



**Universiteit Leiden**

Dehegemonizing The Feminist Discourse

Comparing the Discourse Analyses of International Development  
Organisations and Moroccan Women's NGOs

**Master's thesis**

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## List of Abbreviations

ADFM.....	Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc
ALF.....	Anna Lindh Foundation
AMDF.....	Association Marocaine des Droits des Femmes
CEDAW.....	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
FLDDF.....	Federation de la Ligue Démocratique des Droits des Femmes
NGO .....	Non-Governmental Organisation
UAF.....	Union de l'Action Féminine
UN.....	United Nations
USAID.....	United States Agency for International Development
PANIFD.....	Plan National d'Action d'Inclusion des Femmes au Développement
WLP.....	Women's Learning Partnership

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Research questions and thesis structure

Particularly under the reign of King Mohamed VI (started in 1999) international donors began to increasingly cooperate with Moroccan national ministries by introducing norms devoted to improve Moroccan women's status in several sectors among which education, agriculture, microfinance, and gender budgeting. Consequently, the initial engagement of the first Moroccan women's NGOs was widely interconnected with the work of international development organisations such as the United Nations (UN) both on a practical and ideological level. In fact, particularly after king Mohamed VI's decision to introduce the *Plan for the Integration of Women in Development (PANIFD)*<sup>1</sup>, the liberal language which characterised the gender-based agenda of international institutions started to be further employed by women's organisations in Morocco for pragmatic other than ideological motivations, such as the obtainment of foreign funding (Salime 2011, 26). Notwithstanding the current link which still connects Moroccan women's NGOs and international institutions on a practical level, such as through the exchange of information and funding, this thesis aims to identify whether these organisations are further interconnected on a semantic level. In other words, the first target of this thesis shall be to shed light on the *nodal points*<sup>2</sup> utilised by both international and Moroccan women's organisations to identify recurrent terminologies and discrepancies in their construction of a feminist narrative. Hence, this thesis shall answer the following research question:

- Which nodal points can be identified by comparing the discourses of international organisations and Moroccan NGOs facing the issue of gender inequality?

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<sup>1</sup> The PANIFD was introduced in 1999 by the Moroccan government to meet the demand of Moroccan women's rights groups which requested: the abolition of polygamy, the expansion of women's rights to divorce, and the increment in the minimum age of marriage to eighteen (Young 2014, 17). The Islamic movement highly criticised king's Mohamed decision – further supported by Moroccan feminist associations and leftist parties – to introduce the PANIFD which was considered as directly originating from the neoliberal economic restructuring programmes designed and funded by UN agencies and the World Bank (Guessous 2011, 243).

<sup>2</sup> The concept of nodal points has been developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in their work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* published in 1985. This term will be further explained and elaborated in Chapter 1.1.2: Theoretical framework and methodology.

Despite the positive outcomes pioneered by development organisations in Morocco, scholars have greatly theorized on the negative drawbacks caused by the link between aid, dependency, and hegemony in developing countries. For instance, during an interview to Abdullahi An-Na'im<sup>3</sup> (2000) the scholar comments on the drawbacks of dependency by stating that: “international organizations have to confront the fact that their tendency to be hegemonic, as a reflection of their being a product of their own society, must be challenged through a conscious effort within those organization” (2000, 47). Further referring to the hegemonic attitude of international development organisations towards local NGOs in North Africa Julia Pitner (2000) argues that NGOs are developing frustration towards international funders such as USAID, inasmuch they mostly impose their agenda impeding NGOs to freely operate according to their ideology: “Local perception...is that they come to the region with agendas rooted in specific foreign policy objectives seeking ‘partners’ to unquestioningly carry out programs that seldom resonate with the political situation on the ground” (Ibid., 35).

To assess whether the exchange of resources and information between international and Moroccan female organisations is currently producing an unbalanced system of economic dependency would signify to go beyond the linguistic boundaries of this thesis. In fact, discourse analysis does not aim to assess and explain the reality but instead to analyse “how the structure, in form of discourse, is constituted and changed” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 6). This can lead us to the elaboration of the second research question of this thesis which further aims to assess whether the comparison of international and Moroccan discourses on gender equality demonstrates the presence of a prevailing discourse (hegemony) on an ideological and linguistic level. Hence, the second research question is articulated as follows:

- Does the comparison of the discourses analysed demonstrate the presence of a hegemonic discourse in relation to the issue of gender inequality?

Aiming to answer the research questions, I will include in this chapter the theoretical framework and methodology of this thesis which is based on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal

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<sup>3</sup> Abdullahi An-Na'im is a lawyer and a prominent human rights scholar and activist. Currently, he is a professor of law at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Lisa Hajjar, sociology teacher at Morehouse College, interviewed him on January 7, 2000. The transcription was provided by Zachary Kidd and funded by the Morehouse sociology department.

Mouffe (1985) theory on discourse analysis and hegemony. Following the first chapter, the analysis will be structured in two principal sections: chapter two, namely ‘Discourse Analysis on International Development Organisations: UN Women and USAID’, shall focus on the analysis of UN Women and USAID’s discourses by identifying the principal nodal points constructed in their female narrative. Along chapter three, ‘Discourse Analysis of Moroccan Women’s NGOs’, I will particularly examine the discourse of different categories of Moroccan women’s NGOs: the *Fédération de la Ligue Démocratique pour les Droits des Femmes* (FLDDF), *L’Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc* (ADFM), *Association des Femmes du Quartier Assalam pour le Développement et la Communication*, the association *Al Karama* and *Azzahrae Forum for Moroccan Women*. The semantic structure of the Moroccan NGOs differs in some characteristics such as: expressed values, goals, and structural matters. Nevertheless, I consider the inclusion of different kinds of Moroccan NGOs in the discourse analysis as a useful tool to complicate the final analysis included in the fourth chapter: ‘Comparing and Analysing the Final Results’. This chapter will be centred on the second research question of this thesis, by specifically comparing the discourse analyses in order to provide a final perspective on the presence of a hegemonic discourse on gender equality with reference to the documents analysed.

The material which I will utilise to provide the empirical evidence of the discourse analyses will mostly rests on documents retrieved by the main websites of the organisations which properly frame main goals and values as well as providing the necessary source of information on the associations’ projects and activities. Specifically, alongside chapter two the analysis will be based on UN Women annual reports (2018-2019) and USAID’s official website (2020). Moreover, the data utilised in chapter three will mainly be retrieved by official Moroccan NGOs websites as well as secondary sources such as official websites of network association with which the NGOs cooperate. Since Moroccan NGOs official websites are frequently not accessible or currently inexistent, the analysis will be further supported by academic fieldwork research such as Aura Lounasmaa (2013) and Amy Young (2014) PhD theses on Moroccan NGOs’ activism which contain useful insights to properly tackle the discourse analysis. I believe that despite the diversity of the sources analysed, the material in question can be considered as structurally and typologically similar in the way it includes concise and functional information on associations which share the goal to ameliorate women’s status in developing countries. Moreover, it is

possible to affirm that the documents analysed essentially share a common purpose: to provide online information on both ideology and activities of the associations in question. Lastly, the possibility to access different types of material – such as interviews and impact reports – would have provided the thesis with a richer understanding on both international and Moroccan ideologies on the issue of gender inequality.

## 1.2 Theoretical framework and methodology

In this section I will present the theoretical framework and methodology utilised to analyse the selected material, thus discourse analysis. Firstly, the concept of discourse has been widely tackled by many linguists such as Johansson and Woodilla (2010) who define the concept of discourse as a standard habit of speaking and communicating. Subsequently, other analysts define discourse as a much more intricate concept; discourse, according to Chalaby (1996) has also strong relations with elements and components which are "intertextual and interdiscursive" (Bhatia, 2008). This claim has been defended by other linguists such as Phillips (2002), who states that discourse must be studied in order to understand and uncover the often-hidden construction of reality (Phillips, 2002). Thus, as Hardy (2009) states as well, the methodology of discourse analysis is necessary to shed light on the effects that it has on society. However, the author further states that the research and analysis is nowadays more difficult than ever since social media and social networks enlarged the overall quantity of content, creating a wide and complex network of discourses, which is almost impossible to untie (Hardy 2009). According to this view, it is possible to affirm that the main problem with understanding a determinate discourse is the necessity to define the social and cultural context which surrounds it. A different perspective has been introduced by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), scholars who provided the main theoretical framework for this thesis. In fact, the authors elaborate an inverse concern, focusing discourse analysis on its central discursive aspect instead than on its contour, hence, the social context around within a certain discourse is constructed. Among the major aspects of Laclau and Mouffe's theory elaborated in their main work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985) there is the elaboration of a series of discursive tools – such as *nodal points*, *floating signifiers*, *chain of equivalence*, *hegemony* and *social antagonism* - which allow the academic sphere to investigate social phenomena both on a theoretical and

a practical level. In fact, even though Laclau and Mouffe do not always provide practical examples to explicate their theories, the aforementioned discursive tools can be extremely adaptable to empirical analyses (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 49). Considering that this thesis rests extensively on empirical evidences - which will be unpacked in the following chapters - I believe the theorisation of discourse analysis elaborated by Laclau and Mouffe to be the most appropriate tool for answering the research questions I have previously enounced. Thus, the main points of their elaboration on discourse and discourse analysis will be analysed in the following paragraph.

Firstly, Laclau and Mouffe describe social phenomena as dynamic and changeable. By merging both Marxism and poststructuralism, the authors develop a theory by which the social is conceived as a web of processes which constitutes the place of creation of meaning. Moreover, as aforementioned, the authors argue about the instrumentality of discursive tools, which can be utilized to explain every social phenomenon (Ibid., 2-3). Some of the discursive tools which constitute key concepts in Laclau and Mouffe's theory on discourse analysis are introduced as follows:

We will call *articulation* any practise establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practise. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practise, we will call *discourse*. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call *moments*. By contrast, we will call *element* any difference that is not discursively articulated (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 105, italics in original).

Hence, *moments* are the fixed meanings which shape a discourse and are constructed around specific *nodal points* which constitute the most relevant signs around which other signs are ordered (Ibid., 112). A further concept is the *chain of equivalence* which is a link to connect several signs for the creation of meaning as well as to reveal the nodal points which particularly shape a certain discourse. Similar concepts to nodal points are the *floating signifiers*, hence nodal points which can have a different articulation in various discourses. In other words, floating signifiers are signs which are singularly elaborated in different discourses (Ibid.).

I believe these concepts to be essential key tools in the elaboration of the discourse analyses which support this thesis, since specific terms which are related to the issue of gender inequality can be applied by international development organisations and Moroccan female



NGOs with different connotations. This idea supports the consideration of discourse as a mutable and subjective entity rather than a fixed and objectively articulated structure of words. Moreover, to utilise a specific sign implies to exclude other possible articulations of the same concept which will constitute the *field of discursivity* organized around certain elements that creates unfixed and polysemic signs (Ibid.).

The process of transition from *moment* to *element*, thus from a floating to a fixed meaning, is defined by Laclau and Mouffe as *closure*. By reaching closure, a discourse is theoretically fixed. However, this closure can never be entirely accomplished since fixed meanings in the discourse can be constantly challenged and reshaped due to the multiplicity of meanings still existing in the field of discursivity, in other words, “any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre” (Ibid, 112). Therefore, according to this theory, discourse analysis does not allow scholars to investigate the reality, but it does permit to reveal *how* the reality we perceive as natural is elaborated to reach a point of closure. A possible outcome of closure – considered as the process which aims to create a certain objectivity - is that alternative understandings of a concept are suppressed in order to normalise a specific perspective. As argued by Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) in reference to Laclau and Mouffe’s theory on discourse analysis: “the aim of discourse analysis is to map out the processes in which we struggle about the way in which the meaning of signs is to be fixed, and the processes by which some fixations of meaning become so conventionalised that we think of them as natural (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 26).

In order to properly investigate this process, Laclau and Mouffe theorize the concept of *hegemony* as a moment in which *social antagonism* between discourses occurs and one discourse attempt to overcome different ones. In other words, one discourse struggle to reach objectivity and to overcome alternative articulations on the same topic. Considering the definition of discourse as subjective and changeable, the process of “fixation of meaning” (Ibid., 5) would contradict the intrinsic concept of discourse itself. For this reason, the idea of deconstruction of discourse, or discourse analysis, has been introduced by Laclau who borrowed the term ‘deconstruction’ from Jacques Derrida (Ernesto Laclau 1993, 281). According to this view, the aim of discourse analysis is to highlight the contingency of hegemony in discourse practices as well as to demonstrate that certain discourses can be differently combined without losing their objectivity.

A similar idea will be applied in this thesis in order to structure the comparison of international and Moroccan discourses on gender inequality and to investigate the way in which certain nodal points can be differently combined in feminist discourses which theoretically aim to the same goal: ameliorating the condition of women by providing new structures and projects as well as to increase work opportunities for women worldwide. The similar goals and the initial influence of international organisations in the development of Moroccan NGOs has caused the presence of analogous nodal points in their feminist narrative. Nevertheless, as we shall observe in chapter three, Moroccan NGOs are effectively able to challenge the discourse utilised by international organisations by redefining it and through the introduction of new elements in the field of discursivity related to gender equality. The differences in the discourses can confirm the theory that hegemony, or closure, cannot be fulfilled since the fixed meanings in the discourse can often be undermined by the multiplicity of meanings still existing in the field of discursivity (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 113). In conclusion, to theorize the existence of a hegemonic discourse in relation to the feminist narratives analysed would contradict the never-ending and subjective nature of discourse itself. Clearly, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to evaluate whether Laclau and Mouffe theory on discourse analysis can be considered as relevant and applicable to any semantic context. Differently, this thesis's aim mainly rests on the empirical evidence provided which strictly refer to a specific selection of organisations both on an international and local level. Hence, in the following chapter I shall begin to provide the discourse analysis of the material selected with regards to the international feminist narrative exemplified by two main international development organisations: UN Women and USAID.

## 2 Discourse Analysis on International Development Organisations

### 2.1 UN Women

The UN began to actively include the gender inequality issue in the organisation's agenda in 1975, particularly after the organisation of the first international conference for gender equality held in Mexico and ignored by most of the development agencies of that time. Consequently, other conferences were organized in Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), and Beijing (1995) and permitted the UN to increase the global awareness on female equality issues worldwide. The regular scheduling of international conference has been a crucial factor which pushed the emergency of a global feminist network. In addition, the UN has played an essential role in setting international standards on the issue of gender inequality. For example, with the introduction of the 1979 *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) which increased women's participation as well as providing an important tool to defend women's rights (Bessis 2004, 633).

The discourse analysis will be focused on the 2018-2019 Annual Report of *The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women* (UN Women) section founded in 2010 by the United Nations General Assembly. The main objectives of this organisation are to directly face gender inequality issues worldwide as well as stimulating and facilitating the development of gender-related projects and of the international feminist network. The organisation of UN Women currently encompasses four previously distinct sections of the UN gender-based agenda, listed on the official website as follows:

Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW); International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW); Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI); United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). (UN Women 2018-2019).

The main activities of UN Women include the fight against gender discrimination and the provision of financial contributions and gender experts to local organisations in several countries. Moreover, UN Women contributes to the establishment of universally recognized standards to achieve gender equality as well as operating in connection with

governments and civil society to “design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide” (UN Women 2018-2019).

## 2.2 UN Women discourse analysis

The UN Women 2018-2019 annual report can be a valid example to identify the principal nodal points present in the discourse of this internationally recognized institution. In fact, this annual report reveals the identity profile of the organisation by utilising a specific set of terminologies and therefore providing enough content to determine in which way the topic is presented to the reader. The risk encountered when analysing such kind of annual report is that the message can be too concise and stereotypically shaped in order to meet the requirements of several associates, donors and governments. Nevertheless, the repetition of certain concepts - such as ‘empowerment’ and ‘economic growth’ - can be justified by the nature of the report itself: to provide objective facts and statistics about actions and accomplishments of the organization more than focusing on an in depth analysis on the repercussions of the projects in specific areas.

Firstly, the term **gender equality** represents a nodal point of this document inasmuch it is frequently mentioned as one of the main purposes of the organisation: “UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to *gender equality* and the *empowerment* of women” (Ibid., 2). Additionally, gender equality is described as a tool to connect the global feminist network through the actions of UN Women: “UN Women connects people, issues, and ideas behind one shared purpose: making *gender equality* a reality in our lifetime” (Ibid., 4). Additionally, this notion is frequently presented as a final goal which still requires more social attention as stated in the extract below:

This has been a year of reform and renewal...the hunger for *gender equality* and women’s *empowerment* has never been greater with vigorous public debate, social mobilization and awareness-raising to transform social norms and strengthen accountability for the implementation of commitments reforms, to ensure that they strengthen system coherence

in supporting *gender equality* and *women's empowerment*, and providing guidelines for working environments with inclusivity, diversity and equality (Ibid., 2).

As noticeable in the aforementioned extracts the term gender equality is often utilised in connection to the term **empowerment** further nodal point of this annual report often utilised in connection to economic strategies as exemplified by one the primary section of this documents 'Empowering Through Economies' (Ibid., 1). This connection is further reflected by the following extract:

*DECENT WORK AND SOCIAL PROTECTION ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO REALIZING WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND WELL-BEING AND BOOSTING THE PRODUCTIVITY OF ECONOMIES AT LARGE...UN Women helps connect more women to economic opportunities and assets. Our efforts concentrate foremost on reaching women at the furthest and least-protected margins, such as domestic workers and smallholder farmers. On a broader scale, through evolving national policymaking and global norm-setting, we challenge the patterns in economies that continue to perpetuate women's exclusion* (Ibid., 17).

As we can observe in this section, the chain of equivalence which constructs the nodal point of economic empowerment is formed by a set of key elements such as: decent work, productivity, economies, economic opportunities, and women's exclusion. Apart from the specific section which focuses on empowerment through economies, there are other indirect references to this concept such as the section 'The Fund for Gender Equality' (Ibid., 14) and 'Financial Statements' (Ibid., 40) which aim to provide graphic information on several data such as: statement of financial performance; donors; and voluntary contributions to UN Women 2018. In general, the aforementioned results are mostly left to speak for themselves instead of being contextualised and deeply analysed. This view of empowerment as measurable could be tricky since, by simplifying reality, fails to recognize the unpredictable process of transformation which is involved in women's empowerment, a process which cannot simply be described through numbers and statistics (Arat 2015, 11; Kabeer 1999, 461-462).

The term **development** represents an additional nodal point in the 2018-2019 annual report of UN Women, with a particular focus on sustainable and local development programmes which represent a tool to support both national and local interests as stated in the report: "we engage with governments around shaping and upholding internationally agreed norms

and standards, and aligning national and local *development* policies, plans and budgets accordingly” (UN Women 2018, 35). Additionally, the term development is frequently utilised when discussing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a program which sets 17 main goals by focusing on the following strategic priorities:

Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action (Ibid., 46).

Moreover, the concept of sustainable development is mentioned among the three pillars of global progress along with the nodal point of **human rights**: “through its links across the United Nations, it puts gender equality at the centre of all three pillars of global progress: peace and security, *human rights* and *sustainable development*” (Ibid., 5) . In addition, referring to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary from the 1995 Beijing conference, the document remarks its importance to achieve women’s rights as follows: “the anniversary will be a rallying point to insist on finally achieving the *human rights* of all women and girls. As an essential part of global mobilization, UN Women is bringing together the next generations of *women’s rights* activists with the gender equality advocates and visionaries who were instrumental in creating the Beijing Platform for Action” (Ibid., 7). Hence, the concept of women’s rights is highly seen as being initiated by UN Women and introduced in developing countries. In addition, the notion is connected to the issue of gender-based violence: “every women and girl has the right to a life free from violence, yet all over the world, gender-based violence remains the most common violation of *women’s human rights*” (Ibid., 23).

An additional nodal point expressed in the document analysed is the **cooperation** between international and national organisations, which is considered as necessary to increase UN Women propositions and projects:

Our programmes and advocacy involve women’s organizations, the private sector, schools, media, and groups of youth and men. Together, we are establishing comprehensive essential services, and robust legal protections and practices grounded in nationally and internationally agreed standards. Outreach campaigns unite an ever-growing number of people to speak out for a violence-free world (Ibid., 21).

The document further elaborates the message of cooperation by remarking the importance of creating a network of mutual support: “UN Women makes links with governments, businesses, civil society, and other partners with the power to accelerate change and realize equality in our lifetime” (Ibid., 35). Despite the emphasis on collaboration strategies is noticeable, UN Women is often pictured as the central element to reach ameliorate women’s status and obtain gender equality worldwide. Nevertheless, women are often depicted as active partners who contribute to the incrementation of UN Women projects. This characteristic introduces a further key element of UN Women feminist narrative which is the nodal point of **participation** mostly treated in terms of obtaining the right to be politically active:

Women have the right to *participate* and *lead* in political institutions. Recognizing that right, more countries than ever before have moved towards gender parity in parliaments, local governments and political parties...UN Women collaborates with legislatures, electoral management bodies, women’s networks and other United Nations entities to end stereotypes that keep women out of leadership roles, increase the number of women leaders, and build their skills and capacities (UN Women 2018-2019, 11).

Additionally, the nodal point of participation is mentioned among the Sustainable Development Goals, project which supports women’s equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four main strategic priorities: “Women lead, *participate* in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy” (Ibid., 48).

## 2.3 USAID

The *United States Agency for International Development* (USAID) can be defined as “one of the most active and dominant” (Poster and Salime 2002, 185) organisation involved in the issue of gender development. Moreover, this association is described as a bridge institution which creates transnational links between international organisations such as the UN and local associations, other than providing funding at the grassroots level. On the USAID official website, the organisation is depicted as the “premier development agency and a catalytic actor driving development results” (USAID 2020). The focus on ‘Gender equality and women’s empowerment’ is listed among the main sectors of action of USAID alongside “education, global health, democracy, human rights and governance” (Ibid.). In

the section dedicated to USAID's actions, a general statement indicates the principal ideology behind the organisation: "USAID transforms. It transforms families, communities, and countries – so they can thrive and prosper. Whether by preventing the next global epidemic, responding to a devastating earthquake, or helping a farmer access tools to grow her business" (Ibid.). I believe the decision to utilise the verb 'to transform' in the extract above to be quite indicative of the overall hegemonic tendency of USAID discourses on gender equality by which women are more often depicted as tools to reach a greater economic prosperity than as active subjects of their own empowerment. For this reason, several scholars have started to question USAID by critically examining the association's strategy worldwide. For instance, the study of Poster and Salime (2002) reveals how USAID's microcredit programs initiates a "complicated transnational web of funding" (2002, 185) which involves the state, international agencies, and local organisations of the receiving countries. Additionally, these programs create a high tension among NGOs, the state, and international donors, thus, impeding more than incrementing women's empowerment and the transnational feminist movement worldwide (Ibid., 186). Considering the case of Morocco, USAID is frequently criticised by Moroccan NGOs which generally refuse to accept the aid of several organisations based in the US. As stated by Khadija Abenaou (2017), volunteer member of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDH) Central Bureau:

Taking funding from the U.S. is against what we stand for. We don't establish partnerships with countries who directly violate human rights. With its violations in Iraq and Palestine, at the head of these countries is America. We demand the rights of the countries to make their own decisions and take their own independence. We can't compare Spain to the violence of the American state. No one reach the level of violations of the Americans (Khadija Abenaou in Patel 2017, 52).

USAID began to operate in Morocco in 1957, working on a various range of activities from agricultural development strategies to family planning initiatives (Sandberg 2014, 106). The main areas of intervention of USAID in Morocco are listed on the organisation's official website as: youth employability, democracy and governance, and primary-level education. A fact sheet is dedicated to the Moroccan gender gap and to the description of how development organisations run their programs in the region (USAID 2020). Differently than the UN Women 2018-2019 annual report, which does not refer to the Moroccan case specifically, this document can provide a more in-depth discourse analysis



on this organisation's narrative with reference to projects initiated to ameliorate Moroccan women's status. Additionally, I will firstly include references to the discourse implied in the fact sheet regarding the actions undertaken by USAID facing the issue of gender inequality worldwide.

## 2.4 USAID discourse analysis

Firstly, both notions of **gender equality** and women's **empowerment** can be considered as nodal points of USAID strategy on a semantic and practical level: "USAID believes that *gender equality* and women's *empowerment* are fundamental for the realization of human rights and key to effective and sustainable development outcomes" (USAID 2020). These terms are often utilised in connection to economic strategies such as financial investments and developmental strategies: "At USAID, we believe that investing in gender equality and women's empowerment can help eradicate extreme poverty, build vibrant economies, and unlock human potential on a transformational scale" (Ibid.). Notwithstanding the potential usefulness of these projects in developing countries, it is possible to notice how the obtainment of equality and women's empowerment are mostly treated as an investment to ameliorate the economic conditions worldwide. As highlighted in the following extract:

Investing in *gender equality* and *women's empowerment* can unlock human potential on a transformational scale. Women account for one-half of the potential human capital in any economy. More than half a billion women have joined the world's work force over the past 30 years, and they make up 40 percent of the agriculture labour force. According to the World Bank, countries with greater gender equality are more prosperous and competitive (USAID 2020).

Moreover, both gender equality and the concept of empowerment are mentioned as key development strategies: "At USAID, we believe that *gender equality* and *women's empowerment* is not a part of development but the core of development" (Ibid.). Hence, the concept of **development** can be considered a further nodal point used in strict connection with impact strategies such as "strategies and programs shaped by a gender analysis and establish metrics that measure the gender impact of our programs" (Ibid.).

It is not possible to observe the presence of the nodal point of 'cooperation' in the document analysed. On the contrary, we shall notice a tendency to describe every action as involving exclusively the role of USAID. Hence, considering how this discourse is shaped, it seems as women are taken out of the equation and not described as active subjects. A few examples derived from the document analysed are: "USAID actively promotes; USAID addresses gender as a cross-cutting issue; USAID works to address underlying causes of instability; USAID actively promotes female participants as role models; USAID provides direct grants and sub-grants to a number of women's organizations" (Ibid.). Clearly, the fact that the document is mainly centred on the organisation's goals and activities does not represent an issue per se, since the nature of the website is to represent the organisation. However, the main issue relies in the absence of a balanced discourse, hence a discourse in which women and other organisations (both international and local) are mentioned as active participants and partners of USAID programs. Differently, women are portrayed as passive receivers of programs and funds, thus, they are more represented by USAID than pictured as participating in the process of empowerment.

### 3 Discourse Analysis on Moroccan Women's NGOs

#### 3.1 Moroccan women's activism

Particularly after the introduction of the *Moudawana*, or Family Law Code, in 2004 a great number of women NGOs emerged in Morocco, increasing their social impact with the promotion of women's participation and social mobilization. As observed by Sadiqi and Ennaji (2006) Moroccan women NGOs can be truly considered as "schools of democracy" (Sadiqi and Ennaji 2006, 80) which are currently improving female working conditions as well as women's agency recognition in shaping the development of the region. The three principal waves of activists characterising the secular feminist movement in Morocco are described by Sadiqi (2013) as "the pioneers (from 1946 to the end of 1970s), the Second Wave (from 1980s to 1990s) and the Third Wave (2000s to present)" (Sadiqi 2013, 5). These movements did not exclusively have an impact on gender policies but also on the long-term development of Moroccan politics. A patriarchal system was predominant during the first years of Moroccan activism and it highly stimulated the narrative of the initial associations which managed to weaken this extremely authoritarian system (Sadiqi 2016, 4). The initial requests of the Moroccan feminist movement were elaborated in *Al-Wathiqa* - the first feminist text written in modern Morocco – which included the "abolition of polygamy, dignity at home and dignity outside home" (Sadiqi et al. 2009). The first female organisations involved urban and élite women who demanded improvements in the education sector, and which provided first aid help for families in need in the post war period. After the obtainment of Morocco's independence, secular feminist organisations adjusted their narrative to the uprisings in the region, initiating a process of modernisation which was inspired by the first period of globalisation. Moreover, the influence of young activists further increased the renewal of secular associations (Sadiqi 2013, 5). During the years of Moroccan independence (1912-1956), both nationalist and colonialist groups utilised gender-related issues as a principal topic to obtain more consents. Accordingly, feminists of the first wave started to refer to both traditional and modern values during public speeches in order to increase their consents. As stated by Sadiqi (2013) "the first wave saw in tradition a comforting anchor of identity and in modernity a path to emancipation, salaried work and self-esteem" (Sadiqi 2013, 7).

Political Islam mostly influenced the second wave of secular feminism which was marked by the introduction of new actors, such as educated women from moderate social classes with a rural background. Thus, the secular feminist movement became “more heterogeneous class-wise and more discursively polyvocal” (Sadiqi 2013, 8). Another innovation consisted in the political participation of educated women who started to enter the leftist parties to increase the mobilisation against the authoritarian Moroccan regime. As a result of the hierarchical and male-dominated structure of leftist parties, women began creating independent feminine associations (NGOs) which constituted “the birth of women’s activism in the public sphere of power” (Ibid., 9) and further influenced the process of democratization of the public sphere. The first independent organisations - such as ADFM which developed in 1985 from the *Communist Parti du Progrès and du Socialisme* - worked in a twofold way: providing social services and literary classes as well as ensuring legal assistance for women in need. Moreover, their actions stimulated the introduction of the PANIFD (1999) which contained several demands such as “rise in the minimum age of marriage for girls to 18...the legalization of all types of divorce and the abolishment of polygamy” (Ibid., 10). The third wave of secular feminism evolved with more dynamic and complex groups, especially due to the influence of new technologies and the process of globalization in Morocco. Moreover, the feminist movement expanded in rural areas, developing a connection with the Berber activist movement (Sadiqi 2016, 10).

Despite the positive outcomes obtained by female NGOs in Morocco, there are still several factors which prevent the development of these organisations such as “lack of training, information, know-how in associative management and initiatives, weak internal as well as external communication and heavy reliance on international donor agencies” (Sadiqi and Ennaji 2008, 80). In addition, the development of Moroccan women’s activism has been greatly influenced by UN Women’s activities, which often constituted an opportunity to increase both public awareness and international support. For instance, the 1979 CEDAW convention signed by the Moroccan government imposed the latter to report yearly improvements on women’s empowerment to the international arena. In 1996, Nouzha Skalli – on behalf of the secular organisation ADFM - presented an alternative report on Moroccan women’s status which drastically differed from the one submitted by the government. The data submitted were collected by a net of women’s organisations and represented a first attempt to oppose the governmental decisions regarding the issue of

gender inequality in Morocco (Sandberg 2014, 83). This act permitted Moroccan women's NGOs to pressure the government administrators in order to increase their participation in the fight against gender inequality. Moreover, this move further demonstrated that "Moroccan women were organized, articulate, and deserving of support" (Ibid., 113). Consequently, women's organisations began to develop further strategies to obtain donors and assistance beyond UN, such as through the meeting with World Bank's representatives in 1997, during which the collaboration with Moroccan activists and their inclusion into the country's development programs was established. Thus, the use of international donors "as a resource for legitimacy, solidarity, financing, and skill building" (Sandberg 2014, 113) quickly increased as a strategy to obtain both resources and intellectual support. As stated by Sandberg (2014): "Moroccan women's organizations would soon routinely turn to external donors in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere, to provide resources that would assist them to achieve the agendas that they had established for themselves" (Ibid., 113). The Moroccan NGO's economic dependency on external funders can provoke several drawbacks among which the modification of identity and strategy of the association in order to obtain more financial support. As stated by Laura Brand: "In the post-1990 period, when external funding began to flow, women's groups found their agendas shaped by the projects for which they could secure funding...the funding has often shaped the concentration of efforts in ways that do not necessarily reflect Moroccan priorities" (Brand 1998, 66).

### 3.1.1 The Moroccan feminist movement

The feminist movement in Morocco has historically developed in two main trends, namely secular and Islamic feminisms, which differ mostly for their different process of translation of Islamic law into family law. As stated by Sadiqi (2016) "the difficulty of 'Islamizing' the secularist thought or 'secularizing' the Islamic camp is real and is significantly impacted by the conservative-modernist tension that characterizes Moroccan society" (Sadiqi 2016, 4). In other words, the process of modernization of the country is frequently considered as a threat for the preservation of Moroccan traditional values, including the role of women in the society. In addition, secular associations have considered Islamic movements as an obstacle to the achievements of social renovations, among which Moroccan women's emancipation. The main critique exposed by Islamic feminists to secular feminism points out to an extreme adaptation to Western concepts

which can represent a threat to the unity of Islamic communities. Moreover, other than representing a reflection of Western associations, secular feminism has been criticized as being based on elitist principles, not truly reflecting the everyday reality of Moroccan women. The movement of Islamic feminism has been created as a response to these critiques, thus, to provide a more localized alternative to ameliorate Moroccan women's conditions. The obtainment of gender equality in the public and private sphere remains the main goal of these movements while their narrative is constructed around an Islamic and local discourse. Hence, the Quran is considered as bearing the principles of gender equality and human rights which do not have to be considered as a Western creation. In fact, these values have been deprived of their true meaning by a patriarchal and androcentric society (Badran 2005, 9). In addition, Quranic messages have been historically instrumentalized to serve the purposes of a male-based hierarchy. As the judge and activist Shirin Ebadi points out: “[the] divine book (the Qur'an) sees the mission of all prophets as that of inviting all human beings to uphold justice...The discriminatory plight of women in Islamic societies, whether in the sphere of civil law or in the realm of social, political and cultural justice, has its roots in the male dominated culture prevailing in these societies, not in Islam” (Shirin Ebadi, 2003). For this reason, Islamic feminism's hermeneutic aim to elaborate a new interpretation of Quranic verses proving that, while human laws are contestable, shari'a law is eternal and wise. Nevertheless, Quranic interpretation can vary depending on the social and historical context and it is not antithetic to the intrinsic values of feminism. Thus, a further goal of Islamic feminism is to reconcile Muslim women's identities in order for them not to choose between activism and religion: the two path can be both connected into an “holistic Islam in which secular and religious dissolve back into each other” (Badran 2005, 23).

The adoption of the *PANIFD* in 1999 caused a crucial change in the division between secularist and Islamist movements, which has further complicated the juxtaposition between right-based and faith-based women NGOs in Morocco. In fact, the terms secular and Islamic with reference to Moroccan feminist trends cannot entirely reflect the ideology of respectively right-based and faith-based NGOs. As a common trend, right-based NGOs centre their narrative on a human rights-based discourse while faith-based NGOs mostly refer to local and religious references. Nevertheless, as stated by Lounasmaa (2013) “although presenting themselves in binary opposition to each other, the goals, referential and narratives of the groups are often parallel” (Lounasmaa 2013, i). Hence, the apparent

dichotomy which distinguish right and faith-based women's organisations in Morocco is overcome by the fact that both types of associations often focus on similar goals and objectives. As stated by the director of the right-based organisation AMDF: "I believe that we have benefitted from that diversity of referential...for us the principle and the objective is the same. The principle is equality and the objective is to change...we are secular, we have a human rights referential but we weren't against the utilisation of cultural referential that interpreted religion in our favour" (Najat Razi in Lounasmaa 2013, 182-183). Despite the communal core ideas, Moroccan organisations variously decide whether adapting completely to a specific feminist trend or – generally in case of small and recent organisations – not to determine the association's activism as part of one specific set of ideologies (Ibid., 136). Consequently, the differences in the construction of a feminist narrative imply the necessity of including different kinds of Moroccan NGOs in the discourse analysis which will be presented in the following section.

### 3.2 Discourse Analysis on Right-based NGOs

The *Fédération de la Ligue Démocratique pour les Droits des Femmes* (FLDDF) exemplifies the activism and feminist discourse of the initial right-based NGOs established in Morocco since 1993. During the third LDDF congress - which had place in Rabat in 2009 - this organisation became a federation by encompassing fourteen regional sections for the purpose of ameliorating the standards of the facilities contributing to its development. The organisation currently works on different levels to ameliorate Moroccan women's conditions by focusing on education, legal actions, lobbying activities, and field surveys. Moreover, the creation of solidarity caravans which annually travel around the region and in foreign countries has contributed to the awareness campaign aimed to increase women's knowledge on Moroccan laws especially concerning women's rights (La Ligue Démocratique pour les Droits de la Femme 2020). The information provided for the discourse analysis which follows have been retrieved by the association's main website as well as based on the information retrieved by the Anna Lindh Foundation network which works in partnership with LDDF. The material retrieved by both websites have been personally translated from French.

On the official website of FLDDF the association is described as a democratic and independent organisation for all women which aims to the establishment of gender equality in Morocco. Thus, the concept of **gender equality** can be considered as nodal point of the association further linked to the establishment of democracy and human rights. In fact, among the main goals and mission of this association, there is: to protect women's rights by focusing on the principle of *gender equality* as well as to fight gender discrimination and emancipating Moroccan women. The strategy adopted by LDDF is articulated in several axes which include a primary sociological and educational interest as well as interests in lobbying and advocacy projects. In particular, the educational strategies aim at the promotion of a civil society based on different principles among which: to protect women's rights and to ameliorate their status by applying the principle of *gender equality*; to fight every form of gender discrimination and to spread an emancipated *egalitarian ideas*; to change the discriminatory legislations against women (the Family law code) by referring to the principle of *equality* as stated in international conventions; and to sponsor the associative culture based on the values of *equality* and citizenship (ALF 2020). Further referring to the concept of equality in education, LLDF states that “[*equality* in the 2004 reform] can be considered as a considerable advance, and can have an important influence on mentalities, as long as we take it into account in school curricula, the education system, and mass communications” (CIOFEM 2004, 99 in Young 2014, 63). Thus, to introduce the concept of equality in the education system can allow the implementation of the Moroccan society from above (by changing the laws) but also from below by having an impact on the individuals. As we shall observe in chapter four, the concept of equality works as a ‘transnational reference point’ (Young 2014) inasmuch it is also linked to local references such as the Moroccan constitution and Islam defined as “the religion of justice and right” (LDDF 2000, 8 in Young 2014). Moreover, the slogan ‘justice and equality for a harmonious family frame’ is utilised by LDDF to advertise the project *Caravane de solidarité* which I have previously mentioned as one of the major initiatives of this association (Ibid.). This slogan represents an example of connection between a transnational language and Moroccan nodal points present in the feminist narrative of LDDF.

The notion of **women's rights** represents a recurrent nodal point of the ideological narrative of this association as exemplified by the online content analysed. In fact, the association describes itself as an NGO working in the field of *women's rights* mostly



referring to their universal recognition (ALF 2020). Moreover, this concept is further mentioned under the legitimate means of action which are listed in the descriptive section of the website. Particularly, among the main strategies there is: the intervention of officials and institutional organisations involved in the protection of *women's rights* to support and make justice to victims of violent acts (Ibid.). In addition, the main activities listed on the website are almost entirely connected to the application and development of women's rights through several actions among which: to strengthen the possibilities of success of local and regional NGOs and to create a dialogue which can increase the application of *women's rights* in the constitution; to strengthen the teaching of *human rights* and gender equality; training to ease the application of *women's rights*; to ameliorate economic and social *women's rights* in Morocco. Moreover, contributing to the education sector LDDF organises the project 'L'Espace Avenir' in Rabat which allows young Moroccans to learn and discuss several topics connected to human rights as well as to participate to alphabetisation courses approved by the Moroccan Ministry of Labour. The courses are not entirely focused on alphabetisation but further provide a programme based on social, legal, civil, and economic rights which are taught in a participative and active environment. The course is structured in three levels in which international human rights conventions are mixed to more local related topics such as women and Moroccan law, women and creation, the right to learn and women's rights within the family (La Ligue Démocratique pour les Droits de la Femme 2020).

The project 'L'Espace Avenir' introduces a further nodal point highlighted in this document which is the importance of **cooperation** among national and international female associations. In fact, this project further aims to open the collaboration with children and young people associations which allow to co-organise several activities and to further integrate the dimension of 'equality' and 'citizenship' in their actions. Moreover, national partners of LDDF are listed on the main website as follows: Espace Associatif, Association Marocaine des Droits Humains and AMDH. In addition, among the international partners mentioned there are Oxfam Quebec, Movimiento por la Paz, el Desarme y la Libertad, Droits et Démocratie, Rights & Democracy and Oxfam Intermon (La Ligue Démocratique pour les Droits de la Femme 2020). The concept of cooperation is also articulated in the section dedicated to the main strategies utilised by FLDDF to accomplish its main goals such as: several *communicational strategies* and procedures; *conferences*, panels, interviews and training universities; establishment of *relations, coordination* and *exchange*

of experiences with national and international organisations which have similar goals (ALF 2020). Nodal points such as ‘communicational strategies, conferences, relations, coordination and exchange’ integrate the possibility to build up the chain of equivalence of cooperation which allows this association to construct an open narrative in terms of local and international partnerships. Additionally, as previously stated, among the main projects of the association there is the creation of a dialogue between local and regional NGOs, particularly aiming to the application of internationally recognized women’s rights in Morocco. The decision to contribute to the ALF Network is itself a sign of the openness of this organisation, at least on a theoretical level. Several points are listed to explain how FLDDF can contribute to the ALF network, for example by exchanging information on activities and debates regarding women’s rights with other associations (ALF 2020). In addition, the creation of certain projects such as the ‘Centre d’Information et d’Observation des Femmes Marocaines’ (CIOFEM) established in 2001 is meant to increase the level of cooperation between FLDDF and other organisations. Moreover, this project aims to further provide information and training for tutor on different fields among which counselling, alphabetisation, organisation of workshops and legal advising to Moroccan women (Ibid.).

*L' Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM)* was founded in 1985 in an international context which was actively involved in the issue of gender inequality, especially during the UN decade for women. The international context influenced the national Moroccan environment of the time by initiating a process of democratisation which influenced the first expressions of feminist ideas. In this context the founders of ADFM, mostly progressist and Moroccan women, felt the necessity to create an independent association which could fight gender inequality by prioritizing this issue in the Moroccan political agenda. From the so-called mass organization - measured by the number of sections, members and activities proposed - the deep desire to promote women's rights influenced the beginning of a new stage in the 90s: that of a more thoughtful mission and of a more modern and practical organisation of the associative life. ADFM has since then opted mainly for structural strategies to directly challenge the patriarchal Moroccan system. Moreover, the organisation has developed its capacities which currently make it a source of action, legal proposals, advocacy, and mobilization for Moroccan women (Lounasmaa 2013, 300-301). The main website of the association is not updated therefore the information for the discourse analysis have been retrieved by the official website of the

Women's Learning Partnership (WLP), network which cooperate with ADFM since 2000 (WLP 2020).

Firstly, it is possible to identify the primary importance of **democracy** as nodal point of this organisation both in the name and description of its main goal which is “to strengthen women's power and influence in the juridical, political, economic, and social spheres to build an egalitarian, *democratic*, and sustainable society” (WLP 2020). The importance of democracy in this association's discourse is further proven by the collaboration with the *Feminist Spring of Democracy and Equality* network created in 2011 in collaboration with other associations such as FLDDF, the Association Marocain de Lutte Contre la Violence a l'Egard de Femme (AMVEF), Union de l'Action Feminine (UAF), and smaller women's organisations. The joint memorandum of the network (entirely in Arabic) strongly ties these organisations to democratic and modern ideas. In addition, the basic principles of democracy such as “independency of the judiciary, separation of powers, reinforcing the powers of elected bodies and transparency and good governance” (Lounasmaa 2013, 162) are mentioned in the *Feminist Spring of Democracy and Equality* memorandum.

Additionally, ADFM defines itself as an independent NGO which bases its actions on **human rights** as universally recognised (Lounasmaa 2013, 300). Thus, “promoting women's economic and social rights” (WLP 2020) can be considered as one of the focus areas of this NGO. Among the reasons of intervention, there is the observation of any violation of women's rights. On a practical level, among the main activities of this association there is the publication of three shadow reports on the CEDAW, publishing studies on *women's rights* and equality and providing legal aid service for women. Moreover, in partnership with the Association Tanmia.ma, ADFM produced five podcasts on *women's rights* issues launched as part of the “Why Not?” campaign in 2017. The topics of these podcasts are particularly: “equality between men and women; discrimination against women; the fight against stereotypes; equality in inheritance; and Women and collective lands in Morocco” (Ibid.). The topic of the podcast can highlight a further nodal point of ADFM's discourse which is clearly the notion of **gender equality** or ‘culture of equality’ which is mentioned among the focus areas of ADFM and has to be promoted alongside women's economic and social rights and the fight against sexist stereotypes in Morocco (Ibid.). In addition, ADFM's participation in the regional *Equality Without Reservation* campaign – which advocates for the abolition of all reservations to the

CEDAW – can be considered as a further proof of the involvement and importance of equalitarian ideas for this association.

Despite the autonomy of ADFM is mentioned among the priorities of the association, working in **cooperation** with national and international women’s associations which share similar goals and ideas also constitutes a key point of action. In fact, ADFM coordinated the Anaruz Network in 2016 which encompassed forty counselling centres for women victims of violence. The main role of ADFM was to structure the memorandum of demands to reform the Moroccan Family Code. Additionally, ADFM’s membership in the WLP network is a further element which can highlight the openness of this association in terms of cooperation and exchange. In fact, ADFM contributes to WLP’s growth by mutually exchanging data and supporting projects. On WLP website several recent accomplishments of ADFM includes: the advocacy tactics which influenced the introduction of new laws regarding human trafficking and the treatment of domestic workers; launching a campaign which sparked an important public debate on gender equality and equity in the Moroccan society; increasing the review and analysis on the issue of equality by collecting data and organising meetings with experts in the field culminated in the publication of “For a social debate about the inheritance system: Moroccan women between laws and socio-economic developments” (Ibid.).

### 3.3 Discourse Analysis on Faith-based NGOs

The *Association des femmes du quartier Assalam pour le développement et la communication* is a small and independent faith-based organisation founded in 2004 which contributes to improve the local, regional, and national social development of the suburb of Agadir. The association is auto financed and mainly focuses on the promotion of literacy and training courses for women as well as on financial assistance for families in need (Monasso 2014). The difficulty in accessing Moroccan NGOs’ official websites is accentuated when researching information on faith-based associations. For this reason, the material utilised for the discourse analysis will be based on both online information on the association shared by secondary sources (Monasso 2014) as well as on material provided by academic fieldworks (Lounasmaa 2013). The information retrieved by the website Monasso (2014) were personally translated from French.

Firstly, as noticed by Lounasmaa (2013, 60), the term **development** is frequently utilised in the discourse of faith-based organisations which generally focus on an immediate economic empowerment for Moroccan women. In the case of the Association Assalam, the term development frequently has the specific connotation of *social development* as indicated in the stated mission of the association which includes: to educate women and children of the district as well as to consolidate civil values for all citizens which have to utilise the local, regional and national *social development* (Monasso 2014). A further example can be identified among the objectives of the association which is: the development of the entrepreneurial spirit, of volunteering and of teamwork encouraging mutual aid, solidarity, and *social development* (Ibid.).

The activities of the association Assalam are primarily focused on the **cooperation** with local realities of the suburb of Agadir, with a focus on activities aimed at the consolidation of local partnerships and on the amelioration of the suburb itself. The projects listed on the website aim at the creation of an effective communication and cooperation between the association and the citizens of Agadir. In addition, the projects are mainly based on the amelioration of the suburb through recreational and cultural activities to strengthen the spirit of solidarity in the neighborhood. For example, the association Assalam works in collaboration with local schools by running projects which permit the direct participation of students such as through the external renovation of the primary school Assalam. Moreover, the association organizes training course for students which are further supported by local teachers and schools, such as the local private school *Mimosan* which contributed to this project by allowing the students to utilise its facilities. In addition to be supported by local realities, the association Assalam appear to be further open to cooperate with regional and international institutions as stated among its main goals: to open up to other associations sharing the same objectives and seeking partnerships and exchange with national and international associations (Ibid.).

The references to development goals for women are elaborated in connection with the importance of the **family** as fundamental, as stated among the mission and goals of the organisation: to participate in the elaboration and execution of projects dedicated to women, children and the *family* (Ibid.). As previously mentioned, the parallelism between the gender equality discourse and Islamic values, such as the importance of protecting the family, allows faith-based NGOs to formulate a modern Islamic narrative in relation to the

gender inequality issue. This concept has been theorized by Young (2014) as follows: “the movement has begun to shift its discourses and many of its programs in order to promote a harmonious family life for women in addition to and alongside equality and women’s human rights” (Young 2014, 24). The faith-based organisation *Al Karama* further reflects this frame which represents a common nodal point in the discourse of faith-based NGOs. In particular, in the introduction leaflet of the association, the value of family as a fundamental institution is discussed alongside the necessity to fight Moroccan gender-based discrimination (Lounasmaa 2013, 153). In fact, the leaflet identifies as one of the primary goals of the organisation: “protecting the *family* against dissolution; diminishing the phenomenon of psychological and legal divorce and to combat all forms of violence and discrimination against women” (Ibid.).

A similar pattern can be identified in the official website of the organisation *Azzahrae Forum for Moroccan Women* which clearly establishes a link between women rights and the **family** by describing the organisation as a “women network for protecting and promoting *women* and *family* rights” (Azzahrae Forum for Moroccan Women 2020). Moreover, a further description of the associative goals is “women’s working to protect the rights of women and the family, promote and develop the intellectual and cultural production in this field” (Ibid.). Additionally, the creation of the *Advisory Council for Family and Children* is listed among the principal interests of the association alongside the introduction of fair employment conditions for women and implementation of the law on violence against women. Furthermore, among the field of action listed it is possible to notice the strict link between Moroccan women and the family unity. In fact, the actions listed are: “field research on employed women and the distribution of roles; organizing a convoy on the promotion of women’s political participation; organizing a convoy against sexual exploitation of minors; income generating projects for women and girls” (Ibid.). Moreover, further activities which picture the role of Moroccan women in connection with the family unit are: “preparing reports, research and field studies on women and family related issues, listening and family counselling for women in difficult situations; organizing seminars, lectures and study days of interest to women and the family; organizing awareness raising campaigns on women and family issues; handicraft workshops, hand sewing, cookies making, and culinary arts; exhibition of associations’ products” (Ibid.).

Lastly, a further nodal point of this document can be considered the **cooperation** of the Azzahrae Forum both on an international and national level. For example, factors of international presence mentioned are: participating in the Human Rights Council sessions held in Geneva; participating in the Commission on the Status of Women sessions in New York; taking part in regional workshops (Cairo, Beirut, Tunis) (Ibid.). Moreover, the association cooperates with national partners such as: The Ministry of Justice and Liberties; Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development; Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and Arab Networks for NGOs. The association further contributes to the organisation of national and regional conferences, seminars and forums to spread information on both the associative activism and the on the partners with which it cooperates.

## 4 Comparing and Analysing the Final Results

This chapter will be focused on the second research question I aim to answer in this thesis formulated as follows: does the comparison of the discourses analysed demonstrate the presence of a hegemonic discourse in relation to the issue of gender inequality?. In order to properly tackle this research question, I will firstly unravel my final comments on the discourse analyses by comparing both resemblances and discrepancies between international and Moroccan discourses on gender inequality. Firstly, I will focus on the shared set of terminology, or what has been defined by Young (2014) as ‘transnational feminist frame’: the concepts of gender equality and women’s rights. Moreover, the individuality of the Moroccan feminist discourse will be linked to the presence of locally bounded nodal points describable under the umbrella of the so called ‘harmonious family frame’ (Ibid.). Secondly, I will comment on the different use (or unuse) of the notion of empowerment in the two contexts analysed as well as on its ambiguity in the academic sphere. Finally, an insight on the concept of hegemony and social antagonism – as elaborated by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) – will be crucial to properly tackle the research question, thus, whether the material provided in this thesis demonstrates the presence of a hegemonic discourse on the issue of gender inequality.

### 4.1 Sharing discourses: the transnational feminist frame

By comparing the nodal points of the discourses analysed, it is possible to firstly recognize the recurrent use of specific nodal points - encompassed under the notion of the ‘transnational feminist frames’ (Young 2014) - which constituted the foundation of the Moroccan women’s activism: hence, the concepts of *gender equality* and *women’s rights*. Except for the faith-based organisations I have included in the discourse analyses, these terms often support the discourse of UN Women, USAID and right-based Moroccan NGOs. A Further concept to be included among the shared set of terminologies is the one of international and national cooperation and development, nodal points which are further utilised by faith-based Moroccan NGOs. The recurrent presence of a shared set of terminology, or nodal points, can be justified by the considerable influence the transnational feminist network had in the development of Moroccan gender activism. In



fact, as noticed by Amrita Basu (2003), two phases of progression of translational feminism can be observed in Morocco: a first period in which universalist goals of feminist were established (1975-1985) and a second period in which international women's network began to take actions on regional and local issues always in the name of general principles, such as internationally recognized standards on women's rights and gender equality. In particular, the UN played a major role in constructing a transnational women's movement by setting a standard of terminology and norms for governments and organisations worldwide. In the case of Morocco, the importance of this standard norms is expressed in local contexts, such as by the Moroccan association *Collectif 95* which defines the CEDAW as a "vital instrument" (Collectif 95 2005 in Young 2014, 54) allowing women to pioneer for their rights and further securitizing the action of governments through the imposition of specific standards on the gender inequality issue. Despite the important role the transnational feminist network played in local contexts, the universality attributed to UN meetings and their results has been criticized as ostracizing the participation of women's associations and networks from developing countries. Moreover, individuals and NGOs have also enrolled an essential part in supporting and pushing the UN and governments to tackle both rights and economic issues of women worldwide. These transnational networks have forced diversity within feminism and allowed the expression of a multiplicity of perspectives on issues relating to women. Considering the Moroccan case, the production of reports to be presented during the 1995 Beijing conference was essential to increase Moroccan's women participation in the growing transnational women's movement and for the development of transnational right- based NGOs such as Collectif 95, FLDDF and ADFM (Young 2014, 54).

As previously mentioned, it is possible to observe the presence of a transnational terminology in documents published by faith-based organisations such as the Moroccan associations *Azzahrae* and the association *Assalam*. This tendency can be explained by the fact that despite many Islamists frequently portray their message as more local and authentic than secularist organisations (category which encompasses women' right associations) both ideologies developed from the same processes of globalization and modernization. In fact, several aspects of the transnational feminist movement are frequently supported by Moroccan Islamists groups such as: women's right to education, women's right to work, and the nuclear family as the fundamental social unit. In addition, Islamist movements in Morocco utilise their transnational connections to support their

projects as in the case of secularist groups. In fact, as noticeable by the discourse analysis of chapter three, the importance of local/international cooperation (both on a practical and discursive level) is often introduced among the major goals of both faith-based and right-based Moroccan women's organisations. Thus, as stated by Sadiqi (2003), both Islamist women's groups and women's rights associations have shared a common language and interdependent trajectories (Sadiqi 2003). The criticism against the use of an international human rights-based discourse caused right-based NGOs to refer to "more localised accounts of what is meant by rights" (Ibid., 60). Throughout this process Moroccan NGOs manage to create a fluid and complex narrative, which often incorporates both human rights-based keywords as well as Islamic references. This process of transformation and "islamization of the feminist movement" (Salime 2011) does not exclusively involve right-based NGOs. In fact, the malleability in shaping NGOs' narrative can be further observed in faith-based organisations which manage to complicate their narrative by referring to international feminist discourse. This process of re-reading the Moroccan culture and mixing narrative has in both cases the aim of increasing the audience and the public consent of the association, consequently augmenting the possibility to obtain positive outcomes to achieve gender equality in the region.

Despite these shared nodal points were initially inspired by international organisations – such as UN Women and USAID – it is possible to affirm that Moroccan organisations have managed to link the translational feminist discourse to local understanding of women's role within the family and society, as we shall observe when analysing the 'harmonious family frame'. In addition, the transnational language cannot be considered as part of an external and foreign reality but differently as an inherent part of the Moroccan society. As stated by Young (2014), "there were already local understandings of 'equality' in place, on which the transnational frame of 'equality' could draw" (Young 2014, 55). The fact that the concept of equality can be considered as an important nodal point in Moroccan women's NGOs material and not a replication of the international understanding of equality demonstrate that this term has been appropriated in local contexts. Additionally, according to Young's findings, the term is more successful when connected to an agreed and shared set of norms – such as the *Mudawwana* reform – than when connected to foreign laws or ideologies. A similar consideration is made for the women's human right frame for which its relevance relies in its open-endedness and connection to the equality frame. As noticeable in the first article of the *Beijing Platform for Action* the two terms are often

intertwined: “equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace” (Article 1 in Young 2014, 59). As in the case of the equality frame, when the women’s human rights frame is clearly and specifically connected to Mudawwana issues, and to the discourses and activities of the women’s rights movement it becomes more powerful. Hence, the issue of violence against women, as part of the women’s human rights frame, worked better for the movement in instances where it could be connected directly to the need for Mudawwana reform, as seen in the case of the equality frame. In sum, equality and women’s human rights are attractive abstract concepts which can get lost if not used in relation to specific and concrete goals for action and development as happened in the case of Moroccan feminist discourses.

## 4.2 The harmonious family frame

The first major difference which can be identified when comparing the international and Moroccan feminist discourse is surely the introduction of notions specifically related to the Moroccan society. As we have already noticed, this strategy can be applied by both adapting a transnational language to local references (such as the *Moudawana* or religious references) or through the introduction of a new frame of terminology. This trend has been further analysed by Young (2014) who introduces the notion of ‘harmonious family frame’, in other words, a frame which encompasses locally bounded nodal points which can be identified in the Moroccan discourse analysis. This frame symbolizes the singularity of the feminist discourse in Morocco as well as their independency from the global feminist discourse. In fact, it demonstrates that associations and activists actively pursue to convince Moroccan women and the public of their goals and ideology to the point of elaborating a new frame of action. As stated by Young (2014) “rather than imposing their own vision of what women’s lives should be, or what transnational feminism envisions for women, they are receptive to the realities of Moroccan women’s lives” (Young 2014, 92). Additionally, the women who actively participate in these projects cannot be considered as passive receivers of the projects, but differently as direct or indirect agents involved in this process of localizing, convincing and educating the Moroccan society.

To begin with, the ‘harmonious family frame’ centralizes the notion of family as nodal point of the narrative of Moroccan women’s NGOs and it is utilised by both faith-based and right-based organisations. In fact, as noticed in chapter three, despite not symbolising a clear nodal point this term is present in the discourse of both the association FLDDF and ADFM as well as in the discourse of the faith-based association Assalam, Karama and Azzahrae. In particular, the FLDDF’s slogan ‘justice and equality for a harmonious family frame’ - used to advertise the caravan of solidarity - directly links the empowerment of Moroccan women (through education and training) to the economic development of their family and demonstrates a process of adaptation of women’s rights activists to the reality of Moroccan women. In fact, women’s rights activists of the first wave in Morocco negatively idealized the normative ideal of the Moroccan family - especially marital relations within it - as limiting their projects and challenges. Thus, while never letting go of the primary objective of reforming the Mudawwana, the secular movement has begun to establish programs which allow women to improve their role *within* the family, thus increasing the family’s standard of living along with the increase in their own personal income or education level. This change appear to be productive inasmuch Moroccan women became more attracted to the programs in several ways such as: bringing family members into cooperatives, encouraging female family members to seek help from the associations for divorce counselling, using literacy skills to teach their children, joining cooperatives to increase their standard of living and keep daughters in school, and seeking out opportunities to learn about women’s rights in order to help their sisters and children (Ibid.). In sum, it is possible to notice that there is a new conversation taking place in which a macro-level change, the reform of the Mudawwana, is being described and utilised by women who have concrete family demands which they hope a broadly conceived movement for women’s rights will be able to address. Moroccan women’s associations are, in turn, learning from them and adapting their projects and discourses to account for the importance of family to women, as reflected in the development and usage of this frame. These discourses and frames of action are intertwined together within the movements and utilised in different periods and with a different level of recurrency depending on the life of the associations (Young 2014).

### 4.3 Empowerment as a floating signifier

The great use of the term ‘empowerment’ by international organisations and its absence in the Moroccan feminist narrative is the second major difference which can be noticed by comparing the discourses analysed. Before evaluating the specificity of how this term is utilised in the discourses I presented, I will firstly introduce its ambiguity in the academic sphere. In fact, the term empowerment can be considered as contested by several scholars, such as Griffin who claims it to focus more on individual emancipation than collectivism (Griffin 2010, 94). A similar concern is presented by Elliot (2008) who argues that “like neo-liberalism, the philosophy behind empowerment is a focus on the individual even if the barriers to empowerment are structural” (Elliott 2008, 9). Moreover, Larsson suggests that empowerment can mean that a person or a group is developing the notion of their own capacity and abilities (Larsson 2010, 221). Additionally, as Agot argues, “an empowered person or group is presented as one that possesses the capacity to make effective choices and act on them to achieve desired outcomes. The capacity...is primarily influenced by *agency* (personal ability and asset base to envisage and purposively make meaningful choices) and *opportunity structure* (the formal and informal contexts within which one operates...)” (Agot 2008, 288). A further problem is that as stated by Lombardo and Meier (2008) a concept with a loose significance such as empowerment can cause the prevalence of a certain perspective entirely because of pragmatic reasons than of ideological ones.

It is possible to notice that this term is widely used by international development organisations, probably because it rightly serves the possibility to encompass different meanings and contexts. The concept of empowerment in relation to economic strategies - or what has been described as ‘liberal empowerment’ (Sandberg 2010, 234) - can be defined as one of the major nodal points in the discourse of UN Women and USAID. This notion of women’s empowerment mainly describes it as instrument for development priorities, such as the fight against poverty and the process of democracy building. Hence, in line with liberal ideas, the individual growth represents a central theme of liberal empowerment argumentations which are mostly based on rational actors and practical interests, such as training courses and impact strategies (Romano 2002, 13). A further emphasis of this approach is the de-politicisation of the concept of empowerment, in other

words, the process of taking power out of women as real subjects of this process. As demonstrated by the discourse analyses, women are frequently not represented as active subjects but mostly as empowered from the outside, especially in the case of USAID. This tendency can cause an instrumentalization of the concept of empowerment itself in the narrative of development institutions (Chant 2016, 5). Furthermore, as affirmed by Cornwall and Edwards (2010) “women’s empowerment is heralded in today’s development circles as a means that can produce extraordinary ends. Women are vaunted as a ‘weapon against poverty’” (Cornwall and Edwards 2010, 1). A more inclusive approach of the term empowerment is recognizable in the narrative of UN Women in which the international/national cooperation and women’s agency represent nodal points of the discourse analysis. This approach seems to be more in line with the concept of ‘liberating empowerment’ which focuses on power relations and aims to “question, destabilise and, eventually transform the gender order of patriarchal domination” (Sandberg 2008, 19) by evaluating collective actions. Thus, according to Laclau and Mouffe (1985) theories, it will be more appropriate to define the term empowerment as a floating signifier than a nodal point inasmuch it is a concept which often stands as a variously articulated central element in different discourses. Nevertheless, despite the different approach with which UN Women and USAID treat the term empowerment the centrality of this nodal point in international organisations’ discourses is not contestable. Differently, as previously mentioned, this term is apparently absent in the discourse of Moroccan women’s associations. It is possible to hypothesize that the frequent use of this term by international organisations has provoked its denaturalization in local contexts which may perceive it as overly unnatural and, in addition, as a symbol of disempowerment. In fact, as stated by Menike (1993, 181) “in the name of Aid, in the name of Empowerment, we become culturally disempowered. What a destruction. What a price we pay for Aid. And remember, it is all done in the name of People’s Empowerment.” Furthermore, Menike advocates that in true development, there should be no room for destruction of traditional values or cultures (Ibid.). Nevertheless, as stated by Rowlands (1995), empowerment must include a process where people perceive themselves as able and entitled to occupy that decision-making space, process which implies a combination of ‘power to’ and ‘power from within’ (Rowlands 1995, 101). Regardless the utility of this term in feminist discourses its absence in the Moroccan feminist narrative further symbolizes the discursive individuality of Moroccan NGOs from the global arena.

#### 4.4 Discourse analysis and hegemony

The comparison between the discourses analysed, their shared nodal points and differences, allows to provide the fundamental material to answer the second research question which I have previously enounced in this chapter. In order to proceed with the analysis, it is firstly necessary to explicate the concept of hegemony and social antagonism according to Laclau and Mouffe's theory (1985). To begin with, the concept of 'hegemonic universality' was inspired by both Marxist paradigm and Antonio Gramsci's theory on hegemony and Lacanian psychoanalysis (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, iii). This concept refers to the representation of a singularity which is temporally considered as universal in a hegemonic relation between discourses, defined as elements in constant tension with alternative realities. The presence of two different alternatives, or social antagonism, on the same topic is crucial to stimulate dialogue and negotiation on specific subject matters (Mouffe 2005, 6). In fact, the space of antagonism, defined also as 'the political', is described as a democratic environment in which institutions and practices can produce a potential antagonism played in an agonistic manner (Ibid.,115). Additionally, as stated by Jørgensen and Phillips (2002, 48), both hegemony and discourse are similar in the way they represent the fixation of meaning which follows a phase of antagonism between discourses. In addition, the term deconstruction has been further utilised in order to analyse this topic by Laclau who borrowed this concept from Jacques Derrida affirming that hegemony is "the contingent articulation of elements that might appear as objectivity" (Laclau 1993, 281) while deconstruction is what reveals this contingency by showing that there is not objective articulation, hence, that any element can be combined differently. This process of deconstruction can thus be compared to discourse analysis since both processes aim to deconstruct the knowledge recognized as socially universal.

The process of deconstructing the reality through discourse analyses is what I aimed to obtain with this thesis: to deconstruct the discourse utilised in two different contexts in order to reveal the presence of subjective or hegemonic articulations on the same issue. Considering, as aforementioned, the notion of hegemony as the moment a certain articulation of discourse prevail on another one after a process of antagonism, I will suggest that if the international discourse on gender equality used to prevail and highly influence local NGOs this does not appear to be the case anymore, considering the Moroccan case

study. In fact, Moroccan NGOs' discourse demonstrate that the associations have obtained a certain level of semantic autonomy proven by the reformulation on the transnational frame, the elaboration of locally bounded nodal points (such as the harmonious family frame), as well as by the absence of the concept of empowerment which represents a crucial nodal point in the discourse of international development organisations such as UN Women and USAID.



## 5. Conclusion

This thesis has sought to identify which nodal points are utilised in the discourse of both international development organisations (UN Women and USAID) and Moroccan NGOs dedicated to the issue of gender inequality. The discourse analyses has been performed by investigating specific documents belonging to official and secondary websites which provide information on the organisations' main ideology and activities. Despite the structure and source of the documents analysed can differ, I believe the comparison to be adequate inasmuch the scope of these websites share a basic goal: hence, to share specific information on the way the organisations structure their action in order to ameliorate women's conditions worldwide. By doing so, the documents further reflect the way the organisations formulate their narrative on the issue of gender inequality. Considering discourse analysis as a process by which the linguistic shape of a certain reality is deconstructed in order to investigate its reality, I attempted to examine the chosen material by utilising the model developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) which provided me essential tools to identify nodal points and discursive strategies of the organisations considered. This process is meant to tackle the first research question of this thesis:

- Which nodal points can be identified by comparing the discourses of international organisations and Moroccan NGOs facing the issue of gender inequality?

The discourse analyses, structured alongside chapter two and three, has firstly shown the presence of a shared set of terminologies, definable as 'transnational feminist frame', which can be traced back to the initial influence international organisations had on local NGOs both in Morocco and other developing countries. In fact, as observed by Merry (2005;2006) the economic dependency of Moroccan NGOs from foreign organisations can frequently mutate into a discursive adaptation from global to local discourses. During this process, NGOs often embody the role of translators, hence, associations working as fundamental actors in the development of strategic tools to reshape ideas and norms according to the context in which they operate (Ibid.). This process of replication and hybridization has been identified in the discourse analyses of both right-based and faith-based Moroccan NGOs which attempt to link a certain transnational language to local

references. In particular, specific nodal points - such as gender equality, women's rights, cooperation and development – have been linked to local references, such as the *Moudawana* reform and the family as a fundamental element in the obtainment of gender equality. Even though Merry (2006) conceives the receiver's possibility of developing 'multivocal messages', the scholar further points out to an imbalanced North/South translation of norms by stating that: "translating from a 'weaker' language into a 'stronger' one...means translating from a less powerful language to a more powerful one...the process of 'cultural translation' can be an act of power, especially when it means reinterpreting one set of experiences and categories in terms of another more powerful one" (Merry 2006, 42). A different perspective is introduced by Lounasmaa's (2013) analysis on Moroccan NGOs discourses and activism, in which the author argues that the complex relation between women's NGOs and foreign organization is not essentially based on a one-way cultural translation process which shapes local organisations on the model of more powerful and external realities, but mostly on a mutual exchange of information. Accordingly, by comparing the results of the discourse analyses, we can observe that Moroccan women's NGOs actively work on a process of reappropriation and reformulation of the transnational language related to the issue of gender inequality. The information provided by the discourse analyses are essential to tackle the second research question of this thesis:

- Does the comparison of the discourses analysed demonstrate the presence of a hegemonic discourse in relation to the issue of gender inequality?

The theory by which global organisations have hegemonized the discourse on gender equality by constructing fixed and standardized meanings which must be translated into local contexts has been introduced by several scholars. Nevertheless, the process of deconstruction of discourse and creation of new subjectivities can be considered as unavoidable inasmuch this process belongs to the intrinsic malleability of discourse itself (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). By utilising NGOs as symbol of 'social antagonism' it is possible to identify examples of the unique strategies Moroccan women's NGOs imply to shape their narratives. In fact, the material provided by the discourse analyses has proven that, as Lounasmaa (2013) states as well, Moroccan NGOs appear to be developing an independent and flexible strategy in their construction of a feminist narrative which is increasingly overcoming the international 'hegemonic' discourse. In fact, as discussed in

chapter four, through the reformulation of a transnational language, the use of locally bounded nodal points such as the harmonious family frame as well as through the unuse of the notion of empowerment, Moroccan NGOs' appear to elaborate a singular articulation which is not entirely in line with the international discourse on the same topic. In sum, the discourse on gender equality seem to be shifting towards the process defined as 'social antagonism', hence, the coexistence of different articulations on the same issue which can remain in a parallel position rather than imposing themselves as a hegemonic truth. Moreover, both international and local organisations can mutually benefit from a fluid exchange of information and strategies. Nevertheless, the individuality elaborated by Moroccan NGOs both on a discursive and practical level can be crucial to increase the participation of the principal receivers of the projects: hence, Moroccan women.

## 5.1 Limitations of this study

A first obstacle which I encountered for this thesis was the limited accessibility of online material related to Moroccan women's NGO, particularly regarding faith-based NGOs websites. In fact, by researching different typologies of NGOs to include in the discourse analysis, I discovered that the official websites were either temporarily closed or absent. In fact, several Moroccan NGOs mainly rely on social media pages (Facebook) or network's official websites to share the information on the association's ideology and main activities. Despite the use of unofficial websites (such as ALF and the WLP network) has been fundamental to support the discourse analysis on Moroccan NGOs, the possibility to access official material would have facilitated the analysis of NGOs' discourses as in the case of the discourse analysis on international development organisations in present in chapter one. For this reason, I further supported the discourse analysis of chapter three with the fieldwork research of Lounasmaa (2013) and Young (2014) which represented an essential contribution to the overall progression of this thesis.

A further issue faced throughout the analysis was the necessity to compare documents provided in multiple languages. In fact, while the material which I included for UN Women and USAID is entirely in English, this was not always the case for Moroccan NGOs discourse. In general, certain websites include the information in at least two or three languages among which French, English and Arabic. Rarely, the information is provided

in Arabic with only the provision of one fact sheet in English (such as in the case of the association Azzahrae) or exclusively in French. Clearly, the possibility to compare material provided in the same language would have constituted a more accurate comparison of the discourse analyses. In addition, I believe this factor to be in contrast with the associations' preposition of cooperating with both national and international organisations operating in the same field of action. In fact, both the creation of an official website and the provision of information in multiple languages can practically expand the connection with other associations.

Lastly, considering the intrinsic nature of discourse analysis, this study certainly involves the limit of providing a subjective perspective. In fact, despite having utilised a specific methodological framework on which this thesis extensively relies, the selection of the associations and the material to analyse as well as the decision to focus on certain nodal points rather than others has been carried out by following my own perspective. Thus, this consequently implies that the results presented in chapter four must be considered as valid only in relation to the specific selection of material provided. In other words, this thesis does not aim to offer an objective evaluation on the action and discourses of the associations included in the discourse analyses. Differently, as previously mentioned, the aim of this thesis rests within the semantic boundaries of discourse analysis as tool to deconstruct the reality which surrounds us.

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