



universität
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DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

“Knitting for EmPOWERment? –

The challenge of power relations through the
organization of women homeworkers in Turkey”

Verfasserin

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angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra (Mag.)

Wien, 2012

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt: A 057 390

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt: Internationale Entwicklung

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I dedicate this thesis to the women homeworkers of Tuzluçayır

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Acknowledgements

Danke

An meine Mama, die mich jeden Tag mit ihrer Liebe, ihrer Unterstützung und ihrer 'positiven Energie' aufbaut und meinen Glauben an mich selbst bestärkt

An meine Familie, ohne deren Unterstützung ich mein Studium nie geschafft hätte

An Laura, mit der mich viel mehr als nur die Faszination für die Türkei verbindet

An Familie Resmerk, Clelia, Camilo, Nico, Astrid und Veronica für den vielen Kaffee, die ver- und entwirrenden Gespräche und eure FreundInnenschaft

An Julia, ohne deren Gedult und Hingabe ich die Fertigstellung dieser Arbeit wohl nicht geschafft hätte

An meine Diplomandinnen-Selbsthilfegruppe Marjan, Nura und Anna für das Teilen von Schmerz, Wut und Hoffnung

An Magda, Lucie, Marlene und Birgit für das gemeinsame Reflektieren, Zuhören und Kämpfen, das mich persönlich 'emPOWERt' hat

An Stefanie Kron, die diese Diplomarbeit wissenschaftlich unterstützte und mich mit ihrer positiven Art immer wieder zum Weitermachen ermutigte

Thank you

To Wojtek for the time together in Turkey and for always finding the right words

To Ayça Kurtoğlu and Yıldız Evecit for influencing and changing my theoretical perspective in their classes which I have truly benefited from

Kozadan İpeğe Kooperatifinde çalışan kadınlara bana olan güvenleri ve bana ayırdıkları değerli zamanları için

Devrim ve Figen'e arkadaşlıkları ve birlikte geçirdiğimiz zaman için

Ankara'daki arkadaşlarım Merve, Demet, Batu, Leyla, Alper ve Yalçın'a ve Viyana'daki Tandem grubum Pınar, Batu ve Açelya'ya ceviri yardımları için

Teşekkür ederim

Yalnız değiliz–Birlikte daha güçlüyüz

1. Introduction

“Weaving our Union, Knot by Knot” (Ev-Ek-Sen 2010)

In the context of the rise of neoliberalism, the flexibilization and financialization of the global political economy, companies in the North and the South have increasingly made use of homework, a form of production at home in which predominantly women are involved. Women homeworkers do not only knit cloths and dowry, which they sell for very low money, they are also involved in 'knitting' solidarity networks with other women working home-based in the same district, country or even across nation-state borders. Ev-Ek-Sen, the first union of women homeworkers in Turkey also used the symbol of making 'knots' in their declaration to relate to the long struggle of organizing, networking and fighting for their rights as informal women workers. Since 1995 women homeworkers have been organizing in Turkey in order to improve their living and working conditions as women engaged in waged production at home and demand the recognition of their work. Like in other countries, women homeworkers have founded local groups, such as the Ankara-based cooperative Kozadan İpeğe, and a national solidarity network HomeNet Turkey, from which Ev-Ek-Sen evolved. Despite their struggle for over 15 years, their organizing has remained quite invisible in the academic research about homeworkers. This thesis aims to contribute to the literature about women homeworkers and their organizing in Turkey and to increase the visibility of their struggle by analyzing the women homeworkers' movement and their challenge of power relations within the concept of emPOWERment.

1.1. Research question and field of study

Feminist scholars started to deal with the increasing phenomenon of homework in the 1980s and had a share in making women homeworkers' contribution to the household and the capitalist economy more visible (Mies 1982, Allen/Wolkowitz 1987, Beneria/Roldan 1987). In harmony with studies in other countries or on the global level, scholars in Turkey, such as White (1994), Boris/Prügl (1996), Topcuoğlu (2005), Balaban/Sarioğlu (2008) and Dedeoğlu (2010), have also demonstrated the rise of waged production at home as a result of the neoliberal policies. They focused on the interconnection of capitalism and patriarchy, the exploitation of women homeworkers through their work in the informal economy, as rural migrants living in squatter studies and emphasize the significance of gender for the construction of homeworkers as non-working housewives facilitating their exploitation.

Lourdes Beneria and Martha Roldan (1987: 8) already state in their groundbreaking study about homework in Mexico City at the end of the 1980s a “tendency to view women as

passive recipients of change, as victims of forces they do not generate or control.” Picturing women only in regard to capital's interests in pulling them into and out of the labor market disacknowledges their “own resistance and struggles that while clearly subject to significant constraints due to their subordination in society, derive of a strategy of their own.” Writings focusing on the organizing of poor women or particularly of women homeworkers in the North and the South, such as “Dignity and Daily Bread” (Rowbotham/Mitter 1995), “Homeworkers in a global perspective: Invisible no more” (Boris/Prügl 1996) and “Women in Trade Unions. Organizing the unorganized” (Martens/Mitter 1994) have described some of these strategies and made women homeworkers' struggle around the world more visible. These women workers were presented as agents of change instead of poor and passive 'Third World women,' that are powerless victims of capitalism and patriarchy.

Turkey is one of the countries in which neoliberal globalization has led to a flexibilization and informalization of the labor market and to an increase in the use of homework as a cheap and flexible form of production performed by 'feminized' workers. Turkey also has to be mentioned when speaking of the organization of women homeworkers and their struggle against the gendered consequences of neoliberal capitalism and for better living and working conditions. Despite the very active involvement of feminist activists and scholars in the organizing of women homeworkers in Turkey, the literature about women homeworkers' organizing remained little. Studies dealing with their organizing either have a strong focus on local solidarity networks and projects, such as Hattatoğlu (2000) or concentrate on the national level by comparing Turkey's experience to homeworker movements in other countries, like (Bergan 2009) with Bulgaria.

I decided to focus on Turkey because it was during my Erasmus exchange semester at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara at the department of Gender and Women's Studies in 2011 when I was confronted with the issue of homework for the very first time. Since the moment I discovered the 'invisible hands' of homeworkers not only on my own clothes, but on the bazaar, in restaurants and in the mall, and the function of this greatly exploited workforce for the neoliberal political economy in Turkey as an intermediary country in the international subcontracting chains, the issue of homework and the fascination for their organizing as informal women working at home captivated me and has gripped me ever since. In the following thesis I have tried to combine a reconsidered notion of empowerment and the organizing process of women homeworkers in Turkey. I was interested in applying the empowerment approach, as a concept having emerged from social movements in their fight

for justice, on a specific example. In this diploma thesis I will attempt to show *how the organization of women homeworkers challenges and changes power relations based on class and gender and empowers women homeworkers*. In addition to this *research question* I will include two subquestions in my analysis: (1) Which local and national strategies are followed by women homeworkers in Turkey in order to change their position and challenge power relations based on class and gender? (2) In which dimensions do personal and collective emPOWERment take place?

Regarding the research question(s), this thesis is guided by *three assumptions*: (1) The presumed separation of home and 'real' work, flexibilization and informalization have constructed women homeworkers' position as unrecognized, 'feminized,' invisible, isolated and informal workers. (2) The organizing into local groups does not only improve the economic situation of women homeworkers, it increases 'power from within' regarding self-confidence and self-esteem in order to resist power relations, fosters their identification as workers and nurtures the power women homeworkers can have when working in solidarity ('power with') to struggle for their rights as women workers. (3) By demanding the recognition as workers, the right to organize and access to social security, women homeworkers not only challenge the position of homeworkers as unrecognized, invisible and informal women workers in the reproductive economy but at the same time question power relations based on class and gender and gendered constructions of work on a local, national and global level.

Jane L. Parpart, Shirin M. Rai and Kathleen Staudt's (2002) conception of empowerment presented in the introduction of their edited book "Rethinking Empowerment" influenced my understanding of the term. They argue that empowerment must be analyzed in global, national and local terms. A reconsidered notion of empowerment requires a more nuanced understanding of power and cannot transcend power relations as it takes place within them. Therefore, empowerment must be understood as a process and an outcome in an "institutional, material and discursive context" (ibid.: 4). Since empowerment changed from being a radical political concept used in movements demanding social justice and a transformation of power relations to a buzzword in the developed jargon, focusing on the individual and the local level, a critical feminist reconsideration is demanded. Thus, the analysis of the struggle of women homeworkers as activists and agents of change in this thesis is based on an understanding of empowerment, which stresses the multi-dimensionality of power and draws back on Jo Rowlands' (1997, 1998) differentiation between 'power over,' 'power to,' 'power from within,' and 'power with.' EmPOWERment is thereby understood as the ability to take actions in order

to challenge and transform power relations and change one's own position. In order to emphasize power as the core element of empowerment and distinguish this notion from the neoliberal appropriation, which focuses on the individual, I will write 'power' within the term empowerment with capital letters. With the aim of avoiding the romanticization of 'the local' and acknowledging the interconnection of global and local power relations, of economy and culture I will use Spike Peterson's feminist rewritten global political economy which takes the interdependence of the reproductive, productive and virtual economy and the inseparability of identity, meaning system and structure into consideration. Moreover, I intend to analyze with these theoretical devices the 'position' of women homeworkers—as 'feminized' workers producing at home in the informal economy—in Turkey and the context in which their organizing takes place. For this purpose I will use studies which deal with homework(ers) on a global level as well as in urban Turkey and focus on the neoliberal transformation of Turkey in regard to flexibilization, feminization and informalization.

Qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2000) of problem-centered interviews (Witzel 2000) conducted with six women homeworkers from the women's cooperative Kozadan İpeğe as well as (newspaper) articles, blog entries, the declaration of Ev-Ek-Sen, newsletters written by women homeworkers or their supporters allowed me to analyze the various dimensions of personal and collective emPOWERment. The organizing struggle of women homeworkers is analyzed with a focus on urban Turkey and was examined particularly in relation to power relations based on class and gender. By concentrating on collective action and institutionalized organizing I do not intend to obscure the daily renegotiation of power and the informal solidarity networks among women homeworkers.

This thesis is written from a critical cross-disciplinary feminist perspective. I am particularly influenced by (feminist) political economy, socialist feminist theory, Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) literature, (Neo-)Marxist and post-colonial theory. Drawing on Peterson (2003: 28) I do not understand feminism merely as a “movement to empower women but as a systematic transformative critique of hierarchies that are linked and ideologically 'naturalized' by the denigration of the feminine.” Despite the fact that I have limited my analysis on (embodied) women—as 90 percent of the homeworkers in Turkey are women and men only tend to 'support' the production at home—I do not only understand gender as an empirical category but as an analytical category. Gender structures power relations and the divisions of labor“ which determine what counts as work, who does what kind of work and how different kinds of work are valorized“ (ibid.: 31). In this sense, writing

from a critical feminist perspective means to do research not only to understand the world but to de-naturalize and re-politicize hierarchies and power relations and to change them.

Instead of referring to myself as 'the author,' which shows distance and objectivity, I have tried to use the first person as often as possible in this thesis in order to take responsibility for what I write. Despite the fact that the emphasis on my own involvement in the production of knowledge may seem 'un-academic,' I consider it as a central factor of critical knowledge production and the challenge of traditional academic authority and style (Letherby 2003: 7). Trinh T. Minh-ha says in her movie "Reassemblage" (1982) that she does not "intend to speak about, just nearby." This phrase became very important to me as it relates to my own lack of authority. I can only approach coming to an understanding of homework and the struggle of women homeworkers but I will never be an 'expert' on it. Even though I do not intend to speak 'for' women homeworkers or promote homework as an advantageous or empowering work for women, I hope to make the struggle of women homeworkers in Turkey more visible.

1.2. Structure

After a conceptual clarification of homework in Chapter 2, I am going to present my theoretical research approach where the analytical devices used in this diploma thesis are introduced in Chapter 3. The theoretical approach consists of two parts. The first part gives an overview of the development of the term empowerment and its various uses. It particularly focuses on power in order to re-appropriate empowerment as a buzzword for anti-hegemonic politics. It presents different understandings of empowerment or what empowerment can be and differentiates between *personal* and *collective emPOWERment*. In the second part I will introduce Spike Peterson's rewriting of global political economy, which provides me with useful analytical tools for the examination of the organizing of women homeworkers in Turkey from a feminist perspective. Beginning with a short reflexion on my own positionality to the research I will focus on data collection and data analysis in the fourth chapter. In Chapter 5, I will explore the social position of women homeworkers in relation to the separation of home and work, flexibilization and informalization. I intend to present the context in which the struggle of women homeworkers in Turkey takes place. Chapter 6 draws a picture of different organizations of homeworkers on the international level and focuses particularly on the structure of the women homeworkers' movement in Turkey. This includes on the one hand HomeNet Turkey, the national solidarity network, on the other hand Kozadan İpeğe women homeworkers' cooperative as an example of a local women homeworker's group and the six organized women homeworkers which were interviewed. In Chapter 7, I will combine the results of my qualitative analysis in Turkey with my theoretical understanding of

emPOWERment and analyze the different dimensions of personal and collective emPOWERment through the organizing of women homeworkers.

2. Homework: A conceptional clarification

Homework should neither be confused with school-children's assignments nor with housework or domestic work. Even though the differentiation between housework and homework may be problematic, especially in Post-Fordism, and it is not clear in the case of homeworkers where paid and unpaid work take place in the same space and often at the same time, I think it is crucial to *analytically* distinguish between reproductive and productive work tasks. According to Friedrich Engels (2010 [1984]) productive work refers to value-producing activities and reproductive work to the maintaining of the family members and the work force. Reproduction includes therefore *biological recreation*, such as the bearing of children and the creation of the next generation, *day-to-day reproduction*, like cooking and cleaning, and *social reproduction*, e.g. the socialization of children, the reproduction of production relations and ideologies legitimating them.¹

Despite the fact that the *domestic labor debate*² has been crucial in widening up the conceptualization of work—as many understandings of work exclude (unpaid) work done at home—and demonstrating the function of reproductive work for capitalism, my thesis is neither about housework as an unpaid reproductive work at home performed predominantly by women nor about domestic work as waged reproductive work in the household of others. This diploma thesis deals with homework, performed by homeworkers, as an income-generating activity within the own four walls of the worker. In order to avoid confusion with domestic work and subsistence production, it is also important to notice that the material products of homeworkers are not consumed by the members of the household, in which the homework takes place, but are produced for the exchange in the market.

Although Karl Marx (2007: 504 [1987]) already described the phenomenon of paid production in the home of workers as “domestic industry” and many scholars and organization have dealt since the crises of Fordist capitalism in the 1970s and the following restructuring of the global economy with the growing shift of production from the factories to the households, there is still no internationally recognized definition of homework and only little agreement on what is included in this term. Even within countries the definition of homework changes and many authors use the term homework and home-based work

1 In chapter 3.2. I will expand this notion of reproduction by using Spike Peterson's understanding of the term.

2 For a short overview and a feminist critique of the domestic labor debate see Gardiner (2000).

interchangeably or do not argue why they use the one or the other (among the exceptions are Felstead/Jewson 2000, Allen/Wolkowitz 1987, Topcuoğlu 2005).

In “Homeworking: Myths and Realities”, one of the first studies dealing with homework, Sheilla Allen and Carol Wolkowitz (1987: 1, emphasis added) define homework as “the supply of work to be performed in *domestic premises*, usually for piece work payment. Known also as outwork, it is a global phenomenon.” As most other authors writing about homework, Allen and Wolkowitz consider the spatial location of this kind of production as significant because homework is done within or around the home as the primary site of social reproduction in capitalist societies (Felstead/Jewson 2000: 14). Homework is often related to *outwork* as the putting-out strategy of factories especially in course of flexibilization. The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology defines outwork as “the employment of individual workers by firms outside the firms workplace—usually within the workers own house. The employer supplies materials (and possible machinery) and workers are paid on piece rate basis. It commonly involves light assembly work” (Scott/Marshall 2005: 470). This term emphasizes the putting out of specific steps in the production process from the factory to e.g. subcontractors in the form of piecework but does not include the household as the site of production and its connotation to the 'feminized' private sphere. In contrast to the term of outwork, homework stresses especially the location where the work task is performed: *at home* (Topcuoğlu 2005: 10). In order to highlight the significance of the household as the space in which homework takes places for the non-recognition of homeworkers as workers, their poor working conditions, their low salaries and their invisibility I will make use of the term homework instead of outwork.

The C-177 Home Work Convention developed by the International Labor Organization (ILO)—in response to the international pressure of homeworkers—has not only recognized homeworkers as workers having a right for labor standards like other workers in the formal sector but offers a powerful definition.³ The convention defines homework in Article 1 as

[...] work carried out by a person, to be referred to as a homeworker, in his or her home or in other premises of his or her choice, other than the workplace of the employer; for remuneration; which results in a product or service as specified by the employer, irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used, unless this person has the degree of autonomy and of economic independence necessary to be considered an independent worker under national laws, regulations or court decisions. (ILO 1996)

3 So far the ILO Convention No. 177 has been ratified by the following 10 states: Albania (2002), Argentina (2006), Belgium (2012), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2010), Bulgaria (2009), Finland (1998), Ireland (1999), Netherlands (2002), Tajikistan (2012) and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2012).

The Home Work Convention highlights that the work location of homeworkers is not only sited in domestic premises it is also not owned or managed by the employer or the supplier. Consequently, it becomes even clearer that domestic workers often living in the households of their employers are not included in this term. Additionally, the convention also defines homeworkers as paid but only dependent workers, employees. By using the term *home-based work* instead of homework, many authors and also workers' movements have criticized the ILO's definition for not including 'independent' own-account workers, also called self-employed workers, in their understanding of homework and for therefore applying a too narrow definition. Especially organization in Asia, like the Indian-based Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), have used the term home-based worker in order to include all different forms of income-generating activities at or from home and also own-account workers (Jhabvala/Tate 1996). Arguing that homework only describes a mode of production related to dependent *piece-work and subcontracting* predominant in industrialized countries, they used the term of home-based work without defining the exact employment situation of the worker.

Despite the fact that I appreciate the inclusion of own-account workers in the conceptualization of homework/home-based work and many authors and organizations prefer to use the broader term of home-based work in order to avoid exclusion, I think it is important to differentiate between individuals working *from home* and gaining 'functional flexibility' like lawyers, journalists or also scientists etc. and individuals who are 'pushed' to work *at home* because of informal and irregular employment relations or missing opportunities to work outside their home. If we do not distinguish between different forms of home-based work—or in the words of Alan Felstead and Nick Jewson “home-based production”—as an “economic activity by members of households who produce within their place of residence commodities for exchange in the market” (Felstead/Jewson 2000: 15) we lose analytical sharpness and neglect work patterns shaped by gender, class and racism.⁴

For specifying the way of production and the employment relation I will use the broader term of home-based work for all kinds of productions done around or at home, like the Felstead

4 In order to clarify the differences between people working at or from home, Felstead and Jewson differentiate between the following forms of “home-located production”: First, they distinguish between (1) home-located employers as producers who employ others like hotel owners, and (2) home-located workers. As the latter are a very heterogeneous group they distinguish in a second step between (3) home-located petty commodity producers and (4) home-located wage laborers considering the possibility of controlling their market situation by themselves. Because of the absence of a third party the first group forms a direct relation with the end-user and receives the full benefit of the product like hairdressers, childminders or craft workers. Felstead and Jewson make a third important distinction between (5) high discretion home-located wage laborers and (6) low discretion home-located wage laborer called homeworkers (Felstead/Jewson 2000: 15-17).

and and Jewson's concept of home-located production, and use homework only for manual, 'low skilled,' monotonous work in the home of the worker. Thus, my understanding of homework excludes professionals working from or at home, like tax consultants and also writers, musical workers or artists. Besides the fact that homeworkers often draw back to the support of unpaid family, the conceptualization of homework needs to exclude people employing others regularly. White collar teleworkers as home-based workers involved in information technology or other forms of communication are not included in my understanding of homework in this study.

Because of the fact that many workers often shift between employment relations considered as own-account workers and dependent workers paid in the form of piecework it is important to include so called own-account workers as well in my understanding of homework. With regards to Felstead and Jewson's conceptualization, the term homeworkers refers in this thesis not only to *low discretion home-located wage laborers* but also to *home-located petty commodity producers*.

In accordance with organized women homeworkers in Turkey (Coşkun 2010: 212) I also distinguish between piece-rate workers, order-based workers and own-account workers: (1) *Piece-rate workers* get their work from an intermediary who receives orders from factories. After turning the raw material into a finished good or performing just another step in the production process, homeworkers deliver the commodity to the same person. Piece-rate work involves e.g. sewing toys, assembling zips, putting together ballpoints, sewing beads onto clothes. This kind of workers do not have a direct relationship to the end-user of their product or the 'market' and experience indirect control by the middleperson⁵. (2) *Order-based workers* often receive their orders from neighbors, acquaintances or from workshops. This work involves the preparation of traditional food, dowry, sewing etc. (3) *Own-account workers* are in direct contact with the end-consumers of their product. They buy raw materials themselves and sell the finished goods, such as baby dresses, knitted scarfs or bags to the user. They tend to be classified as self-employed. However, homeworkers tend to work on their own-account with the intention of receiving new orders. Even though it seems that the third group has more control over their work situation, own-account workers often do not earn more money than pieceworkers—because of the competition with bigger firms—and earn mostly the same amount of money as dependent homeworkers. Although it is analytically important to distinguish between dependent piece workers and own-account workers, the experienced differences are

5 I consciously use the term middleperson instead of middleman because not only men but also older women work as intermediaries.

unclear and tend to disappear. Ev-Ek-Sen, the Turkish union for homeworkers describes their situation in Turkey as follows:

[E]ither we are given piecework by factory or contractors, or we work on the basis of orders from individuals, or we work on our own-account. And it is not unusual for us to do all three in the same week or day of our life, for [sic!] the flow of work is irregular, the income is low, and payments are unreliable. (Ev-Ek-Sen 2010)

Furthermore, homework exists in different sectors (manufacturing, textile, garment, food etc.) and consists of different tasks labeled as traditional handcraft like knitting, sewing, making carpets but also food production and non-traditional work like assembling motors, sewing soft toys. Besides different working conditions, it is important to take into consideration that homeworkers are not a homogeneous group. They differ in relation to gender identity, age, origin, sexuality, dis-ability, ethnicity etc. and have their own positionality within the variety of structures and discourses.

3. Theoretical approach

In this chapter I will introduce the theoretical terms and devices used in this thesis. The first part deals with a reconsidered notion of empowerment focusing particularly on the question of power. The second part presents a rewritten feminist political economy which understands economy and culture as inseparable and includes gender as an analytical and structural feature in the analysis of globalization.

3.1. Reclaiming empowerment

In the following chapter, I will introduce my understanding of emPOWERment, which aims to incorporate Parpart, Rai and Staudt's reconsideration of empowerment, as mentioned in the introduction. First of all, I will demonstrate the changes in the concept's use and meaning. Drawing on Lukes' and Foucault's notion of power, I emphasize the importance of power as the core element of emPOWERment for critical politics in the second part. By using Rowlands' differentiation between 'power over,' 'power to,' 'power from' and 'power from within' and other feminist conceptualization of empowerment I will present the notions of personal and collective emPOWERment used in this thesis.

3.1.1. Empowerment: a contested concept

In the last decades empowerment has turned from a radical political concept questioning global and local power relations and demanding a transformation of the social order to a term understood as “the unquestioned good”, a so called “motherhood term” (Parpart/Rai/Staudt 2002: 3), which makes everyone feel happy and warm. It is often used in a way which assumes that the reader knows what it is about but leaves out how it can be reached and what it actually means (Rowlands 1997: 7). The fluidity of the term has been perceived by many as a positive strength of empowerment as any movement or project could use it for its own demands. At the same time it constitutes a weakness because it facilitates the neoliberal appropriation and the neutralization and de-politicization of the once radical concept. Batliwala (2007: 557) even states that “[o]f all the buzzwords that have entered the development lexicon in the past 30 years, empowerment is probably the most widely used and abused.” The origin of the term is not entirely clear but it can be said that the term empowerment emerged initially in diverse social movements demanding social change and justice, like the protestant reformation movement, the Black power movement and in feminist actions (Gaventa 2002, quoted in Batliwala 2007: 557-558).

Contrary to concepts like 'gender' or 'participation,' which were developed at a theoretical, abstract level and then applied in practice, empowerment emerged in social movements and

incorporated into the academia and the development discourse at a later stage. As one of the first writers relating systematically to the term, Barbara Solomon (1976) identifies empowerment in her book “Black Empowerment” as a social method in the work with the oppressed Black community in the United States. Nowadays empowerment has entered the mainstream and has been adopted by development agencies to improve productivity and efficiency.⁶ Appropriated by neoliberalism empowerment shifted from a political idea to a buzzword which can be found in every lexicon of development as other mainstreamed terms like participation, partnership or sustainability (Cornwell/Eade 2012).

In order to reclaim empowerment, it is crucial to consider its once radical meaning and its history of application. Although Paulo Freire (1992) did not make use of the word empowerment in “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, his theory of *conscientization* has been one of the most important reference points for the empowerment account, especially in education. Being influenced by Marxism and liberation theology and critical to the paternalistic top-down development agenda, Freire was convinced that the oppressed population is able to perceive inequality from structures affecting their lives and take action against the disempowering source(s) of oppression. In this regard, critical consciousness as an educative tool describes a process in which individuals or social groups start to question their social reality, end the “culture of silence” and take transformative actions as critical subjects against the oppressive structures 'from below.' Freire's concept of critical consciousness as “deep awareness of one's own socio-political environment” (Stromquist 2002: 229) has been used by activists and intellectuals to give more attention to the social reality of the poor and marginalized and their ability to understand their own position, perceive social and political oppression and change it through grass-root and local activism.

As empowerment turned out to be a central term in the development agenda as well as in the feminist movement it is essential to consider the history of its evolution in relation to the incorporation of women and gender issues into the development agenda as well. Within the *welfare approach*, which dominated the development field until the 1970s, women were only considered as passive recipients of welfare and therefore reduced to their reproductive role as mothers and wives in the development process. After Ester Boserup's (1970) work “Women's Role in Economic Development” had challenged the assumption that the benefits of the development process would automatically *trickle down* to the poor, the women's question entered the development discourse in the form of the WID paradigm during the 1970s.

6 It turned out to be a crucial concept in social work, psychology, education, and management. Using management-language, companies are even claiming that their employees get empowered when their supervisors are laid off and substituted by new technologies in order to enhance 'productivity.'

Drawing on Boserup's finding of women's marginalization through development, WID argued from a liberal feminist perspective for the importance of women's inclusion in decision-making processes in order to reach efficient development and economic growth but did not question social structures causing women's subordination (Rowlands 1997: 5, Sharma 2008: 4). Within the WID agenda, empowerment means that women should be “brought into development” (Rowlands 1998: 12) and take over positions of decision-making in the economic and political sphere to increase productivity. In this context, women's empowerment is functional in the economic development of a country but does not include a structural change of power relations⁷ (ibid.: 12-13). It neither includes a transformation of social relations nor a consideration of gendered power relations.

In search for a new approach, which neither perceives women as passive victims nor uses them for the sake of liberal capitalism but allows women to challenge political-economic and patriarchal inequalities, agents from the South applied the concept of empowerment to give more attention to local knowledge and point out that women from the South themselves know best what they need:

It is the experience lived by poor women throughout the Third World in their struggles to ensure the basic survival of their families and themselves that provides the clearest lens for an understanding of development process. And it is *their* aspirations and struggles for a future free of the multiple oppressions of gender, class, race and nation that can form the basis for the new visions and strategies the world now needs. (Sen/Grown 1987: 9-10)

At the World Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985, *Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era* (DAWN) presented Third World women's perspective on development and advocated a strategy of “empowering ourselves through organizations” (Sen/ Grown 1987: 89) DAWN's understanding of empowerment does not only refer to the position of poor women but also includes a powerful critique towards the top-down, neocolonial development agenda that has marginalized women and their perspectives. Sen and Grown criticize in “Development, Crises and Alternatives Visions: The Third Women's Perspective” the assumption of women as a homogeneous group suffering from the same forms of oppression and neglecting the differences and inequalities among women. DAWN formulated a strong critique towards WID and its disregard of the neocolonial capitalist system. Furthermore, Western feminism and its neglect of other forms of oppression like capitalism, nationalism, heterosexism, racism etc. besides patriarchy was also heavily criticized.

⁷ WID's understanding of power confines with the one-dimensional view described by Lukes, which I will discuss in Chapter 3.1.2. This approach aims to integrate women in the existing order and to give them them greater access to decision-making processes. It hardly challenges power relations within the household or their structural position within society (Kabeer 1994: 224-225).

Over the past twenty years women's movement has debated the links between the eradication of gender subordination and of other forms of social and economic oppression based on nation, class, or ethnicity. We strongly support the position in this debate that feminism cannot be monolithic in its issues, goals, and strategies, since it constitutes the political expression of the concerns and interest of women from different regions, classes, nationalities, and ethnic backgrounds. (ibid.:18)

By highlighting the significance of democracy in organizations and the strengthening and building up of movements and networks, DAWN differentiates itself strongly from the usual donor perspective, which tries to identify the most suitable groups for funding.

Within organizations, open and democratic processes are essential in empowering women to withstand the social and family pressures that result from their participation. Thus the long-term viability of the organization, and the growing autonomy and control by poor women over their lives, are linked through the organizations' own internal processes of shared responsibility and decision-making. (ibid.: 89)

Since patriarchy is not considered as the only reason for poor women's oppression, Sen and Grown stress the possibility of transformation through “political mobilization, legal changes, consciousness raising and popular education” (ibid.: 87) in order to reach change on different levels. By focusing on the grass-root level and the experience of Third World Women as a political subject, DAWN's understanding of empowerment calls for collective action against different forms of oppressions experienced by women in the South, as political subjects, who are able to challenge power relations in personal and social relations through organization.

From the perspective of poor women, Sen and Grown formulated a radical critique of the integration approach of WID, and demanded a society freed from subordination and domination. “They dismiss existing structures and by stating that what they want is not a larger piece of the cake but a totally different cake altogether and a call for a new development paradigm that restructures the power relations” (Aithal 1999). This publication can therefore be considered as a turning point. It opened the floor for the Gender and Development (GAD) paradigm, which includes the influence of notions of femininity and masculinity on gender relations and emphasizes the significance of culture besides economic inequality. As GAD does not understand women anymore as passive recipients of welfare or victims but as active agents, actors of change, it supported the famousness of the empowerment approach.

At the beginning of the 1990s, empowerment had already entered the development jargon and was used in different branches like education, health, women and workers' rights, rural development. Through the widespread use of the term and the substitution of outdated terms like participation for empowerment, the once radical and politically sharp concept of empowerment got lost. The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 therefore

not only stands for propagation of *Gender Mainstreaming* but also for the presentation of empowerment to the international community which declared “to take priority action for the empowerment and advancement of women” (United Nations 1995: point 7).

In the development discourse empowerment is often linked to Caroline Moser's framework of *Gender Planning* offering different tools and concepts for the integration of gender into the planning of development. She describes gender planning as a means of empowerment: “The goal of gender planning is the emancipation of women from their subordination, and their achievement of equity and empowerment” (Moser 1993: 1). Despite the recognition of women's triple role and the useful differentiation between practical and strategic gender needs⁸, Moser regards empowerment, which is the goal, only as an increase of self-reliance and inner strength and the ability to gain control over resources. By using the term *self-reliance*⁹ for the individual, Moser shifts the focus from global power relations to the individual and community level. In contrast to DAWN, who speaks of the “self-empowerment of women” (Sen/Grown 1987: 82), Moser considers empowerment as a result of external intervention through development institutions and experts. In this regard, empowerment does not include a transformation of global power relations, since it is only connected to the individual or the community level. Consequently, the concept already lost its once political counter-hegemonic message and “became part of the development orthodoxy” (Sharma 2008: XVI) in the mid-1990s.

As a result of the shift from development understood as economic growth to the integration of non-economic aspects and ideas of *development with a human face* after the debt crises and the harsh consequences of the structural adjustment programs, the World Bank started to show more interest in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), grass-root activities, ideas of sustainable people-centered development and even made empowerment one of its key pillars (Rowlands 1997: 3, Sharma 2008: XVI).

8 Moser (1993) states that women are involved in three different roles: the productive, the reproductive and the community management role. Besides basing her framework on the triple role of women, Moser distinguishes between practical and strategic gender needs. *Practical gender needs* are needs that refer to the improvement of immediate living conditions (e.g. health, water, employment) and arise out of women's specific position in the society. *Strategic gender needs* relate to needs identified by women in order to change their position in society in relation to the intersection of different forms of inequalities, like the gendered division of labor, legal rights, domestic violence etc. In contrast to practical needs, strategic gender needs challenge gender power relations and therefore women's subordinated position.

9 'Self-reliance' is a central term in the dependency approach which criticizes the external dependence of poor countries and argues for national liberalization from (neo-)colonial dependence and domination. In this sense, self-reliance does not refer to the individual level but to national self-reliance in relation to food, health care, education, water and energy (Sen/Grown 1987: 83-84).

Many basic services [...] are best managed at the local level—even the village level with the central agencies providing only technical advice and specialist inputs. The aims should be to empower ordinary people to take charge of their lives, to make communities more responsible for their development, and to make governments listen to their people. Fostering a more pluralistic structure—including non-governmental organisations [...]—is a means to these ends. (World Bank 1989, quoted in Rowlands 1997: 1)

The empowerment of women has even been declared as the third of eight Millennium Development Goals which aims to “promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger, disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable” (United Nations 2000: 5).¹⁰ The neoliberal appropriation of the concept occurred in the context of an increasing emphasis on the market, private actors and the individual for development and the decreasing belief in the (welfare) state as the former main actor in the development process. Rowlands (1998: 11) states that “[...] empowerment as a concept has arisen alongside the strengthening of focus on individualism, consumerism and personal achievement as cultural and economic goals.” Consequently, in the language of empowerment we can observe a shift from the macro level to the micro level, which means the obscuration of “the articulation of the local with global processes” (Barber 2002: 42) and a strong placement on the individual who becomes responsible for his/her own needs and the development of the whole *community*¹¹. This understanding of empowerment involves the idea that poverty is a failure of the individual and not a consequence of unequal political-economic and social power relations. By replacing the term welfare with empowerment, the responsibility of the individual to take care of him/herself is stressed and the influence of the interventionist (welfare) state is pushed back. The focus on the individual is not at all linked to the feminist idea of ‘the private is political’ at all but to the emphasis on self-governance and self-help, which should enable people to fulfill their own needs instead of relying on welfare (Sharma 2008).¹² In this understanding empowerment means to leave individuals and communities with their own needs and foster “entrepreneurial self-reliance” (Rowlands 1997: 26). In the language of neoliberalism, empowerment turned from a radically political collective to an individual process, following the request: *empower yourself*, and has been freed from any criticism towards unequal power relations in order to serve profit-making and increasing competitiveness. Tandon (1995: 32) argues that “[s]ince the concept is located within the very centre of ‘power relations’ and therefore challenging to powerholders, they have no choice but to incorporate it within their language and rob it of its threatening

10 In the Millennium Development Goals empowerment is not considered as an instrument or a process but as a goal, an end itself. The aim is to close the gender gap in education at all levels, to increase women's share of employment in non-agricultural sector and increase women's political participation in national parliaments.

11 I will deal with the problematic term of the community in Chapter 3.1.3.

12 Micro-financing serves for instance as one of the easiest way to reach this individual empowerment because it does not require a serious transformation of global capitalism or other power relations.

implications.” Therefore, the radical concept of empowerment has been used in the development paradigm to stabilize the system not to challenge or transform power relations.

As I have shown in this chapter, empowerment has been used by many different actors in different meanings. The variety of uses can be traced back to the different definitions of power. As power is the root-word of empowerment, the following chapter will show how the definition of power influences the way it is understood and how it is possible to reclaim emPOWERment by using a different understanding of power.

3.1.2. Excursus on power: Bringing the power back

Power is one of the most contested terms in social sciences and “to engage in such disputes is itself to engage in politics”, as Steven Lukes (2005: 30) states. As there have been many attempts to develop a universal definition of power, I will not commit to one specific universal understanding of power but focus on the *multi-dimensionality* of power. Therefore I will use different understandings of power, which enrich the concept of empowerment and bring the power back into this formerly radical term.

In the general view, power is defined in relation to authority, obedience, and dominance—the so called ‘power over’. It refers to the idea that power can be possessed by individuals and institutions and is used to influence the behavior of others regardless of what they want. Max Weber's definition of power may be the most similar to the understanding of power in the common sense. He describes power (*Macht*) as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his [sic!] own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests” (Weber 1964: 152). Since his understanding of power is very wide and, as he says, “sociologically amorphous” (ibid.: 53), Weber suggests to understand domination (*Herrschaft*) as “the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons” (ibid.: 152). This means that power is not inherent in individuals, it is created in social relationships.

In his book “Power: A radical view” Steven Lukes points out that power is a multi-dimensional social factor. He distinguishes between three dimensional views on power even though all three “[...] can be seen as alternative interpretations and applications at one and the same underlying concept of power, according to which A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests” (Lukes 2005: 30). In the one-dimensional view, which is especially associated with the pluralist view of power of Dahl, Polsby and Wolfinger, power means the ability to change the behavior of others within a decision-making process. Lukes describes the *first dimensional view* as the one focusing on “*behaviour* in the

making of *decisions* on *issues* over which there is an observable *conflict* of (subjective) *interests*, seen as express policy preferences, revealed by political participation” (Lukes 2005: 19, emphasis in original).

Referring to Bachrach and Baratz who criticize the one-dimensional view of power and the behavioral focus, the *two-dimensional view* points out the significance of covert conflicts and describes power as well as the ability to control the political agenda and to limit the issues which can be debated. This refers hereby to a decision aiming to prevent the emergence of interests in opposition to those in power of decision-making and the exclusion of certain issues through coercion, authority, manipulation etc. It therefore includes both decision-making and *non-decision-making* but limits its attention to *observable* conflicts, which are overt or covert (ibd.: 20-25).

By introducing the *three-dimensional view* on power, Steven Lukes argues against the notion that power means the control over institutions and resources. Furthermore, he opposes the assumption that power and conflicts are always visible and observable. Instead, Lukes points out that power is also exercised by preventing others to think about even having a conflict and questioning the status quo.

[T]he most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent [...] conflict from arising in the first [...] by shaping perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial. (Lukes 2005: 27-28)

Lukes criticizes the two-dimensional view for only drawing attention to observable conflicts and ignoring importance of “latent conflict[s]” (ibd.: 28) that refer to interests between A, who is exercising power, and B, whose real interests are excluded and who is even unaware of them. In other words, the power that is exercised by dominant social, political, economic and cultural groups is often hidden and leads to the “internalization of oppression” (Rowlands 1997: 11) and the absence of actual or imagined alternatives. Therefore it is real and influential.

This three-dimensional understanding of power can be also found in Marx's commodity fetishism¹³ and in Antonio Gramsci's notion of *hegemony*, which much inspired Lukes'

13 In Section 4 of Chapter 1 of the Capital, Marx (2007 [1987]) introduces the notion of commodity fetishism. Referring to the transformation of relations between people as the producers and traders of products to relations between things, the commodity gets a life of its own. Its value seems to be natural and not a product of social relations between people. It is furthermore connected to the collective belief, the common sense, that it is natural to measure the value of products by money. The fetishism of commodity results therefore from the invisibility of the commodity's real producers in capitalist societies and the belief that a specific value is naturally attached to a commodity—even though it is the result of social relations.

understanding of power. The Italian communist argued that capitalist hegemony is not based on power through coercion or force and violence but on power through the organization of consent. This perspective focuses on social norms, values, beliefs and definitions which legitimize the social structures and stabilize the domination of the ruling class. This means that the ruling group does not only exercise power over the dominated, the dominated also acquiesce the domination and internalize the dominant ideas. From a feminist perspective, power is exercised predominately by “men over other men, by men over women, and by dominant social, political, economic or cultural groups over those who are marginalized” (Rowlands 1995: 101-102). Therefore a feminist perspective not only needs to focus on the state and the economy, but also on the family and the common sense which contribute to male power.

For a different notion of empowerment, which does not imply taking over positions of power and dominate others, but getting the 'power to' act and changing one's own position and challenge hegemonic power relations, it is useful to integrate a post-structuralist account of power. This perspective helps to avoid structural determination and the assumption of socially pre-given interests due to a specific position within society. By not only pointing out the repressive character of power but also the productivity of it, Michel Foucault criticizes the idea that power can be possessed by individuals or groups and has thereby broadened the understanding of power. According to Foucault, power exists in its exercise and is constituted in a network of social relations. Power is diffuse, fragmented, relational and fluid. It is a complex net of force relations that encompasses the whole society and leaves no body or space outside of it. Foucault has moved the analysis of power from specific locations like the state to the personal, the body and broadened hereby the understanding of the political as well. By emphasizing the “micro-physics” of power (Foucault 1979: 26), Foucault especially analyzes the micro level, the local operation of power in the everyday practices and in the “capillaries of the social body” (Allen 1996: 271). Even though Foucault (1980b: 94) has extensively dealt with disciplinary power in his work, he rejects the idea of an all encompassing domination. He rather stresses the idea that “[p]ower comes from below” and “is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations.” He emphasizes that

[...] there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and rules at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix [...] One must suppose rather that the manifold relationships of force that shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions, are the basis for wide-ranging effects of cleavage that run through the social body as a whole. (Foucault 1980b: 94)

This signifies that power is not only exercised by the state, law, schools and other powerful institutions which tend to stabilize power relations, but comes from everywhere. Therefore, nobody is outside of it. Despite the rejection of the notion of the sovereign subject and his focus on dis-empowering practices and the disciplination of the body, Foucault recognizes the relations between power and resistance as well. By considering resistance as a form of power, Foucault shows that power does not only repress but also produces effects. Following this understanding, power is never one-sided, monolithic and unchallenged and resistance never outside relations of power.

[T]here are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power, hence, like power, resistance is multiple. (Foucault 1980a: 142)

Referring to Foucault, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson do not understand “resistance in a disembodied duel with power” (Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 19) but as a “complex interaction” (Parpart/Rai/Staudt 2002: 6). They point out that the potential of resistance is understood as an experience that (re)constructs the identity of the subjects in case it is connected to collective practice. Foucault describes the transformative effects of resistance as experience in the following:

[Resistance is] producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds. Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverse social stratification and individual unities. (Foucault 1980b: 96)

Resistance can therefore reconfigure the subject: Nevertheless, it is important to notice that resistance or experience cannot be possessed by a sovereign subject, as “experience, like identity, is not something that the sovereign subject 'has,' rather, the subject itself must be conceived as the unstable and often unpredictable outcome of experience” (Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 20). Therefore, power does not only discipline bodies and dis-empower individuals, it also provokes resistance. The experience of resistance as acting against hegemonic and disciplinary power relations may transform the identity of subjects and change their positionality and activate the process of emPOWERment.

By using Jo Rowlands' differentiation between 'power over,' 'power to,' 'power from within' and 'power with,' I will introduce in the following part the notions of personal and collective emPOWERment in order to bring power back in the de-politicized and mainstreamed term and stress that emPOWERment needs both individual conscientization and collective action.

3.1.3. Personal and collective emPOWERment

In the previous chapter, I have predominately dealt with accounts that link power to domination, which has been described by authors like Rowlands (1995), Kabeer (1994) and Allen (1998) as 'power over.' Although Weber's definition locates power in social relations and distinguishes between power and domination, it follows the assumption that the power gain of one social group is at the expense of another and therefore a zero-sum game in which group A, as the powerful, has the ability to exert power over group B, who are left without any power. In this understanding, marginalized groups, like the so called 'Third World Women' are left without any power as they experience oppression by a “matrix of domination” based on class, gender and 'race' (Collins 2000: 18). This “controlling power” (Rowlands 1995: 14) separates people into two separate and oppositional groups: the powerful and the powerless. It is based upon the dichotomous thinking of active/passive, man/woman, North/South, subject/object etc. Following this binary notion of power, the first group possesses power and has control over the second one, which accepts its subordinated position and has no power to change it.

'Power to' bring change

Drawing on the notion of the productivity of power and resistance as a form of power and as a transforming experience, especially theorists dealing with feminist empowerment approaches, such as Rowlands (1997) and Kabeer (1994) have described the form of power which creates new possibilities and actions as 'power to'. It draws back to the Latin meaning of power *potere*, and in French *pouvoir*, as *to be able to*. By defining power as a kind of energy, Nancy Hartsock speaks about this type of power as “generative power” (Hartsock 1985: 223, quoted in Rowlands 1998: 13). John Holloway also distinguishes between *power to*, *potentia*, and *power over*, *potestas*. His “power-to-do” has been translated in the German version as *kreative Macht*, creative power, contrary to “power over” as *instrumentelle Macht*, instrumental power.“

Power-to-do is always social, always part of a social flow of doing. Our ability to do is produced by the doing of others and creates the conditions for the future doing of others. It is impossible to imagine a doing that does not integrate in some way with the doing of others, past, present or future. (Holloway 2002: 2)

Holloway's understanding of 'power to' is linked to the social, the creative doing with other people, which makes you feel powerful. The emphasis on the generativity and productivity of power “creates new possibilities and actions without domination” (Rowlands 1997: 13). Following this understanding of power as a capacity, as a power to do and bring upon change, emPOWERment is not about taking action in order to gain power over and dominate others. It

means the challenge of hegemonic power relations and the undoing of social constructions that constrain their ability to act.

This notion of empowerment acknowledges that no individual or group is totally powerless even though they are often not in position of power and 'disempowered'¹⁴. Considering Foucault's theory on power and the notion that power is both the source of oppression but also the source of emancipation, "[e]mpowerment involves the exercise rather than possession of power." Furthermore, emPOWERment does not take place outside of power relations and "[...] cannot transcend power relations; it is enmeshed in relation of power at all levels of society" (Parpart/Rai/Staudt 2002: 4).

Personal emPOWERment and power from within

Despite the danger of individualizing the process of emPOWERment and pushing the responsibility on the individual, it is crucial to consider the changes in the positionality of subjects engaging in resistance and the interdependency of individual and collective emPOWERment as well. Following the idea that the 'personal is political,' many approaches targeting social transformation focus on personal empowerment.

The notion of 'power from within' is closest to Freire's concept of *conscientization*, which involves the development of a critical consciousness and allows individuals to become subjects. Naila Kabeer relates the "power within" to Lukes' three-dimensional view on power and the process of thinking about alternative ways of living and becoming aware of one's own (objective or strategic) interests. Focusing on the ability to control resources and make decisions, Kabeer (1994: 229) points out that "such power cannot be given; it has to be self-generated." Jo Rowlands (1995: 103) specifies the process of personal empowerment as "developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the effects of internalized oppression." In "Questioning Empowerment. Working with Women in Honduras" she defines "self-confidence", "self-esteem", "sense of agency", "sense of 'self' in wider context" and "dignity" as the core values of personal empowerment (Rowlands 1997: 112). Thus, the development of 'power from within' refers on the one hand to increased *psychological power* in the form of "self-esteem" (Stromquist 2002: 23) agency and on the other hand to the process of perceiving the circumstances behind one's own position. Nelly Stromquist (2002: 23) who distinguishes between four dimensions—psychological, cognitive, political and economic—identifies the critical understanding of one's reality as the *cognitive*

14 In the empowerment approach the term disempowered is increasingly used in comparison to powerless as it refers to the (active) process of subordination by the ruling group and the domination structures (Sharma 2008: 26).

dimension of empowerment. Kabeer describes this process as the following: “Strategies of 'empowerment from within' [...] entail reflection, analysis and assessment of what has hitherto been taken for granted so as to uncover the socially constructed and socially shared basis of apparently individual problems” (Kabeer 1994: 245).

Consequently, personal emPOWERment is connected to the perception of one's own position as not fixed, natural or pre-given but as changeable through actions and the development of critical consciousness as the “ability to recognize oppression and injustice” (Kabber 2010: 19). It increases the trust in the possibility of resisting hegemonic power relations, taking actions against them and “to make a difference” (Giddens, quoted in Goetze 2002: 183). It includes increased self-respect and self-determination and “the generation of a sense of effective agency” (Sharp et al. 2003: 283) through which women decide to act.

Rejecting the idea of taking over positions of power and domination in order to change society, Black feminists have written about the significance of personal empowerment as a result of changed consciousness. Acknowledging that not all women are able to speak out their anger¹⁵ or have the time or money to get organized, Patricia Hill Collins as a Black American woman characterizes this process of inner transformation as follows:

[C]hange can also occur in the private, personal space of an individual woman's consciousness. Equally fundamental, this type of change is also empowering. If a Black woman is forced to remain 'motionless on the outside,' she can always develop the 'inside' of a changed consciousness as a sphere of freedom. Becoming empowered through self-knowledge, even within conditions that severely limit one's ability to act, is essential. (Collins 2000: 118)

While writing about the significance of the erotic as power and knowledge, Audre Lorde also stresses the relationship between the individually experienced oppression, the personal pain and anger, and wider political activism. “Our acts against oppression become integral with self, motivated and empowered from within” (Lorde 1984: 58).

Critical voices, like Yuval-Davis (1993), have articulated concern that the individual process of empowerment does not automatically lead to collective empowerment or progressive politics. As women may also feel empowered after getting active in right-winged or fundamentalist movements that treat women generally as inferior or which aim to dominate the non-involved persons, other marginalized people, we need to focus on the effect of their struggle for other people as well (Rowlands 1997: 25-26). In order to undo social constructions and transform power relations, individual and collective emPOWERment must work together as there is no unidirectional relationship between the individual and collective

15 For a critique of the equation of voice with agency/empowerment and silence with disempowerment see Parpart (2010).

level. Acknowledging the importance of the generation of 'power from within' and the changes in the positionality of people engaging in resistance and social movement I understand personal empowerment as the first level of emPOWERment.

Collective emPoWERment and power with

Hannah Arendt (1969: 44) describes power as “the human ability not just to act but to act in concert.” She argues that power is never the property of an individual person but belongs to a group and can only exist if this group stays together. The power that is generated when individuals work together and experience the feeling of solidarity and collective agency is named as 'power with.' It refers to the phrase that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, especially when people start “to act together for the shared or common purpose of overturning a system of domination” (Allen 1998: 36). The emphasis on the collective works on two levels: Firstly, it refers to the collective experience of subordination, to their position as a group and secondly, to their collective strength and the experiences made during this process of working together in groups, networks and organization and developing a collective identity. Nelly Stromquist's (2002: 23) *political* dimension of empowerment stresses the ability to mobilize and create social networks and organizations in order to challenge the operating power relations. Rowlands (1997: 116-117) describes the core elements of collective empowerment as sense of collective agency, self organization and management, group identity and group dignity. She further points out that the differentiation between empowerment by the group and empowerment at an individual level is artificial but important in order to understand the significance of collective action for change. Kabeer describes this process as the following: “From a state of powerlessness that manifests itself in a feeling of 'I cannot', empowerment contains an element of collective self-confidence that results in a feeling of 'we can'” (Kabeer 1993, quoted in Rowlands 1997: 23).

Furthermore, it is important to analytically distinguish between emPOWERment, which on the hand challenges hegemonic ideologies and the internalized oppression of the group through the collective action on the one hand and emPOWERment that improves the structural position of this group on the other hand. This *structural domain* refers to social institutions that stabilize and institutionalize power relations, for instance through the exclusion of women from specific rights. Collective emPOWERment in this domain relates to changes at the level of social institutions and therefore includes for example improvements in law, a better economic position through minimum wage etc. But in order to reach emPOWERment at the structural level, the production and spread of *counter-hegemonic ideas*

are necessary—as institutionalized power relations are very stable and hard to change. Consequently, it is not enough to only change the law, but the power relations behind them. I agree thus with Parpart, Rai and Staudt (2002: 4) that emPOWERment needs to be considered as a *process* but also as a result of a process of transforming power relations, as an *outcome*.

In order to prevent a de-politicization of the concept, emPOWERment needs to be positioned within “the local social, cultural, economic, political context” (Aithal 1999) but also analyzed in national and global terms as it takes places within a matrix of interaction local and global power relations. It is enabled but also constrained by broader political and economic structures. In agreement with Parpart, Rai and Staudt (2002: 3), I believe that the focus on local has “profound limitation” as it “tends to underplay or ignore the impact of global and national forces on prospects on poor people's (especially women's) empowerment, and encourages a rather romantic equation between empowerment, inclusion and voice.” This is the reason why emPOWERment is never a universal unilinear process with a fixed goal but a particularistic process of change and transformation in a specific context situated within the interaction of local and global power relations.

Since political mobilization tends to draw on the common experience of a group, it is important to add, that not all of the members share the same experience. Even though they may be located similarly in relation to the interconnectedness of gender, class, ethnicity etc. their individual situatedness, their positionality may be different. Therefore, the process of collective emPOWERment is based on the “imagined community”, the imagined rather than directly experienced common identity. In this regard, “experience does not transparently reflect a pre-given reality, but rather is itself is a cultural construction” (Brah 1996: 16). As Yuval-Davis has pointed out:

[...] empowerment for one group of people might easily represent another group's disempowerment, particularly if categories such as 'community' or 'women' are used in a way that does not allow for the existence of power relationships within such categories as well as between them and other categories. (Yuval-Davis 1994; quoted in Rowlands 1994: 25)

Following this argument, I avoid using the term of community or community empowerment, which is often linked to the image of the small and local village community that stand in opposition to the powerful government. In order to avoid this romanticization of the local and to acknowledge differences and power relations at the micro level I will make use of collective emPOWERment instead of community empowerment for the second level.

In order to be able to analyze emPOWERment within local, national and global power relations and understand the position of women homeworkers in Turkey, I will draw on a feminist perspective on global political economy in the next chapter.

3.2. Feminist global political economy

It is crucial to consider the inseparability of economical and cultural processes and the interaction of global and local power relations when analyzing the 'position' of women homeworkers in Turkey. For this purpose, the perspective of a feminist global political economy can offer important insights and devices for the analysis of homework. In this chapter I will introduce the main ideas of Spike Peterson's critically rewritten global political economy, which allows me to include gender as an analytical category in my analysis.

3.2.1. (Global) Political economy

In the general understanding, political economy refers to the interaction between economy and politics. But since the term has meant many different things to different people, I will give a short overview over the history of the term. As the term *economics* comes from the Ancient Greek *oikonomia*, from *oikos* (house) and *nomos* (custom or law), referring to the management of the household, political economy started to be used in order to bring the economy from the household to the state. In 1615, the term *économique politique* has been utilized by the Mercantilist Antoine de Montchrétien for the first time.

In contrast to the Scottish moral philosopher and economist Adam Smith who neglected the origin of the term of economy from *oikos*, James Steuart (1767) also still remarks the following before the publication of Adam Smith's (1937 [1776]) *The Wealth of Nations*: “What oeconomy is in a family, political oeconomy is in a state.” However, through the spread of Smith's understanding of political economy the household got marginalized in the production of economic knowledge and the analysis of the circulation of goods, of production and also ways of appropriate government in order to secure the wealth of the nation dominated the discourse of political economy in the middle of the 19th century (Michalitsch 2012: 117-120).

By criticizing the classical thought of Smith and Ricardo for representing the bourgeois ideology—in contrast to their self-proclaimed objectivity and neutrality—Karl Marx (2007 [1987]) developed a critique of classical political economy in *the Capital*. His understanding focuses on the social relations between people through the exchange of commodities and considers classes as the basic unit of analysis. Departing from the thoughts of classical

political economy, Marx's political economy does not only stress the inseparability of economics and politics, it also includes social and historical aspects in its analysis.

With the rise of neo-classical theory in the 1870s, the term economy started to replace political economy and separated the political from economics. In contrast to taking value as the measure of the amount of labor required for the production and analyzing it in its social contextualization, value started to become determined on the basis of utility instead of labor. A strong focus on the micro level, the maximization of utility and the use of methodological individualism is characteristic for the neoclassical paradigm.

Since the 1980s Neo-Marxist theories have re-emphasized the inseparability of politics from economy and started to use the term political economy again by analyzing changes in the organization of (global) production, the global division of labor and class and geopolitical hierarchies without using an economic determinism but including the significance of culture in their analysis of the international/global political economy.¹⁶ Even though international political economy and global political economy are often used interchangeable, I will stick to the second as the term 'global' enables us to move away from the state-centered focus and emphasize the role of transnational flows through globalization. This means that the use of the cross-disciplinary approach of global political economy does not only transcend the boundaries between the studies of politics and economics but also between the national and international level.

Because of the fact that the question of power in the reproduction of structure, social changes and transformations have traditionally been an object of political economy, global political economy may be particularly helpful in the analysis of homework and its role in the global political economy.

3.2.2. Gender matters

Even though (Neo-)Marxists aim to analyze the interconnection of politics and economics (and culture) and the condition for the reproduction of capitalism, this approach has focused (like the (neo-)classical economic theory) on paid employment and the formal economy and has marginalized or ignored all unpaid, reproductive work done predominantly by women. As a result of the rise of the women's movement and the growing participation of women in the labor force since the 1970s, women and (later gender) issues started to be

16 Drawing on institutionalist traditions, the French regulation school has analyzed the relationship between the regimes of accumulation and modes of political and social regulation needed to sustain the stability of the intrinsically unstable system of capitalism (see e.g. Aglietta 1979, Lipietz 1987). Neo-Gramscian approaches have focused additionally on the links between culture and politics and the role of hegemony through ideological consent for the procreation of the transnational ideology of neoliberalism in the international political economy (see e.g. Cox 1987).

(slowly) included in the analysis of political economy. First, as in other disciplines, feminist scholars criticized the universalization of the European modern man in the form of the *homo oeconomicus* and pointed out the androcentrism in the assumed objective and neutral categories of economy. The dominating models and categories take “male-dominated activities (paid work, the formal economy) and masculinized characteristics (autonomous, objective, rational, instrumental, competitive)” (Peterson 2005: 501) as the human norm and present female-dominated activities (reproductive work) and feminized characteristics (emotional, dependent, subjective, caring) as deviant or irrelevant for the analysis of economy.

Second, in order to correct the androcentric bias and make women's experiences and lives visible many feminist writers have asked the question 'where are women' and followed the strategy of 'adding women' to prevailing masculinized categories, narratives and frameworks.¹⁷ Making women visible and showing their contribution to the society illustrates on the one hand how women and men differently affect and are differently affected by the political economy but exposes on the other hand the interdependence between usually visible male dominated activities, the “main story”, and the usually hidden and marginalized activities of women enabling the first. By including the “background story” and correcting the androcentric bias, as Peterson (2005: 501) called it, the interrelationship between women's and men's activities, identities and power relations are examined as well.

Third, feminist writers have moved beyond criticizing dominating approaches for being gender-blind and excluding women to reconstructing theories and analyzing the significance of masculinity and femininity in the global political economy. These approaches do not focus only on women as an empirical category but understand gender as a social construction that is used as an analytical category. Gender is understood as a structural feature of social life, which dichotomizes not only men and women but shapes our thinkings and identities. From this perspective, women or reproduction cannot simply be 'added' without either women becoming like men or transforming the constructions themselves (Peterson 2005: 502). In contrast to WID and its aim to include women, the GAP approach has exposed the structural privileging of men and masculinity, the naturalization and de-politicization of the gendered division of labor, the *devaluation* of feminized work, the triple burden of women (in familial, formal and informal activities) and criticized the dominating narration of development itself (Peterson 2003: 32). By accusing dominating feminist theories for homogenizing women—

¹⁷ The already mentioned domestic labor debate is one example for the discussion of the appropriateness of certain (gender-blind) Marxist categories for analyzing women's experiences, in this case reproductive labor in the house.

considering women as an analytical category (Mohanty 1988)—and taking patriarchy or gender hierarchy as the primary oppression, Third World women and post-colonial writers have stressed the “interconnection of structural hierarchies” and the diversity and inequalities among women (Peterson 2003: 33).

In the tradition of integrating instead of only 'adding' questions of gender, identity and reproduction into global political economy, Spike Peterson's framework developed in her book “A Critical Rewriting of Global Political Economy” will be presented in the following pages and used in Chapter 5 for the analysis of homework(ers) in Turkey.

3.2.3. RPV-framing, triad analytics and globalization

Basing her broader understanding of economy on Foucault, Bourdieu¹⁸ and feminist economics, Spike Peterson rejects the separation of culture and economy and allows to consider identities and cultures in relation to economic phenomena and to integrate the significance of race/ethnicity, class and gender in the analysis of the changes through globalization. Spike Peterson applies a cross-disciplinary and multi-dimensional analysis and moves beyond a narrow definition of economy by presenting an alternative analytical framing of three mutually constituted economies: the reproductive, productive and virtual economies, RPV-framing. She introduces these three economies as “[...] systematic sites of power, involving meaning systems, normalization, subjectivities, and institutions, they enable us to map identities and culture in relation to conventional social practices, processes, and structures” (Peterson 2002: 4, emphasis in original). In Peterson's frame these spheres of economic life “through and across which power operates” (Peterson 2003: 1) are understood as mutually constitutive and as economical and cultural. The RPV-framing is an analytical device to understand continuities and changes in the global political economy. In the words of Peterson:

[It] brings together the conceptual and material dimensions of '*social reproduction*', non-wage labor, and *informalization* into relation with the familiar but increasingly global, *flexibilized*, information-based and service-oriented '*productive economy*', as well as with the less familiar but increasingly consequential '*virtual economy*' of financial markets, commodified knowledge, and the exchange less of goods than of signs. The goal is to move beyond the limitations of prevailing accounts, while building on their insights and addressing important but neglected features of today's global political economy. (Peterson 2003: 38, emphasis added)

18 For Foucault “[e]conomy [...] signifies the production of linguistic and institutional forms through which human beings define their relationships” (Hutton 1988: 127, quoting Foucault 1980b, 88-92, 158-65). Also Bourdieu's understanding goes beyond the dominant idea of economy. He “characterizes fields of practice/habitus as 'markets' where the distribution of not only material but cultural and symbolic forms of capital (knowledge, prestige, etc.) structures “exchange processes and operations of power” (Peterson 2003: 174, 1, quoting Bourdieu 1991).

Besides the RPV-framing, Peterson presents a second conceptual innovation, the *triad analytics*, in order to integrate the usually marginalized issues of identity and subjectivity into the analysis of social relations and global political economy. With the intention of moving away from the binary dichotomization of material-symbolic and structure and superstructure the triad analytics consists of three interacting and “co-constituting dimensions of social reality” (Peterson 2003: 40): (1) identity (subjectivity, self-formation), (2) meaning system (symbols, discourses, ideologies) and (3) social practices/institutions (actions, social structures, politics, economy). They relate to the questions of “who we are”, “how we think” and “what we do.” This means that Peterson not only focuses on the social embeddedness of the (formal productive) economy in socio-cultural and political context but on the intersection of the three economies including an analysis of identities, ideas and practices as interactive and mutually constitutive.

While speaking about *globalization* Peterson refers to the language of global restructuring but uses Eisenstein's term of the “capitalist racist patriarchy” to describe the ongoing processes as “continuation” but also as a “new conjuncture” of it (Peterson 2003: 4). This changes in the post-1970s global political economy has been named, among others, as “post-Fordism” by the regulation approach (Amin 1994), flexible specialization (Piore/Sable 1984), flexible accumulation (Harvey 1989) and relates to the transition from modernity to post-modernity. By examining how globalization has reshaped these three economies of power she identifies two major structural trends: (1) the fulminate growth in financial markets and (2) the increase in informal and flexible work.

The aim of Peterson's critical analysis is to de-naturalize the 'common sense' and “demystify the operating codes of neoliberal capitalism” (Peterson 2003: 13). By considering the intersection of gender, race, class and nation as structural features of globalization, Peterson aims to expose the structural oppression and problems produced but usually concealed by neoliberalism. Besides pointing out the uneven effects of globalization manifested in these structural hierarchies, Peterson intends to re-politicize power relations that are naturalized through the denigration of the feminine.

In the following chapters I will present the three economies separately and especially focus on the changes relevant to the question of women homeworkers. Even though the two phenomena of financialization and flexibilization need to be analyzed as interdependent, I will focus more on the second trend since homeworkers are more affected by the flexibilization and informalization than by the growth of financial markets.

3.2.4. Productive economy

The productive economy relates to the sphere of formal exchange—the site of workplaces, markets and firms. Conventional economic approaches focus on this economy as it includes primary, secondary and tertiary production and constructs 'real' work as paid labor characterized by contracts and regulated employment relations in the context of the formal economy. Based on the dichotomization between the (paid) productive labor in the public sphere and the (unpaid) reproductive labor in the private sphere neoclassical and Marxist approaches have privileged the former and took the social reproduction through the heterosexual family for granted and not relevant for conventional economic theory. In Peterson's rewritten productive economy, this site is not only the economy of “commodity production and work processes but [...] also involves less objective or objectified production—of information, services, desires, tastes, and financial abstractions“ (Peterson 2002: 7). It affects labor relations, patterns of consumption, produces ideas of “who am I”, of identity and involves therefore power. The following changes in the productive economy are understood as both a condition and an effect of globalization.

Peterson states that we can observe a decline of the value assigned to (non energy) primary production and of their demand since the 1970s. Decreasing terms of trades of primary commodities in favor of increasing prices of manufactured commodities have had devastating consequences in the Third World where primary production is still dominant. Furthermore, Peterson describes *de-industrialization*, the shift from primary and material-based production to information and knowledge-based production as further trend in the productive economy through globalization. The *downgrading of manufacturing* is linked to a loss of highly skilled, well paid and often unionized jobs and a global increase in low waged, semi- or unskilled jobs. Additionally, the increased productivity in the manufacturing sector without increased employment opportunities has led to a so called *jobless growth* in many countries. It is important to note that manufacturing is still important in the global economy, as the share of manufacturing jobs has even increased worldwide since the 1970s. Nevertheless, the growth of information-based production, primarily in industrialized countries, devalues agricultural and manufacturing labor worldwide (Peterson 2003: 50-51). Even though de-industrialization affects particularly major cities and advanced economies, in which Fordist production relations were dominant after World War II, and is therefore not characteristic for the global political economy, it nevertheless influences other countries e.g. in form of changes in the international division of labor and the reallocation of production processes from developed

countries, where most of the products are still consumed, to developing countries (Elson/Pearson 1986).

Flexibilization as one of the major structural trends of globalization is described in conventional approaches as the

[...] shift in production process away from large, integrated factory worksites, unionized workers, and mass production of standardized consumer goods to spatially dispersed (global) production networks, increasingly casualized and informalized workers, and small batch, “just in time” production for culturally constructed niche markets. (Peterson 2003: 59)

It is furthermore linked to an increase in the use of decentralized, subcontracted production, small enterprises, a growth in temporary, part-time, non-unionized jobs and other strategies aiming to increase profitability and reduce production costs, especially of labor, in the context of global competitiveness. Flexibilization therefore translates as erosion of job security in employment and income as well. Strategies to cut labor costs involve employment relations, like part-time or temporary employment, which were already typical for women during Fordism but have moved to the core of the capital accumulation in the time of flexibilization and Post-Fordism. Thus, Peterson asserts that flexibilization feminizes the 'workforce' and links flexibilization to feminization. Standing (1989) argued in his paper “Global Feminization Through Flexible Labor” that the restructuring of the labor market and the increased global competition around the world led to an absolute and relative growth in the use of women's labor through the move of women into former male dominated jobs. This means that men's work was substituted through women's cheap and flexible labor. Moreover, Standing assumes that women are increasingly employed because they offer cheap labor. In this context, the term of feminization on the one hand refers to the increase in the share of women in paid employment, and on the other hand to the transformation of working conditions in the form of casualization, informalization and increasing insecurity not only for women but also for (non-elite) men. Consequently, Peterson (2003: 64) states that the “feminization of the workforce is thus both a material, embodied transformation of labor markets and a conceptual characterization of devalored labor conditions.” It is important to note that Peterson applies the term 'feminization' in reference to the devalorization and denigration, of work, identities, bodies which are associated with femininity. Since Peterson (2005: 507-508) uses gender as an analytical category, feminization does not only relate to the devalorization of women's work but also of feminized 'others,' like immigrants, the poor or other marginalized groups. Due to the fact that the great majority of the world's population is 'feminized' the global political economy is highly dependent on their poorly or often unpaid, flexibilized and un(der)recorded work.

Additionally, *cultural assumption and expectations* about gender devalue women, their work and their skills and legitimate the lower wages of women for the same work. Assuming that women are only secondary earners, in contrast to the male bread winner, justifies the higher participation of women in low-waged jobs typical for flexibilization. The feminization is connected to the “real and perceived flexibility of women” (Peterson 2003: 63). Flexible work arrangement are seen to be advantageous for women as they allow them to earn income while fulfilling their responsibility for social reproduction. Mohanty states that “ideas of flexibility, temporality, invisibility, and domesticity in the naturalization of categories of work are crucial in the construction of Third-World women as an appropriate and cheap labor force” (Mohanty 1997: 20, quoted in Peterson 2003: 65). This means that the international capital making use of the gender ideology, which considers men as the breadwinner and legitimizes the lower labor unit costs of women as more reliable, stable and flexible workers with 'nimble fingers,' fostered the move of women into employment. Women in developing countries have taken over gendered jobs or deskilled formerly men's jobs and worked for lower salaries due to their secondary status in the labor market. Additionally, women are employed in these jobs because they are considered to be more docile and willing to accept bad working conditions. Furthermore, women tend to join trade unions less often and are considered to be more suited to monotonous and repetitious work (Elson/Pearson 1986: 73). Consequently, the preference for women workers is not only material but also ideological.

We can state that only those with high valued skills take advantages of the process of flexibilization as they are not bound up the the rigid Fordist monotonous work, working control and rigid regulation but can profit from flexible working hours, workplace flexibility and the erosion of the temporal and spatial separation of work and leisure time. But women and non-elite men are hardly ever among the few who can benefit from more individual freedom associated with functional flexibility. As flexibilization also stands for the avoidance of organized labor, cheap labor as functional for the competitiveness of many countries, increasing informalization (in the reproductive economy) and growing speculation (in the virtual economy), Peterson concludes that “trends are better understood as weakening the position of men as workers than of dramatically enhancing the position of women” (Peterson 2003: 65).

Following the ideal of efficiency and flexibility, neoliberalism has led in Northern countries to economic restructuring, the transition from Fordism to Post-Fordism, and in Southern countries to structural adjustment policies (SAPs) targeting privatization and trade liberalization and the transition from import substitution to export orientation. SAPs are

austerity programs which include neoliberal reforms as a condition for international loans by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Evolved in the context of foreign debt problems in the 1970s and 1980s and influenced by the Washington Consensus, SAPs aim to increase the level of productivity, rationalize the economy, open the national market for foreign competition and integrate the national economy into the global economy.¹⁹ Despite the gender-neutral language of adjustment programs feminists have not only pointed out the uneven and especially gender-differentiated effects but also the “gender, class and racial/ethnic biases in policy making” (Peterson 2005: 509). When we consider the consequences of privatization, especially the cuts in the public welfare provision, which has an important function for the reproduction of the society, the engendering of restructuring becomes highly visible. As women are culturally responsible for reproductive work, they are expected to fill the gap despite fewer resources. This leads to an increased burden for women working in “triple shift” and a worldwide observable “feminization of poverty” due to declining household income (Peterson 2005: 510). In order to guarantee the well-being of their families, women's reproductive work does not only increase, women also seek employment under deteriorating structural conditions as a survival strategy.

Besides privatization neoliberalism promotes *trade liberalization* as the second pillar. In this model, the removal of barriers is assumed to guarantee a more efficient allocation of resources and to bring economic growth. Liberalization and export orientation have been associated with a feminization of employment as women are preferred in labor-intensive export-oriented industries, the adoption of flexible production processes (as treated above) and informalization (treated in the following chapter).

Peterson (2003: 65-68, 2005: 509) identifies another change in the productive economy: an *increase in the flow of people* in the form of urbanization but also transnational migration. On the one hand, she argues that the movements of people need to be understood in the context of the global political economy and geographical unevenness that shape the structural patterns of migration. Global dynamics like the commercialization of agriculture, the promotion of export manufacturing or high rates of un- and underemployment have served as so called 'push factors' for internal and external migration. Peterson (2003: 67) adds that “[t]he shift to an informational and service economy generates jobs that are polarised in terms of skills and

19 According to Lourdes Beneria (1999: 2-3), adjustments are made particularly in four field: 1) foreign exchange, which includes a devaluation of the currency and increasing inflation as a result of the rise of import prices and domestic prices. 2) Cuts in government spending, which leads to a shift of resources from the public to the private sector and a reduction of governmental services in the health and education sector. 3) economic restructuring in the form of market deregulation 4) trade liberalization and attraction of foreign direct investments.

work conditions, especially in big cities.” Drawing on the findings of Saskia Sassen (1998), Peterson argues that job opportunities are expanding for highly valued and skilled workers at the top end (in relation to 'brain drain' from poorer countries) but also at the bottom end, where women and immigrants as feminized workers are proportionally overrepresented in unskilled jobs. On the other hand, migration is not only influenced by economic factors, the flow of people is also shaped by and shapes individual and group identity formation. The shift of place can also provoke a shift in identity and destabilizes and reshapes traditional family forms and divisions of labor.

These trends in the productive economy have forced people to pursue survival strategies and take up all kinds of jobs they can get. The feminization of employment has led to an increase in the participation of women in the labor force but for most under bad and insecure working conditions. Neoliberal policies have produced a growth in informal activities in the household, in the irregular economy, as the following chapter will demonstrate.

3.2.5. Reproductive economy

The reproductive economy corresponds to the “[...] economy of families and the private sphere— where human life is generated, daily life is maintained, and socialization reproduced” (Peterson 2003: 79). Due to the dichotomization between the (public and valorized) formal and the (marginalized and private) informal sphere and the focus on commodity production and exchange, the reproductive economy is usually considered as irrelevant for analysis of economy in mainstream approaches. The marginalization of this economy is based on the common sense of the enduring ideology of private and public spheres which naturalizes and de-politicizes familial relations and the caring labor of reproductive work and normalizes heterosexism.

By trying to rewrite the global political economy Peterson describes the reproductive economy as the main site of negotiation concerning the conditions under which not only biological procreation but also social reproduction takes place. Peterson (2002: 10) stresses here that social reproduction not only refers to caring labor, the day-to-day reproduction of the family but also to other institutions that reproduce language, education, religion, economy, politics and law. The reproductive economy deals with the household, the informal sector and feminized kinds of work, such as homework, domestic work, international sex work. This hidden part of the economy has been described by neoclassical and Marxist economists as the informal sector, which was assumed to be characteristic for pre- or non-capitalist societies and supposed to shrink through increasing (capitalist) development. Here I will focus on three points dealing with the role of the reproductive economy in the restructuring of global

political economy: First, it is the site of subject formation and socialization, second, the 'devalorization' of women's work, and third, the expansion of informal activities.

The production of the subject that takes place within the family deals with the “socialization into [...] the norms and orderings of one's culture” (Peterson 2002: 10). It guarantees the production of individuals able to work within capitalism, which means the acceptance of the position of workers within the production process and of inequalities and hierarchies linked to it (Peterson 2005: 511). Furthermore, the assignment of different value to people's work (overvalorization and undervalorization) is a crucial factor in the reproduction of power relations. From a feminist perspective, the household is not only a structural feature of capitalism it is also the location of the first internalization of gender differences, identities and belief systems about race/ethnicity, class, gender, nation and other “axes of difference” (Peterson 2002: 10). Thus, socialization refers to the acquirement of an identity, in the triad named as “who am I” and internalization of specific (dominant) codes in the sense of “what I do” (Peterson 2003: 81).

As I demonstrated in the previous subchapter flexibilization has changed the organization of production in the productive economy. Since flexibilization is linked to de-regulation, outsourcing, subcontracting and the casualization of labor and the erosion of labor protection and rights it contributes and merges with *informalization* (Peterson 2003: 84). Peterson states that global restructuring has led to a process which “increased the volume, value, extent, and socio-political significance of informal sector activities” (ibid.: 85). Defining informalization has to be considered as a political act as it defines what counts as economic activity and established thereby boundaries between public and private sphere. In the early 1970s the concept of “informal sector” was introduced by the ILO (1972) in connection with a labor market study in Kenya where a high percentage of workers were involved in unrecorded and unregulated small-scale activities. In order to underline the continuity between the formal and the informal sector and to emphasize that informal activities are not only limited to one sector or industry, the term “informal economy” has been increasingly used. Following the understanding of the ILO, informal economy is used for “workers and companies engaged in not recognized or protected work under legal and regulatory framework and are characterized by a high degree of vulnerability” (ILO 2002, quoted in Dedeoğlu 2010: 4). Drawing on the employment-based definition of Martha Alter Chen, Rena Jhabvala and Frances Lunda (2001: 8), Dedeoğlu defines informal work as follows:

[I]nformal work [is the work] done by wage workers who work without a minimum wage and assured work or benefits, whether they work for formal or informal firms. Working without

employment contract and regular working hours, these informal workers are not covered by benefits such as health insurance or unemployment benefits. (Dedeoğlu 2010: 4)

In contrast to the enterprise-based definition of informal work, which only covers self-employed, family workers, employers and employees of informal enterprises, this definition also includes domestic workers, casual, temporary, part-time and unregistered workers and important for our case, also homeworkers.

Rejecting the separation of distinct spheres and economies and emphasizing the process instead of the status, Peterson prefers to speak about informalization as “[...] a range of activities that are typically describes as informal by virtue of not taking place in the 'formal sector' of conventional economies, i.e. the sphere of production” (Peterson 2003: 192, 13). Focusing on the degree of formalization and regularization Peterson differentiates between the least formalized “social (or domestic) economy” including families, household, subsistence and mutual-aid networks and the underground, hidden “shadow” or “irregular economy” in which homework, baby sitting, streetside selling, sex work etc. are included (Peterson 2003: 86). Informal activities interact with the formal economy of commodity production, profit-making and labor regulation, but is structurally distinguished from it. Using this understanding of informalization, Peterson also includes non-waged work in her understanding of informality. Informality therefore covers very diverse and heterogeneous activities that take place in the public and the private sphere, in rural and urban areas, in the global North and South. Even though informal workers are not a homogenous group most of them have in common that their work is both invisible, under-recorded and 'feminized.' They do not have access to social security, labor rights and minimum wages which 'real' workers in the 'formal sector' can benefit from.

Even though secured formal employment with safe-guarded labor contracts was a male privilege in Fordist industrialized countries and the majority of workers in developing countries could never enter the formal sector, informalization does not only relate to the deterioration of working conditions for male workers in Europe, it also refers to the increased use of informal workers in households, rural areas or in urban squatter settlements which became highly integrated into the global political economy (Homeworkers Worldwide 2003). The consequences of informalization reveal that “globalization is not simply economic but inextricably social and cultural” (Peterson 2003: 110). The shift of production from the formal to the informal economy, the decrease in state welfare and the deterioration in work conditions and real wages have increased the pressure on the family/household to engage in informal activities in order to compensate for the declining resources. In this context

informalization on the one hand refers to the increase in reproductive work done predominantly by women as the primary agents of social reproduction, and on the other hand to an increase in informal activities in waged labor in and outside the household. Saskia Sassen (2000, quoted in Peterson 2003: 97) has called the expectation that women will absorb the costs of structural adjustments—often through informal activities—and therefore places the responsibility on women as “feminization of survival.”

Since the majority of workers engaged in informal activities are women, migrants or other economically marginalized and feminized groups (Sassen 1998) informalization strongly reveals the significance of power relations since involvement in informal activities is not only determined by poverty but by structural hierarchies. Informalization decreases the structural power of workers, impedes collective action through the isolation and individualization of workers and increases the dependence on self-reliance. Patriarchal ideologies interacting with racism render women, migrants and economically marginalized groups the prototypical informal workers whose bodies, skills and labor gets materially and ideologically devalued, in the words of Peterson 'feminized.' Furthermore informalization tends to reproduce racialized geopolitical hierarchies and channels 'feminized' workers into insecure, low paying labor intensive employment in order to secure the reproduction of the global political economy and increase profit.

Despite the liberal and Marxist prognosis that the informal economy will lose its significance through growing (capitalist) development, informal activities did not only increase in developing countries but also in rich economically developed countries. Therefore, informalization cannot be simply described as a side-effect of globalization or as a passing phenomenon, but as a structural feature of capital accumulation and a crucial strategy to increase profit during the last years (Peterson 2002: 112). Peterson locates informal activities in the reproductive economy because socially reproductive and informal labor are a condition of the productive economy and the accumulation that sustain the virtual economy.

3.2.6. Virtual economy

Peterson defines the third systemic site of power as the virtual economy. In contrast to the still marginalized reproductive economy, the virtual economy is increasingly integrated into the analysis of the global political economy. The virtual economy is the site of “financial markets, cyberspace, and the exchange less of goods than of signs” (Peterson 2002: 1) in which Peterson identifies three different modes of the virtual economy: 1) the financial 2) the informational and 3) the cultural mode. Although this chapter is a very strong and convincing part of Peterson's work, I will focus on the growing importance of financial markets as this is

more important to my topic than the increasing exchange of information, consumerism as an ideology and the political economy of signs.

Despite the fact that the revolution in informational and communicative technologies does not have a direct effect on homeworkers, the increasing role of computer technology is important as it enabled the growth in financial markets and the compression of time and space. Besides the reproductive and the productive economy, the virtual economy, which has grown in significance through the increasing role of cross-border financial transactions and the deregulation of capital control, is therefore also relevant for the topic of this thesis.

Since the 1970s we can observe a shift from fixed exchange rates and the regulation of capital flows to floating exchange rates regulated by the market because of the collapse of the Bretton Woods system. As this transformation is in most countries connected to deregulation and the abolishment of exchange controls this shift meant a crucial turning point for the globalization of capital flows. This resulted in an enormous expansion of global financial transaction or as Drucker says, an “enormous mass of 'world money'[...] [that] is not being created by economic activity like investment, production, consumption, or trade. It is created primarily by currency trading [...] It is virtual rather than real money” (Drucker 1997: 162, quoted in Peterson 2003: 126).

Besides the explosive growth of financial transactions, value has been increasingly created not by economic activities through production of goods and services but by financial speculations, the trading in money. Therefore the creation of value in the global financial markets got “disembodied”, it is decoupled from the 'real' economy of (material) production, investment and trade (Peterson 2003: 164). In the virtual economy symbolic/virtual money is exchanged and features an “economy of signs” (ibid.: 116). Peterson remarks:

[T]he virtual economy features the exchange of symbols: primarily money in the context of global financial markets; but also information in the context of a 'postindustrial,' 'informational,' or 'service economy'; and 'signs' in the context of postmodern aesthetics, consumption, meaning and culture. (ibid.: 113-114)

Since higher profit can be generated by financial markets rather than in the so called 'real' economy “[...] trade in virtual money is dwarfing trade in 'real' products” (ibid.: 130). Thus, it is important to consider the linkages and overlapping between the three economies and link the growth in the financial markets structurally to “the shift [...] from manufacturing jobs and Fordist practices to an increase in service jobs, flexible production, and informal, non-unionized, low-waged and insecure labor forms” (Peterson 2002: 16). On the one hand, these structural changes have led to a devalorization of manufacturing and an encouragement of

short-term investments. On the other hand, the growing importance of the virtual economy increased the burden of socialized risks through the enormous instability of financial markets (Peterson 2005: 513). Feminist analysis have made the gendered costs of crises visible and have showed that girls and women are stronger affected by cuts in the welfare system, increased informal activities, longer working hours, decreasing participation in education and degenerating conditions of social reproductions (ibd.: 129-128).

4. Methodology

In this chapter I will present my methodological approach. I am going to reflect on my own positionality to the study and the question of objectivity and power. Besides presenting the problem-centered interview and content analysis as the methods used to generate and analyze data, I will also examine the role of my gatekeeper, the person who introduced me to the women homeworkers, and the location of the interview for my research findings.

4.1. Nothing is objective—My own positionality

“A person is defined by the stories he [sic!] tells about himself [sic!] as well as by the stories that are told about him [sic!]”, Burton Blatt (1981, quoted in Ashby 2011) writes. Many stories have been told *about* homeworking women. It was very important for me to 'give the voice', which is usually only on the 'expert,' the academic, the trainer, also *to* the women homeworkers as actors and experts of their own reality. It was crucial for me to learn about their personal perception of their position as women homeworkers in Turkey and to listen to them speaking in their own words about their experiences as organized homeworkers. Thus, writing about the organization of women homeworkers in Turkey and conducting interviews with women working in a homeworkers' cooperative in Ankara not only raised methodological questions, it also made me reflect on my own positionality to the study, the differences and similarities between me and the research participants. It also encouraged me to think about issues of objectivity and power in the production of knowledge during this process.

Despite some commonalities with the women homeworkers, such as my position as a woman, a child of a workers' family coming from a small town and having moved to the capital of Austria, my precarious living conditions and my ability to speak Turkish, I was confronted with the dichotomization between 'insider' and 'outsider,' my educational privilege and my role as a *yabancı* (stranger, foreigner) writing about homeworkers in Turkey. I think it is also worth mentioning that I spent more than 12 months in Ankara in the past two years and lived, studied and worked in different parts of the town. The fact that I felt very familiar with Ankara and did not experience something like 'leaving home and going to the field' facilitated my research and made me experience the feeling of being an 'outsider' less strongly. But what perhaps concerned me most was the fact that I am a non-homeworking²⁰ woman from a rich Western European country who was writing and producing knowledge *about* Turkish and

20 The production of knowledge at home complies to my category of home-based work, not homework. Although much of this thesis was written in my own flats in Ankara and Vienna, I am not a homeworker as my work is considered 'skilled' and my work is not feminized because of being produced at home.

Kurdish women living in a poor district in Ankara, Turkey. I talked to my Turkish friend and lecturer Ayça K. about my concerns to engage in this research as a woman having the possibility to study at a university and having grown up in Austria. She smiled and told me that many of her students at Bilkent, a private elite university in Ankara, had grown up in Turkey, maybe even in Ankara but would never leave the richest districts of Ankara or go to a district where homeworkers are living because of their class difference (research diary 28.09.2012). After this conversation I realized that being a cultural 'insider' also does not automatically open the route to better 'knowing.' Even though my nationality, my status as an 'outsider' definitely influences and shapes research encounters, processes and outcomes, it is important to avoid a reduction of my positionality to ethnicity and culture thought as fixed and stable. Furthermore, the epistemological assumption that the local 'insider' has a closer, truer access to knowledge does not only conceal class differences it is also based on a positivist notion of knowledge and reality. It assumes that knowledge “[...] pre-exist[s] the research process and [...] is simply awaiting to be discovered by those with the appropriate cultural resources and skills” (Herod 1999: 314). In accordance with Peterson, I would argue that a post-positivist perspective needs to reject “[...] the possibility of absolute objectivity because no fixity 'meaning' exists independent of participation in mediated–social, discursive–realities” (Peterson 2003: 35-36). This signifies that both interviewer and interviewee participate in the constructing of meaning and reality and there is thus no 'real' truth to be discovered. It turned out to be crucial to consider my positionality not as fixed but relational and fluid.

Besides reflecting about my own positionality, I also consider it vital to think about power relations involved in the research process. I tried to reduce my position of power as the researcher by allowing flexibility in the interview process (Chapter 4.2), letting the participants choose the site of the interview (Chapter 4.4.) and trying to construct a non-hierarchical relationship. Furthermore, I conducted the interviews in Turkish, the language of use in the cooperative and also the mother tongue of most of the members. In accordance with my experience, Letherby (2003: 114-115) notes that the research relationship is fluid and that the researcher does not always have the control of the research situation and his/her power as a researcher can be challenged. During interviewing I realized that some of the women were much more experienced in giving interviews than I was in conducting them. I was in control of the order in which questions were asked, but the participants decided whether to answer or not, and to what extent. Furthermore, my young age (at the time of the interview I was 23), my accent and my mistakes when speaking Turkish obviously also weakened my authority

and power as a researcher in the research process. Although the interviewee as an agent may resist to answer some questions and give the researcher the feeling of 'powerlessness,' the position of the interviewer as the researcher gives him/her institutional power. Despite the aim to avoid hierarchical power relations, power is part of all kinds of relationships and the production of knowledge always involves 'power over.'

Even though the research process is a social, relational process in which interviewer and interviewee participate, after 'leaving the field' the researcher has ultimate control over the material. Therefore, it was important for me to be conscious of the hierarchy and power in the post-field process in which the active role of the women homeworkers is over and only the researcher is involved in the selection and interpretation of the material (ibid.: 117). In contrast to *feminist empiricists*²¹, I do not assume that the appropriate use of traditional scientific methods, such as problem-centered interview and content analysis, separates me from values or makes my results more objective or closer to truth. I am aware that I also exercise power by turning the 'experience' of women into written (English) text, by (unconsciously) hearing some things and excluding or marginalizing others. In contrast to traditional science intending to separate politics from research, I consider the research process as a *political act* in which power relations are involved.

At this point I want to emphasize that I do not aim to speak *for* women homeworkers or claim to know about their 'real' lives. I am aware that I was only partially able to access the lives of the women homeworkers I am interested in. However, reflecting on my positionality and positioning myself in power relations also does not allow me to step out of my position as a woman researcher from a Western country, but it reveals how my positionality shapes the result of this study. As a researcher I cannot stand outside of the reality that I observe because I participate in it as well. Even though I aim to analyze the power relations women homeworkers are challenging through their organization, I am also involved in the power relations determining their position and my position. Nevertheless, I believe that looking at subjugated knowledges, listening to the 'experience' of women homeworkers, trying to understand their problems and hopes, learning about their own concepts they use to make sense of their reality and getting involved in their collective actions may allow me to acquire knowledge 'beyond my position' and participate in the production of anti-hegemonic knowledge.

21 Feminist Empiricism challenges the way traditional methods have been used by noticing androcentrism—the experience of men is assumed to be the norm and women are constructed as deviant—and 'adding women' to claims about the general nature of human beings. Despite its useful critique of value freedom and the challenge to the view that the social identity of the researcher is irrelevant, feminist empiricism does not question the scientific goal of objectivity and the production of truth (Letherby 2003: 43, Peterson 2003: 29).

4.2. The problem-centered interview

During my three-month stay in Ankara I conducted six problem-centered interviews with active members of the women homeworkers' cooperative Kozadan İpeğe²². Witzel and Reiter (2012: 4) characterize the problem-centered interview as a “qualitative-dialog method of reconstructing knowledge about relevant problems.” The meaning of 'problem' in this method has a stronger allusion to the German word of *Problemstellung* or the French *problématique* than to a 'problematic' issue. It is oriented towards relevant social problems. In my case this 'problem' refers to the living and working conditions of women homeworkers and their struggle to get organized. Five out of the six interviews focused on the 'problem' of the personal perception of the changes since the time the women as active members of a cooperative became organized. In order to learn more about the establishment, the aims and the working mode of the cooperative I conducted a sixth interview with another homemaker , Devrim, and asked different questions.

Aiming to neutralize the supposed contradiction between being open-minded and being led by theory, this theory-generating method is influenced by an “interplay of inductive and deductive thinking” (Witzel 2000). Methodologically, the problem-centered interview is neither in line with the deductive procedures in which data is only collected and then verified or falsified nor with the inductive position of naive empiricism assuming a general openness of the interviewer who has no prior knowledge of the research setting. It assumes as mutual relationship between induction and deduction.

Compared to the narrative interview (Schütze 1977), in which the interviewer is not supposed to interfere in the narration process, the interviewer in the problem-centered interview engages more in a conversation with the participant. S/he asks questions, but without interrupting the flow of narration. The problem-centered interview is more *structured* than the narrative interview but is still an *open-ended interview*. The structure of the interview is not fixed as the guideline of the problem-centered interview is flexible. I decided to make use of the method of problem-centered interview because it does not only aim to make “objective evidence on human behavior” but also emphasizes the significance of the “subjective perceptions and ways of processing social reality” (Witzel 2000).

Witzel suggests using the four following instruments in support of the problem-centered interview: the short questionnaire, the interviewing guidelines, tape recording and a postscript.

22 In Chapter 6 I will introduce the Ankara-based women homeworkers' cooperative Kozadan İpeğe and the five members interviewed.

Before the narration process, I made use of a *short questionnaire* to collect data on social characteristics like name, age, place of birth, years of doing homework and years of being active in the cooperative. Additionally I assured that I will not use the real names of the participants in the interviews in order to guarantee anonymity. The question answer-scheme helped me to start the conversation and gave a first impression about the positionality of the participants. Furthermore, the short questionnaire prevented to obstruct the narration process by asking questions about statistics or dates.

The *guideline* is a crucial part of the problem-centered interview. It ensures comparability as the same general information is collected. Intending to investigate my research question, the interview guideline was theory generated and focused on the individual and collective changes experienced by the women as experts of their situation. Questions like “I have found the the homeworkers' slogan 'We are workers. We want rights' in a newspaper. What does it mean for you” or “What has changed for you personally after joining the cooperative“ encouraged the participants to speak about their own perception of the organizing process as women homemaker, the shift in their personal identity and development and their motivations and hopes. As the interviews were conducted in Turkish, I asked Turkish mother tongue speakers for support in the creation of the guideline in order to avoid any misunderstandings.²³ As I was not very experienced in the conduction of interviews (especially not in Turkish) the guideline also provided a helpful support during the interview.²⁴

All interviewees gave me the allowance to *tape* the interview, which enabled me to focus on the conversation and fully transcribe the interviews. Despite my advanced Turkish skills, I also experienced language problems during the interview. Consequently the taping and the transcription helped me to understand some difficult parts. The taping and full transcription of the interviews also allows the reuse of the data. The transcription served as a primary source for the research data, not the original interview itself. Even though I also tried to include non-verbal elements through the postscriptum, the analysis was primarily based on the transcript.

23 This step was especially important in order to use a comprehensive language and to avoid Marxist or trade union jargon like in the word of *örgütlenmek* which means to organize, which is typically for the jargon of left winged groups and not understood by everyone. Consciously I used the word *işçi*, standing for worker, in the questionnaire in order to find out about their reaction to this term and the issue of self-identification as a homemaker.

24 Please consider the guideline used with the five organized women homeworkers about the personal experience after joining the cooperative in the Appendix.

Postscripts were written after the interview to complement the scripts. They include comments on the behavior of the interviewees, body language and my own behavior as an interviewer. I also noted first impressions of interpretation.

The interviews were fully transcribed into Turkish, which was also the language spoken in the cooperative, and then partially translated to English. For the analysis of the fully transcribed interviews I used the method of qualitative content analysis by Mayring, described in Chapter 4.5.

4.3. Gatekeeper

Despite much effort to build up contact with Ev-Ek-Sen or scientists working on homework in Turkey, I did not manage to speak or write with any 'expert' before my arrival in Ankara. Because of my good knowledge about the town and my social network of friends and colleagues, I planned to do my fieldwork in the capital, instead of Istanbul or another city. However, I was not sure if the project still existed and if I would be able to contact women homeworkers. In the end, it turned out to be very uncomplicated owing to the help of my gatekeeper, Devrim, whom I met already in my second week in Turkey thanks to a friend. Devrim, who is an active member of the cooperative, invited me to come to the women homeworkers' cooperative in Tuzlucaşayır after I had told her about my research topic.

In order to draw a full picture about my fieldwork in Ankara it is noteworthy that I kept in contact with Devrim after the conduction of the first five interviews. She also introduced me to her other sister and her nieces and invited me to a four-day trip to *Dersim* (Tunceli), where her family originally comes from. This trip brought me not only closer to Alevism and the position of Alevis²⁵ in Turkey; I also spent a lot of time with women around forty and talked with them their problems, their anger and hopes. Also after the trip I continued my contact with Devrim, visited her in her house and enjoyed listening to her stories about Tuzlucaşayır, the feminist movement in Turkey, the Kurdish topic and so on. Devrim also introduced me to many friends and political activists, which helped me to not only to understand the situation of homeworkers in Turkey better, but also the situation of the political Left, the Kurdish and Alevi issue and the feminist movement(s) in Turkey.

I decided to write about this contact with Devrim more in detail because the relationship with her influenced (consciously and unconsciously) my perception of homeworkers in Turkey and

25 Alevis constitute one quart of Turkey's population and therefore the largest religious minority in Turkey. Alevism combines Shiism with elements of Anatolian Sufi traditions but is also connected to specific cultural, more humanistic and leftist values. However, Alevis are not a homogenous group, there are religious but also cultural differences among those who perceive themselves as Alevis. Some Alevis are from Turkish origin, others are Kurdish.

particularly the cooperative. Devrim as an active member of the cooperative is not neutral to the research setting and as a gatekeeper influenced my access to this social space. I always tried to reflect in my research diary about her influence on my perception on the research field, on Tuzluçayır, on the women homeworkers but also the perception of others of myself. This example shows that positionality is not only connected to the subjective perception of a social position but also to the position of oneself in difference to others.

4.4. Location

In “‘Placing’ Interviews: Location and Scaled of Power in Qualitative Research” Elwood and Martin (2000) demonstrate that the site of an interview has wide-ranging implications and influences the results of the study. They argue that “the interview site itself produces ‘micro-geographies’ of spatial relations and meaning, where multiple scales of social relations intersect in the research interview” (ibid.: 649). The location of the interview influences the “positionality of participants in relation to the people, places and interactions discussed in the interview” (ibid.: 649). That is why I consider it as important to name the locations where the six interviews took place.

The five interviews with the women homeworkers were held in a separate room in the premises of Kozadan İpeğe cooperative. This quiet room next to their working areas usually serves as a kind of office and a store room of already finished bags. The women themselves decided to conduct the interviews in this separate room and not next to the others. This guaranteed anonymity and silence and allowed them to speak freely. The sixth interview that focused on the establishment of the cooperative was conducted in the living room of the homeworker's flat close to the cooperative. The home as the location of the interview with Devrim was particularly advantageous as the atmosphere was much more relaxed—in the cooperative the women homeworkers always feel that they have to keep on working in order to finish the order—and allowed her to express criticism of the cooperative.

The chosen locations are obviously not 'neutral' as I was there as a guest. Nevertheless, I assume that power relations are always involved and also not absent in so called neutral locations like restaurants or cafés. As my research question focuses on the changes in the life of women through the involvement in the cooperative, I considered particularly the cooperative as the best fitting site. It provided me with the possibility to enter their work center, observe the interaction of the women among each other in the cooperative and the procedure of homework and participate in group conversations with them. As one interview question also targets the experience in working together with other women in a group, it was

important to be in the social space that allows homeworkers to leave the house and meet with other homeworkers. Furthermore, I assume that the conduction of the interview in the work center of the cooperative even made the women homeworkers more experts of the issue of homework and strengthened their confidence during the interview.

4.5. Qualitative content analysis by Mayring

In the course of a study about the psycho-social consequences of unemployment, Philipp Mayring developed a concept of qualitative content analysis in the 1980s that aims “to preserve the advantages of quantitative content analysis as developed within communication science and to transfer and further develop them to qualitative-interpretative steps of analysis” (Mayring 2000). Analyzing text material of different forms, such as interviews, newspaper articles, Mayring's content analysis does not only focus on manifest content, like the main ideas of the text, it also takes into consideration the latent content, such as the context information. Mayring (ibid.) defines content analysis as “an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and step by step models, without rash quantification.” In order to guarantee reliability and validity the procedures should be inter-subjectively comprehensible. Qualitative content analysis allowed me to perform a systematic, rule-based analysis of the material.

According to Mayring (1988, quoted in Lamnek 1989: 202-204) the process of content analysis consists of nine main parts. (1) At the beginning the material used in the analysis needs to be determined. (2) The second step deals with the situation from which the material originated. (3) In the third step the researcher needs to define the form of the material, such as in my example interview transcripts, newspaper articles, the declaration of a trade union etc. Every text is perceived as being part of a communication process. (4) After the description of the material in the first three steps, the fourth step defines the focus, the so called direction of the analysis. (5) The fifth step deals with the research question which should be answered through the analysis. (6) Afterwards, the techniques of analysis are defined. Mayring differentiated between three concrete methodological procedures (summary, explication, content-based structuring) of content analysis that will be introduced below. (6) The sixth step defines the unit of analysis. (7) By making use of summary, explication and/or content-based structuring the analysis of the material starts at the seventh step. (8) In the last step the interpretation takes place.

According to Mayring (1983, quoted in Flick 2006: 313-314) the concrete methodical procedures of content analysis includes (1) summary, (2) explication and (3) structuring. (1) The first technique seeks to systematically extract the information of the material used for the research question by reducing the material to its main content. In deviation from Mayring, I did not paraphrase all parts of the interviews because many sentences were very short and the content very dense and compressed. For other parts and particularly in the very long interview with Devrim paraphrasing and drawing out repeated sentences was helpful in order to generate the relevant content. In the end of the summary a manageable corpus should be created which still reflects the original material. (2) The technique of explication was used in order to understand some indications, learn more about the *herstory*²⁶ of Kozadan İpeğ and the process of mobilizing women homeworkers. The second technique supports the clarification of the content. I used both *narrow context analysis* which adds material from direct environment of the text to facilitate the interpretation and *wide content analysis* which includes also information beyond the text such as in my case information about Turkish labor laws, the Contemporary Women and Youth foundation or about the district of Tuzluca. (3) The third technique allowed me to arrange the material according to the pre-defined levels of personal and collective emPOWERment and the following different dimensions as a result of a deductive-inductive process. This means that a combination of the three content analytical techniques has been chosen for the content analysis in this research.

As the description of the material is an important step in the content analysis, I will give a short overview of the material in the following.²⁷ The transcription of the five interviews with the women homeworkers about their perception of the changes served as the most important source of the personal level and the collective level in reference to the cooperative as a local strategy for homeworkers. Furthermore the newsletters of Homeworkers Worldwide (2007-2010) called “We work at Home” were indispensable for the analysis of the global movement of women homeworkers and the organizing process of women homeworkers in Turkey. Particularly, The documentation of the foundation of Ev-Ek-Sen, the trade union of women homeworkers in Turkey was particularly helpful (see Chapter 5.2.). Additionally, I used the declaration and the call for unity from Ev-Ek-Sen (in English) and the self-description of Kozadan İpeğ from their blog. These documents describe the groups from their own standpoint and mention those demands and activities that they want to make more visible.

26 The term *herstory*—developed as a feminist critique of the male-biased *histography*—attempts to emphasize the role women played in history. As women's role in society has been excluded and denigrated in the male-centered historical records, this approach intends to reconstruction history from a feminist perspective.

27 Please consider a list of the material used in the content analysis in the Appendix.

Gülsüm Coşkun's (2000) article “Building Women Homebased Workers' Organizations in Turkey” was also an important part of the analyzed material. In the article she reports about the main points of the *herstory* of women's organizational struggle in Turkey not from the position as an academic or a trainer but from a homeworking activist (that only graduated from primary school) involved in HomeNet Turkey and doing mapping²⁸ and local workshops in all different parts of Turkey. In addition, I used an interview with the president of the cooperative published in Mamak Halk²⁹ which the homeworkers wanted me to read. In short, all the material for the content analysis was based on texts produced by homeworkers themselves or their supporters. For the *explication* I drew on newspaper articles about the organizing of women homeworkers from Turkey. The articles I utilized are all accessible online and were published on websites from the feminist and/or labor movement and from other newspaper (Hürriyet, Yüksekova Güncel) in Turkey. Furthermore, Devrim's interview served as an important source for the explication.

Despite the more deductive approach of this thesis I tried to define the different dimensions of personal and collective emPOWERment in a more inductive way and stay open for the conceptualization of life changes formulated by the homeworkers themselves. Looking back to Chapter 3.1. I differentiated between personal and collective emPOWERment that served as my main categories. I tried to formulate the subcategories out of the material, reformulate old categories and develop new ones. Even though the different theoretical thinking on personal and collective emPOWERment definitely influenced my formulation of subcategories, I aimed to incorporate the concepts women homeworkers have developed and used to make sense of their reality as well.³⁰

28 Mapping is a technique used in the action research approach which aims to reach homeworkers and build networks and organizations. *Horizontal mapping* intends to identify who are the homeworkers and which kind of work is done. It focuses on problems, such as occupational illnesses, women's issues, informal work, and the possibilities of organizing. *Vertical mapping* deals with the chain of production between the employer, the subcontractor and the homeworker and the location of homeworkers within the supply chain (Homeworkers Worldwide 2003). The mapping is not only done by trainers but also by women homeworkers themselves (Coşkun 2010: 215).

29 Mamak Halk is a left-winged, monthly local newsletter of Mamak.

30 A content analysis grip, which includes some examples, can be found in the Appendix.

5. The context: The position of women homeworkers in Turkey

By using literature about homeworkers in the global and the (urban) Turkish context and analyzing it with the devices of a feminist global political economy and the understanding of power demonstrated in Chapter 3.2., I want to describe the 'position' of women homeworkers in Turkey in this chapter. By focusing on three structural changes, (1) the presumed separation of home and 'real' work, (2) flexibilization and feminization and (3) informalization, I intend to describe the context in which women homeworker's struggle takes place in Turkey and by focusing in a second step on the meaning of these changes for the position of women homeworkers in Turkey in each chapter.

5.1. The myth of separated worlds: home and 'real' work

5.1.1. Capitalist industrialization

In order to understand the problems women homeworkers are faced with, it is crucial to consider the role of homework as paid work done in the household by predominately women in the capitalist economy. Despite the danger of taking the experience of white (heterosexual) middle-class women of Western Europe as the norm for all women and 'silencing the Others,' I will deal in this subchapter with the presumed move of production from the household to the factory and the separation of work and home through capitalist industrialization.

When industrial capitalism developed and the so called 'productive' labor left the house in order to sell its labor power, the main site of production shifted from the household to the factory. The household turned from a unit of production and consumption in which women's work had been essential for the family to a sphere structurally and ideology separated from the productive economy, in which wage labor, working contract, exchange relations and commodification were dominating and marked as masculine (Peterson 1992: 42-43). Elisabeth Prügl (1999: 27) states that "[t]he industrial revolution entailed not only a separation of home and work but also a spatial reorganization of gender relations that created the home as a female sphere and the public world of work and politics as a male one." This means that home and work were not only spatially separated, the household as the sphere for the family became feminized and all activities performed in it were constructed as non-work and made invisible.

Consequently, industrial capitalism did not only affect patterns of production and changed the division of labor by class and gender, it also reconfigured identities, redefined ideas of proper womanhood and manhood and was reinforced by the 'cult of domesticity.' The ideology of

domesticity as a feature of middle and upper class life in Victorian period created the notion that there are two separate spheres: one for men, the public realm full of violence, temptation and dangers, and another for women, the domestic sphere, the home as the retreat from harsh working life, the place of harmony and the women's only proper place. In reference to woman's nature, women should only devote themselves to the well-being of their husband and children and take care of the management of the household (Boardmann 2000). The raising of the future generation and the day to day reproduction were not only seen as a woman's personal affair but considered to concern the welfare of the whole community (Boris 1996: 28).

Although the daily life experience of the majority of the working class could not fit this hegemonic family model and women continued to play an important role in and outside the household for the income of the family, women were defined as housewives and mothers and men as workers and breadwinners. The construction of home as the “place to rest, the opposite of the factory or workplace” (Boris 1996: 28) and the assumption that production moved from the household to the factory and “workplace and residence became spatially segregated” (Silver 1993: 181) tend to make all forms of work, paid or unpaid, done in the domestic realm invisible and marginalizes especially women's participation in the political economy.

Women of the middle and upper class became defined as mothers; their economic contribution to the family became invisible as domestic labor lost its value. The idealization of motherhood furthermore separated nurturing and dependent care from work. Thus wage labor became identified with the ideal workers as a man, because women—no matter what their actual life situation—were to care for children and maintain households. (Boris 1996: 24)

Even though the ideology of domesticity evolved in the middle class of Great Britain, it turned out to be (globally) hegemonic through imperialism and the discourse of modernization. The separation of the reproductive and productive economies tended to under- and devalorize work performed in the 'feminized' domestic realm and constituted an understanding of 'real' work only placed outside the home, in the productive economy, and performed by masculinized workers.

Growing out of her research on lace makers in India, Maria Mies (1982, 1986) labels “housewifization” as a process taking place in the context of colonialism and global capitalism that defines women as housewives, dependent on their income earning husband, irrespective of their actual work status. The social definition of women as housewives is the counterpart of men being defined as breadwinners. Additionally, the Western welfare states, which served as a role model also for developing countries were extensively based on this

“myths of separated worlds” (Prügl 1999: 27) and the 'common sense' locating men in the public sphere of politics and 'real' (paid) work, and women in the family sphere characterized by caring (unpaid) and emotional labor (Peterson 2003: 79). Elisabeth Prügl emphasizes that many Fordist labor laws have (re)produced the gendered separation between work and home:

Although gender constructions shifted in different geographical and historical contexts throughout the twentieth century, oppositional constructions of masculine and feminine became an integral part of global Fordism, enabling such as unequal pay, occupational segregation, restricted pension rights for married female workers, or the concept of family wage. (Prügl 1999: 104)

Despite the fact that capitalism was only poorly developed at the times of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the Kemalist³¹ founders of the Republic of Turkey did not only aim to get rid of the Ottoman past and its Islamic law, they also intended to change the lifestyle, appearance and the daily habits of people. The goal was to reach 'the contemporary level of civilization' which meant reforms targeting the modernization understood as Westernization of Turkey's society. It would go beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze the effect of capitalist expansion on the separation of home and work in Turkey in detail. However, it is worth noting that despite the fact that the Kemalist founders of the Republic of Turkey encouraged (elite) women to increase their participation in the public sphere, to follow education and seek jobs outside the home in order to foster national (capitalist) development, they did not challenge the idea that women are responsible for the well-being of the family. Women's role was considered as functional for the Westernization of the Turkish society as they were the ones educating the future generation of Turkey (Arat 1994). Through the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code in 1926 Turkey did not only redefine and reshape gender relations; it also transferred hegemonic notions of femininity and masculinity from capitalist Western Europe to Turkey and promoted a specific ideal in the society of Turkey.³² Like in other Western states, the Civil Code defined the husband as the head of the family and responsible for the support of it. The woman was defined as a wife dependent on her husband and as a homemaker responsible for the welfare of the family. Furthermore, woman's income-generating activity outside the house was dependent on the husband's permission. Even though this Civil Code improved women's position in the family and gave them political

31 Kemalism--named after its founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk--is the officially adopted ideology of the Republic of Turkey with the following six principles (also called the six arrows): nationalism, etatism, republicanism, populism, revolutionism and laicism.

32 The Civic Code banned polygamy, imposed a minimum age in order to prevent child marriage, and recognized women as equal to men in certain areas, such as inheritance, property, witnessing. It also granted women the right to choose their partner, to divorce and to keep their maternal right after divorce. Through the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code the nuclear family became an institution organized and protected by the law (Arat 1994: 63-64).

rights, it re-institutionalized male power in the family and stabilized women's social and economic dependence on men and normalized the separation of 'real' work and home.³³

The example of Turkey shows how notions of femininity and masculinity are global and interact with local power relations. The definition of women's primary role as both reproducers and 'good wives' responsible for the 'home' need to be understood therefore as a global (not universal) trend.

5.1.2. “We work at home”

Going back to England, through the integration of production at home into the industrial division of labor in the mid-19th century and the putting-out system the factories homework even increased and changed its form: Homeworkers started to produce no longer the whole piece but only fulfilled one step of the production process (Balaban/Sarioğlu 2008: 4). In contrast to the Marxist prediction that production inside the household will diminish because of increasing industrialization and the better control of labor in the factory, decentralized, small-scale and labor-intensive continued to exist and even started to grow worldwide through flexibilization since the 1970s. Boris (1996) stresses as well that homework is not a residual form of production but integral to industrial revolution. This means that homework as the “outside department of the factory” (Marx 2007: 505 [1987]) did not disappear through modern production techniques but “grew in symbiotic relation to the factory system” (Boris 1996: 20). Despite the fact that the transfer of production from the factory to the household in the form of homework demonstrates the interrelation of the productive and the reproductive economy, the constructed separation between home and 'real' work has not lost its significance and granted the continuation of cheap production at home.

As homework takes place in the household and is carried out besides unpaid domestic work, in the reproductive economy, it has been feminized, in empirical and analytical terms. It has been constructed as a hobby performed by housewives, in short as non-work without any value. Because of the fact that homework is performed within the own four walls of the worker and not in the factory or the streets, homeworkers also remain invisible. According to Singh and Kelles-Vitanen (1987: 14) the contribution of homeworkers to the economy is not captured by national and international statistics and remains therefore invisible for policy makers and planners. This is why advocates have often called homeworkers the “invisible work force” (Eşim, Sims 2000: 95). Erendil (2003) states, “Homeworking women are invisible to

33 The new Civil Code, which came into force in 2001 as a response to the feminist movement, abolished the legal supremacy of men in marriage and considers the spouses as equal partners.

the state (they are not included in statistics), to society, and even to themselves in the sense that they often do not consider themselves to be workers.“

Since homeworkers are spatially isolated in their houses and do not have the experience of working together with others at the same site, they have been considered as unable to develop class consciousnesses. They were therefore excluded from the 'imagined community' of the working class (Prügl 1999: 38). Consequently, homeworkers need to increase their visibility in order to win acknowledgement as workers also by those opposed to capital, as it has always been visible for capital, according to Staples (2006: 5). Already Karl Marx mentions the ability of capital for mobilizing homeworkers and names them as an army set “in motion, by means, of invisible threads” (Marx 2007:505 [1987]).

Small-scale studies on homeworkers in Turkey have exposed the value of Peterson's triad analytics and have shown that the traditional patriarchal ideologies of states, religions and families, which are constructing women homeworkers as mothers and housewives responsible for the care of the family, constitute also identities. Jenny White's (1994) study on homework in Istanbul demonstrates that women homeworkers often do not define themselves as workers. They rather consider themselves as mothers or non-working housewives and view homework and domestic work as part of their identity as “good women” and of their membership in the groups of “wife, mother, neighbor, and Muslima” (ibid.: 9). The women homeworkers even insist that their labor is not work, as work is connected to income-producing activities outside the house, which is considered to be inappropriate for a working-class woman. This indicates that not only states and trade unions have not recognized homeworkers as real workers but also women homeworkers themselves internalized this patriarchal ideology that devalues women's work and skills and sees homeworker not as real work, but as temporary work or as a hobby. White reports the following: “In their own words, they 'do' this labor (bunu yapıyoruz), and they 'give (the product) out' (dışarıya veriyoruz), they do not 'work' (iş yapmak, çalışmak)” (ibid.: 8). Homework is regarded only as an extension of (unpaid) houseworks and demands skills that a proper woman should have:

A 'good' woman knows how to clean, cook, serve, embroider, knit, and crochet, she bears children frequently and always keeps her hands buzzy. For the working-class women of Istanbul, labor, along with honor and childbearing, is a central defining theme of their lives. (ibid.: 7)

Following this statement, the income-earning activity of homeworkers is viewed by themselves as “making some money in their free time for something (like knitting) which they would have been doing in any case” (Okten 2001: 287) as a good mother and wife. Patriarchal ideology makes women not only devalue their work and sell their labor at a very low price, it

also constructs women homeworkers' skills as 'natural' for a good women. In harmony with White, Reyhan Atasü Topçuoğlu's (2005) findings reveal that women homeworkers prioritize their role as mothers and wives over their income-generating activities, as considering themselves as workers may challenge the power of the husband as the constructed breadwinner of the family. Utku Balaban and Esra Sarioğlu (2008) report as well that homeworkers working on piece-rate consider themselves as housewives who just earn pin money or *pazar parası*³⁴.

Despite the fact that the earnings of homeworkers are central for the living of the family, women's work remains hidden and invisible and their income is not considered as real wage neither by others nor by themselves. Since homework takes place in the household belonging to the reproductive economy and not in the factory, homeworkers are not recognized as 'real' workers and their income-earning activities not as 'work.' Homework violates the presumed separation between home and workplace and “the notions of femininity and masculinity that map onto this separation” (Prügl 1999:19) it has been 'feminized' in order to provide a cheap labor for capitalists and to sustain the image of the idle housewife and the male breadwinner. The power making women homeworkers perceive themselves as non-working housewives instead of workers does not work through coercion but through the internalization of operating codes. It refers to the three dimensional hidden power of Lukes which prevents conflict as the separation of home and work is taken for granted and not considered as a historical process which did not only 'feminize' all work performed in the home but also made it invisible.

5.2. Flexibilization and feminization

5.2.1. Flexibilization in neoliberal Turkey

Peterson describes flexibilization as one of the major trends of globalization. Even though homework already existed in the Ottoman Empire and before 1980 in Turkey, particularly in the form of carpet production by rural women, it experienced a boom through globalization and experienced a structural change through the integration of Turkey into the capitalist global economy (Ayata 1987, quoted in Topçuoğlu 2005: 94, Hattatoğlu 2000). For this reason it is important to analyze the labor market changes through the neoliberal restructuring of the political economy of Turkey.

34 *Pazar parası* (pazar, Markt; para, Geld) refers to money spent at a local market, where vegetables, fruits, cheap clothings and kitchen utensils are sold, for preparing the daily meal for the family and contributing to the well-being of the family (Dedeoğlu 2010: 27, 4). However, pazar parası can also be used for paying the bills and rent or for children's education depending on the total income of the family.

In Turkey, flexibilization is linked in the productive economy to the shift from import substitution industrialization³⁵ (ISI) to export-led industrialization (ELI) in the context of structural adjustment policies. Turkey has often been praised by the World Bank and the IWF as a successful example concerning trade reform and labor market flexibility. The development strategy of ISI started in Turkey in 1961 and “was characterized by medium-term planning, protectionism, significant involvement of the state in the industrial sector and populist politics” (Çağatay/Berik 1990: 121). The new constitution of 1961, which had been introduced in the following of the 1960 *coup d'état*, emphasized the right for trade unionism and facilitated consequently trade unions to become an influential power in labor politics and the distribution of income in the urban regions in Turkey. Like in other countries, trade unions in Turkey demanded 'family wages' for workers based on the male breadwinner earning enough for the whole family.

The economic development of Turkey is similar to other emerging markets that were forced by the hegemony of neoliberalism to open their economy to the world market since the late 1970s and 1980s in order to reach competitiveness through deregulation and liberalization. In 1977, Turkey started to experience an economic crisis that was linked to a deficit on current account, growing debts and high inflation. The era of ISI was officially ended with the adaption of a stabilization package on January 24 1980 which targeted “[...] a reduction in government involvement in productive activities and increased emphasis on market forces and the replacement of an inward-oriented strategy, based on import-substitution, with an export-oriented strategy and attraction of foreign investment“ (Öniş 1998: 245). While international financial institutions provided Turkey with required capital, the military intervention in September 1980 guaranteed the “political stability and the exclusion of any democratic processes” (Öniş 1988: 138) for the neoliberal transition. Turgut Özal, from the center-right

35 Import substitution industrialization (ISI) is a development strategy inspired by Keynesianism and the theoretical writings of Raul Prebisch (1950), Celso Furtado (1964), Hans Singer (1950) and other structural economic thinkers of the dependency theory tradition and applied in the economic policy in many developing countries. Bruton (1998: 904) describes ISI as a set of ideas about the central question why poverty has prevailed and continued in some countries while others have become rich. The answer to this question is found in the structure of production in poor countries and their inability to profit from the international trade because of a lack of industrialization. This policy of ISI aims to substitute imports through domestic products in order to decrease foreign dependency and develop the national industry through state intervention. The development of the home market should be achieved through the promotion of the domestic industrial base and the protection of the domestic industry through through tariffs and import controls (Kiely 1998:83). In Latin America ISI was already adopted in the 1930s, in the rest of the peripheral countries in 1940 and 1950s (Kiely 1998). Even though domestic employment and wages grew in many countries, the foreign dependency was not decreased because many countries had to import goods for their new industries and also take loads to afford the investments in new industries, which led to high foreign indebtedness. The crises of the ISI development strategy in the 1960s and 1970s was reinforced through the oils crises of 1973/74 and 1978/79, which led to the inability to pay back the debts for many countries.

Motherland Party, was in charge of the economic policy and implemented the devaluation of the Turkish currency, encouraged export by subsidies, tax reductions and credits, liberalization of financial market, privatization and tried to attract foreign direct investment through e.g. the establishment of export processing zones (Çağatay/Berik 1990: 121).

The 1980s and the shift to the export-oriented model was not only characterized by devaluation and the encouragement of foreign investment in the virtual economy, the change was made possible by the suppression of the labor movement and the de-politicization of the society after the *coup d'état* that facilitated the decrease of wages. With the clear words of Nichols and Sugur (2004:151): the measures of the military aimed “to smash the left and nail down trade unions.” Onaran and Stockhammer (2005: 74) further state that the “export orientation à la Turca” was made possible through “strict procapital redistributational mechanisms”, which led to the decrease of real wages without affecting the profitability in a negative way. They claim furthermore that these changes were not achieved through new investments but as a result the suppression of wages, real devaluation and high export subsidies. Even after the return of the civil government the suppression continued and the right to organize, to strike and to collective bargaining was not fully reintroduced after being suspended in 1980.³⁶ Those labor policies were crucial for export orientation and Turkey's competitiveness that has been based on low prices. Yeldan (1994) estimates that real wages declined by almost 40 percent between 1980 and 1988, while real profits almost doubled. The decreasing wages enabled to keep the unit labor costs low and balanced the effects of increased interest rates and devaluation. In the post-1980 period, low-income groups' the standard of living degraded as a result of the neoliberal policy of cutting public spending and reducing labor costs.³⁷

Between 1980 and 1988 the integration into the global economy was mainly achieved through the liberalization of commodity trade and export promotion. Consequently, 1989 can be considered as a crucial turning point as the “debt-driven state” (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu/Yeldan 2000: 481) opened the Turkish economy for global financial competition through the overall liberalization of financial markets (Boratav/Yeldan/Köse 2000). İlker Ataç (2003) describes the economic strategy after 1989, in the words of the regulation approach, even as an financial accumulation regime as the Turkish economy became highly dependent on speculative short-term capital flows, so called hot money, and was characterized by a high instability, which led

36 Industrial relations continue to be regulated by the military laws despite of the extension of the right to organize and negotiate collectively in 2001 (Fougner/Kurtoğlu 2001).

37 To give a very concrete example: In 1970 a worker had to work 17 minutes to buy one kilo of bread, in 1985 already 38 minutes (Melinz 2000: 149). The Gini coefficient, which measure inequality in values, increased from 0.40 to 0.49 between 1979 and 1994 (Elveren/Galbraith 2009, quoted in Dedeoğlu 2010: 7)

to several financial crises in the following years. Since the end of the 1980s the virtual economy, which became increasingly disconnected from the real productive economy, became increasingly important and led to financial crises in 1994, 2001 and 2008.

Despite the integration of the Turkish economy into the global economy, the full liberalization of the trade and financial market and the promotion of export, a so called *job-less growth*, an economic growth without a corresponding increase in employment opportunities, can be stated in Turkey. In the period between 1980 and 2004 Turkey's working-age population increased by 23 million people: However, only 6 million jobs were created in this time (World Bank 2006: 12). As a result, the employment rate in 2006 was with 43,4 percent among the lowest in the world.

Structural adjustment programs have led to a feminization of the work force in many countries as export-led industrialization heavily relies on increasing use of low-waged and flexible cheap female labor. In contradiction to the tendency in many countries and Peterson's assumption that flexibilization feminizes the workforces, studies on structural adjustment, export orientation and female employment, such as Çağatay 1994, Çağatay/Berik 1990, Ecevit 1998, have shown that women's labor force participation continued to decrease in Turkey. Women's employment has been falling since the middle of the 1950s from 70 percent to around 20 percent. (Kümbetoğlu/User/Akpınar 2010: 100).³⁸ Even though women increasingly started to look for work in urban regions—women's unemployment even exceeded men's—the export-oriented strategy could not create enough jobs (for women) (Ecevit 1998). Therefore, we cannot observe a feminization of work in empirical terms in Turkey as women's labor force participation did not increase in the post-1980s period.

Even though the neoliberal ideology aims to reduce the influence of the state e.g. as a provider of welfare or as the owner of companies, the Turkish state did not only play a very active and authoritarian role in the suppression of the labor movement but also as a strong force in the flexibilization of the labor market. For instance, secured jobs in the state sector were transformed to temporary non-standards jobs (Melinz 2000: 148). In order to reduce fixed costs and cut down on labor costs, *subcontracting* became a functional strategy in Turkey as an intermediary country in the international subcontracting chains. Especially in the

38 In urban settlements, the total labor force participation (the ratio of people being employed or seeking for employment) was 45,5 in 1995, 44,1 in 2000 and 45,5 percent in 2006. With 26,1 percent, only one in every four in total labor force was a woman in 2006. The total female labor force participation was 24,9 percent in 2006, which means that only one in every four women was in the labor force. In urban areas, female labor force participation was 17,1 in 1995, 17,2 in 2000 and 19,9 percent in 2006, compared to 74,5, 70,9 and 70,8 percent for men in the same year. This signifies that one in every five within urban labor force was a woman with 21,8 percent in 2006. But it is also important to mention that three in every four not in the labor force was also a woman (73.0) (Töksöz 2007: 19).

economic key sector of garments, textiles, electronics and food processing production of goods in the household is used to increase flexibility and reduce the costs of production in order to increase competitiveness in global markets (Eşim 2003). The increased involvement of subcontracting, smaller enterprises, part-time and temporary employment and the repression and avoidance of organized labor can nevertheless be described as a feminization of work in analytical terms as working conditions and security deteriorated for all workers, for women and non-elite men.

In summary, through the neoliberal restructuring of the Turkish economy a feminization of the labor force (in empirical terms) did not take place and women seeking employment in the productive economy—in order to earn additional income and bear the burden of structural adjustment and financial crises—could not find jobs in the formal sector. The shift to export-orientation was directly linked to the suppression of the labor movement and the decrease in real wages. This means that the Turkish labor market does not only constrain women's participation in the labor market, it also demands a highly flexibilized and 'feminized' work force provided by women homeworkers. Therefore, we can argue that the feminization of labor in Turkey did not lead to growing participation of women in factories, in the productive economy, but to a deterioration of working conditions for women and non-elite men and to a spread of homework as a method of highly flexible production and a survival strategy through which predominately women can earn income (Balaban/Sarioğlu 2008: 5).

5.2.2. The ultimate flexible workforce

Liberal and conservative forces argued that homework is very advantageous for women as it offers them the possibility to combine domestic duties and income-generation. Particularly in times of rising political Islam in Turkey³⁹, the ideal of the non-working housewife can be maintained as homework does not challenge the male breadwinner model but contributes to the household income in order to maintain the well-being of the family. On the one hand, homework is for many working class women the only way to earn income in the context of growing unemployment, jobless growth and the increase of women's unpaid work through cuts in public spending. The fact that it is very difficult for working class women with a low level of education to find well-paid jobs outside the house, in the productive economy, directly serves the interests of the employer in search for flexible, cheap and unorganized work.

³⁹ It would have gone beyond the scope of this thesis to integrate the rise of political Islam through neoliberalism in my analysis. For a discussion of the interplay between political Islam and post-fordism please see Okten (2001).

To stay competitive in a flexibilized global market and increase profit by saving labor costs, employers tend to outsource production processes and draw back on homeworkers as cheap and flexible workers. Many homeworkers are paid *piece-rates*, which means that they are waged only by the number of finished pieces they produced, and do not have a guaranteed weekly wage. Furthermore, dependent homeworkers are only paid the products that can pass the quality check by the supplier. As homeworkers' labor is undervalorized, 'feminized' and not even considered as 'real' work and their wages constructed as pit money or only complementary, homeworkers mostly earn even below minimum-wage and are forced to bear themselves for the costs of accidents and work diseases⁴⁰. But homework as a method of production reduces not only the average labor costs, it also reduces the running costs of production. Suppliers do not have to pay for the non-labor costs as homeworkers have to pay themselves for costs merging into household expenses like rent, light, heating. Additionally, homework can be classified as a form of just in time production⁴¹ which is characteristic for Post-Fordism and the strategy of flexibilization. Allen and Wolkowitz describe the advantage of homework for the supplier as follows:

The employment of a homeworking labour force makes it possible for the supplier to purchase labour only as and when required. This flexibility is acquired at no costs to the supplier. Payment is for output only. (Allen/Wolkowitz 1987: 97)

The work of homeworkers is only used if there is demand for their products. This means that homeworkers do not have an income if there is no demand, like in times of economic instability or crises, so they have to bear the costs of fluctuation themselves. This strategy has been called numerical flexibility as firms or employers can quickly adjust to changing levels of demand by using subcontractors and homeworkers as the perfect flexible labor force in order to increase efficiency and reduce fixed and labor costs. Employers are able to match seasonal and fluctuating demand by changes in the labor force, in other words giving work to more or less homeworkers. Labor intensive sectors are especially dependent on an “easy to hire and fire” labor force, as Eşim (2003) describes homeworkers, in order to reach the demanded flexibility in times of increased instability through the expansion of the virtual economy.

Because of the highly individualized relationship between the supplier/middleperson and the dependent homeworker, the bargaining power of homeworkers is very limited. Jenny White (1994) and Saniye Atılğan (2007) demonstrate in their studies the significance of family,

⁴⁰ I will come back to this issue in Chapter 5.3.

⁴¹ In the 1980s companies increasingly imitated Japanese methods of flexible production which rely on subcontracting. Instead of accumulating a stock of finished goods they get the products just in time (Prügl 1996: 45).

kinship and community relations in the construction of mutual indebtedness for the functioning of the homeworking industry in Turkey and the reproduction of exploitation and gender inequality. The middleperson, who often lives in the same districts or is a *hemşehri*⁴², is not only determining in the avoidance of labor struggle by constructing consent through personal relations, s/he also profits from the sale of the products that the homeworkers have made. Due to the middleman/woman standing between the homeworker and the employer—resulting from the decentralization of production processes—the homeworker cannot meet directly with the employer to bargain for better wages and often do not even know where their products will go to and how much their market price is. The middleperson exercises power particularly based on gender, class and age over the homeworker in order to keep the labor costs low and the worker docile.

As homework does not take place under strict surveillance typical for Fordist mass production in factories, the forms of control maintaining this form of capitalist production are specific. Allen and Wolkowitz (1986) reveal that the immediate relation between the production of items and the payment aims to increase the intensity of work because of its speed-up effect. Instead of the direct observation in the factory, homeworkers are faced with indirect modes of control, such as deadlines, quality checks, the construction of consent, which demand much self-discipline from the worker and construct a “myth of autonomy” that obscures the power of the middleperson over the homeworker.

Additionally, homeworkers often compete among themselves and even work for lower wages in order to obtain orders and sell their products. In the context of the suppression of the labor movement, homeworkers can also be considered as an ideal labor force in the flexibilized labor market as the isolation in the home and the competition of homeworkers decreases the possibility of organizing and solidarity and increases the power of capital over labor. Relating to the study of Eraydın and Erendil (1999) about the Istanbul clothing industry, Balaban and Sarioğlu (2008: 23) state, “The process of subcontracting atomize the labor force along with minimizing the awareness among workers. This atomization retards the chances of collective action and thereby the bargaining power of workers.” This means that the strategy of using homeworkers in search for flexibility and competitiveness does not only decrease the labor costs for employers and transfers the costs of fluctuation, but it also separates workers from each other and decreases the awareness of exploitation among them.

42 Hemşehri is a person coming from the same village, town or province. Hemşehrilik refers to the patronage and solidarity networks based on the same place of origin. Hemşehrilik is therefore in between non-kins and relatives.

In short, in the case of homework we can not speak about functional flexibility serving the interest of the worker. Considering the irregular income, the low wages and weak bargaining power of homeworkers, the flexibility of homeworkers is mainly at the advantage of the employer as it increases profit and the power of capital over labor. In times of the fragmentation of the production produces and the growing use of subcontracting in order to increase adaptability and flexibility, women homeworkers can be therefore considered as the “ultimate flexible work force”⁴³ (Bergan 2009: 220) whose work is feminized and exploited.

5.3. Informalization

5.3.1 The increase of informal work in Turkey

To increase flexibility and reduce costs, especially of labor, production has been shifted from the formal sector to the informal economy. This means that there has been a shift from the productive economy—with all its labor regulations, taxes, workers' rights, valued work and skills—to the weakly regulated reproductive economy in the post-1980 period. Consequently, the informalization of the Turkish economy has to be understood in relation to the global and flexibilized productive economy and the increasingly important virtual economy of financial markets. Subcontracting, laying off workers, cutting workers' benefits and the decentralization of production processes have led to an increase in the informal economy in Turkey, in contrast to the slow expansion of the formal economy.

The workers' loss of social security in the context of informalization is directly linked to explicit policies of de-unionization in Turkey. According to Turkish labor law, only workers with a social security number and a workplace registration number are allowed to join or form a trade union. This signifies that informalization has been very advantageous for investors as the shift to the informal economy has decreased production costs through lower wages, no taxes and the lack of social security rights of workers. Additionally, the labor law stabilizes these power relations by excluding informal workers from the right to organize. Analyzing the garment industry in Turkey, Dedeoğlu (2011: 27) emphasizes the importance of informality as a “[...] way of survival through which the formal rules are manipulated to tap into cheap labor resources. All these contribute to a globally competitive industry.”⁴⁴

43 By calling homeworkers the perfectly flexible workforce I do not intend to describe flexibility as a characteristic of women homeworkers themselves, but as a characteristic of homework as a method of production (Allen/Wolkowitz 1987:98).

44 The line between formal and informal work is nevertheless hard to draw. Formal workers, employed in a formal factory, are also involved in piece work in order to earn extra money. Furthermore, subcontracting is not only widespread in the informal but also in the formal market due to the fact that subcontracted workers are not registered, have a lack of labor rights and are therefore cheaper and more flexible.

Particularly rural migrants were drawn into the informal labor force as the formal sector could not absorb the population growth in Turkish cities. The rate of people living in urban areas was around 17% at the foundation of the Republic in 1923 until the early 1950s, and increased to 25%, 45% and 60% in the years of 1960, 1980 and 2000 (Keleş 2006, quoted in Uzun, Çete, Palancıoğlu 2010). The rapid urbanization of Turkey since the 1950s was an effect of the mechanization of agriculture and transport, industrialization in the cities and ideas of better life in cities and after 1980s the ongoing conflict between the Kurdish Workers' Party and the state security forces. The rural migrants which particularly settled down in so called *gecekondu*, coming from *gece* (night) and *kondü* (placed (built) over night), squatter areas in all big cities in Turkey, have offered a cheap, unskilled and 'feminized' workforce in Turkish cities. Facing high levels of unemployment, they accepted informal employment relations with poor working conditions and low wages.

Even though the extension of the informal economy is hard to measure and numbers vary as the definition is changing, studies, such as Odman (2000), describe a tendency of informalization as a result of Turkey's integration into global markets. In Article 60 of the Turkish constitution it is written that everyone has the right to social security. Additionally, the Turkish labor law prescribes that all workers must be registered in the Social Security Institution. It provides the registered workers with insurance for work accidents and occupational diseases, health care, pregnancy, disability, old age and death, and retirement plans. However, Töksöz (2007:35) reports that the number of people working outside any legislative and institutional protective measures, which includes social security as well, has reached a phenomenal level as a result of the flexibilization of the Turkish economy. Looking at the numbers of 2006, 10,827,000 people were working without being registered with a social security institution, compared to 11,503,000 in formal employment. This means that 48,5 % of total employment, 66% of total female employment and 42,3% of total male employment was informal. The high percentage of women in informal work can be explained by the fact that about half of the women work in the agricultural sector, where work without social security is very widespread. But also in the non-agricultural sector 35% of women and 33,6 % of men are employed informally. Furthermore, Töksöz (2007: 37) observes that 61% of newly created job in the period of 2000 and 2006 are in the informal economy. According to the World Bank (2006: iii), one in three workers in urban Turkey and three in four in rural areas are working informally, without social security.

In Turkey the Household Labor Force Surveys (HLFS) serves as the primary source for trends in employment and records unregistered informal worker as those who report to work without

social security coverage. The HLFS statistics show that there has been an increase in the number of women working without social security coverage since 1989 (it is the years when HLFS was done for the first time) in Turkey. Between 1989 and 2000 the absolute number of women engaged in informal work increased, but women's ratio remained at around 15-16 percent. By 2006, women's share of informal work grew to 19 percent and the share of informally employed women rose from 27 percent in 2000 to 35 percent in 2006 (TURKSTAT 2006, quoted in Dedeoğlu 2010:8f). This obviously shows that a growing number people in Turkey are working under deteriorating conditions of 'feminized' informal employment and that more and more women are pushed into the informal economy, which allows me to speak also about an empirical feminization of the informal economy in Turkey over the 2000-6 period.

In Turkey, especially women having worked before as unpaid family labor in rural areas started to become employed in the informal economy as a result of migration to the cities. (Kümbetoğlu/User/Akpınar 2010:97) Ecevit (2008, quoted in Kümbetoğlu/User/Akpınar 2010: 100) has argued that the migration from rural to urban areas is one of the main factors for the decreasing female labor force participation since the 1950s, as women tend to stay at home after arriving in the city, they are “drawn back home.” Many of these women started to work as homeworkers and were integrated as informal workers into the global political economy.

The expansion of informal employment reveals that the informal economy is not marginal but integral to capital accumulation and has, contrary to orthodox Marxist expectations, even increased. The liberalization of the Turkish economy and the deregulation of the labor market has not merely increased women's unpaid work but also pushes women as cheap and flexible labor in the informal economy. Facing increasing income inequality, deterioration of living standards and real wages, urban women started to seek employment in order to contribute to the family income and secure the survival of the family. Because of the small number of jobs available in the formal economy and the high rate of unemployment, women have been forced “to accept positions in the unregistered economy for wages that are below the official minimum and without job and social security. Most often, these women work in the informal economy in temporary, sporadic, home-based, seasonal, irregular, or piecework jobs” (Kümbetoğlu/User/Akpınar 2010: 97). The growth in informal activities emphasizes the significance of the reproductive economy which is needed in order to maintain the working of the 'main story,' the productive economy, and increase the competitiveness of the Turkish

economy in the global market. Consequently most women in Turkey stay outside the formal labor market and are involved in informal activities, such as homework.

5.3.2. Informal and invisible workers

Most casual observers realize the amount of street vendors, shoe shine guys or tea sellers on Turkey' streets. Even though one can find the products of homeworkers on the streets, in tourist and clothes shops and in restaurants, homework as one of the most widespread forms of informal employment remains mainly invisible for the observer due to its location in the household and also to the state because of its unregistered character.

The process of informalization has led to a deterioration of working conditions and a loss of social and political rights. It has also moved production from the productive to the reproductive economy, from factories to the small firms and small workshops, to the backyards and the households in order to decrease production costs and avoid taxes and labor regulations. Small-scale studies in Turkey, such as Çınar (1994), Topçuoğlu (2005) and White (1994), show that homework is particularly common in gecekondu areas, which indicate that especially low income, 'unskilled' women from marginalized try to find additional income by taking up homework.⁴⁵ The over-representation of rural migrants, women and other marginalized groups, like Kurdish people in the informal economy demonstrates that involvement in the informal economy is not solely determined by poverty, but also by structural hierarchies like gender, class and ethnicity (Balaban/Sarioğlu 2008). The disproportional over-representation of married women (Çınar 1994; Balaban/Sarioğlu 2008, Eraydın/Erendil 1999) also indicates that informalization is linked to a transfer of social reproduction responsibilities to the household which increases the burden on women and prevents them from leaving the house.⁴⁶

It is important to note that companies do not only draw back to homeworkers as informal workers in order to avoid taxes, women homeworkers as unregistered workers are also cheaper because of their lack of social and political rights. Since homeworkers do not perform their work in the factory or under the supervision of one boss and are not employed as other workers in the productive economy, homeworkers are often considered as self-employed instead of employed, as Elisabeth Prügl (1999) has shown in her study. Even though the labor

45 According to Çınar's (1994) estimation, one in every three women living in working-class neighborhoods of Istanbul was engaged in homework in 1994. The real number of homeworkers in Turkey is hard to count as homework is not registered and homeworkers' contribution to the economy not counted and invisible. Furthermore, homeworkers tend to present themselves as non-working housewives during the data collection.

46 Particularly after the financial crises in 1994 and 2001, already insufficient care services were reduced. This demonstrates the interrelation of the reproductive and the virtual economy.

law No. 4857 has been changed in 2003 and integrated dependent homeworkers into the definition of workers, the law has not been implemented yet. Therefore, the vast majority of women homeworker still do not have a social insurance and are dependent on their husband or father. In this sense, women homeworkers' work is not only devalued by constructing it as a hobby, it is also 'feminized' by excluding women homeworkers from any regulation concerning wages, health, safety, benefits in times of pregnancy, sickness or old-age, which workers in the formal economy enjoy. Homeworkers also do not receive paid holidays, overtime pay for evening, night or weekend work.

In Turkey, homeworkers are also legally not able to join a trade union as the Turkish law requests members of unions to have a social security number and a workplace registration number, which many homeworkers do not have (Bergan 2009: 224). Besides the fact that trade unions focus on the organization of formal workers, women homeworkers without a social security number are even legally excluded from the right to form a labor union and to bargain collectively, granted in Article 51 and 53 of the Constitution.

As the informal economy is like the formal economy marked by gender, women homeworkers do not only earn less than workers with similar jobs in the productive economy, but also less than male workers in the informal economy (Prügl 1999: 329, quoted by Peterson 2003: 101). As Balaban and Sarioğlu (2008) demonstrate in their study about homeworkers in three city districts of Istanbul, only a small minority of women homeworkers are able to earn the minimum wage (in 2008: 585 TL, currently 701). Despite the fact that all homeworkers interviewed work at least four hours a day, more than half of them even 'all day,' the average income in this sample was between 50 and 100 YTL (1 YTL was approximatively 0.75 USD at that time).

Through the (non-)decision of the government of Turkey to exclude women homeworkers from the rights formal workers are entitled to, the power of employers over homeworkers as workers is institutionalized and reinforced. Besides maintaining the dependence of women homeworkers on their husbands or fathers, these laws keep informal workers, particularly homeworkers, unorganized and aim to prevent solidarity among women homeworkers, so called 'power with,' in the form of institutionalized organizing and collective bargaining for better wages.

6. Homeworkers organizing

It is not the intention of this thesis to include all homeworkers' organizations into its analysis. That is the reason why I will only shortly introduce those international organizations and networks that were particularly influential in the organizing process of women homeworkers in Turkey before introducing the national homeworkers' movement HomeNet Turkey, the Ankara-based cooperative and the women homeworkers interviewed.

6.1. International level

When talking about the organization of women homeworkers the *Self-Employed Women's Association* (SEWA), which was already founded as a trade union in 1972 in Ahmedabad in Gujarat in India, definitely has to be mentioned. It grew out of the Women's Wing of Textile Labor Association (TLA), which is the oldest and largest union for textile workers founded in 1920 by Anasuya Sarabhai and was inspired by the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi⁴⁷. SEWA has received international recognition as they managed to do what many considered as impossible: to organize poor women across the informal sector, including homeworkers. SEWA defined itself as a “union of the self-employed” (Prügl 1999: 112) but combines trade union struggle, cooperative formation and micro-enterprise supportive services for its members. On the one hand, SEWA demands social protection, like the right to minimum wage; on the other hand, it also acts like a development organization by providing small loans to its members (Prügl 1999: 137). In its work, SEWA has not only coined the term 'home-based worker,' it also especially challenged the exclusive categorization of employees and self-employed.⁴⁸

In contrast to SEWA which is a union founded for self-employed workers, a traditional trade union in Portugal started to organize homeworkers in Madeira. The *Embroidery Union in Madeira* (SIBTTA) started to recruit homeworkers in 1975 and is therefore the oldest example of union organization of homeworkers. After more than 30 years of struggle the union won the legal recognition and social rights for homeworkers. Homeworkers in the embroidery industry benefit from a specific social security scheme, which entitles them to retirement pensions, unemployment benefits, maternity rights and health insurance. For instance, members of the union participated in the European meeting in Istanbul in 2007 and inspired the other homeworkers through their experience, as I will show in Chapter 7.3.

47 Gandhi supported the strike of textile workers in 1917 and was convinced that the awakening of workers' consciousness would create positive strength for their struggle. On that account a union should deal with workers' lives in the factory and at home (Jhabvala 1995:114-115).

48 For more information see: www.sewa.org

In the 1990s homeworkers started to organize on an international level. SEWA for instance also supported the establishment of *HomeNet International*, a global network of homeworker advocacy organizations. HomeNet International with its headquarter in Great Britain not only facilitated the exchange of information between various homeworkers' groups from different countries and made the topic more visible by participating in international feminist conferences and writing in feminist publications it also played a significant in the coordination of the preparation for the discussions at the ILO, as Prügl (1999) has shown.

Homeworker organizations in Latin America, Europe and South Asia launched the *Federation of Homeworkers Worldwide* (HWW) on May 1st in 2006 in order to keep on working internationally. The federation's purpose is to strengthen and support the visibility and organizing of homeworkers throughout the world and develop and expand solidarity networks. It can be understood as a lobbying forum that fights for the improvement of the living and working conditions of homeworkers worldwide and increase their visibility, recognition, protection and organization. (Homeworkers Worldwide n.d.). Turkey HomeNet, the national network of homeworkers in Turkey is also part of the federation.

Homeworkers have not only organized into local organizations and national networks, they also established *regional organizations* like HomeNet South Asia and HomeNet South East Asia.⁴⁹ Those regional organizations were very important examples for the recently launched HomeNet South East Europe, in which HomeNet Turkey is also involved (Wiego 2012a, Wiego 2012b).

6.2. Homeworkers organizing in Turkey

Like in other countries, women homeworkers have been organizing in Turkey as well. The first attempts to organize homeworkers and to analyze their situation date back to 1995, one year after a strong financial crisis hit Turkey. The *Working Group on Women Homebased Workers* (Ev Eksenli Çalışan Kadınlar Çalışma Grubu) was founded by activists and academics after a workshop on women homeworkers in Turkey in October 1999 in Istanbul. This national support group was established by non-homeworking women in order to increase the visibility of women homeworkers, network between groups and individuals and support their organizing process of homeworkers in Turkey. They started to use the method of (horizontal and vertical) mapping in different parts of Turkey in order to support women

49 HomeNet South Asia as a regional network of homeworkers and their organizations was set up in 2000 after the Kathmandu Declaration in order to promote member based organizations in South East Asia and strengthen regional solidarity among women homeworkers in the informal economy. Through the national networks in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka 290 organizations are part of it. For more information on HomeNet South Asia and HomeNet South East Asia see: www.homenetsouthasia.net and www.homenetseasia.org

homeworkers to organize themselves and work towards the establishment of a national solidarity network. The national support group has been lobbying for the creation of a national policy concerning homeworkers in Turkey based on the ILO convention (No. 177). In 2004 the working group reached one of the major aims: the organization of the first national conference on women homeworkers in Turkey. In addition, they support the networking among women homeworkers across Turkey and between HomeNET and local groups and work on building contacts with homeworking groups in other countries. Furthermore, they have been trying to increase the visibility of homeworkers by drawing the attention of trade unions, ministries, institutions and researchers on homework and establish dialog with women's groups and NGOs (Homeworkers Worldwide 2007: 13-14). Since Habitat II, the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlement held in Istanbul in 1996, SEWA encouraged women home-based workers of Turkey to organize themselves and visit them in India. In 2002, six women homeworkers from different cities in Turkey and representatives of this support group went to India and learned from the activities of SEWA in India (Eşim 2003).

Since the question of (self-)representation is crucial to the organizing process, women homeworkers started to take responsibility for all the duties like organizing national conferences, local workshops etc. in 2007.⁵⁰ In the following year *HomeNet Turkey Solidarity Network of Women Homeworkers* (Türkiye HomeNet Ev Eksenli Çalışan Kadınlar Dayanışma Ağı) was established in order to foster national solidarity, exchange experiences and learn about local strategies and define local priorities. Out of this network women homeworkers launched Ev-Ek-Sen, the already mentioned union of home-based workers' in November 2009. It is a right-based organization aiming to reach social security, change discriminatory laws and develop a national policy for homeworkers. As informal workers are not allowed to unionize, the foundation of the union is also part of their fight for political rights to organize. The closing down process of the union is still going on.

Different strategies for the organizing of women homeworkers are needed due to the fact that women homeworkers do not only produce different goods, work in different sectors and are involved in various employment relations but also live in often very different parts of Turkey. Local projects are therefore important for both the adaption of strategies to local context and the organizing of more homeworkers. In 2002 the first women homeworkers cooperative was established in Avcılar, a district at the European side of Istanbul. *Avcılar Home Based Women*

50 In December 2011 the second National Conference on women homeworkers was held in Ankara (bianet 06.12.2011).

Workers Cooperative (Avcılar Ev Eksenli Çalışan Kadınlar Küçük Sanat Kooperatifi) was founded by eight homeworkers in 2002 and grew up to around 40 active members and 200 homeworkers within the larger network (Balaban/Sarioğlu 2008: 23).⁵¹ Besides cooperatives women homeworkers have also organized into self-help groups and bazaar groups (e.g. in Antalya), into work teams (e.g. in Muğla), into associations (Diyarbakır) into an own account restaurant management (e.g. in Hakkari). Some of these groups are registered in order to increase the visibility of homeworkers, others prefer to remain informal to avoid the high tax charges. Women homeworkers tend to organize around the work they already know and are able to find themselves (Coşkun 2010).

6.3. The local example: Kozadan İpeğe

*Kozadan İpeğe Ev Eksenli Çalışan Kadınların Kooperatifi*⁵² (From Cocoon to Silk Women's Homebased Workers' Cooperative) is at the moment the only (officially registered) homeworkers cooperative in Turkey. Before introducing the cooperative itself I will give a short overview of its development. It evolved out of the project *Enhancing opportunities for Women Home-based workers in Economic Life* (Ev Eksenli Çalışan Kadınların Ekonomik Yaşamındaki Şanslarını Artırma) by the *Contemporary Woman and Youth Foundation* (CWYF, Çağdaş Kadın ve Genlik Vafkı)⁵³. This project aimed to provide capacity-building trainings for homeworkers with the goal to increase their income. In order to reach women homeworkers the method of mapping was used by women for women in different economically underdeveloped districts of Ankara, like Altındağ, Keçiören and Mamak. After this recruiting process around 150 women became interested in the project. The ultimate object of the project was to establish a cooperative for women homeworkers (Third Sector Foundation of Turkey 16.12.2012).

Kozadan İpeğe as a women homeworkers' cooperative was founded in 2007 by 23⁵⁴ women from Mamak and Tuzluçayır. At the moment 13 women are active members of the cooperative but within the larger network there are around 60 women. In order to avoid hierarchies and create an egalitarian and solidarity based model where all members receive

51 Unfortunately the cooperative in Avcılar has been closed because of very high tax charges. I will come back to this point in Chapter 7.2.

52 In contrast to other names of organizations, I will use the Turkish name Kozadan İpeğe instead of its English translation From Cocoon to Silk.

53 Established in 1994, CWYF is a non-governmental non-profit organization which aims to support women and young people through education and employment. The foundation has various locations in squatter areas in Ankara. In Mamak and Tuzluçayır CWYF operates community centers that provide free education and training for more than 2000 young people and 1000 women a year.

54 The number of the founding members seems to be not very clear. Different numbers are used in different sources and by different people. The number ranges from 20 to 25 women. I decided to use 23 as this number can be found on the blog of the cooperative as well.

the same income and have the same rights, the involved women decided to found a cooperative instead of a foundation, a company or an association. This meant the establishment of the first women (homeworkers) cooperative in Ankara. In the cooperative, like in other political and cultural groups in Turkey, once every two years a president is selected by its members. The cooperative focuses on the production of cloth bags for conferences, meetings, universities etc. Already at the beginning of their work together, they said “We do not want plastic bags. We want cloth bags” (Yüksekova Güncel 22.05.2012, translated by myself). Besides this work, they also sell handcraft at expositions and fairs. In earlier periods they also prepared *erişte* (Turkish egg noodles) and *tarhana* (a powder out of dried yogurt, vegetables and flour used to prepare soup) which are typical products made by homeworkers. The women also earned money by preparing food for funerals, including for instance *helva*. In fact, they take all work that they can get. Furthermore, they try to use environmentally friendly products in all of their works.

Like other local homeworkers groups, Kozadan İpeğe is an income-generating organization fighting against poverty and aiming to improve the economic situation of its members. Even though the work comes from home around five women are also working in their work center in Tuzluca. It is in the first floor and consists of three rooms, a working room, a small office and a kitchen. Besides their work in the economic domain, the women of the cooperative are also active in the social and political field by receiving and giving educational trainings, participating in (international) exchanges and political campaigns for the improvement of their situation as women homeworkers, like the signature campaign for a minimum wage for homeworkers in Turkey. Kozadan İpeğe also participated in an exchange program with women's organization from France and Germany focusing on gender roles in different countries and enabling women to travel to other countries. Furthermore, they have a so called 'empowerment package' including trainings about gender, communication and conflict resolution, domestic violence against women, women's movement and organizations, homework, reproductive health etc., which every women who intend to join the cooperation should take. Additionally they give each other trainings and even organized literacy courses for other homeworkers. As Kozadan İpeğe is one of sixty women cooperatives in Turkey it is also part of the national network of women cooperatives.⁵⁵

The cooperation neither receives support from public institutions nor from private or civil society institutions. In order to maintain their independence (from party politics) and keep the cooperative open for women with any political or religious idea they do not want any support

55 For more information on women cooperatives in Turkey please see: www.kadinkooperatifleri.org/koop

from state institutions. In the cooperative the members are not hemşehri but are from different origin. However, many members are from Sivas and Çorum resulting from location of the cooperative in Tuzlucaýır.

6.4. Excursus: A few words on Tuzlucaýır

Tuzlucaýır is a part of *Mamak Belediyesi*, one of the poorest settlements in Ankara. When Ankara became the capital of the newly founded Republic of Turkey in 1923 and was constructed at the center of the new 'nation,' the population was around 20.000 people. Considering the increase in the population of Ankara—in 1927 already 75,000, in 1950 290,000 and 4,8 million today—the significance of urbanization for the structure of the city is obvious (Demirtaş 2009: 109). Before 1950 only elites moved to new capital for administrative purposes. After rural-to-urban migration started as a result of the Marshall plan and the industrialization policies in the 1950s people migrated particularly from Central Anatolia to Ankara. Meanwhile people from all regions of Turkey are living in Turkey's capital. However, *hemşehrilik* is still a crucial factor for settlement. Mamak was particularly appreciated by the migrants because of its location close to the road leading to their hometowns. As the ties to the village were still very important at that time, the location of Mamak in the eastern part of Ankara facilitated the transportation (Demirtaş 2009: 122).

One of the neighborhoods in the municipality of Mamak is Tuzlucaýır, whose history dates back to the end of the 1940s. People migrated from Sivas, Çorum, Yozgat, Gümüşhane and other parts of Turkey to this neighborhood in the southern part of Mamak. As the people living in Tuzlucaýır are mainly Kurdish and/or (Turkish) Alevi, who are among the two most marginalized groups in Turkey, informal employment has been significantly high in this district for over 60 years. This may also be the reason why Tuzlucaýır as a poor gecekondu settlement became one of the most politicized, left-winged districts in Ankara in the 1960s and earned the reputation of being “little Moscow” (*küçük Moskova*) (Devrim, Metin 2009: 91-92)⁵⁶. Even though most gecekondu houses have been replaced by *apartman*⁵⁷ in the 1990s and it has also lost its political significance, there is still a specific atmosphere in Tuzlucaýır.

On the one hand the women homeworkers chose Tuzlucaýır as the location of the cooperative because many of them have been living there. On the other hand Tuzlucaýır is a comparably liberal district where women can walk on the streets without being harassed and where

56 In the mid-1970s Tuzlucaýır even played an important role in the history of the PKK (Partiya Karkên Kurdistan, Kurdistan Workers' Party) as the second meeting of Abdullah Öcalan and his comrades took place there.

57 *Apartment* refers to an apartment building which has a few floors and on each of them a few flat. Many gecekondu areas in Turkey have been being replaced by such blocks in order to increase the 'modern' look of the city.

political activism is part of the identity of the district (Devrim). The political background of the district may have influenced the interviewees' perceptions of their position as homeworkers.

6.5. The interviewed women homeworkers

In this part I want to briefly introduce the homeworkers who participated in interviews. The first five women work together in Kozadan İpeğe and are all active members. I have changed their names in order to maintain their anonymity. In agreement with the sixth woman, I will apply the name her friends and family members are using to call her.

I conducted the first interview with *Ayşegül*, she is at the moment the *başkan* (president, chairwomen) of the foundation and stressed especially that she was a founding member of the association. During the interview it was easy to realize that it was not Ayşegül's first interview, as she was very self-confident and had a lot to say about the cooperative. She is 48 years old and born in Divriği in Sivas in Central Anatolia. Ayşegül has been working as a homemaker for about 25 years and was producing carpets at home. When joining the cooperative, Ayşegül did not experience much resistance from her family because she had already been a volunteer in CWYF before and her family has gotten used to her leaving the house and being active in women's groups.

I conducted the second interview with *Merve*. She is 48 years old and was born in Sungurlu, a district in Çorum, in northern Anatolia in the Black Sea Region. After her children did not need her support at home anymore, she decided to look for work outside the house and got involved in the project five years ago. For her it was especially important to leave 'home' and work outside as she felt very bored and unused at home where she was just serving her family and did not look after her own needs. In the interview it turned out that the question of space has been very central for Merve.

Gülsu is 41 and was born in Ankara but her family is also from Çorum. She has been a member of the cooperative for two years. But also before joining the cooperative she was in contact with the women of Kozadan İpeğe. Since childhood she was working as a homemaker by knitting and sewing. Her family produced clothes for their own use because they made everything at home instead of buying them from the market. To earn income they “gave the products also outside for money.” Like many other Turkish girls, Gülsu already learned to do handcraft as a child in order to support the well-being of her family and produce dowry for her future wedding. She particularly stressed that her social circle expanded and that she learned her rights through the participation in the cooperative.

Yıldız is 47 years and born in Şiran in Gümüşhane in the Black Sea region in North-East Anatolia. She has been working as a homemaker for 16 years and joined the cooperative five years ago. When working as a homemaker she did order-based embroidery work and lacework for kith and kin. She started to do homework because her husband was working and she had to look after the children and the household. Furthermore, her husband did not want her to work outside. Yıldız graduated from primary school and has two daughters for whom she wished an easier life than her own. Yıldız spoke a lot about the problems she encountered when going out of the house and joining the cooperative. It was very obvious that the resistance against the opposition of her family made her very strong and self-confident. She cares a lot about the women around her, talks to them about her experiences and tries to support them when they want to leave the house like she did. After joining the cooperative she got politically active, started to join demonstrations and became a member of the Kemalist and social-democratic *Republican People's Party* (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi).

The fifth interview was conducted with *Hatice*, 43 years old. She was born in Ankara but her parents are from Çorum. She has been working as a homemaker for 25 years and joined the cooperative five years ago after participating in the training of CWYF. After her wedding at the age of 19 her husband did not want her to work 'outside.' Furthermore, she also wanted to stay by the side of her daughter. When they experienced economic problems Hatice could not find a job that suited her needs. This is the reason why she started to take orders for sewing and making lacework at home. Hatice narrated that she felt very alone and bored at home. After having participated in the training at CWYF she joined the cooperative. For Hatice the most important personal change was the increase in her self-confidence and the ability to speak without being shy.

I held the sixth interview with *Devrim* about two months after the interviews with the other homeworkers. Devrim is in her late thirties⁵⁸, and therefore the youngest member in the cooperative. She has a university degree, lives in Tuzluca with one of her sisters and is the only childless and single woman in the group. Devrim tends to emphasize her position as the child of Alevi parents and as Kurdish person born in Ankara. She is a feminist activist in various women's groups in Ankara, is very politicized and was in the second period the *başkan* of the cooperative.

58 As Devrim does not even tell her close friends how old she is, I decided not to mention her real age in this thesis.

7. Organizing for emPOWERment?

In this chapter I will analyze the organizing of women homeworkers by bringing the theoretical and the empirical parts together and by using the differentiation between personal and collective emPOWERment presented in Chapter 3.1.3. To go beyond 'the local' and consider the interconnection of local and global power relations I will include Spike Peterson's analytical terms of a feminist global political economy as well, when analyzing the different dimensions. In the first part, I will focus on the personal level of emPOWERment. The second part deals with the cooperative and the collective level of emPOWERment. The struggle for social and political rights on the national and international level is the third part's focus.

7.1. Personal emPOWERment–What has changed for me?

Women are often preferred as workers in labor-intensive export-oriented sectors because they are considered to be more docile and reliable workers. This stereotype is connected to the assumed psychological status of women as more submissive, less self-confident and easier to control. Furthermore, the devaluation of women's work and skills within the family and the labor market does not only lead to lower wages for women, it also influences their self-esteem and identities. Looking back to Lukes' third dimension of power and Peterson's triad analytics, the vital role of subjectivity and identity for the emPOWERment of women homeworkers becomes even more obvious. Despite being in the same social position, not every women homemaker perceives her working situation in the same way because of different life histories or other identities. This turned out to be very clear in the interviews I conducted. Women described different personal changes in their life situations and emphasized issues that others did not even mention. In order to avoid a homogenization of women homeworkers and the assumption of a generalized common 'experience' after getting organized, I will deal with the personal level of emPOWERment in the following part.

Even though Kozadan İpeği is a cooperative which mainly aims to increase the income of women, the significance of the non-economic factors for the success of their project was also recognized during the establishment of this project. Thus, the following changes on the personal level need to be understood not only as a result of the work in the cooperative but as an outcome of all these different strategies used to encourage homeworkers to organize. The empowerment trainings at the beginning of the organizing process already enabled women to participate in the cooperative and changed their perception of their situation. Consequently, it

is important to see personal emPOWERment as both a process and an outcome and as mutually dependent from collective emPOWERment.

7.1.1. I feel much more powerful

By asking the open question “What has changed for you personally” in order to encourage them to speak about their personal development, all five women mentioned (directly or indirectly) an increase in *self-confidence*. They described the sense of self-confidence in relation to the feeling of security in interactions with others, of self-assurance and the faith in their own abilities. This is particularly important when speaking and negotiating with people in positions of power because it increases the perception of oneself as an actor who is able to take decisions and bring upon change. Their feeling of stronger self-confidence expresses itself particularly in relation to *communication*:

In my life...I was not a very talkative person in community. For example my self-confidence increased. [...] Meanwhile I can speak comfortably with everyone. I can express myself [...] In old times when somebody came...or for instance when we went to the muhtar [elected head of a village or a neighborhood] I used to shy away. Now I do not shy away anymore from my counterpart. I think they are people like me and I behave in a more relaxed way. (Ayşegül)

Ayşegül as the president of the cooperative appeared to me as very experienced in giving interviews and talking about the cooperative's work. Hatice, who also spoke in a very professional way sees her increase in self-confidence expressed in raising her voice in conversations instead of staying calm and feeling too shy to speak.

Personally my self-confidence increased above all. [...] I was a very closed...I mean...While speaking...I could not speak comfortably...I was a very timid person. I think I changed entirely [from head to toe]. I feel much stronger at least. This is a very good thing. (Hatice)

Also Yıldız who described herself before joining the cooperative as “uneducated” and “voiceless” told me very proudly that she is not shy anymore to walk into a workplace and tell them that she wants to work for them. As the women homeworkers in the cooperative often need to look for work at conferences, in universities and banks by offering their products, and participate in different kinds of meetings and trainings, their communication skills and their self-confidence increased.

Joining the cooperative also expanded the *social circle* of the women involved. To increasingly socialize turned out to be a very important change for those women who did not experience (much) opposition from their families like Hatice and Gülsu. Particularly Hatice stressed that she had felt very alone at home. “As a 'person at home' you are not going out, you are withdrawn. You do not see other people,” she said. Hatice also had not had friends in the same building or in the close neighborhood who could have supported her when the

deadline was approaching or when she felt alone. As the five women go to the work center nearly every day or participate in trainings with other women, they spend much more time outside, with non-family members and also have to interact and socialize with people they do not know. Even though this dimension seems to be part of collective emPOWERment, the women homeworkers described it as a personal change because of the fact that they were isolated and some of them even bored and lonely when working (merely) at home.

As their work as houseworkers and homeworkers inside the house, in the reproductive economy, had been valued neither by themselves nor by their families, the work in the cooperative has increased their *self-esteem* as well. Merve described her monotonous life before joining the cooperative as follows:

[...] get up in the morning, prepare the breakfast. Cook, sweep the house, look at your children. In the evening wait for your husband. A life like this. Always the same. Always the same. Now it is different. At least I have an aim [...] I did something. I feel I am useful.[...] I go out of the house... and let it go a bit. (Merve)

In this statement Merve not only reports about the monotony she experienced while working at home and her responsibility for the reproductive work, she also demonstrates that work inside the house is not considered as 'real' work, neither by the society nor by her. Particularly the reference to usefulness in her statement demonstrates the role of meaning systems, the impact of social ideas of work and non-work on self-perception and identity. Working outside the house and producing with other women in a common workplace let her feel proud and appreciated. Also the other women reported that the little money they earn through the cooperative makes them feel very proud. "I am earning," Ayşegül said, "This is my money." She does not spend the money for herself but she feels very satisfied when buying things with it. Although none of them told me that their economic income had increased strongly through the work in the cooperative⁵⁹, it seemed to be very important for them to leave the house (occasionally) for work and bring home their own money. Despite the fact that the women are still working as homeworkers but carry out their production activities in the presence of other workers outside the primary site of the reproductive economy, the home, they feel more valued and accepted as workers.

Additionally, the women homeworkers linked the changes on the personal level to a sense of becoming aware and learning about their own *needs* and *interests*. Merve stated, "Actually I became aware of myself. I got to know myself...I should say. I learned to do what I want to do and not what others say. I learned to fulfill my own wishes." Merve started to listen to her own needs and wishes and does no longer feel the need to act in a way that males others

⁵⁹ I will come back to this point in Chapter 7.2.2.

happy and comfortable. Considering the strong ideology of domesticity, the widespread assumption that women are 'naturally' responsible for the well-being of their family and should sacrifice themselves for it, this statement can be understood as a sign of increased *autonomy* and *strength to resist the masculinist power* others wield over her life. In the interviews particularly Merve and Yıldız describe this process of change, of learning to perceive and realizing oneself, as Merve said, and listening to one's own (subjective) needs. Yıldız reported:

I learned this: First myself. In my previous life it was always I mean always first my children, my family and then in the end myself. Now it is not like that. Now it is first me. Then my children. Then my spouse. I made such an order. In this way we are going. This is how I am happy. (Yıldız)

Yıldız illustrated this personal development in relation to her family members and created an order. This may at first sight seem very egoistic and individualistic. But when considering Yıldız' lifestory in the context of a collectivist family culture in Turkey and the high pressure on her to act only like her family wanted her to and to look only after the needs of her husband and children, this statement refers to a real change in Yıldız' life. It has helped her to lead the life that she wants and makes her happy.

Particularly the women who experience(d) opposition from their family and friends told me that resisting the will of their husband and other family members made them feel stronger. They relate this feeling to the question of power. "Power so to say...I think I became very strong (power-ful)," Yıldız said. Since she experienced strong opposition from her family and no support at all from anyone, she is very proud of what she has achieved. The experience of resisting power relations has changed these women. They started to perceive the power they can have to bring about change in their lives and challenge power relations in the household. Merve characterized this 'power from within' with the simple sentence, "What I want to do, I can do." Merve's family still does not support her working outside the house, but she keeps on going. Also Yıldız spoke about a very long way of fighting against the pressure of the family to stay at home. All of the women referred to a difficult *process* of challenging their husband's power position, their social position as the reproducer of the family and their personal internalization of these power relations.

Those changes are also connected to a renegotiation of domestic relations and a challenge to the ideology of domesticity and the male breadwinner model. Even though some of the women told me that they still face opposition from their family, they have experienced this 'power from within', the strength of resisting the expectation of a 'good woman' and therefore challenged the male power in the household. However, not all of the homeworkers

interviewed had to struggle against their families when announcing that they want to leave the house for work and join the cooperative. Gülsu and Hatice mentioned that they were supported by their families when taking this decision. Nevertheless, all of them legitimated this step in the interview by telling about their grown up, engaged or married children or the arranged house. Even when they got support by their families to leave the house, the feeling of acting against the hegemonic social expectation of a woman as the person primarily responsible for reproduction primarily reproducer has been very strong.

Despite my critical perspective on approaches which focus only on the personal level when speaking about empowerment, the interviews with these five women demonstrate the vital role the psycho-social dimension plays in the organizing process of women homeworkers. The rising level of confidence and self-esteem, which Rowlands defines as core elements of empowerment, enabled the women homeworkers to follow their own needs and increased their ability to challenge 'power over.' All these changes at the personal level relate to a feeling of specific 'power from within', in the words of Rowlands, a 'power to' raise the voice in a bigger group, to act against habits and expectations and to fulfill one's own wishes. Instead of Stromquist's psychological dimension, I called this category psycho-social dimension in order to include the changes in the social circle as well and to stress the importance of society for psychological change.

7.1.2. I learned I am a homemaker, an invisible worker

Besides the changes in the psycho-social dimension, the five interviewees also spoke about a learning process of questioning things priorly taken for granted and understanding their own position in society. In the period before the establishment of the cooperative, four out of the five homeworkers interviewed participated in an awareness-raising training organized by the CWYF. They described the training period as “eğitim” (education/training) and referred to it as a very positive experience in which they started to see the world differently.

I did not know that I was homeworking. I did work at home. I was working order-based. I gave it to some people and took money for my work. But until I took the awareness education I did not know that I am working. I understood that we are working in the training given before the establishment of the cooperative. But of course I was late. (Ayşegül)

As I have discussed in Chapter 5, the women homeworkers of Kozadan İpeğe also had not considered themselves as workers but as full-time housewives before joining the training. When speaking about this time Ayşegül used the terms “iş yapmak” (to do work) and “iş vermek” (to give work). Even though they identified their products as “iş” (work) the women working at home had not considered themselves as workers. Through the training and the work in the cooperative they started to see themselves as women homeworkers involved in

paid production and working in order to send their children to school or pay for food and rent, or in other words “in order to survive, just like all other workers [...] not as a leisure time activity” (Ev-Ek-Sen 2010). However, they also have to face the fact that they are recognized as workers by neither their families nor by the state. Ayşegül notes:

One of the main problems of homeworkers is that we are not visible. We are not visible. Neither in the laws nor at home are we seen. Because of earning on a daily basis and without security we are not seen anywhere.

By sharing their experiences, talking about their employment relations, their position in the family and the low payment the women homeworkers understood that their work is denigrated and made invisible. Gülsüm Coşkun (2010: 214), a woman homeworker active in HomeNet Turkey describes their work in local workshops as follows, “We raise awareness that our problems are not individual problems, but they are common. We are not alone and solutions of our problems can be common, too.” All women interviewed stressed the importance of getting organized in order to become visible and to improve their working situation through working in cooperatives and demanding insurance, minimum wage etc.

Even though the experiences of those five women are quite similar, it is very important not to forget that each of them has her own personal history and development. When asking about the reasons for starting to work as homeworkers, all of them talked about their own personal story and predominately referred to the influence of gendered power relations and the need for additional income. Most of them mentioned their responsibility to look after the children, others to their husband who had not wanted them to work outside. Hatice had started to do homework because she could not find a good job outside in times of financial problems as a result of her low level of education. Gülsu's example of working as a homeworker since childhood demonstrates the significance of socialization in the household, as the primary site of the reproductive economy, and the role girls' (devalued) work and skills can play for the the household's income. It is connected to the internalization of gender relations and the normalization of homework as a 'natural,' devalued task of women in the reproductive economy. Interestingly nobody linked their homeworking to the position of being migrants, the children of migrants or part of a religious or ethnical minority who are discriminated in the labor market as well.

In short, by joining trainings and exchanging their experience with other women homeworkers, the women of Tuzluca started to understand their personal reasons for becoming homeworkers and no longer perceive this work as a 'natural' extension of the duties of a girl, a good housewife and mother. They 'learned' that they are homeworkers and not only

housewives and *positioned* themselves closer to the identity of workers in difference to housewives. This development of critical consciousness questions assumptions which have been taken for granted for years and challenge the common sense that women knitting, sewing and cooking at home are not workers. All women homeworkers agreed that they are workers and are therefore also entitled to rights.⁶⁰ They also spoke both directly and indirectly about the rights they are entitled to as women, e.g. by demanding the right to work outside the house or the right for an insurance independent from their husbands,' and emphasized the importance of organizing to claim these rights. Gülsu described this change as follows, "[...] I think we learned more about our rights. We really understood it here... If we are organized, what things we are able to achieve."

Through the trainings and the work in the group the interviewees did not only change their self-perception, they also started to identify themselves as workers and realized the exclusion from specific rights because of being women homeworkers and the need to get organized. This indicates a process of politicization, of undoing internalized oppression and questioning not only gendered power relations in the family but also the legitimacy of laws. In the words of Lukes, these power relations based on class and gender which the women homeworkers started to perceive refer to all *three dimensions of power*. These changes in the positionality of each woman homemaker bear on a process of learning, realizing and understanding and are therefore associated with Stromquist's *cognitive dimension*.

In summary, the increase in psycho-social strength and the change in consciousness are crucial factors for opposing the family's pressure. The society does not only devalue women's work but also encourages women to stay at home in order to be a good wife and mother. By claiming the women's right to work outside of their homes in the cooperative instead of isolated in the house, the women homeworkers have challenged the identity of the male breadwinner and the male power in the household. They experienced an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem, have had more contact to non-family members and understood that they are not housewives but workers entitled to rights. The women interviewed themselves linked their personal development to the issue of power and stated that they feel much stronger and powerful now. By developing a sense of 'power from within' as a feeling and an ability to act and change their own position as women and homeworkers, the women from Kozadan İpeğe all reported about a process of personal emPOWERment. However, it is worth pointing out that emPOWERment should not be understood as a linear universal process; therefore the changes in the lives of the members of Kozadan İpeğe as a result of

⁶⁰ I will come back this point in Chapter 6.3.

their organizing in the cooperative only demonstrate tendencies and not a general assurance of emPOWERment.

However, it is important not to forget that not all women homeworkers (in Tuzluca) have the opportunity to join the cooperative because they have to look after younger children or the elder because of a lack of free public care institutions and the transfer of social protection to the reproductive economy. In other cases the husband or other family members do not allow the woman to leave the house (research diary: 09.07.2012, 18.07.2012). People with an already increased self-confidence or self-esteem or with the will to change something in their lives have a higher tendency to join trainings or workshops. This means that those with a very low self-confidence and self-esteem or those who are prevented from leaving the house and getting organized are hard to reach, mobilize and organize. The interviews with the women homeworkers confirm that an empowerment concept which only focuses on personal empowerment is limited. Much of the personal changes in the life of the interviewed women happened because of their working together with other women homeworkers and their common struggle for a better situation of all homeworkers. Therefore it is central to include the collective level in the analysis of emPOWERment and acknowledge the interdependence of the personal and collective level within local and global power relations.

7.2. Collective emPOWERment–We will become butterflies and fly...

Even the name of the cooperative Kozadan İpeğe (From Cocoon to Silk) has a strong reference to the transformation aimed to be achieved through the establishment of this project. In an article about the cooperative published by *Hürriyet* (27.06.2007), a high-circulated liberal-conservative newspaper, Ayşegül says, “Up till now we passed many stages.[...] With patience we have knitted our cocoon, we will become butterflies and fly.” Using a very figurative language she speaks about the long process of mobilizing women, exchanging their experiences as homeworkers and starting to develop plans for getting organized. The cocoon as a protective covering for the pupa is associated with the cooperative. In Ayşegül's statement a strong desire for collective emPOWERment as a result of the cooperation of women homeworkers can be observed. Also in another article from *Yüksekova Güncel* (22.05.2012), a left-winged Kurdish newspaper from Hakkari, the name of the cooperative has been linked to both the struggle for freedom and the emphasis of production by connecting it to the valuable and precious material silk.

In the following chapter which deals with the collective level of emPOWERment, I will focus on the homeworkers' cooperative as a solidarity-based model aiming to increase the income and to foster solidarity among women homeworkers in Tuzluca.

7.2.1. The cooperative as an income-generating strategy

In Turkey, homeworkers tend to organize in local cooperatives (besides often unregistered working and bazaar groups) in order to improve their income.⁶¹ The women homeworkers' cooperative in Tuzluca was found in order to fight the widespread poverty and unemployment among the district's population. In the mapping and the training in which the homeworkers participated, they discussed a lot about the function of the middleperson or the subcontractor in the exploitation of their labor. They understood that their situation as piece-rate and order-based workers can be changed by replacing the person which stands between the single homeworker and the employer through the cooperative (Devrim, Hatice). The women homeworkers of Kozadan İpeği now get their orders directly from the employer and do not lose income through the extraction of their work by the middleperson anymore. As a local strategy opposing the separation of workers from each other and the use of intermediaries to avoid labor struggle in course of flexibilization and informalization, the cooperative gives homeworkers more power over the production process, increases their bargaining power and ensures a stronger voice vis-à-vis the employer. For own-account workers the cooperative is a strategy to facilitate the access to the market and to generate more income. Hatice and Yıldız described working in a group particularly as an advantage because as a cooperative they can take much bigger orders than when they are working alone in their homes as isolated homeworkers. In case there is a very big order, they also give out work to non-members of the cooperative and enable them to increase their income as well.

As the women of Kozadan İpeği want to work independently, without a middleperson, they experience problems with getting orders as employers often refuse to work without an intermediary in order to avoid direct contact and prevent organizing and an increase in the bargaining power of homeworkers (Devrim, Metin 2009). The production of conference bags seems to be a good market for the women homeworkers. Ayşegül reports proudly in an interview (Yüksekova Güncel 22.05.2012, translated by myself), "We are producing all conference bags. We do not find work anymore. Work finds us. That's very good. We do not follow meetings anymore. They are calling us." Through the production of environmental-friendly linen bags the women in the cooperative managed to create a demanded product

61 To some extent this results from the fact that until recently associations were not allowed to generate income. Furthermore associations are obliged to register as a company which contradicts with the aim to work in a way that is based on solidarity among workers (Bergan 2009: 223).

which provides them with a more regular income. But despite this progress, described by Ayşegül, the cooperative experiences financial problems. “We founded the cooperative in order to be visible but we pay many taxes to the state. Concerning finances we are experiencing difficulties.”

In order to make women homeworkers more *visible to the state* and give the cooperation a legal personality, Kozadan İpeğe was officially registered as a cooperative in order to show that women are working as homeworkers and to emphasize how much they contribute to the national economy. Like other previous homeworkers' cooperatives they are experiencing financial problems due to the high taxation.⁶² Devrim told me in the interview that they are paying all kinds of taxes at the moment: a corporation tax, income tax and value added tax. Furthermore, they also pay 500 Lira per month for the office and have expenditures of electricity, water and heating. This means that the women in the cooperative pay taxes as if the cooperative was a normal enterprise. But despite the fact that they pay taxes they are still not considered as 'real' workers and keep working without insurance.⁶³

Besides this burden of high taxation, it is also worth mentioning at this point that craft production is labor-intensive and exploitative work. In spite of the greater control over their labor, the increased bargaining power and the replacement of the middleperson through the cooperative, it is important not to neglect that the women of Kozadan İpeğe still carry out strongly feminized activities like sewing, knitting and sometimes cooking. Considering Peterson's analysis of the virtual economy's increasing importance and devalorization of manufacturing, the work of the women homeworkers stays 'feminized,' poorly paid and vulnerable to crises. According to the women interviewed, sometimes they work only to pay for the costs of the workplaces.

Despite the fact that the establishment of cooperatives is very widespread in Turkey and also internationally encouraged by international organization like ILO or UNO⁶⁴, the Turkish state does not support homeworkers' cooperatives. Gülsu stressed that she is very proud that the 13 women are able to sustain the cooperative independently despite these difficulties, “Without receiving any support we pay for rent, electricity and water ourselves. With our own labor.” This statement shows that the women homeworkers experience *power* by getting organized

62 For instance, the very successful women homeworkers' cooperative in Avcılar in Istanbul also had to be closed because of the high tax burden and the resulting low income for its members. Because of the extra burden of taxation, many homeworkers' groups prefer to stay unregistered and invisible (Devrim).

63 I will come back to this point in chapter 7.3.2.

64 The year 2012 has been declared by the United Nations as the International Year of cooperatives in order to increase the awareness about the significance of this alternative economic model in the fight against poverty and for employment generation.

and working together *with others* in order to challenge capitalist power relations exploiting their labor. Despite the problems they experience they have had the 'power to' sustain the cooperative as their own space and an independent organization for 5 years and “stay on their own feet”, as they use to say.

The cooperative was founded as a strategy to generate a higher and a more regular income and facilitate the access to the market. However, it appeared to me that the economic dimension has become less important for the women than the social and political. As the cooperative experiences financial problems, the members of the cooperative did not mention a strong increase in their income as a result of joining the cooperative but emphasize the personal emPOWERment they experienced from it and the advantage of working in a group outside the house. In summary, even though the position of the women homeworkers changed structurally, the economic dimension of collective emPOWERment remained limited, partly because of the high taxation.

7.2.2. The cooperative as a solidarity-based model

The decentralization of the production process intends to lower the labor costs and to separate workers from each other in order to decrease their bargaining power and the solidarity among them. The neoliberal flexibilization policies thereby increase individualization, competition and fragmentation of the labor force. When working unorganized at home, homeworkers tend to compete for new orders and even accept to work for lower wages than the others in order to secure orders. During the organizing process the women homeworkers decided to found a cooperative in order to create a “culture of solidarity, sharing and equality” (Kozadan İpege n.d.) and organize horizontally. When asking them about the division of labor in the cooperative everyone answered that they all do the same work and earn the same money. Yıldız said, “Everything is equal. [...] everything here [in the cooperative] is shared. The win and the loss are shared.” Ayşegül notes, “Everyone is doing the same work and the money is also the same. It is made in an equal way—it is distributed in an equal way.”

The cooperation is a solidarity-based model where all members do the same work and also earn the same amount of money. This democratic systems intends to avoid hierarchical power relations among workers, but to create a feeling of belonging together and solidarity among the workers as they all feel responsible for the win and the loss. Hatice who had felt very alone when working at home, pointed out that they all profit by working together and linked it to the emotional benefit as well. “Working alone is very hard. Here we share our work. We take pleasure from it because everyone does the work she can do.”

Besides working together in one space instead of alone in their houses, the women homeworkers support and learn from each other. They give each other trainings in fields they feel especially talented or skilled in.⁶⁵ Through the devaluation of women's work, women homeworkers' skills are often considered as not valuable and as 'natural' for women. By teaching each other these skills they do not only improve their products, they also start to increasingly appreciate and value their own and the skills of other women and strengthen the bonds between them in order to resist and transform power relations.

The establishment of a cooperative can therefore be understood as a strategy to decrease the *power of capital* over labor and to *bring workers together* in the same location in order to foster the feeling of working and belonging together. In contrast to factory workers, workers in the cooperative are not directly observed and controlled by the employer or a boss. This arises on the one hand from the fact that the work process partly still takes place at home, on the other hand it results from the cooperative as a model where all workers are theoretically equal. However, employers also exert power and control over homeworkers working the cooperative through deadlines and quality controls and thereby control them indirectly.

The women in the cooperative also presented the work in the cooperative as advantageous because they can help each other and correct their mistakes (Yıldız). Although the cooperative fosters the solidarity among the women workers I think it is also worth mentioning that some of them also stressed the *discipline* needed in a cooperative in order to keep it running (Ayşegül). As everyone feels responsible for the win and the loss the cooperative also nurtures *self-discipline* of the workers and mutual control. In the interviews the women workers mentioned the importance of discipline for adhering to deadlines. During my visits they were also encouraging each other again and again to keep on working because there is work to do. Because of the pressure to work faster in order to meet the deadline the women in the cooperative also tend to 'disqualify' the ones who are not fast enough and do not have as much experience as the active members in the cooperative, as Devrim mentioned critically.

Even though the cooperative may be horizontally organized and the women homeworkers are not directly observed by a boss, the cooperative needs to subject itself to the conditions of a (global) capitalist economy in order to get access to the market and to generate income. Considering this pressure on the workers in the cooperative to earn enough money to survive and pay the bills for rent and electricity, I think it is legitimate to use the term of self-exploitation, which has been often used by Marxists when analyzing cooperatives.

65 For instance, Yıldız gives trainings about sewing, another woman (not interviewed) about felt, Devrim about women's rights etc.

Cooperatives reduce the level of exploitation but do not erase it. They challenge power relations based on class and gender but still cannot transcend them. The self-exploitation of workers is characteristic of the neoliberal capitalist economy which fosters self-discipline and entrepreneurship. Therefore, it is important that women homeworkers at home and in cooperatives are not considered as self-employed but as workers who are exploited like other workers as well, despite the absence of a constant employer directly observing and controlling them.

In short, the model of the cooperative brings homeworkers together, decreases the power of capital over labor and fosters *solidarity* and collective agency instead of competition and individual struggle. The acting for a common purpose—the maintenance of the cooperative—allows women homeworkers to experience the (productive) power they can have when working together in solidarity instead of isolated at home. The creative doing together, in the words of Holloway, and the the process of learning from each other can be described as collective emPOWERment in a *socio-economic dimension*. However, in order to avoid a romanticization of this local strategy and to analyze the women homeworkers' struggle within global power relations, it is important to consider the self-discipline and mutual pressure as well which is needed to keep the cooperative running. Despite this critique, the cooperative turned out to be an important space for the women homeworkers of Tuzluca and Mamak where they share their work and use it as a social and political space, as the next part will show.

7.2.3. Claiming social space for visibility in the public sphere

Because of their location in the 'feminized' house and the ideological separation between home and work, women homeworkers are not recognized as 'real' workers “by neither the law nor their relatives,” as Ayşegül explained. This makes them invisible to the state, stakeholders and other workers. The foundation of the cooperative and the establishment is therefore also a strategy to make women homeworkers more visible in public space. Even though much of the work is still done at home and then brought to the cooperative, the establishment of the cooperative allowed them to open up a center as a workplace in Tuzluca.

As *Merve* experienced the strong wish to leave the house, the question of space was very central in the interview with her. “[I]n the mornings we come here with pleasure. We open our door. We have a place. That is how we say it. We do something. We have a place. We have a place with our name. I really like this,” she said. Besides having the freedom to move out of the house for work, Merve stressed the importance of having a social space for them. She also added that the center carries their name. When passing by the center everyone can

read 'Kozadan İpeğe Ev Eksenli Çalışan Kadınlar Kooperatifi.' Women homeworkers managed to overcome their spatial and social isolation and to increase their visibility by claiming a social space in the public sphere. Merve also added, “We do something”. Having a workplace, like workers of the productive economy outside of the house, supports their claim that homeworkers are workers just like other workers as well. Thus, the establishment of a common workplace brings them closer to the productive economy. Additionally, she drew out that this office is not only important in the process of becoming visible; it is a space where she enjoys spending time and socializes with other women. “I come here [in the office], drink tea, hold my shift, spend time with friends and have conversations. When we do not have work everyone has shift. To come here chat and relax...even this gives me tranquility,” she said.

Apart from neighborhood and family relations, women homeworkers generally live in isolated conditions and often do not have the possibility to exchange information with other homeworkers. The cooperative provides a physical and social space where homeworkers are able to meet for mutual support and organizing.⁶⁶ The work center of Kozadan İpeğe became an important social and political space in the neighborhood where women can meet, spend time together and talk about their problems and strategies. As most of the other associations and organizations in Tuzluca (but also in the rest of Turkey) are predominately male-dominated, the establishment of the cooperative in Tuzluca creates a public space for women at the same time. This workplace allows some of the members to carry out their working outside their house.

By claiming a social space outside the house as homeworkers and women the members of Kozadan İpeğe have been transcending the private-public dichotomy and made themselves and their work more visible in the district to other homeworkers, formal and informal workers and the state. Consequently, in this case collective emPOWERment is connected to the *socio-spatial dimension* of change.

7.2.4. Working in solidarity and difference

When asking about their experience in working together with other women, all of the members interviewed emphasized that it has positive and negative sides. Besides the positives aspects mentioned in the previous chapter, many of them particularly stressed the *diversity* among them and linked it to conflicts in the cooperative. They referred to different

66 When I was in the workplace in Tuzluca, the women in the cooperative did not only talk about their problems with each other, they also had guests from another women's cooperative producing jewelry and talked about their common problems. Also women walking-by stayed for a while and had some tea and chat with the homeworking women. Some ask for work, others just came there to talk (research diary 18.07.2012).

personalities but also to different origins, ethnic backgrounds and religions. When speaking about the advantages of cooperatives as a solidarity-based model, Ayşegül also reports that conflicts may arise because of the differences among the women workers:

It is not only in cooperative...it is like everywhere else. When women with different characters, coming from different places, and having different ethnic roots are together, there can of course be problems as well. Just like in every foundation, not everything is pink in our foundation as well.

In contrast to most other local organizations or even workplaces, the women homeworkers of Kozadan İpeğe are not all *hemşehri*. Besides the different origins, in the cooperatives Alevi and Sunni, Kurdish and Turkish women are all working together. Furthermore, Devrim emphasized that they never wanted a cooperative with a specific political ideology because all women with different beliefs and ideologies should be given the opportunity to join the cooperative and get empowered. This is also one of the reasons why the cooperative aims to stay independent from any parties or development agency because they neither want to act in accordance with a specific political ideology nor get dependent from a donor who could exert power over them, cut the financing or influence their acting.

Despite the fact that in Kozadan İpeğe women from different origins are involved, Devrim also started to speak about other existing forms of discrimination she realized during a meeting outside of the scope of Kozadan İpeğe. In the cooperative there are no Islamist⁶⁷ women, there are also no young women, no lesbians and no disabled women, she said. Additionally, she sometimes does not feel accepted because of being unmarried, childless, the youngest, and the child of Alevi parents.

Particularly this critical statement of Devrim underlines the importance of analyzing the work in the cooperative not separated from structural hierarchies and power relations prevalent also in the rest of the society. Even though Kozadan İpeğe fosters the power of women homeworkers to act together and challenge global and local capitalist and patriarchal power relations determining their position as women homeworkers, other structural hierarchies such as age, nationality, religion/belief, and forms of 'power over' are also prevalent in the cooperative as the acting of the members does not take place in a 'power-free space.' In spite of the emphasis on the common position as women and homeworkers, the *question of difference* is not neglected but reflected, very openly, by the women in the cooperative. The interviews with the women homeworkers of Kozadan İpeğe underlined the problematic assumption of a homogeneous 'community' which is empowered. Despite their differences,

⁶⁷ In this context, the term Islamist (Islamci) does not have a negative connotation. In opposite to the English term, Islamci is even used as a self-designation. Even though most of the members of Kozadan İpeğe would call themselves religious, none of them is wearing a religious headscarf.

the women homeworkers of Tuzluçayır decided to establish a cooperative together and even started to challenge ethnic and religious separations in the society by struggling together for better living and working conditions and building solidarity among different women. Stressing that their solidarity is not only limited to their work in the cooperative but also includes support in daily life. “We learned what solidarity means.”, Gülsu said. Consequently I called this dimension 'solidarity across difference.'

7.3. “We are workers. We want rights.”

This powerful slogan was published in the international homeworkers' magazine “We work at home” (Homeworkers Worldwide 2008: 4) when reporting about the establishment of the first trade union of homeworkers in Turkey. All of the women stressed that they meanwhile consider themselves as workers but that they are not seen by others as such.

We are working informally. But our work is not even seen. However we contribute to the circulation of this country, we buy material, we give material and we pay taxes before everything. We pay taxes to the state. (Devrim)

Because of their contribution to the economy as workers they also want rights. In the own words of Hatice:

We also want rights. Because we pay here taxes to the state like any commercial company does. But the state does not even grant us insurance at the end of the day. Because we are not seen as paid people. Of course we want rights as well. Of course we can also get health problems because of this work [...] At least we want an insurance. In particular we want a regular salary. A regular income.

Like the women of Kozadan İpeğe, the HomeNet Turkey argues that homeworkers purchase, produce and buy goods (with the money earned through homework) and should therefore be considered as workers entitled to rights. Besides their contribution to the economy through their paid homework, Gülsüm Coşkun (2010) also draws out that homeworkers are mostly women and contribute through unpaid reproductive work to the economy as well. Using this 'contribution argument' based on the notion that people who economically contribute to the national wealth also have a right to profit from the public property women homeworkers and their organization demand social security from the state.⁶⁸

Besides the emphasize on the economic contribution of homeworkers, Ev-Ek-Sen stresses that their work is often seen as a hobby and not as work because of being woman workers.

We work in order to make a living, not as a leisure time activity. We need to eat, too. Our children also go to school as well as occasionally get sick. We also have parents. What is more, beside our homebased work we take care of the children, the sick, the old, and the disabled in the family or household. (Ev-Ek-Sen 2010)

68 Following the visibility discourse of WID, HomeNet Turkey and the support group aim to make the extent of homework to the economy in Turkey more visible in order to highlight homeworkers' entitlement to rights.

As women homeworkers they have the same needs as other workers and are faced with a double burden as reproductive and productive workers, they demand a right to social security in order to profit from rights formal workers benefit as well and be recognized as real workers.

In the following I will first examine their struggle for the freedom of association as informal workers. Second, I will analyze their fight for social security.

7.3.1. Organizing for the right to organize

Besides organizing into cooperatives like Kozadan İpeğe and other local bazaar and working groups, women homeworkers in Turkey also started to organize into right-based organizations. Even though local groups also work on right issues and determine local priorities, an organization with members across the country, like a trade union, is more powerful in pressuring the government to grant workers' rights to homeworkers. But before being able to make use of the bargaining power of a trade union, homeworkers in Turkey need to struggle for their right to organize as informal workers without registration in a social security institution and a workplace number.

After discussions in local workshops and conferences, homeworkers decided to organize in order to win the right for the organization of homeworkers. For organizing strategies of homeworkers it is important to consider that women homeworkers in Turkey are active in different sectors: one day they work in the textile sector by sewing bags like the women in Kozadan İpeğe or on the other day they are active in the food industry by preparing traditional food. “Therefore it is impossible to pack all instances of homebased work in the bag of a single sector” (Ev-Ek-Sen 2010).⁶⁹ Consequently, women homeworkers decided to establish their own independent union, following the example of SEWA, where all homeworkers, irrespective of their employment relation– both dependent and own account workers– and the sector they work in, can join. Referring to Article 2 (a) of the ILO Convention on Home Work, which calls for the right of homeworkers “to establish or join organizations of own choosing”, women homeworkers founded the first trade union for homeworkers in Turkey, Ev-Ek-Sen, and have been trying to get a legal recognition by the state.

Traditional union organizing is based on the organizing process around a common workplace. As homeworkers tend to work isolated within their own four walls they have been considered as impossible to organize. Since homeworkers are one of the most invisible and flexible

⁶⁹ Because of the fact that women homeworkers are forced to be very flexible in order to get enough work, even a single homeworker is not only active in just one single sector. Furthermore, working activities vary from homeworker to homeworker and particularly in different parts of Turkey.

workers more holistic ways of organizing are needed. Consequently, women homeworkers also challenge the traditional way of union organization which is based on the notion of a masculinized worker formally employed in one sector and working with other workers at a registered workplace in the public sphere of capitalist production.

This powerful definition of 'real' work is not only reflected in trade unions' tradition of organizing but also in the labor law. By founding a trade union as informal workers, women homeworkers challenge the law, particularly the Trade Union Act and the Social Security Act, as an institutionalization of power relations. Those laws are excluding around 50 percent of the working population in Turkey from the basic workers' right to organize and therefore serve the interests of capital for unorganized and cheap labor. However, it is crucial to mention that even organized formal workers in Turkey experience harsh criminalization of their activities. Trade union members often get fired from their employers because of their membership in unions or are even sentenced to prison as terrorists for their trade union activity.⁷⁰

The struggle of homeworkers in this field can be understood as a fight for rights that formal workers of the productive economy have already achieved. They demand to be treated equally as other workers and have access to the same rights formal workers benefit from. In the context of informalization, the establishment of a union of homeworkers as informal workers challenges the labor law, which tries to prevent the organization of informal workers and to keep the informal workforce cheap, fragmented and in competition to each other.⁷¹ In Lukes' understanding, the exclusion of half of the working population from the basic working right of organizing and participating in decision making refers to an observable conflict in the labor law. It protects the interests of capital and offers an unorganized cheap and feminized informal workforce in order to advance the compatibility of Turkey in the global economy.

Although workers with a social security number and a workplace registration are legally allowed to form or join a trade union in Turkey and Article 51⁷² of the Constitution grants the right to organize labor unions for all employees and employers, formal workers are regularly

70 In 2009 Turkey was rated by ITUC (2009) in the annual survey of trade union rights violations as the country with the highest number of documented (!) dismissals of workers because of trade union activities.

71 In Turkey, there have also been legal cases against other trade unions like *Çiftçi-Sen* (trade union of farmers) *Genç-Sen* (trade union of students), *Emekli-Sen* (trade union of retirees) etc. which question, like *Ev-Ek-Sen*, the labor law and thereby the hegemonic understanding of workers by founding their unions and demanding legal recognition.

72 Article 51 (1): Employees and employers have the right to form labor unions, employers' associations and higher organizations, without obtaining permission, and they also possess the right to become a member of a union and to freely withdraw from membership, in order to safeguard and develop their economic and social rights and the interests of their members in their labor relations. No one shall be forced to become a member of a union or to withdraw from membership.

denied their basic rights to organize and bargain collectively⁷³. Consequently the struggle of homeworkers for labor right has to be understood as a struggle for union rights for all workers, formal and informal, as the right of formal workers to organize can easily be cut as well in the context of neoliberal labor policies and the authoritarian acting of the Turkish government. Therefore, it is even more important that homeworkers and other informal workers become more visible for formal workers and their organizations in order to build solidarity among all workers and recognize the danger of neoliberalism for the whole working class.

It does not seem not very probable that Ev-Ek-Sen will win the fight for their right to unionize because its members are neither identified as workers active in the same sector nor employers. However, the establishment of a trade union also makes women homeworkers more visible for other workers and builds solidarity among informal workers and all workers in general. It (re-)politicizes the exclusion of around half of the population from the basic labor right of freedom of association and collective bargaining and leads to collective emPOWERment in the *political dimension*.

To put it briefly, if we can win the case for our right to organize, this will be a very significant gain not only for members of Ev-Ek-Sen, not only for all home-based workers whether unionized or not, but for all workers with or without social security. For this reason, throughout the legal process we want to walk together not only with informal or precarious sections or workers, but with all women, with all workers (that is, also with those with formal protection), and with all their organizations as well. (Ev-Ek-Sen 2010)

7.3.2. 'Adding' homeworkers to social security

Using the ILO Home Work Convention which calls for “equal treatment between homeworkers and other wage earners” (Article 4) women homeworkers in Turkey demand their inclusion into the right to social security through the change of the Turkish law. Besides (a) the right to organize which I have discussed above, the international convention calls for (b) the protection against discrimination in employment and occupation, (c) protection in the field of occupational safety and health, (d) remuneration, (e) statutory social security protection, (f) access to training, (g) minimum age for admission to employment or work and (f) maternity protection. Because of the Turkish government's unwillingness to sign the ILO convention, homeworkers also tried to focus on specific rights in their political campaigns which could be adapted step-by-step. For instance, in 2006 women homeworkers collected 5000 signatures from women for their demand for minimum wage for dependent homeworkers and submitted it to the Work and Social Security Ministry. (Devrim, Kozadan

73 Article 53 of the constitution grants the right of collective bargaining: Workers and employers have the right to conclude collective bargaining agreements in order to regulate reciprocally their economic and social position and conditions of work.

İpeğe n.d.). In response, the ministry declared that they have the right to benefit from minimum wage. Besides receiving the right to minimum wage, dependent homeworkers were also recognized as workers in 2003 due to the amendment of Labor Law No, 4857. Homeworkers are now covered by this law because so called 'attached places,' like the home, were included in the definition of workplace. Nevertheless, this law assuring dependent women homeworkers the status of workers and recognizing the 'home' as a workplace has not yet been implemented. The construction of the home as the private, even 'natural' sphere prevents the inspection of the 'home' in regard to labor regulation. Because of the low income, dependent and own-account homeworkers usually consider the premiums of social insurance also as too high and prefer to work without a registration and informally.

Women homeworkers from all different parts of Turkey organized in HomeNet Turkey intend to pressure the government to implement existing laws and lobby for the ratification of the ILO convention. But women homeworkers cannot simply be 'added' to the labor law without expanding the gendered understanding of work inscribed in it. It demonstrates the limitation of the Fordist labor rights which have been heavily based on the notion of a worker as male and employed outside the house (Prügl 1999:145). Women on the other hand have been defined as mothers and depend on the male provider which limits their claim to socio-economic rights. The political struggle of women homeworkers for their inclusion into basic social rights challenges the gendered construction of work which defines women only as dependents and not as equal workers. By demanding the right to social security for their own work, women homeworkers challenge the institutionalized power of the male breadwinner which even puts them in danger of losing the right to go to the hospital in the case of a divorce, as Ayşegül and Hatice stressed. The implementation of the right for social security would therefore not only improve their working conditions, but would also make them less dependent on their husbands or respectively their parents in this aspect.

From the position of women and workers producing at home, women homeworkers make the extent of work in the domestic realm visible and thereby challenged the ideological separation of work and home which obviously does not comply to their living and working reality. The demand for social security as homeworkers challenges the 'non-regulation' of the reproductive economy, where women homeworkers primarily are exploited, and the transfer of social reproduction from the state to the household in the course of informalization. In harmony with the feminist movement since the 1980s, homeworkers intend to re-politicize the home. It transcends the public-private dichotomy by calling for a stronger regulation of the informal

economy in the form of stricter labor inspections also in the private and feminized home, where the whole family is exposed to the health risks because of the material.

In the declaration, Ev-Ek-Sen stresses that their struggle for social security should not be limited to women homeworkers only. In their fight for social rights as informal workers they emphasize the importance of a common struggle with other informal workers.

We also have connections and solidarity with organizations of workers without security, which we shall develop and strengthen. If we have in common that we are being exploited as labourers, if the conditions leading to the exploitation of our labour are also common, then we have a common struggle. (Ev-Ek-Sen 2010)

Despite the importance of stressing that women workers are excluded from basic workers' rights formal workers enjoy and demanding the recognition of women workers as workers entitled to rights, it is important to see that in the context of neoliberal globalization and its policies of privatization and informalization the social protection of all workers is endangered. It is obvious that women homeworkers see their status as informal workers as the cause of their bad working conditions and do not, like the World Bank, promote the informal economy as a way to get out of poverty. In the declaration of Ev-Ek-Sen (2010), women homeworkers state :

We want to improve the conditions of our homebased work, win the rights enjoyed by formal workers, those registered for social security, for example health insurance and the right to a pension when we are too old to work. We want to work under better conditions. What we want is not only work, but secure and 'decent work,' to cite the ILO. (Ev-Ek-Sen 2010)

Women homeworkers do not see the goals of their organizing only in sufficient work in order to survive or the rights formal male workers benefit from, but better living and working conditions in general. In the quoted statement the concept of decent work is used in order to raise their voice for a better life with 'dignity and daily bread' as Sheila Rowbotham and Swasti Mitter (1995) have named it.

This means that the homeworkers' movement in Turkey does not merely aim to improve the income of women homeworkers by forming working groups and cooperatives, but also struggle for the inclusion of homeworkers into social security privileges. For this purpose they increase their political power vis-à-vis the state—addressed as an institution responsible for the welfare instead of only the 'regulator' of the neoliberal economy—through collective action on the national level. Through political mobilization they increase the visibility, the political voice of women homeworkers and experience the *power* they can have *with* others to oppose the neoliberal strategy of informalization and flexibilization, as a way to save labor costs

because of poorer working conditions, wages below the minimum wage level and no social security.

However, it is not enough to make their voices stronger for having their demands 'heard' by the state in order to achieve the recognition and implementation of women homeworkers' rights, in the sense of 'power to.' For a real improvement of their situation as women workers, in the sense of structural emPOWERment, the gendered power relations 'behind' these laws need to be challenged and changed as well. That is the reason why Ev-Ek-Sen highlights in their declaration that women are an important group of allies for women homeworkers because of their cultural responsibility for the reproduction of society:

In Turkey, as in the rest of the world, women are the majority among insecure workers. And this is directly connected to our position as women within the sexist division of labor : regardless of the type of work, there is unpaid domestic labour of all women. (Ev-Ek-Sen 2010)

Consequently, the inclusion of women homeworkers into political and social rights would go beyond a neo-fordist welfare state. The realization of their demands calls for a change in power relations based on gender and class and a transformation of the hegemonic understanding of work and workers.

Moreover, working with insurance cover would also increase their position in the family, as homeworkers are still not recognized by most friends and family members as workers. Yıldız stressed in the interview that she wished to go home to her family and tell them that not only was she working, but she had the benefit of working with insurance cover. She said that it would make her feel really proud because it would show that her struggle was worth it. This example demonstrates the interconnectedness of the psycho-social and the structural dimension and of personal and collective emPOWERment.

To sum up, women homeworkers question the gendered construction of work with their demand for social and political and challenge power relations based on class and gender. They intend to undo social constructions and transform power relations which constrain their ability to organize and get social security from the state. Their organizing on a national level in HomeNet Turkey and the establishment of a trade union increases their political power and voice vis-à-vis the state and fosters solidarity with other workers, formal or informal, men or women. This development refers to the political dimension of collective emPOWERment, in the words of Stromquist, as it defines the ability to mobilize and create social networks and organizations in order to challenge the operating power relations. The recognition of homeworkers as workers by the state and the granting of social rights would signify a change in capitalist and patriarchal power relations and an improvement in the position of all

homeworkers in Turkey. This dimension of collective emPOWERment refers to a *structural* improvement of all women homeworkers, organized or not, and would also support the struggle of other (informal) workers and women for social justice. But despite the fact that some laws have been changed in favor of women homeworkers, they have not been implemented yet. Therefore, collective emPOWERment in the structural dimension cannot be declared yet.

7.3.3. Solidarity across borders

The organizing process of homeworkers does not only transcend ethnical and religious borders, as the example of Kozadan İpeğe has shown, and brings women from rural and urban parts of Turkey together, the fight of homeworkers for social and political right also goes beyond state borders. Since the beginning of the organizing process in Turkey, the struggle of women homeworkers in other countries, particularly the organizing of SEWA in India, served as an inspiring example for women homeworkers and their supporters in Turkey. (Eşim 2003). Since the situation of women homeworkers in Turkey is not only determined by local and national power relations, but also by global constructions of gender and neoliberal globalization in the form of flexibilization and informalization, as I have shown in Chapter 5, building networks with homeworking groups in other countries and organizing international meetings have been seen as very important for the women homeworkers in Turkey. Coşkun described the importance of this kind of meetings as follows:

As Turkey HomeNet, we also carry on our international relations; we don't confine ourselves to passively continue our relations but we try to shape them. Why? [...] [T]o be seen, to touch each other, to exchange experiences, and finally to see that we are not alone. Also we are doing this, because our work is not irregular within our country alone but also globally work is moving to places where labor is cheaper. We cannot confine ourselves to our individual country, but we should make contacts all over the world. In the world there is no difference as regards the working conditions of women homebased workers. We find it important to share this information, to learn about each other and build alliances internationally. (Coşkun 2010: 216)

International meetings open up the space for dialog, the sharing of knowledge and resources with women homeworkers from other countries and nurture a sense of belonging together. Women homeworkers become more visible for each other and a feeling of 'we,' a common identity, is formed by listening to other homeworkers, hearing the energy of their anger, and sharing their success stories and hopes for the future. While speaking about the success story of the Union of Embroidery Workers in Madeira in organizing women homeworkers and achieving rights to social security, Guida Vieira said during the European meeting in Istanbul in 2007:

There are times when we laugh, and times when we cry. There are times when we are sad and think that the world will fall on our heads. But when we ask, if we give up now, who is going to gain? It is only the bosses who will gain. So we rely on our organization, rely on each other and in this way we can transmit a sense of hope to others. (Homeworkers Worldwide 2008: 3)

The example of the trade union in Madeira demonstrates the power women homeworkers' organizations can build in order to improve their position structurally through collective action. The success of this model inspired the women homeworkers in Turkey to found their trade union Ev-Ek-Sen and gave them strength and craft for their struggle for social and political rights of homeworkers also in their country. Through these international meetings women homeworkers learn about the problems other homeworkers face in their countries, "the efforts that have been made to organise, the solutions they have found or are still searching for" (Homeworkers Worldwide 2008:7). It shows "the variety of local situations and strategies" (Homeworkers Worldwide 2008: 3) but also the common problems women homeworkers encounter in all countries.

In addition to the exchange of strategies and the promotion of solidarity, international meetings also foster the creation of transnational networks. For instance, in February 2012 representatives of HomeNet Turkey participated in a conference in Bulgaria in which HomeNet South East Europe was launched. Following the example of HomeNet South East Asia, this sub-regional network aims to foster the development of regional strategies and increase the pressure on the governments of the member countries to adopt and implement the ILO Home Work Convention (Wiego 2012a,b). Besides the cooperation with countries in South East Europe and the membership in the Federation of Homeworkers Worldwide, HomeNet Turkey also hopes that the negotiation around Turkey's EU membership could influence the political agenda concerning homeworkers' rights (Bergan 2009: 226).⁷⁴

Despite the fact that women homeworkers are engaged in the production of different goods, they do not work in the same sectors and play a different role in the economy of their countries, homeworkers around the world tend to work informally and are seen as non-working housewives. Even though local power relations based on gender, class, race/ethnicity, age etc. influence the position of women homeworkers in their societies, gendered constructions of work also do not stop at state borders, but are global (but not universal) and interact with local and national power relations. The analysis has shown that international meetings and networks do not merely allow women homeworkers to learn about the strategies of women homeworkers from other countries and to adapt them to their local

⁷⁴ However, it has to be mentioned that the European Union never pressured Turkey in respect to labor rights or the adoption and implementation of ILO conventions. In opposite, the EU was a crucial force in the liberalization and flexibilization of the Turkish economy (Ataç 2004).

context, it also fosters cooperation and solidarity in light of shared and different experiences, instead of competition and individualism. The inter- and transnational struggle of women homeworkers refers to a sense of 'imagined community,' an alliance between different women and builds on common interests as 'feminized' workers with similar problems in relation to their working conditions. The analysis of the *political dimension* shows that building contacts and alliances with other women homeworkers' groups across socially and politically constructed borders around such issues as women and workers' rights bring 'power to' challenge gendered constructions of work also on a transnational level and is therefore a crucial factor for effective resistance against neoliberal globalization and its consequence and the ideological barriers that "colonialism and racism build among women" (Rowbathom/Mitter: back cover).

The women homeworkers' movement has been reframing the debate on globalization and made aspects of the global political economy more visible which have been marginalized so far in the discussion about the consequences of neoliberalism. The struggle of women homeworkers turned out to be an important part of the 'globalization from below' by contesting flexibilization and informalization and demanding the recognition of workers of the reproductive economy as 'real' workers by governments and international organizations. Even though women homeworkers will not be able to stop neoliberal policies or effectively oppose the financialization and flexibilization of the global political economy, their common struggle challenges gendered constructions of work and global class exploitation and makes women homeworkers and their contribution to the global political economy more visible. Through the cooperation of *different* women in order to improve their structural position not only *collective emPOWERment* for women homeworkers but also for other 'feminized' workers can be achieved. Therefore, the women homeworkers' movement can be considered as a feminist labor movement resisting, de-naturalizing and re-politicizing power relations.

8. Conclusion

This thesis dealt with the organization of women homeworkers in Turkey from the perspective of a reclaimed notion of empowerment. Understanding power not only as a suppressing and dominating (power over) but also as a productive and generative force, which may evolve by acting together with others and resisting power relations, allowed me to use a re-politicized understanding of empowerment which does not only focus on the personal but also on the collective level and analyzes emPOWERment within local and global power relations. The feminist perspective of Spike Peterson on global political economy gave me the possibility to move beyond the limitation of 'the local' and analyze the homeworkers' 'position' in Turkey and the organization of women homeworkers, as flexible, 'feminized' and informal workers in the reproductive economy, within global structural trends and to recognize the interconnection of social practices, ideologies and identities.

The production within the 'feminized' home, in which all kinds of work have been devalued and made invisible through the separation between home and 'real' work through capitalist industrialization and the ideology of domesticity, makes women homeworkers as workers invisible to the state, their families and themselves. I argued that women homeworkers' identity construction as 'good women' and non-working housewives is a central factor for the exploitation of their labor and the institutionalization of male power in the household. The flexibilization of the Turkish economy after 1980 did not lead to an empirical but only to an analytical feminization of work through the suppression of the labor movement, the flexibilization of employment relations and the increased use of subcontracting and homework. Homeworkers are the ultimate flexible labor force as they are (mostly) paid piece-rate, produce flexibly just-in-time and are cheap due to their weak bargaining power and the use of the middleperson. The integration of Turkey into the global political economy has led to an informalization of the labor workforce and pushed women in the informal economy as irregular and unorganized workers. The lack of social security does not not only make women homeworkers a cheap and vulnerable workforce, it also keeps them unorganized and fosters the power of capital over labor.

In this diploma thesis I have shown that the struggle of women homeworkers challenges power relations based on class and gender and leads to emPOWERment in psycho-social, cognitive, economic, socio-economic, socio-spatial and political dimensions and fosters solidarity across differences and borders. The observed changes at the personal and collective level derive from the content analysis of the problem-centered interviews with six women

homeworkers from the Ankara-based Kozadan İpeğe cooperative and newspaper articles, a declaration, newsletters, and blog entries dealing with different organizing strategies written by homeworkers or their supporters. I have approved my assumption that the organizing of women homeworkers does not only tend to (structurally) improve the economic situation of women homeworkers but also focuses on the position of homeworkers as women identifying themselves as housewives and working invisible and isolated at home. However, due to my focus on the importance of collective action I underestimated the significance of the psychological dimension of personal emPOWERment, as the field research has shown.

By getting organized and working in a cooperative the members interviewed experienced personal emPOWERment in a psycho-social and cognitive dimension. Working in the cooperative—often despite the opposition from their families and friends—increased their self-confidence, particularly in communication, their self-esteem and expanded their social circle and contact with non-family members and made them listen to and act according to their own needs and interests. It made them feel powerful enough to confront gendered power relations in the decision to out of the home, in which homeworkers are isolated and their work tends to be devalorized and invisible, and act against the patriarchal expectations around motherhood and domesticity. Beside the fact that women's employment outside the house destabilizes the male identity of breadwinner, the organizing transformed the women homeworkers as subjects and fostered 'power from within' which facilitated the capacity to act and achieve what they want. Through the participation in local workshops and the exchange of experiences with other women homeworkers, the interviewees started to position themselves closer to the identity of workers in opposite to non-working housewives and became aware that their work is neither recognized by the state nor by their families because of being performed in the home on an irregular basis. It made them undo the internalization of oppression and realize patriarchal and capitalist ideologies which 'feminize' their work performed at home and construct them as docile non-working women.

By working together in a cooperative as a local strategy of horizontal organizing the women of Kozadan İpeğe intended to replace the middleperson in order to increase their bargaining power, their income and control over their own labor. Despite financial problems—due to high taxation and the devaluation of manufacturing—and a limited success in the economic dimension of collective emPOWERment, the women homeworkers have experienced the power they can have when working together in solidarity and equality with other women instead of isolated and in competition to each other at home. They started to take action against the flexibilization and informalization strategy of subcontracting which fragments the

work force and separates workers from each other in order to keep them cheap and unorganized. By working in a group, women homeworkers cannot only take bigger orders and finish them faster, they also learn from each other and experience the 'power with' others in order to act and change their position. Against my expectations, the creation of a work center in Tuzluca played a crucial role in the collective emPOWERment of the women homeworkers as it enabled them to meet and spend time together and created a social space for women homeworkers in the public sphere and brought them closer to the productive economy. However, it has become very clear that the organizing of women homeworkers takes place within global and local power relations and does not transcend them. Despite the fact that the cooperative decreases the exploitation of homeworkers' labor it also fosters self-disciplination and self-reliance characteristic for neoliberal forms of labor control. Furthermore, differences based on age, religion, sexuality, dis-ability and ethnicity also construct hierarchical power relations among the members of the cooperative. In spite of the fact that women homeworkers work together in solidarity across differences, established a cooperative and became more visible in the district and to the state, they still do not have access to social security and keep on working informally.

This has shown the importance of organizing on the national level. The analysis of the organizing struggle for the inclusion of women homeworkers to social and political rights have demonstrated that women homeworkers cannot simply be 'added' to the labor law without changing the underlying gendered definition of work and workers in it and the power relations protecting the capitalist interests of companies for cheap and unorganized labor. By founding a trade union as informal workers and by demanding the political right to organize—granted by the ILO Home Work Convention—women homeworkers challenge the exclusion of workers from the reproductive economy, whose work is not considered as 'real' work—from the right to organize, join a trade union and negotiate collectively. They oppose flexibilization and informalization as powerful neoliberal strategies which intend to keep the Turkish economy competitive on global markets and decrease the power of workers, informal or formal. By demanding the full recognition of women homeworkers as workers and the right for social security, women homeworkers challenge the separation of 'real' work and home and the construction of women as dependent wives, the transfer of social reproduction to the household in course of informalization and the position of women homeworkers as unprotected workers. Despite their collective emPOWERment in the political dimension in the form of a stronger voice vis-à-vis the state and an increased visibility to other workers, women homeworkers could not reach structural emPOWERment, which would have meant

improvement for all women homeworkers due to the missing implementation of laws and the non-ratification of the ILO convention. Nevertheless, by knitting solidarity networks across nation-state borders and exchanging their problems and solving strategies, women homeworkers do not only learn from the struggles of other women, they also experience the power homeworkers can have when fighting together in solidarity against global strategies of flexibilization and informalization and the construction of gender, which 'feminizes' work performed in the home. The global organizing has been pushing national governance and international organizations, like the ILO, to recognize homeworkers as 'real' workers and increased the visibility and voices of homeworkers in the globalization discourse.

This diploma thesis has shown that organizing may lead to personal and collective emPOWERment in various dimensions. It was demonstrated that women homeworkers in Turkey are not powerless victims but critical actors who challenge power relations based on class and gender through their organizing on the local, national and international level into cooperatives, a trade union, national and transnational solidarity networks and organizations. Even though their struggle takes place within global and local power relations which tend to keep women homeworkers unrecognized, flexible, unorganized and cheap, women homeworkers have been organizing to bring about change in their personal lives and in their position as homeworkers. Despite the fact that the focus on the individual woman homeworker and her personal story is crucial when organizing homeworkers, emPOWERment can only be reached when people are working together. In this sense, I want to end this thesis with the words of Devrim about her understanding of empowerment:

If you throw a small stone against a window, the window doesn't break. But when you collect very small stones, bundle them up in a tissue and throw them against the window, the windows breaks immediately. You cannot do anything alone. But [...] together power evolves.

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Appendix

Interview Guideline

Short Questionnaire

- Date:
- Location:
- Name:
- Age:
- Place of Birth:
- For how long have you been working as a homeworker?
- For how long have you been organized?
- What are you doing in the cooperative?

Interview Questions

- 'We are workers. We want rights.' What does this slogan mean for you?
- Why did you start working as homeworker?
- How was your life before joining the cooperative?
- Why did you join the cooperative?
- How did your family and surroundings react to it?
- What has changed for you personally?
- How did you experience working with other women?
- Do you want to add something to this issue?

Content Analysis Grid

Source	Text Passage	Generalization	Subcategory	Category
Hatice	Personally my self-confidence increased above all. [...] I was a very closed...I mean...While speaking...I could not speak comfortably...I was a very timid person.	Increase in self-confidence, particularly in relation to communication	Psycho-social dimension	Personal EmPOWERment
Merve	What I want to do I can do.	Feeling of being able to act according to one's own wishes		
Ayşegül	Until I took the consciousness-training I did not know that I am working.	Self-recognition as worker	Cognitive dimension	
Gülsü	We are actually invisible workers. Because of working at home we do not have any security.	Because of being workers at home, homeworkers, they do not get social security		
Hatice	Because when we are alone we cannot take big orders. But if you are working as a group, as an institution all doors open for you.	Working in the group facilitates the access to the market	Socio-Economic dimension	Collective EmPOWERment
Merve	We have a place. We have a place with our name.	Establishment of a social space for women homeworkers	Increase in visibility in public	
Gülsüm Coşkun	We cannot confine ourselves to our individual country, but we should make contacts all over the world.[...]We find it important to share this information, to learn about each other and to build alliances internationally	Learning from the problems and strategies of organization in other countries to apply it in Turkey and vice versa	International cooperation and solidarity across borders	

List of material used for content analysis

- Problem-centered interviews with Ayşegül, Merve, Yıldız, Gülsu and Hatice conducted on August 18, 2012 in the work center of Kozadan İpeğe in Tuzluçayır, Ankara
- Problem-centered interview with Devrim, conducted on September 9, 2012 in her flat in Tuzluçayır, Ankara
- Research diary written from July to September 2012.
- Blog of Kozadan İpeğe (n.d.) including a description of the cooperative and the projects involved. <http://kozadan.blogspot.com/>
- Newspaper article which consists of an interview with the president of Kozadan İpeğe about the work of the cooperative, published in *Mamak Halk* (June 2012: 9): Mamak'ta Ev Eksenli Çalışan Kadınlar Kooperatifi Var! Ev Eksenli Çalışan Kadınlar Kooperatifi Kozadan İpeğe Kadın Kooperatifi Başkanı Nurcan Yalçın ile söyleşi gerçekleştirdik.
- Declaration of Ev-Ek-Sen (in English), published on the website of Homeworkers Worldwide: Weaving out union Knot by Knot. Declaration of the Launch of Ev-Ek-Sen (Union of Homebased Workers) and Call for Unity. <http://www.homeworkersww.org.uk/files/resources/eveksen.rtf>
- Newsletters of Homeworkers Worldwide (2007-2010) "We Work At Home" dealing with the progress of the organizing in Turkey, the establishment of Ev-Ek-Sen and international meetings. The following numbers were used for the content analysis:
(1)2007, No. 2, pp. 13-14,
(2)2008, No.3, pp. 2-7
(3)2010, No.6, pp. 3
- Newspaper article about Kozadan İpeğe in the first period of its existence, in *Hürriyet* (27.06.2007): Mamak'ta koza kurdular kelebek olup uçacaklar. arama.hurriyet.com.tr/arsivnews.aspx?id=6784721
- Newspaper article about the cooperative after five years of its existence, in *Yüksekova Güncel* (22.05.2012):www.yuksekovahaber.com/haber/kozadan-ipege-donusen-kadin-emegi-74123.htm
- Article from bianet (06.12.2011), an independent online communication network, about the second Conference of homeworkers hold in Ankara on 2-4 December: Women Working Home-based Seek their Rights. www.bianet.org/english/gender/134545-women-working-home-based-seek-their-rights
- Article from Gülsüm Coşkun from HomeNet Turkey: Building Women Homebased Workers' Organizations in Turkey. In: *Global Labour Journal*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, pp. 212-217.

Curriculum Vitae

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Sep 2010-Jan 2011	Mentorin im SOWI-STEOP Peer-Mentoring-Program der Politikwissenschaft, Universität Wien
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Sprachkenntnisse

Deutsch (Muttersprache), Englisch (fließend), Türkisch (fließend), Französisch (fortgeschritten), Hausa (fortgeschritten)

Abstract (English)

This diploma thesis deals with the organization of women homeworkers in Turkey as a means of personal and collective emPOWERment. With the rise of neoliberalism, homework—performed predominantly by women at home—has been increasingly used to save labor costs and to keep workers unorganized and flexible. Women homeworkers in Turkey started to organize on local, national and international levels in order to fight together for better living and working conditions. The author attempts to show how the organization of women homeworkers in Turkey challenges and changes power relations based on class and gender, and empowers women homeworkers. EmPOWERment is thereby understood as the ability to change and transform power relations and change one's own position. Power as the core element of emPOWERment is conceptualized not merely as a repressive but as a productive force, which evolves by acting together with others and resisting power relations. The perspective of a feminist global political economy permits to go beyond 'the local' and to include gender in the analysis of the women homeworkers' position and their organizing within global and local power relations. During a three-month stay in Ankara six problem-centered interviews were conducted with active members of a women homeworkers' cooperative. Using Mayring's qualitative content analysis these interviews, in combination with newspapers articles, a trade union's declaration, blog postings, etc. are examined in regard to the various dimensions of personal and collective emPOWERment. The analysis demonstrates that the organizing in local solidarity groups generates 'power from within' which enables women homeworkers to resist power relations, to follow their needs and interests and to act against the hegemonic notion of femininity. Participation in trainings and working with other women at the same site ends their social and spatial isolation and fosters their identification as workers as opposed to their previous identity as non-working housewives. The horizontal organization into cooperatives nurtures 'power to' struggle against the exploitation by the middleperson, and to strive for a more regular and higher income as well as visibility in the public sphere. By demanding the right to establish a trade union and their entitlement to social security rights, women homeworkers do not only challenge the position of homeworkers as unrecognized, invisible and informal women workers but at the same time question the gendered construction of work, which excludes them from social and political rights.

Abstract (German)

Diese Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Organisierung von Heimarbeiterinnen als Mittel zum persönlichen und kollektiven EmPOWERment. Im Zuge des Aufstiegs des Neoliberalismus wurde vermehrt auf Heimarbeit – ausgeübt vor allem von Frauen im eigenen Heim – zurückgegriffen, um Arbeitskosten zu sparen und ArbeiterInnen unorganisiert und flexibel zu halten. Heimarbeiterinnen in der Türkei begannen sich auf lokaler, nationaler und internationaler Ebene zu organisieren, um für bessere Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen zu kämpfen. Die Autorin geht der Frage nach inwiefern die Organisierung von Heimarbeiterinnen Machtbeziehungen basierend auf Klasse und Geschlecht infragestellt und transformiert, und Heimarbeiterinnen auf persönlicher und kollektiver Ebene ermächtigt. EmPOWERment wird verstanden als die Fähigkeit Machtbeziehungen infragezustellen und zu transformieren, und die eigene Position zu verändern. Macht als Kernelement von EmPOWERment wird nicht nur als repressive, sondern auch als produktive Kraft verstanden, die durch gemeinsames Handeln und Widerstand entsteht. Die Perspektive einer feministischen politischen Ökonomie ermöglicht es über das Lokale hinauszugehen und Geschlecht in die Analyse der Position von Heimarbeiterinnen und ihrer Organisierung innerhalb globaler und lokaler Machtverhältnisse zu integrieren. Während eines dreimonatigen Aufenthalts in Ankara wurden sechs problem-zentrierte Interviews mit aktiven Mitgliedern einer Heimarbeiterinnenkooperative durchgeführt. In Verwendung von Mayring's qualitativer Inhaltsanalyse werden jene Interviews in Verbindung mit Zeitungsartikeln, der Deklaration ihrer Gewerkschaft, Blogpostings usw. in Hinblick auf die verschiedenen Dimensionen von persönlichem und kollektivem EmPOWERment untersucht. Die Analyse zeigt, dass die Organisierung in lokalen Gruppen 'Macht von innen' generiert, die es den Heimarbeiterinnen ermöglicht sich Machtbeziehungen zu widersetzen, den eigenen Bedürfnissen und Interessen zu folgen und gegen das hegemoniale Verständnis von Femininität zu handeln. Die Teilnahme an Trainings und die gemeinsame Arbeit mit anderen Frauen am selben Ort beendet die soziale und räumliche Isolation von Heimarbeiterinnen und unterstützt ihre Identifikation als Arbeiterinnen, im Gegensatz zu ihrer vorhergehenden Identität als nicht-arbeitende Hausfrauen. Jene Macht, welche benötigt wird um sich der Ausbeutung durch die Mittelperson zu widersetzen und für größere Kontrolle über den Arbeitsprozess und Sichtbarkeit zu kämpfen, wird durch die horizontale Organisierung in Kooperativen geschaffen. Durch die Einforderung des Rechts auf gewerkschaftliche Organisierung sowie auf soziale Sicherheit fechten Heimarbeiterinnen nicht nur ihre Position als nicht anerkannte, unsichtbare und informelle Arbeiterinnen an, sondern auch die

vergeschlechtliche Konstruktion von Arbeit, welche sie von sozialen und politischen Rechten
exkludiert.