapter, Amargi attaches great importance to the production of feminist knowledge. This slogan emphasizes that experiences matter. Furthermore, mainstream academic knowledge has been criticized for being separated from life. The binary manner of conceptualizing mind/feelings has been considered a patriarchal dichotomy. As feminism values experience, Amargi aims to integrate this into the theory and knowledge to be produced by its members. It, thus, critiques positivism in the era of Enlightment for ignoring women and the oppressed under the guise of being universal and objective.

The Amargi Women's Academy motto above is also related to "the situated knowledge" concept as part of transversal politics. Instead of books, life and experience are regarded as the best teachers of knowledge. Gathering different women who were aware of their subordination would serve in the quest for a holistic approach to the wider truth for women. The knowledge flowing from myriad women about their experiences of oppression under various power relations is considered necessary to enrich a feminist perspective. This process aims at attaining a more complete knowledge as explained in the situated knowledge approach of Stoetzler and Yuval Davis (2002), which holds that for transversal politics, it is vital to account for the social positioning of the person. However, the reduction of knowledge to a simple reflection of its social basis has been rejected. Experiences, social practices, social values facilitate the transition and transformation of situatedness into knowledge (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002).

Yuval-Davis calls this process the feminist dialogical transversal politics:

> The situatedness of the knowing subject has been used epistemologically in standpoint theories in at least two different ways: the first claims that a specific social situatedness (which in itself has been constructed in several different ways) endows the subject with a privileged access to truth; the other rejects such a position and views the process of approximating the truth as part of a dialogical relationship among subjects who are differentially situated. (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002: 325)

Amargi's perspective in this context overlaps with the second approach. The same approach appears in Selek's analogy of different oppressed groups looking from the bottom of a well and each of them could only see a narrow part of the sky, preventing a wider view. The Amargi Women's Academy motto attests to the perception of experience as the best teacher.[51] Likewise, the concept of situated knowledge acknowledges the facility of access by a person subjected to subordination of certain related knowledge, i.e. life teaches a woman a certain part of all knowledge about the world and women coming together could achieve a wider

[51]This motto has recently been criticized by a radical feminist who is also a journalist, Ayşe Düzkan, in an email to Amargi, claiming that such a phrase might also imply women's incapacity to understand abstraction of the academy.

perspective. An understanding of the mechanisms of one's own -as well as others'- oppression is the first step in this struggle. Analyzed knowledge retrieved from women's experiences also can serve as a tool of empowerment for those women. The gathering of knowledge would also serve for the diffusion of a more advanced and complete feminist information to the society. Hence, the idea of a production of knowledge to be realized by the well-educated few was challenged. It was in this sense that the role of academia was criticized. Any woman could contribute to Amargi's pool of knowledge, drawing on her experiences based on feminist methodology. Here, the egalitarian suggestions in Paolo Freire's book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* were put into use from a feminist perspective. Freire emphasizes the principle of non-hierarchy and suggestes the elimination of the teacher-student dichotomy to avoid the "banking concept of education." Freire respects the poor and oppressed people for their understanding of the world they inhabited. According to him, their contributions during the education process are not less important than the knowledge of dominant groups (the oppressors). His humility created a condition of trust and communication between teacher and learner while he taught illiterate poor people to read and write. This way, education became a collective activity, a dialogue between participants rather than a 'top-down' one-way lecture from one person for the benefit of the other (Freire, 1988). Although Freire does not include oppression other than class in his theory -and he was criticized by feminists for that-, his approach to the relationships in pedagogical processes is the same with which Amargi women are concerned. Hence, rather than the consciousness-raising method of second wave feminists, dialogue among different women was more important for Amargi. In this way, women who have been almost completely excluded from history and academia can start creating their own kind of "academia" within Amargi. Women, who learn about feminism from other women in Amargi teach them about their experiences at the same time to create a more complete point of view of patriarchy. For the empowerment of the women who join, the transformative power of activism is utilized, too. An important part of Amargi's method involves women in a struggle against the causal dynamics of their oppression, so that self-confidence as well as will is strengthened.

Dorothy Smith (1990) points to the need to differentiate between social positioning and social practice; thus, experience should be placed over categories. The knowledge acquired by a person of an oppressed identity, therefore, can be valid if that person has suffered from that identity and also if she has the point of view to interpret that information correctly, i.e. the political perspective.

The following statement was taken from Selek's master thesis, which was later published as a book, about violence against transsexuals in Istanbul in 1996:

> When is it important to exist with your own name? If your name is in a language that is forbidden, if instead of being cursed for existing with your name, you are forced to hide it, if it is identity politics versus being left without identity, if your existence is forced to be forgotten, you are pushed into invisibility… Otherwise, it is an unimportant detail what your name is and it certainly won't answer the question of who you are"[52] (Selek, 2007:21).

As indicated above in the quotation, according to Selek's approach to identity politics, it is legitimate to form politics around identity when it is invisible and discriminated against. However, essentializing an identity is a negative issue. The proposition is that a temporary state could be regarded as inevitable for groups having to follow identity politics in order to get recognized; thus, "own" identity organizations are necessary. They need to sort out the situation the oppressed group faces, discuss among the group members and create demands from the society for their rights. However, this period of isolation should not be prolonged. Women as an oppressed groups are among these groups too, organizing in women-only environments, until the day male domination and patriarchy are recognized and many men started to struggle against them, even though this period, unfortunately, seem much longer compared to other identity groups. While doing identity politics, the differences among the members of an identity, such as class, age, etc. could easily be ignored and the identity becomes essentialized. This also would prevent the creation

[52] Selek and "the Others" in the University - Selek ve ötekiler üniversitede http://bianet.org/bianet/bilim/134251-selek-ve-otekiler-universitede.

of environments of multiple identities to overcome the sometimes-self-inflicted isolation and ghettos of this oppressed group. The explanation of the problems to others and listening to them is very important. Transversal politics is based on the principle of "standpoint epistemology." According to this principle, the world is perceived differently from each situated perspective, and while no perspective is necessarily invalid, each of those represents an unfinished knowledge (Yuval-Davis, 1999). Amargi's approach is to create a new opportunity in overcoming these restrictions of oppressed groups in Turkey by combining the partial views held by different identity groups, as well as individuals within those groups having different opinions[53], offering a more complete view of reality. According to Cockburn, one's positionality or 'name' does not define what s/he wants (Cockburn 2007). This point has close repercussions for the possibility of feminism in Turkey since according to Melissa Bilal, a former Amargi participant:

> Doing politics on the basis of experience is the only way we can achieve critical and substantive multiculturalism. Experience enables us to share the way we live our identities in our everyday lives with all the senses, emotions, desires and pain and as an analytical and political tool. It enables us to understand the way subjectivities are created through these elements within certain temporal and spatial configuration of the subject.[54]

The second principle of transversal politics, respecting the other party, is, thus, one of Amargi's main priorities. Therefore, it can be concluded that what Amargi attempts to do, matches all transversal politics principles. The following section examines the actual relations, successes and failures in this context as perceived by the volunteers.

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[53] Karakaya, Y. Merkeziyetçi Politikalara Karşı Feminist Bakış ve 'Çapraz Siyasetler' http://www.kaosgl.com/sayfa.php?id=6363 accessed on 11.1.2012

[54]Bilal, M. Women's Solidarity as a Resistance Strategy against Liberal Identity Politics in Turkey, Department of Music, Chicago University.

5.4. Transcending Identity Politics and Conflicts over Identities

The participants interviewed were chosen to reflect the differences in Amargi as much as possible. When asked about how they defined themselves, all called themselves feminists, including a transsexual man Cemgül, a name derived from two sexes including his given name Ayşegül; after coming out as a transsexual, he called himself "a feminist individual." Two of the participants also emphasize other identities such as "anarchist lesbian feminist" and "Kurdish transsexual." Both are hyphenated identities. Cavidan, the male-to-female transsexual was a Kurdish woman of a politically active family. The volunteers with more than one oppressed identity demonstrate that identities are not mutually exclusive and an individual can have multiple identities.[55] The same applies to Aylin, non-heterosexual and "Hemşin."[56] The transsexual member, Cavidan, considers herself feminist, although she adds that she does not believe in calling oneself "–ist." She states that, "none of our identities stick to us as labels." Cavidan provides the following account regarding her identity:

> My identity is Kurdish and transsexual, these are politically important; I have to say these and I like it. However, feminism, socialism, etc., these are not identities. These are tools to live happily. Ideologies, points of view, theories, I don't accept these as identities.

Thus, Cavidan claims her oppressed (resistance) identities; however, she believes that being a "feminist" is not of the same category. Feminism fits in Castells' "project identity," redefining the position of women as in the following definition:

> When social actors, on the basis of whatever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, by so doing, seek the transformation of overall social structure. (Castells, 1997:8)

Ayla, an interviewee from an Alevi family, never brought up her sectarian identity during discussions in Amargi as one of the sources of her subordination. It is

[55]Sometimes one of her identities could be a hegemonic one, too.

[56]Hemşin is a town in the Black Sea region of Turkey. What is peculiar is that people of Hemşin speak a dialect of Armenian and most of them agree that they are from Armenian descendants. They call themselves Hemşin people.

interesting that Alevi identity, among high priority topics of diversity as an oppressed identity in Turkey, was never on the agenda of Amargi, since these women were not practicing Alevis. This showed that some identities depended on that person's perception and for the identification process, space for individual choices existed. This position was also present in some members of Kurdish origin who did not carry it their ethnic identity as an "identity," a common phenomenon in the general public in Turkey. This could be interpreted as not adopting the identity that was discriminated against. Instead of revolting against discrimination, people may choose to ignore it as long as possible and deny it. The same can be thought about Ezgi and Aylin, as they were both from Hemşin. The language spoken there is a dialect of Armenian. However, they do not do politics around this issue. Aylin puts it as follows:

> I am from Hemşin, but I don't live this as an identity. Being feminist is more obvious. Maybe it is due to the conditions. Of course, my ethnicity and my sexual orientation are important for me as well as my religious stance. However, being a feminist embraces questioning of all these. I prefer not to add any prefix or suffix to feminism.

Aylin chooses to take part in the general struggle of feminism, which she believes combines answers for many problems experienced due to various forms of discrimination.

According to Crenshaw, the distinction between the claims "I am Black" and the claim "I am a person who happens to be Black" is to be noted. The first takes the socially imposed identity and empowers it as an anchor of subjectivity, thus it becomes not simply a statement of resistance but also a positive discourse of self-identification, intimately linked to celebratory statements such as the Black nationalist "Black is beautiful." On the other hand, the latter achieves self-identification by referring to a particular universality (in effect, "I am first a person") and for a concommitant dismissal of the imposed category ("Black") as contingent, circumstantial, and nondeterminant. Crenshaw argues that, "the most critical resistance strategy for disempowered groups is to occupy and defend a politics of social location rather than to vacate and destroy it" (1991:1297). Aylin's and Ayla's

stances as implied in the quotation above can be interpreted either as a result of assimilation or as a reaction to the pressure of essentialism, urging mobilization around a single axis (Spelman, 1988).

For an analysis of the organization of Amargi, first of all, the points creating the most significant conflicts in the society (presumably in Amargi as well) have to be identified. Amargi's effect can be evaluated by combining the conditions in the society, considering regarding them with the occurence inside Amargi, the reflections of the conflict among women. The levels of importance given to certain power relations in Amargi are also investigated. Which ones are given more attention and effort, which ones are left untouched? What are the reasons for that? Concrete examples that create discussions both in Amargi and among wider circle of feminists are highlighted.

In Amargi, the women of more oppressed identities are listened to with more attention in order to learn about their problems stemming from sexism and other grounds of discrimination and to prevent political intersectionality, i.e ignorance of one's problems by multiple movements, for not neatly fitting into the stereotypes of both identities, such as the case of Black women.

On the basis of the interviews, the following power relationships turn out to be the major issues addressed by the groups of women in the second column. The diversity issues in Amargi can be analyzed identifying nodes of intersectionality, reasons for clashes in the group, and transformations of ideas, i.e. changes in the prejudices. The interviewees' narratives are drawn upon to identify these points. It also has been kept in mind that women having the same identity were not a homogenous group and each woman in the group has her own subjectivity, sometimes depending on multiple identitities.

Table 1:

Issues/Structures	**Discussion/Conflict Points**
Racism/Nationalism/Militarism	Turkish vs Kurdish (political)
Homophobia/Heterosexism	Lesbians/Bisexuals vs Heterosexuals
Transphobia	Transsexuals vs Transgenders
Moralism/Feudality/Patriarchy	Conservatists vs Sexual Freedom, Queers
Islamophobia: Atheism vs Islam (headscarf)	Laicists/Republicans vs Liberals
Education	Higher Education vs Lower Education
Classes/Anticapitalism	Higher Classes vs Lower Classes
Political Identity	Socialist vs Liberal vs Anarchist Women
Disability vs Ableism	Disabled vs Abled

Nodes of intersectionality and the groups of women confronting each other in the case of Amargi

The table above shows the issues on Amargi's agenda as well as the actual causes of conflicts. This list can be interpreted as a sign of the diversity of the issues discussed in Amargi.[57] The intersectional approach is emphasized in the definition of patriarchy. The additive approach, separating identities and adding afterwards is criticized. Amargi women put the struggle with various issues in the matrix of domination onto its agenda, keeping a wider defininiton of patriarchy, as is clear in the table above. However, feminism is retained as the main tool to analyze the reasons for domination.

[57]Among these, capitalism and class difference was one of the least discussed. The volunteers also recognized this oversight as a problem which eventually led to several conflicts within Amargi.

The participants who were previously active in mixed-gender political groups were asked about their problems they had in those groups due to exposure to oppression on the basis of sexism and intersectionally due to their other identities on top of that. As Merve explains:

> As a female teacher, students and parents show less respect and you have little authority. Before Amargi, I was a member of the union of teachers, Eğitim-sen. Here, being a young woman and also non-Kurdish caused problems such as not being taken seriously.

Likewise, Cemgül, who worked in a LGBT group, states that when in Lambdaistanbul, men had more experience in organizing; thus, as lesbians, they used to feel weak.Yeliz had previously experienced problems with men in the anarchist groups due to violent language and patriarchal attitudes. These demonstrate the problems faced by women due to intersectional oppressions; as a female worker, as a female non-heterosexual, as a female anarchist, etc. These participants pointed to the difficulties experienced in the political spaces of a mixed-gender kind as the reason for making their way to Amargi. In this sense, women's feelings contribute to their decision to join the feminist movement. In this context, Cavidan explains how being a transsexual woman affects her daily life in the society and her experiences in mixed-gender politics:

> As a transsexual woman you are harrassed in a worse way. When a woman is harrassed walking in the street, she can hit, shout, but when people look at me in a terrible way, harrassing you by eye contact, you cannot react, you cannot complain, he can say I didn't look at you. This harassment happened in the mixed-gender political party, too. People 'othered' you, even though not openly, and that's how I became a feminist.

Cavidan, Yeliz, Cemgül, Feride and Merve explain their experiences and problems in mixed-gender political spaces as well as their employment experiences in a male-dominated environment. Such discussion brought Hilal to Amargi. She was also impressed by Selek's story as well as her interviews published about this new group and decided to take part in Amargi:

> I worked as a jeweler at the Turkish grand bazaar in Istanbul for a couple of years in a very sexist environment. No women are in this sector, but lots of hierarchy. I felt separated from this sector and got involved in Amargi as follows: I saw photos of Pınar Selek in the newspapers, when she got out of

> jail and read about Amargi, because this organization was newly formed. (…) After a long search, I found Amargi finally and met with women, spoke with them but didn't understand because they were not organized. I expected an NGO, but it seemed that this group of women just getting together.[58]

5.4.1. The Repercussions of the Kurdish Issue and Kurdish Women in Amargi

When Amargi was founded in 2001, there was a ceasefire announced by the PKK. As explained in the previous chapter, Amargi conducted several campaigns for this aim. The refusal of ethnic assimilation, important for transversal politics, was crucial in the example of Amargi's case. Kurdish women taking part in Amargi resisted the loss of their culture, although most of them could not speak Kurdish. This was due to state policies of the Turkification of other cultures. Only when assimilation was refused openly in the group as a principle could these women relate to the group. When Turkishness was used as the universal category for all women in Turkey, it caused problems. According to Çağlayan (2007), pressures on Kurdish identity as well as Kurdish language intensified the sexism and violence Kurdish women were subjected to in their own environment. There was an assumption of being non-existent for official identity politics, as Kurds facilitated their perception of non-existence in men's views, as women. The prohibition on using Kurdish in the public sphere made these women more dependent on men who spoke the official language and, therefore, had knowledge of the outer world. This situation additionally prevented these women from accessing facilities to resist male domination (Çağlayan, 2007).

The majority of the feminists in Turkey had been using the term "women from Turkey" instead of "Turkish women" starting in the 1990s, displaying their sensitivity to the Kurdish Question. As a declaration of a political position in solidarity with the Kurdish women, they also translated the declarations on 8 March into Kurdish, making the entire demonstration bilingual for women who could not speak Turkish. However, in some wider circles, nationalism and racism were not

[58] Should the 'headscarf debate' be a debate? http://amargigroupistanbul.wordpress.com/2011/01/06 accessed on 01 December 2011.

questioned at all. For example, in 2006, the Women's Assembly on Shelters rejected the proposition of a workshop about "problems of Kurdish women" due to some Turkish feminist women claiming that it was being parochial, which caused a legitimate reaction from women of Kurdish origin. They demanded that their specific problems related to war, violence from the state and language be recognized among women and for space and time to be reserved for this discussion at an event against violence. Amargi defended the Kurdish women's arguments like many other feminist groups, but their trust in the women's movement for making politics together was damaged.

In the first years of Amargi, the group of Kurdish women, who were close to the Kurdish women's movement, was the biggest and most active one. Most of these women had relatives active within the political party at that time founded by Kurdish people. Selek's criticisms of militarism and nationalism, as well as her doctorate thesis about peace for the Kurdish Question, the real reason for the prosecutions, attracted several Kurdish women to this not-exclusively-Kurdish women's organization. This could be considered as a change of direction by these women from identity politics of the 1990s toward diversity feminism. Although there were Kurdish women's groups such as Dicle Women's Association and Rainbow Women's Association at the time, Amargi became a new milieu of attraction for these women. The initial reason for their partaking in the groups was the solidarity and respect they felt for Selek as well as their interest in the Woman's Question, as Hilal's account puts it.

However, their friends criticized these Kurdish women taking part in Amargi due to organizing with lesbians. They in turn pointed to discrimination based on sexual identity and orientation exhibited by the people in their families and their friends. These women said that they also were oppressed for being different as Kurdish people. As long as it was explained politically, their families and political friends could relate to these; however, this acceptance was theoretical. They would still not tolerate their daughter or friend to come out as a lesbian easily, like their Turkish

counterparts.[59]

One of Amargi's main objectives is the creation of women's knowledge; hence, the Kurdish members who were active from the first days of Amargi along with a Turkish woman, a socialist teacher, formed the "History of the Kurdish Women's Movement Workshop." They prepared a presentation about this subject after few months of research. The theme of the presentation was the "heroines" who were part of the armed Kurdish struggle. One such woman is known as Beritan, a PKK member who threw herself from a cliff in order not to be caught by soldiers (Çağlayan, 2007: 248). When her story was told from the same point of view of nationalism, appreciating her action as the saving of the Kurdish nation's honor, there was criticism of the symbolic womanhood. It was interesting to notice that feminist criticism could find patriarchal failures of a movement due to its nationalist discourses, which was known by the importance given to the women's independent struggle. In this case, Kurdish women were politically closer to feminism due to the movement's ideology about women's liberty compared to an ordinary woman identifying as Turkish. After the presentation, the unquestioned importance given by the Kurdish movement to the honour of women who committed suicide instead of submitting to the army forces was the theme of discussion. These women's bodies were regarded in the movement as symbolizing the Kurdish nation.[60] The women who prepared the presentation agreed with the critique when explained in feminist terminology, indicating the link between nationalism and honor of women regarded as the honor of the nation (Altınay, 2000: 254). Yuval-Davis notes the symbolic role of the woman of the nation in the nationalistic discourses (1988). There was an obvious similarity with Altınay's analysis of Atatürk's words to his adopted daughter, Sabiha Gökçen, the world's first female airforce pilot, before bombing Dersim, persuading her to commit suicide instead of getting raped by the enemy in order to protect the honor of the nation. Çağlayan (2007) stresses this point also present in the accounts of Dersimi about women's honor in the previous Kurdish riots. This issue

[59]I witnessed my friends' interesting conversations in Amargi recounting how they discussed these issues at their homes.

[60]For a more detailed analysis of this connection, see Çağlayan, 2007:82-84.

was discussed from a feminist view and the presenters agreed that feminist politics would problematize such accounts.

The Kurdish women in the Amargi group experienced difficulty in talking about sexuality. One of the interviewees, Feride, said that that when she went to a women's "self defense workshop" in France, women could walk around half naked, not ashamed of their bodies. She stated that it was very nice to experience the feeling of not being embarrassed for that. When she talked about it in a meeting at the house of a Kurdish Amargi volunteer, as something that they all could also try doing, the Kurdish women present there felt uneasy, as if forced to undress and a tense atmosphere followed. A similar event happened in a summer camp when Feride told about her ex-boyfriends, some young Kurdish women felt uneasy due to talking privacy and sexuality in a political context. This issue was the most difficult to address when Turkish and political Kurdish women did politics together. The Kurdish women, although politically against male domination, were indeed more exposed to the notions of honor related to feudalism; that is, at the point of the structural intersectionality, being a woman of a different ethnicity. Kurdish women, in general, had to struggle more with the patriarchal conservatism of the traditional culture when compared to women of Turkish origin (Hassanpour, 2001; Çağlayan, 2007). Among the reasons for that are the following: the transformation aimed at by the republic toward modernism reached Turkish people more widely as its main target and Kurdish culture remained closed due to retaining the Kurdish language as well as lack of interest by part of the state in their development and Kurdish resistance to the assimilation in the Turkish culture.

Kurdish women in Amargi had to overcome their prejudices against Turkish women, about their own racism and homophobia and transphobia to facilitate a healthy dialogue with the other volunteers from various sexual identities. Feride and Merve said that they experienced a lack of confidence for being non-Kurdish. Getting to know each other as Turkish and Kurdish women during the Amargi process helped to break down such prejudices, although not totally. As mentioned above, volunteers of

Kurdish origin had stronger internalized feudal notions such as honor, taboos of sexuality due to the conservative Kurdish culture (Hassanpour, 2001) and, due to their political tendency, a nationalist movement (Çağlayan, 2007). In Turkey, "being politically active for a woman required that she acted androgynously and devoid of feminity for any group doing politics except for feminism" (Kandiyoti, 1991:142). This was a handicap that prevented those women with prior political background from the discussing the issue of sexuality. In 2003, a political workshop was conducted successfully by lesbian and bisexual women in Amargi against homophobia and heterosexism; there was later an attempt to organize a sexuality workshop, which was later crtiticized for not following feminist principles and intimidating women during a training session with questions prepared in a mainstream approach.

Although women's sexuality was a very difficult topic to discuss for the Kurdish women, it was easier when connected to a politicized identity such as that of LBT women. These workshops and theroretical questioning of homophobia, however, did not facilitate the coming-outs of women who did not join as lesbians in the beginning. It was a slow process; apparantly these women felt embarrassed and came out years later. This can be interpreted as a sign of unsuccessful politics in Amargi or very strong inhibitions related to homophobia present in these women. Yet, according to the interviewees, in recent years, lesbians and bisexuals became one of the largest groups of identity, making the image of Amargi "a group of lesbian women" for some feminists. In 2008, some other feminist groups criticized Amargi's establishment of the initiative of "platform against sexual violence."[61] According to Yeliz, when a woman wanted to form a platform against sexual violence, women from Amargi supported her idea. Some other feminists objected, asking how and with whom this was taking place. They also argued that these women should first

[61]Amargi'den Kadınlara Rehber: Tecavüzle Mücadele Edebiliriz! http://bianet.org/bianet/toplum/111030-amargi-den-kadinlara-rehber-tecavuzle-mucadele-edebiliriz accessed on 05 July 2011.

receive trauma support. Furthermore, Amargi did not pass it to the organizations, which had more of this experience during the process. According to them, Amargi did not have enough experience in this field and there were women not identifying as feminists taking part in this platform. Feride maintains that this decision reflected Amargi's enthusiasm and naivity. This initiative was still active when this study was conducted and Amargi's work contributed to the struggle against sexual violence in Turkey.

In spite of a prolonged ceasefire since 1999, the Kurdish conflict entered into another impasse in 2005. The operations by the Turkish Armed Forces continued and the attacks by the PKK resumed. There was no space left for individuals other than those with arms on this issue, including antimilitarist feminist women in Amargi. Selek and some other members criticized the PKK for the resumption of violent acts. Selek wrote an article, questioning if freedom could come through "the blood of the people killed." It was published in Özgür Gündem, a newspaper close to the Kurdish movement. Due to the antimilitarist principles held by Selek and other Amargi women, who rejected violence for any reason, they could no longer be allies with the Kurdish movement that changed the longtime strategy of demanding peace into armed struggle again. Some Kurdish women with close ties with the Kurdish movement felt uneasy with Selek's criticism of the Kurdish movement, which justified the resumption of armed violence as self-defense. They kept silent instead of voicing their opininons and opening a discussion in Amargi. There was another dispute in Amargi at the same time about the determination of the message in the Amargi charter during the forthcoming 8 March demonstrations. Kurdish women insisted that it should again be about women ending the war "We Will Stop the War" (Savaşı Durduracağız), whereas Selek opted for a message to respond to the threat toward Orhan Pamuk by the murderer of Armenian journalist, Hrant Dink, as women "We Will Not Be Well-advised" (Akıllı Olmuyoruz). Selek insisted that the second choice was more important at that time and that the first one had been repeated already in an Amargi effort for the last four years with no success. At the end, the

second phrase was used at the pancarte as proposed by Selek. At the same time, a critical article about feminism of the Kurdish movement appeared in the *Amargi Feminist Theory and Politics Review*, criticizing the movement for keeping women dependent on the leaders of the struggle and separate from other feminists. Upon this, apparently Kurdish women were distanced even further from Amargi. After a short while, eight women, seven Kurdish and a Turkish woman close to Kurdish politics left Amargi without giving any reasons. Known almost exclusively as a Kurdish group in the beginning due to the antimilitarist campaigns and the number of Kurdish volunteers, this rupture caused a great disappointment for Amargi. Other women who remained called for an open discussion within Amargi about the reasons for those members' decisions for leaving, but they were reluctant. Some reasons were given such as Amargi having too much academic focus with the new feminist review as well as a problem of hierarchy in the group, which surfaced during the discussions about the charter, and not mentioning the difference in opinions about the Kurdish Question.

Because all Kurdish women left Amargi, with the exception of Cavidan, and also because the press declarations of the Kurdish movement became distant to feminists at the same time, the recent situation was interpreted as the Kurdish women who were active in Amargi were not totally independent from their national struggle. Hence, another explanation for what happened can be that they had to follow the decisions of the larger group, the Kurdish political movement, as a supposedly liberatory new identity that supressed their autonomy as women, as Appiah puts it, replacing "one kind of tyranny with another" (1994: 163).

From another perspective, this decision can also be interpreted as "outsiders", i.e. non-Kurdish women, were not as sensitive as the "insiders", i.e. the Kurdish women, were to this issue. As Narayan (1988) explains, outsiders could not understand them in critical times like these for not being one of them. In this case, such a perception may have caused them to give up the struggle with women of other backgrounds.

Their trust for the empathy from some outsider members from different identities was broken. Whatever the real reason, it caused a huge disappointment. These developments prompted Amargi to refrain from organizing campaigns for the defense of peace as a support for the Kurdish people. The departure of Kurdish members can also be interpreted as a retreat from transversal politics and a return to identity politics on their behalf.

This event, unfortunately, caused a change in Amargi's membership profile and its priorities. Furthermore, one of Amargi's main aspirations, a dialogue between ethnicities involved in armed conflict as an implementation of transversal politics, was disrupted.

5.4.2. Discrimination Based on Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation

According to the result of a survey on Turkish society published in 2008, "gays are the most unwanted members of society, with 87 percent of respondents saying they do not want a gay neighbor."[62] Turkish society can be considered as both heterosexist and homophobic. Religiously conservative people as well as non-religious groups discriminate against LGBT people. According to Ataman (2011), they were perceived and treated as less than citizens; and LGBT people are subjected to direct and indirect discrimination by the state and society. As a result, violence as well as other types of problems, such as unemployment, having to live closeted lives, etc., caused severe suffering for the individuals from different sexual identities and sexual orientations.

The visibility and problems of LGBT people in society have long been among Amargi's main foci. As already explained, three transsexuals were among the founders of Amargi. Selek's book, as one of the first research projects supporting the LGBT struggle and showing society's hypocrisy as well as the myths of masculinity,

[62] http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/english/domestic/11765449.asp?scr=1, survey of Yılmaz Esmer of Bahçeşehir University accessed on 29 November 2011.

attracted several LBT women to Amargi. Amargi developed close contacts with the LGBT group, Lambdaistanbul, from the beginning. Lesbians who were a minority in Lambdaistanbul and KaosGL joined Amargi. One of the interviewees, Yeliz perceives that lesbians encounter more difficulties in acceptance and establishing an independent life compared to gay men. According to Selin, they first experienced women's solidarity with their revealed identity here and afterward when they returned to Lambdaistanbul, they could struggle against sexism of the male volunteers there. Therefore, their Amargi experience both empowered them and thus increased women's participation in Lambdaistanbul, while also transforming the views of other Amargi women toward lesbian/bisexual women.

In Amargi, the average "mildly nationalist" lesbian who did not question nationalism, militarism and racism could meet and communicate with the Kurdish woman who was political about her identity. The Kurdish woman, who grew up in a family where sexuality was not an issue to be discussed openly, met the lesbian woman who defined her identity as her oppressed sexual orientation.[63] Such encounters transformed the prejudices and the discriminatory points of view of both these groups.

The heterosexism workshop attended by five lesbians and bisexual women was one of the most successful workshops offered by Amargi.[64]As an output of this group, a survey was prepared to uncover the problems, discrimination and violence faced by LGB people in Istanbul starting from their own experiences. In the focus group, Cemgül complained that the heterosexism workshop consisted of only lesbians and bisexuals and heterosexual women did not participate. Merve objected, stating that she wanted to join but was refused due to the decision of having only non-

[63]According to Hassanpour, Kurdish language is patriarchal and homophobic, constituting one of the sources of oppression for women and LGBT people (Hassanpour, 2001).

[64]I was participating in that group as a lesbian woman.

heterosexual members in the workshop, which apparantly was based on own experiences. When the research design was finished, it was turned into project on the problems of LGB people in Istanbul.[65] When the project received funding from a donor, Mamacash, it was carried out together with Lambdaistanbul, a group with more contacts with the community, reaching 393 people, to answer the survey's questions.[66] In April 2006, the survey results were published as a book, which was distributed free of charge to state institutions, universities with funds provided by Mamacash.[67] Sixty-two percent of the people surveyed were male and only the remaining 38 percent were female. This was due to a lesser degree of women not socializing than men in the LGBT organizations and other LGBT environments.

Earlier, in 2004, the Istanbul Social Ecology Platform, ITEP, was launched with the initiative of Amargi. As explained in the previous chapter, with the funding from the European Commision, Amargi organized joint meetings and non-violence training with Lambdaistanbul, Social Ecology Cooperative and Rainbow Kurdish Women's Group about sexism and heterosexism among other issues such as nationalism and social ecology. In these meetings, women, especially from Amargi, and Lambdaistanbul activists discussed their issues of interest constructing a mutual trust and learning from each other about homophobia, sexism and other types of power relations. As a result, heterosexual Amargi volunteers also participated in the following LGBT Pride Marches to support them and LGBT activists internalized feminist principles.

In 2006, a lesbian Amargi activist, also a well-known feminist woman, who had been very active in the organization since 2002, left Amargi. She quit with accusations of

[65]Eşcinsellerin Sorunları Araştırması
http://www.amargi.org.tr/?q=node/255 accessed on 08 July 2011.

[66]Eşcinsellerin Sorunları Araştırması Başlıyor
http://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/57434-escinsellerin-sorunlari-arastirmasi-basliyor
accessed on 02 May 2011.

[67]Ötekileştirilen Eşcinsel ve Biseksüeller
http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek_haber.php?ek=r2&haberno=5881 accessed on 11 August 2011.

moralism and lesbophobia regarding some Amargi members. She claimed that she faced lesbophobia upon having a partner and kissing her during a trip for the Peace Table campaign to Bingöl. According to her, heterosexism was handled theoretically but not realized in practice in Amargi. In my interviews, Cavidan refused to accept that the reason for criticism was homophobia:

> I think that it was something else. Now they also criticize themselves. Those discussions were about something else. They said it cruelly, how non-homophobic are they? As if they have they transcended it all?

Cavidan interpreted the incident in the following way: She was exhausted from activism and desired to retreat to private life instead of continuing to struggle to change the perspectives of women in Amargi. Indeed, the lesbian couple continued activism with the LGBT group Lambdaistanbul, which is possible to interpret as a retreat to identity politics with similar individuals. However, another probable reason can be insiders' reaction (non-heterosexuals) to the insensitive outsiders (homophobic women) by breaking the coalition, as in Narayan's approach, similar to the probable reason for the case of rupture by Kurdish women.

Overall, it can be contended that the taboo of sexuality has never fully been questioned within Amargi, both heterosexual and otherwise, causing other similar conflicts later. The conventional approach to sexuality stoked by feudalistic relations in the country common to many Turkish and Kurdish women was one of the hardest issues with which to deal. One of the interviewees, Feride, underlined this as one of her biggest troubles with Amargi. More specifically, virginity, having boyfriends or girlfriends and nudity were issues not easily dealt with in Amargi until recently. The sexuality workshop founded by three women created a space for women in and close to Amargi in 2008, but the method and questions chosen for this exercise were not proper, i.e. in line with feminist principles of being nonjudgemental and questioning the relevance of virginity as well as sexual orientation. Their method received critique for that from women within and outside of Amargi. Currently, especially the young female-to-male transsexuals' group, Voltrans, changed this by acting in a way to challenge the approach to sexuality through radicalism. Recently, with the

changing membership profiles of mostly younger, educated, Turkish and academician women with a higher ratio of lesbians and bisexuals in the recent years, these topics ceased being taboo. There also were some women who defined themselves as queer among new volunteers. After the visit by Judith Butler in 2010 to Ankara, Turkey, the queer approach became even more widespread among younger students and anarchists in Istanbul. This approach was an attempt to transcend identity politics of the LGBT movement.

A few male-to-female transsexuals who have had no alternative other than resorting to sex work to survive were Amargi volunteers from Amargi's inception. Among them, Cavidan, who has continued to be part of Amargi since its establishment, is also an ethnically Kurdish woman of a politically active family. Volunteers having more than one oppressed identity should remind us that identities are not mutually exclusive and an individual can have multiple identities. Sometimes, one of these identities could be a hegemonic one as well. Cavidan quit sex-work after joining Amargi and did many different jobs. She ran the used-paper workshop, sold mussels on the street, and then became part of Theater Amargi.[68] During the Konya campaign (explained in the previous) Cavidan felt uneasy in speaking for being a transsexual among the women in the villages visited. She preferred to keep silent so that her sexual identity went unnoticed. She spoke on the last day about her "double chains," being a woman and being a transsexual, finally overcoming this fear.[69] This can be given as an example of intersectionality affecting some women in a multiple manner. Cavidan did not organize any specific workshop about being transsexual but preferred to discuss with anyone she could in the group. Her sense of humor and open personality alleviated revailing transphobia among Amargi women. Yet, she was criticized by one of the interviewees, Ayla, for imposing her identity as

[68]As of late, she writes and performs her own plays in the theater. She is the most well known Amargi member after Selek.

[69]Kadından Kadına Özgür Değilim Mektuplaşması
http://bianet.org/kadin/kultur/75881-kadindan-kadina-ozgur-degilim-mektuplasmasi
accessed on 16 November 2011.

unquestionable for personal faults as well as for her oppressed identities. Ayla claims that Amargi women who were not transsexual were not allowed to speak on this subject.

However, when a lesbian member came out as a transsexual man, the situation was more complicated. Cemgül came out recently as a female-to-male transsexual after participating in the heterosexism workshop as a lesbian.[70] He did not feel comfortable -in fact as a man- among women. During the focus group interview, he stated that for some identities, it could be more difficult to join or to come out. She knew that from her own experience. Even though there was trust and space to come out, she was still not sure about what to expect. The existence of common principles within Amargi enabled him to talk about it. Actually, the identity of Cemgül was what Selin found difficult to understand. Selin admitted that she had problems in accepting his identity in contrast to the example of Cavidan, with whom she was friends and never had problems. She accepted that she was transphobic and had to face this. She realized her belief that only men would desire to change their sex into female. She stated that after this process, which was not straightforward, she could relate to the female-to-male transsexuality; her opinions "shifted" as in the terminology of transversal politics (Cockburn, 1999). The inclusion of a transsexual man in Amargi created discussion in wider feminist groups questioning the correctness of this decision. Yeliz explains this process as follows:

> There was only one transsexual man. He had reservations about being a part of the group and wanted us to discuss it. We did so in a large meeting. We agreed that there was no problem as they also experience womanhood when on the streets.

The transsexual man, Cemgül, who was known as a lesbian for many years, states that he had concerns about how Amargi women would react:

[70]Her name was Ayşegül then. His current name Cemgül did not exist in Turkish as a name for males. Gül (rose) generally is not considered to be an appropriate name for a male; most men would take it as an insult to their masculinity. Thus, it can be considered as a queer or intersexual name.

> Coming out is difficult. There is an environment to do it, but there is some unease and not knowing what will happen.

The term queer made its way into discussions of the feminist movement in the 1990s (Butler, 1990). It also became popular in the LGBT circles in Turkey as a term claiming to overcome the hazards of identity politics:

> Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence. 'Queer' then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative. (Halperin, 1995: 62)

Cavidan and Aylin mentions that "queer" is what they could have possibly adopted if only they were better informed about its meaning for claiming as their non-essential identity. Some well-educated, young people visiting Amargi of non-heterosexual sexual orientation and different sexual identities as well as some members of the female-to-male transsexual group Voltrans define themselves as queer. Aylin further states that she felt close to calling herself queer, but she was not sure she knew enough about the term. According to Cavidan, Amargi had become very diverse:

> I am fed up already (laughs). I am the only heterosexual left; all had become lesbians. I mean, there are not categorized groups but Amargi is a colourful group. For example, recently, it was exactly like that, it was very pleasant. When we were moving from the street, the people of the shops around were very sad. Even the LPG gas seller said that, 'You made our eyes get accustomed to the colors, why are you leaving?' And so on. There was a climate of everyone existing side by side, I don't want to call this queer. I don't know about queer, so I don't use it, if it is everyone standing together. Let's call it queer, but queer is something else, I don't know.

According to Aylin, everyone feels compelled to categorize when sexual orientation is at issue. She did not act "cool" or queer and she has not read sufficiently about queerness. However, she was inclined toward it although she did not know how possible it is to live "exactly as queer." That is why she did not classify herself and becomes intimate with anyone she has feelings for.

Amargi is well known by European, especially German, women's groups. Several young female students came to Istanbul as Amargi trainees. They organized "Queer Cinema Workshop at Amargi with the LGBT association Lambdaistanbul between

November 2010 and February 2011. During these meetings, the notion of queer was discussed. As of late, Amargi women regard queer theory a significant discussion and are considering adopting the term "queer" and living a queer life in terms of a Halperian definition of queer and queerness.

5.4.3. Debate over the Headscarf Ban

In the early 2000s, the headscarf issue was at the center of debate, which was mostly discussed by men on opposite sides of the matter - conservatives and laicist-nationalists. There was an increasing polarization after the 2002 AKP electoral victory on this issue in the society because some of the wives of AKP government officials wore headscarves, which raised reactions from the secularists. Feminists in the 2000s were mostly against the ban, as feminists considered that women's bodies or outfit clothing were not for men or the state to decide how they should be. However, the majority did not act to support the Islamic feminists as they also regarded religion as a patriarchal institution. Sancar (2011) notes that when Islamic feminists called the feminists to support them in their claims of the headscarf was a women's right and hence a question of freedom, this support was not completely forthcoming. They did not line up with Kemalist women, either. For these difficulties, the issue of headscarf could not make its way onto the agenda of the feminist movement as a topic awaiting a decision. People on the left and mainstream feminist women kept a distance from religion (Özçetin, 2009).

There is a striking phenomenon about this issue in Amargi, which seems similar to other feminist groups. While 61 percent of women wear headscarves in the society, according to a survey by A&G in 2007,[71] there was no woman who was religious in Amargi, except for the mother of a gay man who had been part of the group for three months upon the advice of her son. When asked during this study if they believed that all identities of women were represented in Amargi, most of the Amargi volunteers mentioned this lack.

[71]Her 100 Kadından 61'i Baş Örtülü http://haber.gazetevatan.com/Haber/139031/1/Gundem.

One of the reasons for that can be the incorrect label of Amargi as "a group of lesbians" and the majority of conservative women would have prejudices against this "sin." However, in February 2008, there was an initiative among Islamic feminists to make a press declaration for the rights of LGBT; however, some Islamic women objected and it could not be declared as initially planned under the title "We Demand All Freedoms Together."[72] This created a disappointment in the larger feminist movement. Two months later in 2008, a handful of women, including veiled women and women from Amargi wrote a declaration titled "A Public Sphere Where We Cannot Walk Arm in Arm is not Our Public Sphere" was opened for signatures and a mailing list was created under the title, "We Look after Each Other."

Nevertheless, religion found a place in Amargi's politics by means of a stance against the headscarf ban. Amargi women's position supported the lifting of the headscarf bans from the beginning and they fostered contacts with Islamic feminists. Well-known religious authors supported Selek during her trials in front of the courtrooms over the years and came to speak about their latest book as a part of the Amargi activities open to all women.[73] In 2006, the first issue of the *Amargi Review* was devoted to articles discussing the headscarf issue. Amargi was one of the few feminist groups without reservations on this subject. Although Amargi women regarded religion as an oppressive institution, they were in favor of discussing this with veiled women with headscarves after the ban and discrimination ceased. In 2007, two women from Amargi appeared in a picture published in a conservative newspaper, *Yeni Şafak*, which caused controversy in feminist circles. Selek and I took "the headscarf photo" in order to demonstrate solidarity and support for veiled women who were deprived of their right to higher education. The story behind it was this: A female columnist, Nuray Mert, wrote that she did not believe that the

[72]E-mail by Hidayet Tuksal to the feminist mail group Kadinkoalisyonu2007.

[73]Bianet Yazar-Yildiz-Ramazanoglu-Amargi-Bulusmalarinda http://77.79.79.245/bianet/kultur/107445-yazar-yildiz-ramazanoglu-amargi-bulusmalarinda accessed on 10 December 2011.

feminists, who were asking for more seats for women in parliament, could also demand rights of religious women to be represented in parliament with their headscarves.[74] It was not a straightforward decision for Amargi women to be present in the "headscarf photo." However during the time of the ban, it was thought that the correct attitude was to go for it. Yet, the photo created some discontent in Amargi as well as in other feminist circles. It touched on a sensitive point of feminist women in Turkey.

Some women stated that they were against the ban but they would like to discuss this issue with women covering their hair.[75] They considered religion as a patriarchal institution. Such opinions reflected the approach of "clashing without violence" in Amargi, i.e. explaining one's own point of view without rejecting the other women. These approaches represent the majority of opinions in the feminist circles. Although it was not said openly, many women, especially older women, coming from Socialist and Kurdish movements, did not consider this photo appropriate, as feminist women from Amargi appearing next to the rightwing female authors was a shock for some of them. For others, as long as the cause was right, collaborating with people of different ideologies seemed courageous and necessary. Meanwhile, newspapers started to show signs of surprise interpreting the photo as a division among feminists, some appearing with moustaches and others with headscarves in response. They commented on this issue, distorting it according to their own approach. Thus, an article had to be written clarifying why we found correct what we did as a solidarity act.[76] Some feminists wrote other articles to criticize it, both in the same publication

[74]Yasağa Karşı Dayanışma Fotoğrafı *Yenişafak* Newspaper 03 April 2007. http://yenisafak.com.tr/Gundem/?t=03.04.2007&i=38400

[75]Should the 'Headscarf Debate' Be a Debate**?** http://amargigroupistanbul.wordpress.com/2011/01/06/should-the-headscarf-debate-be-a-debate/ accessed on 01 December 2011.

[76]I wrote such an article in a newspaper, *Radikal*: Kadın Mal mı ki... http://www.radikal.com.tr/Default.aspx?aType=EklerDetay&ArticleID=874848&Date=15.01.2009&CategoryID=42 .

as well as in others.[77] The major issue was the other women who showed solidarity with covered women and appeared in the picture were mostly supporters of rightwing politics, which feminists used to dislike. Mostly women of Pazartesi Magazine were against the initiative although they once declared that they were against the ban.[78] Necla Akgökçe from this periodical claims that:

> These days it is forgotten that feminism is an ideology of conflict. This weakens our stand and prevents the discussions we have to carry out. The concept of together with our differences is perceived as harmony, as being comforting. It won't work with 'Oh, you are so beautiful, so courageous.' I am not saying that there should be blood but we have to struggle harshly ideologically with each other. This cannot function any other way. [79]

This article also shows the reactions of other feminists toward the "diversity feminism" Amargi aimed to realize. According to Akgökçe, certain differences could not get together even in showing solidarity with women who were oppressed by the state due to their clothing. Some socialist feminist women regard some women, such as right-wingers or even religious women, as the enemy, perhaps as a memory of the left-right polarizations in the late 1970s. The politics of diversity and the defense of the rights of other women in Amargi were perceived as "comforting each other" by the women espousing second wave feminism. Similar perceptions existed in the group Socialist Feminist Collective. For example, an activist of this group in Ankara who previously took part in a socialist movement as well believed that Amargi's organization was too loose for being a real group and it resembled more a platform. However, one of the interviewees in this study, Selin, regarded Amargi's flexibility as its most positive aspect, allowing Amargi to adapt to the changes and a sign of being alive compared to solid structures of not allowing changes. The manner of doing

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[77] Ilıcak, Mert ve Feministler http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalEklerDetayV3&ArticleID=874902&Date=16.11.2011&CategoryID=42.

[78] http://www.pazartesidergisi.com/public/makale.aspx?id=217 accessed on 02 October 2011.

[79] Necla Akgökçe, *Express Magazine* April/May 2007.

politics differed for women with prior experience of organizing before feminism and those who did not.

The *Amargi Feminist Review* addressed the headscarf issue as its cover subject in its first issue in 2006.[80] According to Çorbacıoğlu (2006), Amargi was the periodical focusing on women's issues from a feminist perspective of getting into dialogue without othering Islamic feminists.

In the context of rising polarization over the headscarf dispute in Turkish politics dividing both men and women over the issue, a new women's mailing list was formed by both secular and religious women called "Birbirimize sahip çıkıyoruz" (We are looking after each other).[81] It was a platform of women defending each other's rights as a reaction towards the division of women as a way of doing politics in Turkey (Özçetin, 2009). The starting point was the women's rejection of becoming enemies on the basis of their positions on headscarf ban, put as a question of the survival of the laicist republic against Sharia law. This group consisted of Islamic women who covered their hair, well-known women authors, and even lesbians from various women's groups. Two Amargi members took part in this platform as well. They were against the stereotypes that discriminate against women as 'Islamist robots' and immoral 'sexual objects,' announcing that 'they reject a public sphere where all women cannot walk arm in arm' (Saktanber and Çorbacıoğlu, 2008:516). We can call this mail group's approach as diversity feminism, consisting of women from separate groupings including identity groups, and Amargi's approach as closer to the transversal politics where different women partook in the same organization

[80]It was chosen inspite of some objections of a women's rights activist on the board who was reluctant in the beginning, considering it as a controversial topic for the first issue.

[81]Birbirimize Sahip Çıkıyoruz! http://birbirimizesahipcikiyoruz.blogspot.com/ accessed on 03 July 2011.

with more interaction, discussion and transformation. In conclusion, Amargi women could not include religious women, just like other feminist groups, except for the formation mentioned above. However, several Islamic feminist authors could find a place reserved for them in the *Amargi Feminist Review.*

5.5. Other Debates over Prevailing Power Structures

According to the interviewees, Merve, Deniz and Ezgi, it was the women who formed an active network and put their problems and demands into Amargi's agenda and who also directed the discussions and the protests of that period. However, the solution to the ethnic armed conflict was an urgent issue for all Amargi women. As explained previously, the main issues of intense discussion in the first years revolved around militarism, nationalism, and, to a lesser extent, racism and heterosexism.

5.5.1. Antimilitarism and Nationalism

Sancar (2011) emphasizes that women's organizations should not only stand against violence toward women but also support development of a political agenda that criticizes and stands against militarism, racism, masculinist violence as in the form of armed conflicts based on nationalism/ethnic identities. Forms of violence initiate each other. According to one of the interviewees in this study, Selin, "if today the voices of women's organizations for peace are louder and clearer, Amargi's efforts in the first years have its share in that."

Feminist scholars such as Floya Anthias, Nira Yuval-Davis and Cynthia Enloe provide gendered understandings of nationalism and militarism, expanding the concept of patriarchy further (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989; Enloe 1989). Amargi stresses these links between gender and militarism in its declarations. As stated, the earlier demonstrations by Amargi women were generally designed around the request for peace in the Kurdish Question. The banners of Amargi women for 8 March usually emphasized this demand for peace. Other women's groups occasionally criticized this point on the grounds that the issue overshadowed sexism. The question

whether "a Kurdish woman's problems could be separated, so that feminism dealt with her problems related to her womanhood only" was a significant issue from the perspective of intersectionality (Bora, 2004). Amargi refused to see the Kurdish Question as a separate issue from sexism despite the criticism from Turkish feminists; militarism and war were seen as the ultimate expressions of masculinity. When people started to die in a war, it became a priority to stop it. In this sense, Amargi was similar to the antimilitarist feminist group, "Women in Black." Cockburn credits Amargi with "engaging with Turkish militarism and address the Turkish–Kurdish conflict and working for connection between Kurdish and Turkish women" (2007: 159).

The demonstration called Peace Table was an initiative for the solution of the Kurdish Question.[82] "They directed their feminist activism against the military because, like nationalism and heterosexism, it is a mechanism through which masculinity is produced." (Cockburn, 2007:207)

Pınar Selek criticized the opinion about women as essentially pro-peace, stating in a conference about the relationship between women and peace:

> The discourse of "peace is in women's nature" naturalizes war in a way. Women's participation in peace is a political choice and decision. Women become more visible through the anti-war movement. Politics of motherhood carries dangers. [83]

Selek puts forth her antimilitarist concerns maintaining that "war institutionalizes as a system in the world, worst of all we get used to it. Women, the poor, the dispossessed cannot be determining subjects in ending the wars."[84]

While there was a Kurdish majority of women during the Konya meeting, there were

[82]Kadınların Barış Çağrısı http://bianet.org/kadin/insan-haklari/19757-kadinlarin-baris-cagrisi accessed on 04 April 2011.

[83]Kadınlar Barışı Kurmanın Yollarını Konuşuyor http://bianet.org/bianet/kadin/102283-kadinlar-barisi-kurmanin-yollarini-konusuyor accessed on 05 August 2011.

[84] ibid.

also Turkish and Armenian women. A letter written by Hay Gin Armenian Women's Platform during the "Women Marching toward Each Other" campaign of 6-11 July 2002, stated:

> Once upon a time we were there, on the roads that you'll take, in the places you will pass today. On the road you will take are our voices, our stories and our traces. You wouldn't have heard us before because we were silenced, we were scared. Now we are walking with you so that we can overcome our fears. Let's hold each others' hands and shout and let our screams merge into each other. Let's raise each others' voices so that noone will suppress our voices against violence any more.

The idea of the campaign was that messengers from various cities would go through the cities, towns and villages on their roads, collecting letters from women about their problems and demands; upon arrival in Konya, the geographical center of the country, a conference would be held where women would discuss the problems and possible solutions based on the reports and letters.[85]

Not surprisingly, one of the groups close to Amargi had always been antimilitarist due to its common perspective regarding opposition to the war as well as concerns over the relationship between militarism and gender. Hence, male and female conscientious objectors considered Amargi a natural ally from the start. In Turkey, individuals' objection to compulsory military service is not regarded as a right despite international agreements; many men have even benn detained for that. The book *Barışamadık -We Could not Reconcile* by Pınar Selek about the antimilitarist movement in Turkey told their story starting from the Peace Association of communists and War Resisters in Izmir. Amargi women attended the trials of detained objectors as well as demonstrations in support of their release and militourism festivals, ironic demonstrations against militarism.[86] The female

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[85]Women's Solidarity as a Resistance Strategy against Liberal Identity Politics in Turkey, Melissa Bilal University of Chicago, May 2006
http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=925666

[86]Conscientious Objection 1 - Militourism: A New Expression of Anti-Militarism
http://www.weavenews.org/blogs/erkinalp/1198/conscientious-objection-1-militourism-new-expression-anti-militarism accessed on 07 December 2011.

conscientious objectors, who are also trainers of "non-violence exercises," visited and taught techniques of these methods to women from Amargi in order to deal with prejudices and problems in the groups. One of the first female objectors in Turkey, Ferda Ülker, described the traditional view of women in relation to the military only as mothers, sisters, wives, and girlfriends of those young men who would become soldiers. It was also argued that a risk of becoming "masculinised" when the feminist perspective was overlooked in the mixed conscientious objection movement.[87] The intersectionality of conscientious objection with gender had impacts analyzed in the book published by War Resistors International (WRI). These women were accused by some male objectors and others as people trying to get the easy part, as there was no punishment for female objectors. However, they stated that militarism affected women heavily and female objection was meaningful and relevant. The second issue of the *Amargi Feminist Review* was reserved for militarism, demonstrating the importance attached to antimilitarism.

5.5.2. Discussions about Heterosexism and Homophobia

In 2003, when two lesbians, active in the LGBT struggle, joined Amargi, heterosexism and homophobia/transphobia made their way into the discussions among women of Amargi. Kurdish women outside Amargi, who considered Amargi as a group close to them, also thought of Amargi as a group of lesbians. The coexistence of differences was still difficult to perceive for many women in Turkey. A heterosexism workshop was organized and several non-violence training sessions were held to transform the points of views of heterosexual women. Nevertheless, Cavidan, a male-to-female transsexual who was interviewed for this study conceded that she still had a strong homophobia, especially towards lesbians. She was still catching herself thinking as follows:

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[87]The presentation of the book Women's Conscientious Objection as a Strategy against Militarism. http://wri-irg.org/de/node/11904 accessed on 14 January 2012.

> I used to think of lesbians as follows: What do these women get from this? One has two breasts, so does the other one. When two people meet, they should be a little different. What do they do since the two of them are the same? Now, I don't question it like this, but I still cannot accept that one day I may become a lesbian, or make love to a woman; my stomach does not stand it. This is a serious problem; it was taught to us.

Surprisingly, this transsexual woman was the only one who admitted that she was still homophobic/lesbophobic. It can be argued here that LGBT individuals also internalized these phobias. Cavidan expressed that that heterosexism, prohibiting same sex relations, could sometimes be the real reason for later-lamented sex change operations of some individuals making wrong decisions by having those operations. They could be just gays but could not imagine the possibility of non-heterosexual relationships and changed their sex in vain.

Another interviewee, Yeliz claimed that lesbians had more problems in establishing an independent life compared to gay man in Turkey. The intersectionality of sexual orientation and gender in Turkey, results in having less opportunity for lesbian and bisexual women to object forced marriages. The results in the book based on research prepared by the heterosexism workshop of Amargi women supported this contention. The lesbian and bisexual women in Amargi, however, could overcome this phenomenon due to an empowerment process by organizing with other women, doing political analysis of their own situation and having their own economic independence.

5.5.3. The Issue of Capitalism

During the focus group, capitalism turned out to be the issue upon which everyone agreed that Amargi was not successful in discussing sufficiently. Therefore, economic differences and classism (discrimination based on class) were not given the required attention in a systematic manner. This omittance caused several flaws in Amargi's history.

Although "nonviolence training" aiming to raise awareness of the internalized discrimination was held between several groups partaking in the ITEP platform, and there was a chance of questioning capitalism due to the existence of union of unemployed workers, this did not occur sufficiently. Merve puts it as such:

> In 2004, Özlem and Oya, two socialist women from a mixed-gender socialist group, wanted to work together with women of Amargi and discuss an economic system. Yet, we could not put this onto our agenda. Finally, they diagnosed it as a "tissue mismatch" and left to carry their discussion somewhere else. It could have been a chance to discuss capitalism and class issues.

Apparantly, the problems linked to other issues were more important for Amargi women. It can be concluded that the traditional views about socialism were not accepted due to the proleterian hegemony it envisioned conflicting with the feminist utopia of living without any hegemony. Feminists criticized Marxism and socialists in Turkey for being gender-blind and ignoring women's unpaid domestic labor. Ayla also claims that there is leftphobia in the feminists, an obsession of not being like them in demonstrations, in way of organizing. The differences among economic status among Amargi women was not discussed openly; instead, as Selin puts it, she heard that she was made fun of due to her family's class. This issue was left as ignored, causing hidden problems among women in the group.

Some members resigned because application and acceptance of funds from the EU and Kagider in 2004 and 2005 were interpreted as the end of the radicalism of Amargi as a group and against the capitalist system.

Also, the opening of the bookshop and a café caused Amargi women to reserve time and energy to manage them almost like a commercial cooperative. The clients' being mostly women close to Amargi's feminism, helped to organize with some of them afterward, but it also caused problems, as Ezgi reflects on this process in the following:

> The bookshop is important, but without the discussion about capitalism it caused problems for workers. Are we a commercial group running the bookshop for profit? These caused problems such as the atmosphere in the bookshop, and that being too busy with details missing the bigger issues.

> Volunteers busy with small things made the larger aims of the group get lost. Conditions forced this.

The lack of a reserved space for the internal discussions and meetings weakened the internal interactions among volunteers. The space of the bookshop was supposed to serve both reasons, but the concentration that a meeting required could not be achieved there with people entering the bookshop. The hiring of a paid employee for the sales also caused problems in Amargi. The employee complained that she was sometimes not treated fairly and claimed that too much was expected from her in return for what she received in payment.

Ayla explains her opinons as such:

> As a worker in Amargi, I believe that we are not aware about capitalism. For sexism, yes, we catch it, but for capitalism or violence, we cannot apply it in Amargi's everyday life. We have to struggle with this hollowness. How to relate to the professional worker was not clear.

Due to having an employee, the tradition of having a daily responsible volunteer disappeared. Ayla holds the lack of discussions on capitalism in Amargi to be the reason for not being sensitive enough in this realm. The bookshop's existence also shifted the focus from street demonstrations to creating possibilities for women's literature and scholarship. The *Amargi Feminist Review's* success strengthened this tendency as well.

The amount of taxes on the cooperative and the high office rent for the bookshop forced Amargi women close the bookshop in August 2011, which affected the volunteers' state of mind during my interviews: they were more pessimistic than usual. The decision to change Amargi's legal status from cooperative to association was made to prevent payment of high taxes. A new office was found in November 2011 and Amargi became an association with the name Women's Academy Association, in short, Amargi again.

5.6. Perceptions of Amargi's Exclusiveness or Openness to Newcomers

In this section, to what extent Amargi's objectives in terms of constituting a non-hierarchical structure open to all women was realized on the basis of the perceptions of selected volunteers interviewed for this study. Social movements create a collective identity among its members (Taylor, 1999) and sometimes activists are eager to share this identity with newcomers and sometimes not. Also, there may be unmentioned boundaries for prospective members. I asked Amargi volunteers whether, and to what extent, diversity was attained; more specifically, I asked, if any woman could join Amargi and whether there were some restrictions that kept some women away from Amargi. There were different opinions regarding this, although everyone acknowledged the relative openness of Amargi compared to other organizations. One of the participants, Yeliz shared this contention by stating that:

> Amargi is an organization where all sorts of violence and discrimination are questioned and rejected. I had no problems myself in this context.

Aylin, from Amargi Izmir held a similar conviction:

> According to my experiences, any woman can come. Of course, the lack of self-confidence and trouble of expressing herself among women causes some hesitation, but I can observe that with time they get relaxed.

While sharing the same position, Feride also contends that Amargi was found too wise for some to join based on what she heard from a woman. Amargi women in Izmir were supposed to know too much compared to her and she felt intimidated by this, preventing her from joining. Feride added that actually the same may apply for Amargi Istanbul. She was surprised to hear how some women she met regarded Amargi as a group of great philosophy and success. She believed that, in general, Amargi and its members were considered wiser than they were in reality. Another volunteer, Merve stated that during the first months in Amargi, she felt like an observer in the meetings, as she was not fully aware of the ways she was oppressed. She sometimes also felt excluded for not being Kurdish in the first year due to mistrust toward her from the Kurdish women, as someone from the oppressors' identity. She was an outsider for these women sharing a resistance identity (Narayan,

1988). Nevertheless, Feride asserts that there is space reserved for those newcomers not similar to majority of the group:

> Otherwise they would have not accepted me as a Turkish woman. You do not even have to define yourself as feminist before joining. You may become one there and later say that you did not know that feminism was this.

Deniz points out to the difficulties awaiting a newcomer and stated that newcomers would have trouble due to unfamiliarity with some concepts previously discussed in Amargi:

> The internal discussions and the language we are using are tiring. The newcomer needs motivation to partake in these discussions and to organize in Amargi. Lots of effort is needed to endure the long meetings one does not understand in the beginning. It does not really matter from which identity she is. She would stay if she is motivated. Amargi becomes the group that is assertive in the discussions. They do dominate the group's discussions by being active.

Another volunteer, Ezgi, adds that:

> The newcomer needs time to learn and grasp the politics. She experiences knowledge hierarchy even if it is not exercised. This is not a critique but a fact. Some concepts are previously agreed upon and she would not be familiar with them in the beginning.

Cavidan touches on another issue related to the political stand of the newcomer. She draws attention to the common political approach as a condition in front of a newcomer, which she approaches tolerantly:

> Are we going to say "yes" immediately? As a women's group, of course, we cannot show a reflex we can show to a man toward a woman. If she came to Amargi, there must be something. It will show itself with time. There is a common manifesto, and also we talk about this among ourselves, that she should not be racist or militarist. Such a woman would leave Amargi by herself afer a short while. Yet, I also find it terribly wrong saying: "You are a militarist, you are a fascist, go away!" Just the opposite, we should stop her from leaving. Let her stay to transform; otherwise, how are we going to do it? She came for transforming herself.

Aylin adds that the expressions of a militarist woman defending violence in an Amargi meeting could be problematic, but members would discuss both points of

view without excluding and otherisation. Others, Merve and Ezgi, stress another difficulty for a potential newcomer, which contrasts with the manifesto welcoming "the oppressed woman out there":

> Any woman can join, but she will have problems in the beginning. She needs a strong will to clash. Groups that are active, bring their own agenda into the discussions. The newcomer has to deal with the activeness of the existing groups to get her issues onto the agenda, too.

In contrast, Ayla states that she disagrees with the opinion that any woman could join Amargi.[88] She believes that only women of certain classes and certain education were present in Amargi. She adds that she does not mean economic class, but sociocultural classes. Wearing a headscarf would also prevent it, and it did not succeed, despite some earlier efforts in the neighborhoods inviting housewives from the Kurdish and Gypsy ghettos, Tarlabaşı and the lower-middle class neighborhood, Fındıkzade.[89] She notes that in the beginning she had problems with LGBT individuals using another language. The academics also used similar terminology not easily understood by new members.

Amargi declared many times that the group was open to all women. However, it is difficult to claim that all identity groups were represented. I asked why the identities of women in Amargi did not reflect all differences one can find in Turkey. The explanations varied as put below:

Yeliz, who is a more recent member compared to others, offers the following:

> Women with headscarves and women of diverse ethnical backgrounds have not joined during the time I was here; nevertheless, Amargi continued to be an organization producing politics on these issues as well. Even though we do not organize together, we have created common activities and politics. Some component of the covered women and Kurdish women choose their own

[88]Perhaps her opinion partly was related to the fact that at the time she joined, the new members were people who entered Amargi as a bookshop and therefore they were clients.

[89]In 2005, Amargi's office was moved to a less central neighborhood, Fındıkzade, in order not to remain in the city center where most of the women could not go by themselves. Leaflets were distributed to the doors for women to come and meet with Amargi. However, this did not work out and the office was moved again.

> independent organizations instead of joining the feminist movement in general. This may be due to the priority of their problems stemming from their own identities rather than feminism or also they may have the feeling that they may not be represented enough in Amargi.

Similarly, another interviewee, Aylin states that there is no such ignorance or rejection toward any identity that she can think of. However, religious women, older women and disabled women did not join Amargi to be represented as a group. Selin holds that:

> The women of Amargi are much more open to differences compared to people in other organizations in Turkey, especially if you are an individual suffering discrimination due to being LGBT, Kurdish, Armenian, etc. I think that you will be treated with warmth in Amargi. But if you come from the upper-middle class, I witnessed problems in finding a place in Amargi. I believe that there are serious prejudices. I cannot imagine a religious woman existing in Amargi since I have not met such an example, yet.

The failure in organizing with women with headscarves is obvious. However, the same situation applies to other feminist groups, largely due to the strong secularist strand within feminism in Turkey (Arat, 1994). The previous polarization in the society between religious and non-religious women was reflected in the religious women's distrust toward secular feminists as well. Hence, they did not show interest in participating in the group.

5.6.1. Profile Change Amargi Women over Time and Groupings

In the early years, the majority of the activists were teachers and Kurdish women from the middle or lower-middle classes. There also used to be middle-aged, covered Kurdish women coming to Amargi to listen to the seminars, although they did not join Amargi as members. Their children attended the English classes taught by the members. At present, the activist body consists of mostly young academics from the upper-middle class.

Volunteers interviewed agree that there were more women from diverse backgrounds together in the first years. For example, according to Selin:

> Previously, women from various ethnic, economic and education backgrounds as well as various sexual orientations found a place and organized together. Currently, the profile is Turkish, middle class, university

> educated, even with masters or doctoral degrees. As an example of multiple identities, LBT women are present. Of course there are also high school graduates and women from poorer families trying to survive with difficulties. However, current active members usually have ties with academia and receive financial support from their families.

Cavidan comments on what has changed in the following way:

> There are mostly younger people now, those who declare their sexual orientation; it was not like that in the beginning. People could only reveal it after a while; today, they can directly come out with this open identity. There is such a change.

On the impacts of the change in the profile of membership, Yeliz, who joined after this transformation took place, notes the following:

> Since there are no groupings of identities, I did not observe any change of identities. There were women who discovered their sexual orientation as lesbians in Amargi, but this did not result in any grouping. These women who came out as lesbians later did not form groupings. I used to call myself a lesbian feminist before coming to Amargi. This identity did not make me feel separate from others in Amargi. Most of our politics we do in Amargi can be classified as radical feminist and third wave. The differences in opinions do not create separations.

As explained in the previous chapter, in the later period, the Amargi women consisted of mostly younger academics. Although the invitation to all identities was still there, women coming from other identities such as older and not well-educated could not likely relate to the group of current members and did not consider joining Amargi whereas students and lesbians joined in greater numbers to form groups. However, most of the interviewees state that there was communication among people of different identities within the organization.

Cavidan claims that recently there were small groupings that disturbed her, although she tries to keep it to herself not to go against her friends and Amargi:

> Let me not say anything about this. I feel such a thing about this issue because if I say something it would be bad. Maybe there was not such a thing; it was my illusion because I was also not very much inside. But there was something that way and it is a bad thing. I am just making it up. In Amargi, me, you, Merve we are intimate, everyone knows, let's say Pınar and such and such, it is not nice, is it? In fact, all of us, do you undertand, what I

> mean? Recently, it was going toward such a situation. It is also our fault that we were not there, the ones who joined Amargi first. I do not know, because they met more frequently, they were there more often. We got left behind; we got old, I guess.

However, Yeliz disagrees with this observation by stating that:

> Even though there are women from different identities, there are no groupings according to differences. Amargi is a place where everyone can communicate with everyone else. I had no prejudices toward different identities, so I had not experienced such a change but Amargi is an organization where I could practice my belief in living in diversity.

Another volunteer, Selin, perceives that there were groupings:

> I think that the women who join socialize among themselves at the moment. We experience interaction and theoretical discussions with women from different groups since we discuss everything together but is there friendship with women from other groups? I cannot say "yes" comfortably. Especially, lesbian women can be friends with each other more easily. I, as an academic myself, get along with academics easier for example…There are some women that I had problems, not due to their identity, but differences in attitude. Some of these were solved, yet it still goes on with some women due to lack of confidence.

Selin also is of the opinion that the new Amargi women who joined after the bookshop opened were more active during the recent financial crisis and the longterm members did not show enough effort to help them in this process.

The Amargi volunteers interviewed differ in opinion on this issue. Some commented on the basis of the manifesto and objectives and some explained their observations and experiences depending on how critical they were toward the relations in Amargi.

5.6.2. The Goal of Personal Transformations and Interpersonal Conflicts

Amargi women had to question themselves when they encountered an oppression which was previously not familiar to them. Encounters, such as that of a graduate student meeting a sex worker or a transsexual man as in the case of Selin, helped them to overcome the internalized prejudices toward some identities and alleviate their ignorance about injustices present in the society. Amargi admitted clearly that the oppression of women by other women was also a fact and worked to eradicate it,

starting from inside the group. Amargi women tried to accommodate different identities in the same organization with the implementation of the following goal: overcoming the internalized prejudices of a racist, nationalist, violent, homophobic, transphobic, classist, etc. sort, i.e. different faces of patriarchy. Therefore, they not only aimed at changing the larger society, but they also aimed at transforming the group itself. The volunteers were involved in a struggle against their conditioning stemming from their experiences of living in a patriarchal society. Aylin notes that the nationalism and homophobia are two important issues they had problems in the discourses or the newcomers. The group continues to try to discuss these matters without turning their backs on these women, usually with success in changing their minds. The aims of the ITEP (İstanbul Social Ecology Platform) coalition with organizations working in various realms were expressed as follows:

> To speak about the societal transformation we encounter first of all by surfacing the internalized situations of the forms of power relations in ourselves; to cross the borders of the discourses of freedom we developed based on our own oppressions; to be transformed while conflicting; not to resemble each other while showing solidarity; to create a perspective of freedom which deepens by means of understanding all experiences in all societal conflicts.[90]

However, despite this overarching goal of personal transformations, interpersonal conflicts also surfaced over time. For instance, Cavidan, the male-to-female transsexual of Amargi answered that she had a problem with the once female-to-male transsexual and now the queer, intersexual volunteer:

> One day, I was very angry at Rüzgar (the intersexual, queer person), and I told him that he was a man. That day, he painted the fingernails of one of his hands, and left the others natural, meaning, I am both man and woman. I told him, 'you make one feel very bad saying 'don't do this, do that'; it is very virile and you are doing that'. He said 'I am queer,' etc. those people produce another type of masculinity, very bad… And what is bad is that you cannot make him understand and get convinced. Who is not convinced in life? Men! Do you understand?

[90]İstanbul Toplumsal Ekoloji Platformu, Toplumsal Barışı Tartışıyoruz Bülteni. The bulletin of the Istanbul Social Ecology Platform about Societal Peace.

Here, either the transsexuality, regarded as inferior to being queer or intersexual made Cavidan upset or it also can be her transphobia similar to her confessed homophobia which made her get angry easily towards that identity. The contemporary queer approach regards concrete sexual identities as frozen identities and criticizes them.

Selin admits her prejudices towards Cemgül:

> I did not know about the concept of a transsexual man before coming to Amargi. When Cemgül told me that he is transsexual man I could not get it for a while, wondering how is this possible. I guess I thought only men would want to become women, I mean I accepted the trans-womanhood in my mind but never thought the opposite was also possible. My first transsexual friend was Cavidan but what was important was not her being transsexual, she was my friend for being Cavidan. Therefore my friendship with her did not make me question the transsexual existence. It developed differently with Cemgül, as he was not a close friend of mine. Our relationship was about his being transsexual and the discriminations he experienced due to this. I questioned this kind of being after that.

Feride states that the dominance of Kurdish women in the beginning made her feel bad about being Turkish. Her suggestions or critiques were taken as racist statements. Another teacher, Merve had similar problems. She started to feel like a Kurdish woman after the discussions on this subject, but it was reminded to her that she was not Kurdish, in an exclusionary way.

According to those participants who were involved in the first years, Merve and Feride, there was a big clique in the beginning; those Kurdish women who knew each other previously in the Kurdish political circles formed a more intimate and big group to the point that Amargi was known as a Kurdish women's group. According to Feride, even when the majority of the women were Kurdish, there was place open for non-Kurds as well. Nevertheless, she had some trouble when her ethnicity, Turkishness was used as the source of her ideas, causing some polemic. She wrote about that in the Amargi bulletin - published monthly throughout the year -and tried to discuss this issue but could not get enough attention.

Merve and Feride felt intimidated due to belonging to a hegemonic identity. The transsexual, lesbian and bisexual women did not experience this feeling as much as heterosexual non-Kurdish women did due to their specific subordination. The non-Kurdish women could not speak about Kurdish issues easily. When they did, it was interpreted as nationalism, racism and Kemalism as in the case of Feride:

> When I speculated about the myth of Newroz, which has a symbolic importance in the Kurdish culture, I said that it existed in all cultures across Asia and could, in fact, be a tradition of matriarchy, welcoming the spring. I received reactions as if being a Turkish nationalist – is it Turkish-Kurdish? I believe it is matriarchy tradition in many cultures. As a feminist, it was correct to make it a women's tradition. It caused a huge reaction and I felt that I was not trusted.

Merve felt isolated for not being Kurdish and not trusted as a person who did not suffer from racism. She felt isolation and guilt, as well as a need to apologize for them. Additionally, my critique of the design of the Peace Table campaign was regarded irrelevant and some Kurdish women hinted that my reaction was due to disguised Kemalism. Later, Müjgan, a journalist member offered that campaign admitted that it was not explained well and could not be understood by the feminists and by the public in general.[91]

Ayla faced this feeling in the context of LGBT issues. She states that nobody who was not transsexual could talk about that subject. When she joined, she could not adapt to the language used by the LGBT members and was accused of being easily homophobic.

According to Selin, there is unspoken exclusion of women with hegemonic identities, especially from discussions about the problems of oppressed identities. During the discussions before the referendum about changes in the constitution, there were different opinions. The liberals voting in the referendum for the changes felt that their opinions were not shared by most of the women closer to anarchist or leftwing

[91]We could not explain the Peace Table bianet: http://wwww.bianet.org/bianet/kadin/26274-kadinlar-baris-masasini-anlatamadi--2 accessed on 03 January 2012.

politics. Selin mentioned that as well. She said that there were moments she felt isolated due to her familiy's class status and her opinions.

Feride experienced hardships due to the lack of discussions about sexuality. Her personal questions about virginity in order to open conversation about these issues caused shock for some Kurdish women. She also mentioned that her marital status, being married to a man, made her feel bad among unmarried women and lesbians,as if she was more part of the system and had a legitimising identity (Castells, 1997). Similarly, Selin, the daughter of a richer family expressed her discomfort as follows:

> I heard that in some cases, my family's well-to-do position was made an object of ridicule, attaching it to me. This disturbed me. A few times, as my opinions were classified as liberal, I felt I could not continue the discussion. This was the only time I felt isolated, rejected. But all these examples don't add up to even 1%; that is, I generally encountered situations, not of rejection and discrimination but those of listening, trying to understand, embracing, greeting, etc. in Amargi. The point I would like to draw attention to is there is sensitivity for some certain differences; however, about some differences (e.g. class, education, age and religion), everyone is thought to be similar and, therefore, these differences are equated, either ignored or carries the potential of becoming "disturbing" differences.

Here, Selin's disappointment about the rejection she experienced can be observed. She also adds that this was very exceptional keeping in mind the total of her experiences. This is a discourse of protection of Amargi that Cavidan also used by not putting the problems she had into words. Selin experienced the isolation directly toward the more wealthy, although class and capitalism are not issues of immediate interest in Amargi. She says that the more disadvantaged a woman is in society the better she would be treated in Amargi. Here the grassroots approach is evident as well as the class conflict, which could not be discussed openly; yet, there is surely a "class consciousness" of the women from the lower income background. This is one of the issues, perhaps the most important among them, that cannot be solved by dealing with the internalized sources of discrimination among women but needs a general change in the economic system. It can be claimed that the economic difference is the most difficult to overcome among women according to interviewee responses.

5.6.3. "Non-violence Training" in the Transformation Process

The European activists of War Resisters International introduced mon-violence training to Turkey. They translated and published a book about this method. These techniques involve games and drama in order to solve and discuss issues without fights. Instead of theoretical discussions that do not involve real feelings but only rhetoric about what is right, in these sessions, the techniques aim to release the internalized prejudices and discriminatory attitudes so that they can be overcome together. The points surfaced are not personalized nor is the person blamed; instead, that person feels safe to share and discuss the issue at hand.

The purpose of training is for participants to form a common understanding of the use of nonviolence. It creates a forum to share ideas about nonviolence, oppression, fears and feelings. It allows people to meet and build solidarity with each other and provides an opportunity to form affinity groups. There are usually two trainers leading the discussion and roleplays. Areas covered in a session include roleplays and exercises in consensus decision making, and conflict resolution.[92]

One of the interviewees, Feride, recalled a session that prompted her to think and realize many issues: "How did you become part of an organized group, what do you think about the women who don't have an organization now?" She remembered her previous feelings and felt bad about being arrogant toward the women without an organization.

She herself conducted non-violence training in Nevşehir for men of higher status, by putting forth the question: "Describe yourself without your profession." It was challenging for men of the status of dean, etc.

Merve also credits non-violence training in the following way:

> These sessions helped me in breaking the shell. I could not speak much before. I gained confidence. I was not able to speak in public, play in the social arena. It was a need, I think, that it breaks the power, the ice. I find it

[92]Practicing Nonviolence http://www.nonviolencetraining.org/Training/nonviolence.htm#practicing accessed on 23 December 2011.

> very positive. We could even discuss social peace between Turks and Kurds in a neighborhood during the ITEP period using this method's principles.

Merve, Feride and Cemgül said that this method helped them to speak in public and discuss. This shows the empowerment of women through this tool. Cemgül puts it as follows:

> I was not used to discussions at home. Here I learned that it was possible, it was fun. I was shy, but the training motivated me. Yet, sometimes, it feels like we are taken for children to play these roles. What disturbed me was that we were copying a previous training session when applying the context to other issues, designing a new one. But it certainly helps in a country where we are told to shut up. It transformed me, but he results about surfacing the internalized discrimination and the effort to deal with it can be of short term if one did not care enough to change. It can come back immediately if you don't care enough about overcoming it.

5.6.4. Analysis of Amargi Volunteers' Emotional States and Collective Identity

Social movement researchers have long ignored the role of emotion in movement participation due to the positivist emphasis on rationality. Emotions were often defined as "women's work" and not a realm to be studied scientifically. Emotions reentered the study of social movements in the late 1980s and the sociology of emotions gained influence. Feminist criticism of a reason-emotion dualism in social movement theory (Marx Ferree 1992; Taylor, 1995) and increasing interest in the construction of collective identity has recently allowed emotions to become an area of study when analyzing collective action. There is a growing body of literature on emotion and collective action to examine their role in feminist activism. There are many aspects of the feminist movement to be studied when emotions are considered. Through an analysis of what the women in this study said about their experiences of feminist involvement and identity, this thesis contributes to an understanding of the emotional dimension of collective action generally and of feminist collective action in particular.

A discourse analysis of the Amargi manifesto written in 2000 is useful in order to grasp the intentions of the founders by forming this groups and what Amargi means for them. There, Amargi is defined as "an academy of freedom in which we learn and

experience life in women's solidarity."[93] There are other definitions for Amargi that involve more emotions. For example, it is perceived as "a tree… it has been growing with women's love, support and understanding of each other" or "Amargi is a journey through which we discover and become stronger." As the emotions and longing for freedom are concepts *sine qua non* of a struggle against oppression, this rhetoric overlaps with the feelings of women who have joined. Such language has had effects on the motivation and collective identity of the volunteers in a positive manner. According to Ayla, for example, Amargi gave her the feeling "if we are together, we can change the world."

Taylor defines collective identity as the shared definition of a group that is derived from members' common interests, experiences, and solidarity (1989). It is constructed, activated, and sustained only through interaction in social movement communities (Taylor, Whittier, 1995). According to Jasper (1998):

> A collective identity is most of all an emotion, a positive affect toward other group members on the grounds of that common membership. Defining oneself through the help of a collective label entails an affective as well as cognitive mapping of the social world. Partly because of this affection, participation in social movements can be pleasurable in itself, independently of the ultimate goals and outcomes. Protest becomes a way of saying something about oneself and one's morals, and of finding joy and pride in them.

Jasper adds that the "strength" of an identity comes from its emotional aspect (1998).

In the interviews conducted for this present study, strong emotions were expressed. Three of the volunteers interviewed were not actively partaking in the group anymore. These women spoke more easily when criticizing when compared to the active members, but they also recalled the good times and the excitement while they were active. Just like the consciousness-raising groups, there were intense emotions such as trust, friendship and solidarity as in the support for Pınar Selek's case,

[93]Kadına Dönüş ve Özgürlük Akademisi http://bianet.org/bianet/kadin/6777-kadina-donus-ve-ozgurluk-akademisi accessed on 26 November 2011.

disappointment for not being to able change what was happening, such as violence against women or war.

In general, women who had left Amargi over the years did so for being very active and becoming exhausted after too much dedication for many years. Being young and still having many issues of personal life to solve ahead of them, such as education and employment, made them at some point put their activism to an end. A woman in Amargi quit her well-paid job to do full-time activism, but she had to find another job in a year's time due to financial problems.[94]

According to Jasper (1997), emotions can help explain not simply the origin and spread of social movements but also their continuation or decline. Some scholars have asked why movements decline when they do or why individuals leave movements when they do. Some emotional states keep people in a movement; others drive them away. Emotions help explain not only continued allegiance but also outcomes such as schisms (Jasper, 1997).

The changing volunteer profile of the group, with younger activists recently, prompted the longtime volunteers like Cavidan to say that, "we became old." The absence of several Kurdish women who were there in the beginning and put time and effort into Amargi made the older volunteers feel some loss about it.

According to Taylor, being a woman in a male-dominated and misogynist society evokes a wide range of feelings (1994: 229). Slogans, such as "No Woman Is Free until All Women Are Free" express anger and remind listeners of their subordination as women (Ferree, 1992).

> Personal ties of love and friendship among members were an important cultural ideal. A willingness to shape personal relationships around the cause was, in large measure, what made possible the intense commitment of members (Taylor, 1989:769).

[94]Seyda Selek's interview.

One of the main motivations bringing women of Amargi together was the injustice to Selek. Amargi members showed solidarity for many years, collected signatures, organized the presence of supporters on the court dates. Volunteers had confidence in her and admiration for her. This fact was one of the main reasons these women joined and stayed in Amargi.

Admiration for Selek's book was the reason for Yeliz:

> I was living in Ankara and knew Amargi was open to lesbians. In 2002, I heard about Pınar Selek, because of her book on transgender women. I knew she was a feminist and open to discussion on sexual identity (…). When I moved to Istanbul, I met Pınar and we became close friends because our political points of view are very similar and her work in the LGBT community and her questions and struggles are very important to me.

One of the weak points of the organization was the devotion to the abstraction of Amargi rather than fellow women. Feride complained that the women in Amargi did not meet outside to spend time together. Some members were workaholics and went home directly after finishing their daily voluntary work instead of spending time as friends. She wanted to do things together such as going out, having a beer, etc. However, especially the political Kurdish women, for example, regarded meeting over a drink as a sign of apoliticality.

The effect of the Amargi impressive manifesto on volunteers was that they felt very devoted to the ideal Amargi represented. They believed strongly that what they were striving for was a very important for the world. The name of the organization having mystical and ancient connotations served to elevate Amargi to a mythological entity, out of this world, ahistorical struggle of the subordinated, and in touch with the past struggles of women in Sumerian civilizations. Amargi's abstract goal was the search for freedom and this was reflected in the name of the first book published by the Amargi Cooperative. The reward for participating in the movement was emotional. Activists felt enthusiasm for the movement and cause, as well as pride in the associated collective identity.

However, the period in which the interviews were conducted was the time when Amargi was closing down the bookshop temporarily due to economic difficulties. This affected the moods of the women interviewed. Motivations in social movements

are based on values and emotions as well as reason and perception and interpretation of costs and rewards changes. These costs are best measured in terms of emotional exhaustion and alienation.

Cavidan's words reflected the reflex of defense for an organization she found important, guilt and responsibility when asked about the success in "being together with our differences":

> Hmm, not exactly. There are missing points. I don't know what is missing now. I should not say something wrong. I think that it is not easy. But compared to other groups I see it more in Amargi; it was accomplished more here. Amargi is more open on this issue. Amargi is like a Yolgeçen hanı, a hospitable place for everyone, but we should not forget it, let's say we have to keep it clean. If we are not there today somebody else will come and join this is nice. Lambda is such a group, too. It is like a school; people come and go. However, we should not leave and forget. I know this from my own experience: I have things coming up these days. I have a show tomorrow and I could not help with the moving process. That is why I am saying this.

Cavidan, Deniz, Ezgi and Selin expressed the sadness they felt for Amargi not being as active as it once was. There were both optimism and pessimism. The early period of Amargi, 2001-2006, contained more diversity and enthusiasm. It was closer to being a grassroots organization due to more Kurdish members. The transversal politics also was more applicable due to more systematic interaction and dialogue between differences.

Cavidan, one of the few women who was among the founders and was still present in Amargi, expressed her sadness about the recent inefficacy:

> Recently, there has been messiness and disorganisaton. Amargi recently has stopped launching political campaigns. This upsets me very much because before Amargi was something important in Turkey.

5.6.5. Hierarchy and Decision Making Mechanisms

Amargi included the principles of anti-hierarchy, horizontal organization and the decision-making method of consensus as defined in the manifesto. The functioning

of the decision mechanisms were identified as the most problematic aspect of transversal politics by Yuval-Davis:

> Transversal politics resists autocratic decision-making mechanisms in which certain individuals take upon themselves to 'represent' their communities. However, it does not offer any alternative mechanism or criterion for decision-making, especially in times and places where the old feminist ideal of consensus politics is unavailable or impractical. (Yuval-Davis, 1999: 98)

As explained in the previous chapter, Selek's presence as a prominent feminist sociologist and author raised discussions about her being the president despite the non-hierarchy. Selek, an intelligent young woman with important ideas and enthusiasm, was crucial during the formation of Amargi. However, Selek's vulnerablity, the continuous threats she received from individuals related to state security and intelligence forces, the dangerous situation vis-à-vis the possible trials prevented, most of the time, volunteers from clashing with her as an authority. There were several times when she was criticized and even found naïve or made fun of – like in financial discussions – whereas in political decisions her suggestions were not questioned much. Her vision and efforts were the roots of Amargi, so it was never thought that she would be the one to leave Amargi upon a possible conflict with other women. The presence of a famous and successful figure made it difficult to achieve the goal of a non-hierarchical organization. In the accounts of women interviewed, it was emphasized that this did not create a major problem. For example, Ayla, who took part in the focus group discussion, stated this opinion in an article. She wrote that she could not believe that it was the well-known Pınar Selek with whom she was engaged in dialogue as equals in an Amargi meeting.[95] However, after the Kurdish members decided to quit, Amargi women conducted a non-violence training session about hierarchy to diagnose and correct potential problems.

According to Aylin, a founder of Amargi in Izmir:

> Hierarchy is related to many things, such as labor or experience. We cannot simply say that there is no hierarchy. It is understood differently depending on

[95]Pınar ya da 'Başka bir Dünya Mümkün' Umudum http://www.pinarselek.com/public/page_item.aspx?id=67 accessed on 02 February 2011.

> the person. As long as we can speak about existing or felt hierarchy, it is not a big problem.

Hazal: "In Amargi, there are many things unique, especially the culture of questioning yourself and relationships and trying to prevent hierarchy and power inequality."

According to Yeliz, "Amargi has an anti-hierarchical structure. Because Amargi's structure is very close to anarchism, I can be a part of it. Anarchism is a very important issue in my life."

> Transversal politics might simultaneously prioritize different political projects from different standpoints. This is not important if both struggles can take place at the same time with mutual support. However, if there are only limited human and financial resources available and there is a need to choose only one of these struggles at any one time, there is no built-in transversal way of deciding whichone to choose. This was one of the main reasons that a transversal organisation like Women against Fundamentalism could at a certain point become paralyzed. (Yuval-Davis, 1999: 98)

In Amargi, women chose their own areas of interest; therefore, this issue choice among priorities was not a serious issue. Women were not forced to work together with others on a subject selected by others. Hilal comments on the issue of work area as follows:

> In Amargi I saw women literally coming about projects for themselves. All women have different concerns. Some want to work with Kurdish people; some want to address homophobia; some want to develop art-performance.

When it was about campaigns, the groupings that were more assertive could force their point of view to decide about the priority, as put by Merve in the focus group interview:

> Whichever grouping becomes dominant, the politics of that identity grows. Every woman sort of becomes that, like Kurdishness or lesbianism. We are open for transformation but as Ayla said, whoever is strong creates the agenda. It is to the point that everyone sort of becomes of that identity, e.g. lesbian, Kurdish. But some of those, we cannot be. We cannot become everything. We can remain ourselves and focus on nonviolence without having to resemble each other. There are identities we cannot become.

5.6.6. Problems Identified in Amargi by Volunteers

The focus group was where most of the complaints about the organization surfaced. Some women cited the following issues: common ground was missing recently; there was lack of new discussions as well as no experience and information transfer to newcomers; forming of groupings; and conducting diversity feminism instead of transversal politics. Suzi states that:

> A particular agenda could not be raised. Capitalism was not discussed enough. Antimilitarism had not been on our agenda for a long while. We easily say, we have already dealt with this. New and complicated cases appeared on issues such as nationalism. We needed to revisit these topics on occasions, such as the recent nationalist shooting in Norway; we did not analyze it. We assume having discussed while creating principles. Passing common principles and viewpoints of the group to newcomers was also not done sufficiently. I think that there is no regular experience transfer to the newcomers. Some women people force their personality as diversity. I object to this attitude. Static groups exist, some members are mobilized visiting several; I am among them.

According to Feride, in the first years, women would not defend themselves automatically, but listen and note the critiques, and try to correct those. There was also time for self-critique e.g. for not doing what they promised they would that week or for the attitude during a discussion, etc. in the weekly meetings. This practice disappeared after some time when the critique started to cause some tension. One of the principles mentioned in the Amargi manifesto was broken in practice. In the mean time, the conversations of a political sort were replaced with more everyday talks. These changes weakened the promises given when Amargi was first established and the search for freedom with seriousness.

Amargi's volunteer profile could at times be so diverse that women of more traditional feminist politics sometimes accused Amargi of being a platform instead of a real group in conservative terms. According to them, this degree of diversity contained a potential for disorganization and lack of common political ground. In Turkey, people are accustomed to homogenization in a political struggle.

Deniz underlined the importance of a common ground:

> How common ground is established determines how diversity is constructed. Justice and fairness also are important. We need to construct this common ground. You cannot discuss with people without common ground. The diversity issue is too dominant; when it is not deepened, it is dangerous as only a screen for the outside. We cannot put a newcomer with someone of ten years of experience in Amargi as equals. Blind equality is also not right.

"The common ground of shared principles through the commitment of upholding core values established amongst" (Arendt, 1968: 220) individuals from different identities was recently shaken. Deniz claimed that focusing excessively on diversity, these goals, which were present in the beginning as described in the manifesto, were overshadowed and these needed to be revisited for a stronger political organization.

According to Ayla, the "mosaic" metaphor used for the coexistence of differences was not a positive one. In this manner, differences did not touch each other and always stayed apart, whatever their positions were. Instead, there should be flow between different colors.[96]

Ayla adds:

> The metaphor of mosaic prevents touching each other. A flow is needed. I cannot talk about being transsexual, Kurdish, and I find this problematic. This cannot transform. Our feminism should be beyond identity politics.

Ayla criticizes the implementation of diversity:

> Change is not transcedence or a mosaic. Close relations with other groups can be a show off. I, personally conflict with all. That helps really standing together. Every discussion has a history. It is an illusion when a historical perspective is missing. A method is missing. There are many differences, and it is difficult to choose one method. Our search for this is strong. We force each other a lot. Yet, transcendence is simply not possible.

Ayla was the most sceptical among women in the focus group. She also did not experience the enthusiasm of the previous members as a recent member. According

[96]Ebru Project http://www.ebruproject.com/TR/index.asp The analogy of a mosaic for Anatolia with various cultures was criticized in the same manner by this book, suggesting the art of ebru to replace it.

to Ayla, the space of the bookshop changed the relations inside. Many people passed by, such as LGBT activists from Lambdastanbul, indicating Lambda and Amargi are very close:

> But it is not true, not everybody has good relations with LGBT people. This can prevent a real encounter. The professional worker can have more contact but not other members. We really are closer compared to other feminist groups, but the space has a negative impact on this. Also the conscientious objectors, groups for peace having meetings in the cafe is positive for others, but not for members of Amargi.

Ayla also criticized this as "people forcing their irresponsible personality as their specificity/difference":

> That experience is different and special, so is the other. I am different and it is over. I am not a transsexual and therefore cannot speak about transsexual experience. I find it problematic that the experience, the difference itself is the issue, and the essence of the issue. It is not real politics. We should be able create a feminism diversity discourse beyond identity politics, in touch with differences.

The respect they expected for their disadvantaged identity was sometimes used as a cover for their personality's weaker sides, causing problems in the organization that became "untouchable." Here Ayla criticized diversity feminism and defended transversal politics. As Brah (1991) notes, 'the specificity of a particular experience' may be expression of essentialism causing the person to become untouchable by others, thus preventing criticisms and dialogue. Feride says that this sort of defensiveness conflicted with the first years' critique/self-critique habit as the last agenda of the weekly meetings. Ayla also notes that there were serious political differences among various feminisms present inside Amargi. The issue of diversity sometimes overshadowed the common political perspective. Amargi consisted of women of anarchist, socialist, and liberal democrat views. The discussions during the referandum in 2010 demonstrated that the ideologies of Amargi women beside feminism differed. Nevertheless, there was no one with right-wing, militarist or statist tendencies.

The definition of diversity that Ayla defends fits transversal politics, the original perspective Amargi aimed to realize. In the first years, in spite of the dominance of Kurdish women, problematizing mainly militarism, women and militarism, heterosexism was also high on the Amargi's agenda. Upon internal problems such as personal conflicts, small number of volunteers taking responsibility, etc., Amargi women held a meeting about these issues on the 7 January 2012. They identified some of the issues paving the way to a weaker Amargi and harsh discussions among members.[97]

- We don't feel as subjects due to lack of familiarity with the past conflicts and due to inability to comment like a child caught between a parents' discussion.
- The network of relations among us makes up Amargi. Some have it more strongly and some have it looser.
- The agenda of critique and self-critique is almost non-existent compared to the initial years; thus, we have doubts about the value we attach to each other and efforts we make. In case of conflicts, we move away instead of staying and discussing the problems. This way, the causes of conflicts are not identified due to such ignorance. Hence, only people who are engaged in the conflict change but the structural problems remain. The moments of crisis, in fact, constitute opportunities for a transformation due to being chaotic. Continuation without solving issues prevents transformation.
- We have to remember our aspirations for joining Amargi and revise our responsibilities. It is not only about following e-mails.
- We talk about peace but we cannot establish it among ourselves. Conflicts can take place but lack of trust among people is a big problem. There is a legacy and foundation for that, but we have to be determined to realize it.
- Taking initiative leads to criticism, but it is required, too. Accountability should be there.
- The building of relations with newcomers is an urgent issue wating to be solved.

[97] Listed in an e-mail to Amargi mailing list.

Such criticism about internal dynamics demonstrates at the same time the existence of the capability and will to identify the problems and to overcome them. Amargi women are still devoted to the collective identity of Amargi and look forward to a stronger organization with less personal and structural problems as in the case of the earlier Amargi.

To summarize, Amargi started with much enthusiasm and a wide range of goals to realize. The earlier years contributed greatly to the personalities of the volunteers by organizing in this group and they also devoted much effort to Amargi. However, some ruptures in the group caused compromises on the initial goals. The priority of knowledge and literary creation became dominant after 2006. The perspective of antimilitarism was maintained but not acted upon as much as it had been done previously. The collective identity and common political perspective also became blurred in recent years. Carrying out funded projects and running a bookshop distracted Amargi women. The financial problems created pessimism and a few volunteers worked hard to overcome this. Furthermore, as a volunteer, having to be present for a whole day in Amargi each week for years also became exhausting. Nevertheless, it was observed that volunteers kept on thinking about how to create a better group with less problems and with more initiative, such as better interventions in the agenda concerning feminist women.

CHAPTER 6

6. CONCLUSION

The approach concerning feminist organizing that Amargi aimed to accomplish was constructing unities across differences without disavowing those differences and without positing unities as natural. This required remaining conscious of the dangers of essentializing, naturalizing and homogenizing. The difference between identity politics and diversity feminism can be explained as the former solidifying an identity and the latter attempting to solve problems of diverse individuals by listening to their experiences and adopting feminism into what these problems' solutions require. For accomplishing these aims, first of all Amargi provided an open and non-violent environment for women to discuss their identity-related issues without denouncing them for the sake of wider feminist aims. The inclusiveness of the organization permitted women to engage in both "rooting" and "shifting" - the concepts of transversal politics: by rooting it was meant that one did not have to dispossess their identities or give up the politics upon them, the roots were respected. The term shifting corresponded to the fact that they were given the opportunity to shift their opinions about other women of different identities, also transforming or leaving prejudices aside. Amargi offered women the opportunity to explain their points of view to other women. Thus, volunteers in Amargi could learn about other types of oppression and this could constitute women's solidarity against various axes of patriarchy. This mutual transformation process allowed for the construction of a more expansive view of the society, drawing upon the knowledge each woman brought to this pool. The identification of the groups, benefiting from the perpetuation of power structures, based on the analysis of such feminist knowledge, was also important for a clear and broad feminist perspective.

The differences among women who joined and conducted politics together were not

as tremendous as it may have seemed from a distance. Even though some were believed to be impossible to reconcile, the gaps dividing different women were actually not as sharp as in their minds. When they communicated without prejudices in Amargi, they could acknowledge many common experiences as women and came to understand the points of view and experiences of women of other identities.

This mechanism worked for Kurdish women and LBT women in the earlier years of Amargi very effectively. Turkish and Kurdish women worked in the same group and transformed each other's views. Women belonging to these two groups joined Amargi in the early years with enthusiasm. Recently, young academicians and young LBT women join Amargi more. Heterosexism was questioned by both groups due to lesbian/bisexual women's dedication of bringing it to Amargi's agenda. Feminist antimilitarism was also very dominant and Amargi disseminated pro-peace activism in the following years among other feminist groups as well.

However, some issues such as capitalism, disability and human-centrism (ecology) could not be discussed sufficiently, since women interested in these matters could not form an eager grouping to bring it into Amargi's agenda. The main issues that appeared to be missing in the focus group interview were that capitalism and class differences were not taken up sufficiently. The reason for that could be the impossibility of solving this issue by eliminating prejudices among women. It required a change in the economic system to close the gaps among women. The emergence of the group Socialist Feminist Collective in 2008 could be said to be an example of how to bridge this particular gap, as the founders of this new group filled the gap in this realm instead of joining Amargi. They prioritized the economic problems unlike Amargi and aimed to offer solutions by forcing the state to change economic policy toward problems of women. In Amargi, the class differences were indeed ignored, surfacing sometimes as in the case of Selin in an unhealthy manner as gossip and unspoken exclusion.

One of the reasons for the lack of discussions on some subjects was that nobody

brought it to the group's agenda. As women were regarded as individuals with their own will, instead of victims, it had been expected from them to raise these issues. This mechanism of empowerment worked at its best for lesbians who returned to mixed-gender LGBT groups with confidence in the first years. There were some ruptures with Kurdish and lesbian women causing a loss for Amargi. Nevertheless, these women spent years in Amargi and they would surely be sensitive to diversity issues as well as discrimination in their current identity groups. Thus, in a way they became agents of Amargi's perspective on various issues in the wider society.

Amargi's political aspirations and outcomes can be evaluated as follows:

On the antimilitarist and pro-peace issues, it took an explicit position, that of being against violence and war for ten years. The transversal politics that Amargi conducted was effective, especially in the early period among Kurdish and Turkish women. They could meet, be friends and exchange views both as members of Amargi and by means of the activities and campaigns aimed at this encounter. The partial aspects of the truth about war were shared to construct a wider perspective of the conflict, therefore permitting a possibility for peace created by women holding various views.

The rupture involving Kurdish women in Amargi as a group showed the impact of decisions from the armed parties to incite violence on the women trying to reconcile with women of the other side. Talks of transversal politics could not go further when "weapons started to talk" again and the unarmed parties were silenced. The possibility of joint activism became stuck at this point due to militarism of both sides. There may be additional problems due to Amargi's internal problems, but the point mentioned above could be identified as the main reason for their resignation.
The struggle against homophobia and heterosexism was also a persistent one, particularly since members could not fully overcome prejudices. However, especially the target of transforming other feminist groups' views on this issue was successful to a significant degree.

The recognition of differences was the prerequisite before becoming involved in a common political struggle together. A mutual trust among women was sought that did not exist automatically for women with subordinated identities in the society. On the contrary, minorities do not like each other in general. After establishing confidence and following many discussions, Amargi's utopia was "genuine freedom," free from all power relations.

In analyzing the manifesto, activities, and interviews, it can be concluded that the approach Amargi adopted was transversal politics rather than diversity feminism because dialogue was crucial among individuals belonging to the different identities. This was regarded as the only method of overcoming prejudices and ending discrimination. The coexistence of different identity groups with their problems being addressed was the formula of Amargi women. However, there was a common aim for all of these women: freedom. Amargi women believed in a continuous struggle to achieve more freedom. It required leaving prejudices behind.

The situated knowledge of each group was assembled together into a wider perspective. The aspects familiar only to certain women revealed a partial view, uncovering the mechanisms of power relations affecting them. For Amargi, to access the sum of knowledge containing most of the spectrum of the societal mesh of power structures, the experiences of women subject to various problems related to identity were needed as input. It was also recognized that a group having a single shared opinion was against the principles of transversal politics and individuals in a group had to be listened to.[98] Their subjectivity needed to be respected.

The challenges Amargi women faced during this quest were mainly due to the privileging of ethnic and sexual orientation identities more than the common feminist goals among members. At these times, women having problems left and continued

[98] Merkeziyetçi Politikalara Karşı Feminist Bakış ve 'Çapraz Siyasetler' http://www.kaosgl.com/sayfa.php?id=6363 accessed on 11.1.2012

with the mixed-gender identity groups they belonged to before. These outcomes could be classified as losing faith in following transversal politics with other women and taking refuge in their preferred organizations defending their identity, withdrawing from the original claims due to the disappointments. Consumption also was one of the reasons for the depature of these members who were very active in Amargi for years.

The initiative and hardwork of Selek constituted a significant part of Amargi. Her departure from the country in 2009 caused demotivation. However, women continued with the discussions, activities, and running of the bookshop, etc. The first years witnessed a great enthusiasm. Amargi had an immense meaning for the volunteers. The most active members in the first years either studied at universities but did not attend their classes in order to be more active in Amargi or were unemployed. Such devotion could not be endured and some women felt naturally exhausted.

In this thesis, Amargi, as a place where any woman was supposed to be free to express her difference, is put under inspection for an evaluation in this respect. The reasons underlying this conviction as well as the successes and failures in accomplishing this aim are investigated. As such, the goals and the challenges in this track were analyzed based on interviews with volunteers. Interview data were used to reveal Amargi women's objectives and achievements on the issue of diversity. Amargi women were aware of the prejudices that made it difficult to unite. However, this very difficulty was the main reason for coming together, thus creating its small yet healthy and democratic community to foment change in society. It differed from second wave feminism in this difference accent. It did not call women to just join and solely be part of the group but also to change the group by joining and recounting about their own circumstances, transforming the members and also being transformed by them through conflicts without violence in the process.

It can be concluded that Amargi has been an important experience for diversity feminism and transversal politics in Turkey. Amargi can be labeled as a pioneer in

this context when compared with other groups, part of the women's movement or feminist movement organized with predominantly similar women, such as women with similarity in political beliefs. Other groups and some feminists did not well comprehend the significance of this heterogenous environment in the beginning. Non-Kurds labeled Amargi as a Kurdish group and it was also regarded as a lesbian group by Kurdish women, interchangibly depending on the period, which group was more dominant and visable. Various identities existed together during these ten years; however, women of certain identities were not present in Amargi. There were different opinions about the reasons for that. They were either not ready to organize in a diverse group other than in their own closed group or the approaches by Amargi volunteers caused them to stay away. Due to the prevailing division in the larger society, when people encounter different individuals in a new environment, they tend to leave. The recent profile of younger, middle-class members also likely drove away some women.

Amargi lost one of its strong groupings in 2006. Those women who remained started the quarterly *Amargi Feminist Theory and Politics Review* as well as the Amargi Feminist Bookshop. These two new initiatives changed the profile of women who were interested in joining Amargi. Recently, younger women who have studied social sciences and who are interested in becoming involved in activism found Amargi interesting and joined. LGBT, queer, academic women constituted Amargi's new image. This was due to the open-mindedness on gender issues. Another reason was that the *Amargi Feminist Review* and its board consisting, of mostly feminist academics, are committed to activism; therefore, their students, and even one's daughter, joined the group recently along with young feminist LBT women. Amargi's openness during this time was an appealing factor that prompted new members to join.

Çaha attaches crucial importance to achieving a feminist organizing model that integrates diversity among women stemming from envisioned public and political space attached to it. In a political sphere of authoritarian essence in Turkey, also

having patriarchal quality, an aspiration toward unity in diversity among women constituted a powerful intervention in that political cosmos (2006).

Despite the flaws in some issues and failure in the inclusion of religious women as members, as analyzed in the preceding chapter, it can be contended that the case of Amargi sheds light on a case of feminist formation capable of offering a new model of engaging with identity matters. This group contributed to the extension of feminism in Turkey, to include the antimilitarist struggle and a permanent stand against heterosexism. Furthermore, feminism was accepted more widely in the LGBT organizations, as well as among some religious women's circles, thanks to the support and critique of these groups by Amargi women.

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Interview with Feride on 17 August 2011 - Feride's house, Ankara.
Interview with Selin on 9 October 2011 by e-mail.

Interview with Yeliz on 13 July 2011 by e-mail.

Interview with Aylin on 2 September 2011 by e-mail.

Interview with Seyda Selek, by the Oral History Group in Amargi (2010). Thanks for the permission of Gamze Toksoy, Esen Özdemir, Özge Altın and Suna Yılmaz.

APPENDICES

A. INTERVIEWS

Table 2: Identities in the Focus Group:

Name	Profession	Sexual Id/Orn	Ethnical	Political	Age
Cemgül	Trade	FTM Trans	Turkish		39
Ezgi	Engineer	Heterosexual	Hemşin		34
Ayla	Academician	Heterosexual	Turkish/Alevi		29
Deniz	Engineer	Heterosexual	Turkish		30
Merve	Teacher	Heterosexual	Turkish/Greek	Anarchist	37

Table 3: Identities of the In-person Interviewees:

Name	Profession	Sexual Id/Orn	Ethnical	Political	Age
Feride	Teacher	Heterosexual	Turkish	Socialist	49
Cavidan	Actor/Standup	Trans-, Heterosexual	Kurdish	Kurdish	38

Table 4: Identities of the E-mail Interviewees:

Name	Profession	Sexual Id/Orn	Ethnical	Political	Age
Yeliz	Lawyer	Lesbian	Turkish	Anarchist	37
Aylin	Sociologist	Queer	Hemşin		27
Selin	Engineer/Academician	Heterosexual	Turkish	Liberal	32

APPENDIX

B. SELECT AMARGI PUBLICATIONS

Seeking Freedom, edited Amargi seminars given by prominent feminist activists in 2002

Consulting Centers and Women's Shelters

Violence against Women

I Am not Free, edited letters collected during the Konya campaign

When Women Start to Speak: Kadınlar Dile Gelince

Unfair Provocation[99] and several other literary books by women close to Amargi

Istanbul Amargi Feminist Discussions 2011

[99] http://bianet.org/biamag/kadin/117544-bir-kadin-manifestosu-haksiz-tahrik accessed on 23 December 2011.

APPENDIX

C. OTHER ACTIVITIES BY AMARGI

Meetings across borders in the bookshop: Inviting foreign women to speak in Amargi in order to provide communication on feminisms, problems, and campaigns in other countries. The women who took part were mostly Selek's supporters and mostly not from the West but from the Middle East, including Iran. This activity can be interpreted as an experience of international feminism and transversal politics.

Feminist discussions: articles, discussions about the type of feminism adopted among the volunteers. These discussions were very important for the members of the group. Most of the work done in the later Amargi years was for women outside in the space for the bookshop. In 2011, the book, *İstanbul Amargi Feminist Tartışmaları 2011*, containing the transcription of these discussions was printed.

The Platform against Sexual Violence was established in 2009 and conducted successful campaigns.

The financial situation of the bookshop and the café could not be sustained and they were closed in Summer 2011, following the decision made at the Summer Camp 2010. The concerns about the financial outlook of the organization had started to occupy the agenda.

In December 2011, the legal body was changed from being a cooperative to an association under the name Women's Academia Association, in short Amargi. Also a new place was rented on the İstiklal Street, at a very central spot. This may help Amargi in its future activities for reaching more women.

APPENDIX

D. TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü	☐
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü	X
Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü	☐
Enformatik Enstitüsü	☐
Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü	☐

YAZARIN

Soyadı : Özakın
Adı : Ayşe Ülkü
Bölümü : Kadın Çalışmaları

TEZİN ADI : Accomodating diversity within feminism in Turkey: The Amargi Women's Cooperative, 2001-2011

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans [X] Doktora [ ]

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.	X
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.	☐
3. Tezimden bir bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.	☐

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ: