

Football Fandom in Turkey

Football Fandom in Turkey:

The example of Fenerbahçe Sports Club's Fener-ol (Be the Light)
aid campaign

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of this study is to examine and research football fandom in Turkey through the example of Fenerbahçe Sports Club's Fener-ol (Be the Light) aid campaign. fieldwork? interviews? elite theory? This campaign will be analyzed in the context of elite theory through field research and interviews in this thesis.

Fenerbahçe is one of the most well-known and popular sports clubs in Turkey. Since its foundation in 1907, the club has gained huge success, including winning multiple football cups in the Turkish Football League. In 2018, the club was faced with financial loss and debt, which drove the club management to launch a financial aid campaign titled *Fener-ol* (EN. ‘be the light’), to alleviate the financial burden on the club as well as to create new transparent management.

This thesis is going to investigate the campaign from the viewpoint of the donors. The viewpoints of the donors allowed me to understand how the political and social relations led to the construction of fan identity during the Be the Light campaign. On the one hand, investigating the bond between the fans and the new institutional management of Fenerbahçe made it possible to see the impact on the fans’ perception of the BL campaign as a fandom practice. On the other hand, it also allows me to understand the campaign from the perspective of the elite club management that directed it from the top-down and to see how fans internalized it without getting any tangible economic return.

Keywords:

Football, Globalization, Fandom, Turkish Football History, Relational Sociology, Fenerbahçe, Elite-theory.

Abbreviations:

WHO: World Health Organization

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

PTT: Turkish Postal Service

EFT: Electronic Money Transfer

FC: Football Club

SC: Sports Club

CUP: Committee of Union and Progress

FB: Fenerbahçe

NY: New York

BL: **Be the Light** (Fener-ol) Campaign

TFF: Turkish Football Federation

TSL: Turkish Super League

UEFA: European Football Association

AKP: Justice and Development Party

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

“The Super Lig -Turkey’s Premier League- was established in 1959. Since then, it has changed its name a couple of times, but remains essentially the same with 18 clubs competing.”
(TRTWorld, 2019)

The financial management in Turkey should always be considered together with an arbitrary top-down governmental procedure. Especially beginning from 2013 to today, Turkey has become vulnerable to financial disorder due to this top-down decision making procedure. For example; the government itself, having a sizable debt of its own, promised a large number of private credits. (Economist, 2018).

Related to top-down decision making procedures, various economic areas are also affected by these problematic financial regulations and football is one of them. The growing financial management problems in Turkey have not spared football clubs. Financial policies negatively affect the football clubs just as well, forcing them to take on more and more debt over time. Through this arbitrary economic management, the top football clubs have been taken under the wings of the government and are shielded from economic implications within elite-directed decision-making processes. Financial Times reported in 2019: “The ‘big three’ Istanbul clubs of Galatasaray, Fenerbahçe, and Beşiktaş, along with the Black Sea team of Trabzonspor, all enjoyed a bounce in their share price after it emerged that Turkish banks had come together to ease the burden of debts totaling more than TL10bn (\$1.85bn)”. Hence, there are always top-down financial decisions that create imbalances on economic regularity.

It is also worth noting that some new sports clubs started to emerge in Turkey during the AKP - Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party) government, one of which is the Başakşehir Sports Club. President Erdoğan, for example, donned the team's luminous orange strip at a charity match to mark the opening of its stadium in 2014. The club's main sponsors are firms with close ties to the ruling party (Pitel, Financial Times, 2018). The club administrators who hold the capital are able to steer the football environment in certain directions. For example; the free-fall of the Turkish Lira in recent years has had an adverse effect on the sponsorship agreements between the sports clubs, state administrators, and contractors. The situation deteriorated even further "after a TV network withheld a \$125m payment as it sought to change the terms of a \$500m-a-year broadcast deal after a dramatic slide in the Lira." (Pitel, Financial Times, 2019).

According to this top-down decision-making mechanism, clubs need to follow a way under the guidance of certain standards. Based on their popularity, clubs started investing a large amount of capital into popular footballers so as to attract media attention, encumbering themselves with even further debt. Nevertheless, these investments in football players have turned out to be a huge financial burden that cannot not be easily compensated by the football clubs. This has forced the clubs to be financially cautious in their actions.

The events after Fenerbahçe's presidential election in 2018 occurred as result of this financial mismanagement. The club management announced that the total amount of debt accrued by the club did not comply with the regulations provided by the UEFA. In a statement released in 2019, UEFA noted: "The UEFA Club Financial Control Body (CFCB) Adjudicatory Chamber has determined that Fenerbahçe (TUR) failed to comply with the break-even target for the reporting period ending in 2018 as required by the settlement agreement, which they entered into on 20

May 2016.” Ali Koç, the newly elected president of Fenerbahçe and also a shareholder of one of Turkey’s largest conglomerates, made the decision to release the debt records of Fenerbahçe to the public. Koç also launched a campaign called ‘Fener-ol’ (EN. ‘be the light’, referred to as ‘BL’ henceforth), asking for donations from fans to prove their loyalty and commitment to their football team. Seeking new ways of including the fans into the challenging process of paying off their debt, Fenerbahçe initiated full-fledged mediatization of the campaign through multiple mediums such as TV ads, social media, SMS, and fan magazines.

The campaign offered the fans an opportunity to prove their financial attachment to the football club ‘to ensure the success of Fenerbahçe’. It also did, however, create some backlash among the fans coming from different financial backgrounds. The main focus of the campaign was strengthening the team along with providing financial and business support. It allowed Fenerbahçe fans to play a role in the future success of the team through donating money while also boosting their morale and self-esteem (Berument & Yucel, 2005: 843). While the intent of Fenerbahçe was for the fans to achieve a sense of accomplishment by donating, it became an exclusive privilege that could only be enjoyed by those with the appropriate financial means.

As a result, new elite-relations were born, hinting that the financially disadvantaged groups of people were not welcome anymore. The incessant drive for capital in Fenerbahçe paved the way for surplus extraction as a business model while creating a legitimate perspective of being a fan of the club . This donation campaign imposed both moral and financial responsibilities upon fans through their love, loyalty, and fanaticism for the team which were measured from the perspective of the campaign organizer. Therefore, Fenerbahçe redefined the rules of membership to the community and subjected the fans to a new economic universe.

Football, being one of the most popular sports, influences and is influenced by various relations within the society in Turkey. Yazar (2005: 204) reports that the ruling elites in Turkey have usually taken a controversial and critical approach to popular culture and football in particular. Hence, there is always an ongoing debate about Turkish football in Turkey, which inevitably creates social and financial tension within society. On the one hand, some social and financial relations are taking place within the BL campaign . These relations are mostly based on the way of campaign, and how BL campaign creates a relation combined with the decisions of campaigners. The social and elite distinction is located over there.

This thesis strives to explore and describe the BL campaign and its unique implications from the point of view of the donors, aiming to understand the social impact of the campaign. A large number of Fenerbahçe fans and club members donated money to the campaign to show loyalty and trust, and the fans formed new bonds with other fans through the campaign. The bonds of the campaign also included some hierarchies as well. These hierarchies should also be understood from the perspective of the campaigners who constitute the elite dynamics of the campaign .

There are many aspects to this campaign that need to be examined, especially in terms of its implications in politics, fandom strategy, and business. This financial aid campaign, therefore, might reflect some existing hierarchy among fans. It is important to consider the campaign as a business strategy employed by the Fenerbahçe SC administration, which allowed the fans to have hopes for the future of the club. Analyzing BL, therefore, requires an analysis of the tension between the fans, club members, administrators, and other units of the club. Having placed a considerable amount of financial responsibility and expectations on the fans, Fenerbahçe has embraced the new-social elite distinction.

Being able to donate allowed some fans a higher status among the fanbase, creating an ‘elite’ class. In this work, I will try to describe the relationship between the fans and the club administration and the social ramifications of BL. Various questions and answers surrounding the campaign will be provided in this study. Through this, the thesis will try to reveal the link between the idea of a new-elite fanbase and the construction of a new fan identity as a strategy of alleviating the financial crisis Fenerbahçe, one of the most well-known football clubs in the Turkish Super League. Football in Turkey has intricate dynamics that are intertwined with those of Turkish society, reflecting the cultural and social relations and norms. Therefore, BL and its implications for the Fenerbahçe fans form the basis of this thesis. The campaign had a significant effect on not only the future of the football club but also on the assumed identity of the fans themselves, considering the impact the campaign had on the budgets of the fans. This study, thus, also considers the effects of the BL campaign on the construction of a fan identity and the fanbase itself.

Throughout this study, the thesis seeks to explain why Fenerbahçe fans would donate money to the club, which is essentially a business, without getting any tangible returns for their gesture. Along with the main research question, the study also aims to discover how the club management has approached the fans throughout the BL campaign and through which intermediaries they have created an elite distinction within the club. These questions focus on the actions of the club management and the approach of the fans throughout the BL campaign. There can be several answers to these questions, therefore the thesis tries to focus on the case of the BL campaign to identify Fenerbahçe administration management of the campaign and its fans as a model to better understand the problem .

Through the research question and sub-questions, I try to give a wider approach to my research.

The questions address the dynamics between the BL campaign participants and club management's approach. These questions also led to the narrations of the Fenerbahçe Club about the BL campaign. The study outlines various dynamics of Turkish football in general and of Fenerbahçe (FB) more specifically, as well as providing some background throughout the introduction section. The example of the BL campaign is one result of that complex process for FB. Especially when campaign management is taken into account, it is clear that the BL campaign has emerged as a result of a complex relationship between the fans, administrators, football policies in Turkey and other institutional and state-related aspects. Hence, there is an elite perspective as well.

Therefore, this work also strives to analyze this process in terms of different concepts, methods, and theories derived from the conducted literature review. There are many important concepts that are crucial to consider and study such as globalization, fandom vs. post-fandom, and its relationship with the elite theory. The methodology of this work includes case studies, data analysis of online forums, and semi-structured interviews with some donors. The BL campaign and its effects, as well as the results of the participant study I have conducted, are discussed, and analyzed from the perspective of the elite theory. The findings of this thesis should be considered within the scope of how elite dynamics and fan actions lead us to understand the positionalities of the elites and how these elites' decisions affect other individuals within the context of the BL campaign as a fandom.

1. Key Concepts and Perspectives

This section provides an explanation of why it is important to understand the concept of fandom and how the meaning of fandom reflects the relational dynamics in both social institutions and the globalization process in the realm of constant social transformations. It will also look into how, within the context of football fandom, its practical changes and its organic relationship with international transformations, combined with the presence of elite perspectives.

1.1 Meaning of Fandom

Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines ‘fan’ as someone who admires and supports a person, sport, sports team, etc. Fandom, in turn, refers to the state of being a fan of someone or something, especially a very enthusiastic one. These definitions indicate that fans and fandoms can be interpreted in many fields and landscapes combined with subjective perspectives and habits. The subjective perspectives and habits are the result of some social and intersubjective relations among many entities such as what we see in pop-culture, world-cup games, some private football, and basketball competitions, etc. Thomas Luckmann (2008: 281) writes, “Social stocks of knowledge do not arise from nothing: they are built up in long chains of communicative social interaction that consists of coordinated, synchronized individual action. Individual action, in its turn, presupposes intentional activities whose meaning is essentially derived from social stocks of knowledge”. It is important to regard fandom as a culmination of a strong individual and group identity.

1.2 Relational Approaches to Fandom

Becoming a fan and construction of fandom has some correlated practical aspects to it as well.

These practical aspects of fandom are always well-situated within social aspects. That is why the collective side of football should be considered together with group relations and ideals. Such ideals and relations reflect collective aims and goals as well. All these can be used as a political agenda (Clevand, Doidge, Millward & Widdop, 2018: 3). This politicization involves various entities such as players, coaches, owners, fans, administrators, journalists, etc. and such involvements built new social worlds and cultural backgrounds (Clevand, Doidge, Millward & Widdop, 2018: 3).

In the context of this landscape, Nick Crossley's relational sociology and its findings have an influential role in the identities of the fans and their impacts on other fans. He aims to capture different relations and their various outcomes. For example, Crossley (2011: 42) points out that "there are no interactions, relations, or networks without actors, but actors take shape within those interactions etc. in a constant process of formation or becoming". This process of becoming should be interpreted within social actors and their relational approaches with other units. Because of this, fans took upon an important role within the football environment and its fandom practices. With their situated position, the act became more understandable and politically accepted within its own context. The BL campaign and its donors' relation with club administrators, should be studied sociologically to understand them better. "Experience is a key concept regarding the link between identity as an individual issue and identity as a social-cultural issue." (Porat, 2010: 278). There are various other dynamics that might affect this identity as well. Therefore, the attitudes of the fans towards the fandom have been in constant interaction with other sociological, subject relational, and political relations.

The fandom practices, for example, have changed over time, especially in the era of new-campaigns or activities. The fans themselves internalized these changes, altering their

identity and practices in the process. The fandom experience could be considered an internal practice that also had an external aspect to it. So, there is not one identity that can be considered as a unique organic position. “[...] identity is usually a mundane experience with certain social categories such as ethnic group, class, nation, gender, or allegedly also a more marginal category such as a football club.” (Porat, 2010: 279). While we consider fans and their identity, we also have to consider the constructive role of the fandom and its important instrumental role in fan experiences and relationships with new-campaigns or activities. The identity is embodied in the fan’s life, making fandom a way of life rather than mere practice. (Porat, 2010: 287) Through complex relationships between the fans and other entities, fans construct their fandom in an experimental way.

1.3 Football and Globalization

1.3.1 General History of Football

The true origins of football are subject to debate, but it is possible to trace the rise of football as a modern entity to 17th century England. The combined forces of industrialism, the emergence of the labor class, and the modern middle-class culture gave rise to the popularity of football. The enlightened middle class, striving to create new social and cultural values of rationalism, used football to express their ideals. (Sandvoss, 2003: 5) Football in the modern sense, as a rule-based game, picked up speed and popularity, as modern industrial life became prevalent.

The emergence of new technologies also helped football become even more popular in the 20th century. The development of new communication technologies like television and radio allowed results of the games to be broadcast instantly over vast distances, boosting the spread of football culture as a modern industry transnationally. (Sandvoss, 2003: 7) Sandvoss (2003: 9) states that

the social, cultural, and economic premises of the rise of television were interrelated with those of the rise of modern football. Football, therefore, became an important figure of rational, industrial, and modern life. The emergence of Fordism, suburbanization, and mass consumption allowed both television and football to be fully and firmly integrated into the everyday life of millions of people. (Sandvoss, 2003: 9). This ensured that the football fandom and its effects on society were deeply associated with these notions combined with industrial relations.

1.3.2 Millennial Blues

In his book titled *Post-Fandom and the Millennial Blues*, Steve Redhead discusses the concepts of fan and fandom. He critically and analytically explores the notions and evaluates them in the context of football from sociological, political, and financial points of view. As digitalization takes over the world, different practices also step away from being a strictly national experience. The effects of elites are visible in fandom cultures as well. In football fandom, for example, it is possible to experience the effects of the transformations in the post-1980s period and of neoliberalism. According to Redhead, this process is visible in Britain through the loss of hooliganism and its transformation in society and social relations. Redhead (2002: 10) explains that it was only in the late 1980s that the soccer hooliganism started to disappear even among self-confessed (former) hooligans. This is the perfect example to see how fandom can radically change over time.

Redhead's claims about the post-fandom concept also show up in the changes within the football fandom. As we progressed into the digital age, the fandom experience also started to become more 'physically distant'. This distance-based fandom experience did not spare football fandom either. "The traditional soccer culture of yesteryear of participatory, largely male, fandom of the terraces—threatened by smaller all-seater stadia, steeply rising prices of admission and the

embourgeoisement of the sport—has effectively transferred itself to the already existing male ‘pub culture’ which in large part created it in the first place.” (Redhead, 2002: 30). The post-fandom concept, therefore, clearly reflects the new dynamics of football fans and their intersubjective relations through their identity under the influence of power dynamics. Redhead also mentions hyperreality in his study: “The hyperreality of televised sports culture is commonly taken as innately a ‘bad’ thing, a development which undermines what is recalled as ‘real’ soccer, ‘real’ sport, ‘real’ culture.” (Redhead, 2002: 32). This explains why we can see how football fandom experiences these normative effects of distance-based transformation. The ‘94 World Cup, hosted in the US, showed how deeply football and media were integrated (Redhead, 2002: 52). Several dynamics influenced this transformation but through globalization, the football fandom changed on an international level.

2. Conceptual Clarification

There are some concepts that we need to discuss in order to understand the BL campaign. In particular, how the effects of digital transformation and post-modern culture, combined with economic consequences, are transforming the fandom types also affects this transformation process within football. Cornel Sandvoss (2003: 68) suggests “the link between a capitalist (world) economy, industrialism and the globalization of football becomes even more evident in the analysis of football clubs as central units of production in international football.” Through this, football fandom depends even more on consumption. This consumption idea, in turn, has started to construct other fields in the football industry, such as virtual culture, advertisement, financial management, etc. (Sandvoss, 2003: 82).

Fandom, therefore, should be considered a fluid and dynamic mechanism with roots in various fields and the structure of football clubs and fans cannot be considered apart from this mechanism. It is also worth noting that football is becoming both more global and more local at the same time: “Such forms of spatially distant fandom emerge both transnationally and within national boundaries.” (Sandvoss, 2003: 87). It is interesting how the BL campaign formed itself as an example of digitalization and how it attracted post-fandom identity. The structure of campaign dynamics finds its way under the elite guidance **as well**. Through the BL campaign, the club management has led to the emergence of another approach towards the fandom where fandom identity starts to be measured through other intermediaries such as money. Therefore, it is important to analyze Fenerbahçe’s BL campaign in the context of these newly formed institutional relations. Also, we need to figure out how the elite guidance formed the way of campaign through intersubjective relations.

Chapter 2 – Theory

In this section, this thesis is going to adopt the elite theory in order to understand the paradigms and narratives of the BL campaign and the guidance of elites in Fenerbahçe football. The section starts by describing the elite theory and then moves on to the elites' effect on fans within the BL campaign along with how the political sphere affects it. The elites' impact in Fenerbahçe's management and how this elite concept has become embedded in the example of the BL campaign will be examined. Therefore elite theory leads us to understand the campaign approaches and how campaign dynamics creates a new kind of fandom which is measurable with money. The chapter concludes by exploring the major aspects of the BL campaign and the effects of the number of donations and other dynamics in the club on the general elite configurations and ideas about elite theory.

1. Elite Theory

The elite theory aims to clarify internally and externally related power relations within unions and societies. The theory also explains the decision-making process within a union. Before moving onto explaining the theory, it is crucial to understand the term 'elite'. Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.) defines 'elite' as the richest, most powerful, best-educated, or best-trained group in society. This means that the elite in one society can be utterly different from the elite in another. "Elites are stratified, with central circles, executive cores, power cliques, inner

leaderships, or other ‘elites within elites’ discernible.” (Higley & Pakulski, 2012: 3).

Analysis using the elite point of view is important in understanding the larger picture. “Elite theory draws on the master distinction between elites and non-elites to advance explanatory constructs that can be assessed empirically for accuracy or at least plausibility.” (Higley, Pakulski: 2012, 7). This study investigates the theory in terms of the power relations within the society and Fenerbahçe. The power of the elite, however, does not have to be economic, it might be cultural sources or symbolic capital that is driving the elite power. This allows the elites to emerge from different organizations and movements (Lopez, 2013: 3). Especially with the impact of the democratization process and of the post-cold war era, the new-elite theory started to have an influential role in society. Also there are different politically motivated elites. Lopez (2013: 5) suggests that “new elitists propose a typology of elite configuration: elites could be (a) disunited, (b) consensually united or (c) ideologically united.” As the provided context and empirical evidence became more relevant to elitism and the elite theory in the larger sense, the new-elite and complex dynamics had to allow plural explanations about elite configurations, so that there was not one unique elite configuration but several. One key dimension of the elite theory has become the interdependence between the elites and non-elites (Lopez, 2013: 8). The new-elite point of view, therefore, provides us with a micro-analysis process that can also be used in case studies. The BL campaign shows that the situation of fans' decisions about the funding is also related to the way the elites of Fenerbahçe construct and direct the campaign.

2. Polarization and Elite Theory in BL Campaign Context

The polarization between the fans and elites in the BL campaign could be explained with the

elite theory, especially within the context of the new-elite theory. The debates between the elites and other groups caused polarization among the ‘other’ groups in Fenerbahçe during the process of the campaign. Especially the administration of the club and their social power have had an influential effect on the competition between the fans. Also this created some hierarchies within the fandom practice. The administrative leaders or elites of the Fenerbahçe have positioned themselves in a polarized way between the relations among the fans. So, in fact, there is a rivalry within the elite, and even as a result of this rivalry, the BL campaign emerges, and we can say that the Fenerbahçe management is doing this consciously. That also led to the creation of narratives for elites and guided elites. For example, within the one example on the political sphere of Turkey provides some informative insights into understanding this polarization as well. “Existing research on Turkish political parties highlights the currently polarized state of the Turkish political elite, thus hinting at the presence of a political polarization that entails a growing ideological and policy-based distance between political leaders and parties.” (Aydın-Düzgüt & Balta, 2018: 2). That’s why, loyalty to different institutions and their varying experimental approaches created the current dynamics in elite affects, which is based on polarized and minority-based ideals. Also this effect has some relations with the general political atmosphere. That’s why there are a lot of other dynamics that affect the decision of the fans which are under the effect of some other minor-elite rulings. Politics and other social units have that kind of relationship **as well**. For example; the example of policies employed by the government in the post-2002 period did not help this polarization process either. While the people who distance themselves from the governing party, AKP, feel that this polarization is a pressing issue in Turkey, those who feel closer to the government or those who hold office within the government deny that Turkish society is polarized. (Aydın-Düzgüt & Balta, 2018: 4) Political

framing and the role of the elites are also major determinants of this polarization **as well**.

The determinant issues of how political issues are framed and how these frames affect the experience of the individuals in Turkey lead us to understand how the elite's decisions affect the non-elite's decisions as well. "Indeed, political frames can include exaggerations and/or outright distortions of reality, with these exaggerations or distortions resting on symbols, endorsements, and links to partisanship, ideology, and culture. This implies that they can also serve as tools of extensive elite manipulation." (Aydın-Düzgit & Balta, 2018: 9). Political polarization, however, is denied by government officials, who claim that what is being referred to as polarization is simply a political reaction to a genuine transformation that is, in fact, helping to achieve and consolidate societal harmony. (Aydın-Düzgit & Balta, 2018: 14) Polarization leads to feelings of exclusion in some members of the society, especially the ones that are opposing the government. As a result, in terms of the BL campaign, there is a strong elite effect that can be measured and these effects reflect the political dynamics within Turkey which is a crucial reason for understanding the decisions of the elites among the non-elites of that union.

The relationship between the elite theory and plural political dynamics has an influential role in understanding the power relations within these aspects. "As the circle of those who decide is narrowed, as the means of decision are centralized and the consequences of decisions become enormous, then the course of great events often rests upon the decisions of determinable circles." (Mills, 1956: 21). The polarization between the elites leads to some micro-decisions **as well**. These micro-decisions and their relationship with the individuals should be re-configured within the institutional dynamics and their relation to the elite theory. "The micro-operational elite group includes both the owning and the appointed managerial elites of individual organizations and owners of some smaller organizations." (Farazmand, 1999: 344). The organizational

positions and the decisions of the elite can be analyzed together. The organizational decisions and their backgrounds make up the elite's point of view. "They are the agents of the strategic elites located at the apex of modern organizations in government, corporations, nonprofit institutions, and political parties." (Farazmand, 1999: 345). There are various campaigns and experiences that should be figured out through the decision-making processes of the elites. Political polarization has had a significant impact on these processes **as well**. Also the elite's decisions of any institution have some effects on the non-elites of that institution because the decisions of fans and supporters have relation with this elite dynamic.

The BL campaign can be analyzed using the elite theory which is based on the institutional context of Fenerbahçe. Starting from 2011, the historical position of Fenerbahçe changed in Turkish football. The match-fixing allegations in 2011 had a significant impact on the financial management of Fenerbahçe. The decisions of the ruling elite about the allegations also hint at the possible political reasons for the prosecution. According to some Fenerbahçe fans, this case was also politically motivated. Especially during the court proceedings in 2012, the derby game between Galatasaray and Fenerbahçe changed the atmosphere in the league. There was an altercation between the fans and the police after the game outside of the stadium. (Irak, 2014: 122) During this period, a blog named Papazın Çayırı (EN. 'Father's Meadow', referring to an old stadium in Istanbul) refocused on critical articles about police violence, linking this to other sections of Turkish society. The prosecutions pushed by the political elites and their pressure on the Turkish league created a polarized Fenerbahçe both economically and socially. This led to Fenerbahçe creating a discourse to reunite and reconnect to its fandom, using the slogan 'biz bize yeteriz' (EN. 'we have each other' or 'all we need is each other'). Some elite configurations in Fenerbahçe as an institution and some political configurations in Turkish politics led to the

creation of new relations and discourses in the middle of the tensions created by this polarization. BL, therefore, should be analyzed in this context, especially keeping in mind how fandom has been reconstructed as a result of these relations and tension among the elites. That is why the BL campaign should be analyzed within those relations, especially how fandom is reconstructed from the point of these relations and tensions among the elites.

Moreover, elite theory allows one to provide a better account of how football, politics, and other important social units could be configured in relation to each other. It allows the reader to see how some micro-decisions of the elites lead to polarization, especially in a country like Turkey, where high-tension is visible at the macro level. These micro-decisions taken by the elites have influenced the institutional relations and those who were attached to these institutions suffered the largest effects. Within the Fenerbahçe context, the decisions regarding the launching of the BL campaign led to the fans donating money to show their fandom identity. The fandom identity and its dynamics find its purpose well under the elite decisions and their programs.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter provides an account of what qualitative analysis is and how it relates to the case study. The methodology chapter tries to explain how fans approached the campaign through fieldwork and its content analysis in the BL Campaign atmosphere to understand my principles and variables via discourse analysis. The discourses used by donors allow me to explain qualitatively elaboration to insights of the campaign. Then, I begin to describe my study group, the ethical dilemmas of the study, as well as the preparations I have made and the limitations I have faced during this research.

1. Qualitative Analysis and Case Study

Qualitative research can be conducted within and across multiple disciplines, including education, sociology, psychology, and other fields. (Saldana, 2011: 4) Understanding the social aspects of BL requires one to explore the various motives of the campaign, which is why qualitative analysis is the most fitting method to study a multitude of different aspects through a variety of interpretations. The role of an individual and their relationship with the BL campaign can reflect some aspects and interpretations for qualitative analysis. “In qualitative research, there is also a variety of genres: the usual criteria are the particular approach to inquiry and the representation and presentation of the study.” (Saldana, 2011: 4). The individual interpretations of BL, therefore, could shed light on different aspects of the campaign, which would allow us to

understand its different social aspects and its relation to elite guidance.

Upon careful consideration, I have decided that my research questions could be best understood through a case study and analyzed through qualitative analysis to ensure that “the issue is not explored through one lens but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood.” (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 544). Conducting a case study also allows investigation of a specific topic but does not limit one to explore the idea through a specific-normative way. Case studies allow one to answer the ‘how’s and ‘why’s of a phenomenon while also taking the context into consideration (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 556).

Another important aspect of a case study is that it allows the researcher to combine different methods so as to illuminate the case at hand from different angles (Johansson, 2003: 3). Therefore, for case study, I have contacted thirteen people who donated to the BL campaign. Using the qualitative methods, I identified the BL campaign as a case study to learn more about the campaign through fieldwork. Thesis's main focus in this study was to find out the motives of the donors and of the campaign itself and where is the elite guidance within the regards of the campaign. Understanding the kind of individuals who donated to the campaign and how that kind can be identified under the uniqueness of the campaign was another point of the study. Case studies allow the researcher to have a reasonably manageable holistic project to conduct qualitative research. (Saldana, 2011: 8) The thesis that analyzes the BL campaign as a case study would permit a deeper understanding of Fenerbahçe fans and how the BL campaign have transformed into a fandom practice.

1.1 Fieldwork and Coding

Through fieldwork, it is possible to investigate the experience of the fans regarding the donation

campaign and the social construction of the campaign towards the fans as well as illuminating the reasons the donors made the decision to donate to Fenerbahçe which is related to elite directioned way. “Fieldwork/ethnography is perceived as a description: an account of facts and experiences captured under the label of ‘context’, but in itself often un- or under-contextualized.” (Blommaert & Jie, 2010: 5). Alongside the fieldwork, the thesis tries to conduct semi-structured interviews with thirteen participants to get a better insight into the motives of the BL campaign. Using the descriptive/structural coding method, I was able to analyze the issue in a comprehensive manner and its relation with elite guidance. “Structural Coding applies a content-based or conceptual phrase representing a topic of inquiry to a segment of data that relates to a specific research question used to frame the interview (MacQueen et al., 2008: 124).” (Saldana, 2012: 84). While structural coding is a versatile tool that is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, it is especially useful for studies that feature multiple participants and semi-structured data collection methods. (Saldana, 2012: 84) Employing structural coding methods, the thesis can expand on the narratives of the research and descriptively analyze the data collected from the participants and the relations with campaign directors. That’s why there is strong guidance of how the sample mentions the structure of the campaign.

1.2 Sampling

During interviews and fieldwork, I mostly opted for participant observation methods. Participant observation is a unique method where the researcher actively participates with people in everyday life settings while observing and collecting information. (Jorgensen, 2015:1). To understand the BL campaign and its social implications as well as its background related with elite theory, it is important to view the perspective of the fans and donors. Participant observation

is often used in qualitative and ethnographic research and fieldwork. (Jorgensen, 2015: 2). It also allows the researcher to understand the individual perspective of the participants. “Many proponents of participant observation and other qualitative methods eventually would reject the positivistic goals of explanatory (nomothetic/emic) theorizing entirely in favor of interpretative (idiographic/ethic) theorizing as envisioned from a humanistic standpoint.” (Jorgensen, 2015: 5). During my own fieldwork, the individual standpoints of the participants gave me valuable insight regarding the campaign and its social construction and humanistic standpoint. Iacono, Brown, and Holtham (2009: 45) suggest that the use of self in the study allows the reader to understand how the knowledge has been constructed and to better evaluate the research findings. The method, therefore, permits a detailed analysis of the complex ideas regarding the BL campaign as well as a better understanding of the way Fenerbahçe fans perceive the campaign as a fandom strategy which is more understandable strategy relation with elite decision.

Therefore, for the study, I tried to find fans of both Fenerbahçe and of other Turkish teams who had donated to the BL campaign. This thesis tried to identify the motivations of the fans in donating and their expectations from their involvement in the campaign. Above all, the thesis sought to define and interpret the group’s identity and how they measure the experience of fandom by making a donation.

Interviews are an effective way of citing and documenting an individual’s perspectives, feelings, opinions, values, attitudes, and beliefs about their personal experiences and social world, in addition to factual information about their lives. (Saldana, 2011: 32). Some factual interpretations of the campaign reflect how the fans perceive money and the importance they attribute to the amount of money they donate. In the case of the BL campaign, donating money was not the only experience the participants underwent. For some, other moral implications had

an important role in their donation like. These experiences and their intersubjective links with individuals created a conduct to the aims and strategies of the campaign. “Particular studies regularly have explored and innovated with most of the basic steps, strategies, techniques, and procedures of participant observational investigation.” (Jorgensen, 2015: 11). The institutional reflection of Fenerbahçe was revealed from the perspective of the fans through BL. Hence, the thesis aims to explain the wider implications of the approaches and the beliefs that the BL campaign caused in the fans along with the impact of the campaign on Turkish football in general. Moreover, this study allows us to understand where Fenerbahçe stands as an institution in the eyes of its fans as well as what the fans expect from the club in the aftermath of BL which is directed from elites.

2. Online Content Analysis

The online content analysis method allowed me to understand where the BL campaign stands in online contexts and how the campaign is constructed from the perspective of the fans. Saldana (2011: 57) suggests that digital culture produced new sources of data for qualitative researchers, which the thesis aims to make use of. The thesis elaborate some of the most popular and influential websites and social media forums in Turkey for my analysis, which allowed me to have a better understanding of how the BL campaign is received by the commentators and how their views are reflected on the internet and its relations with club elites within a general perspective.

3. Preparation and Encounters

Preparing for the interviews was another important part of my methodology. So as to be able to ask relevant questions, I have conducted the BL campaign research before the interviews regarding the main principles of the campaign and Fenerbahçe's strategies including how they publicized the campaign on the internet and on TV. I framed many questions in a way that was compliant with the strategies employed by Fenerbahçe so as to be able to reveal the ontological stance Fenerbahçe's elite adopted within the context of the campaign within the perspectives from the donors. As Saldana (2012: 2) reports, the research questions, methodologies, conceptual frameworks, and fieldwork parameters should be context specific.

Another aspect of BL campaign preparations included an online content analysis. This thesis analyzed a multitude of comments and questions regarding the BL campaign that was posted on the internet by various users. Analysis has created a sub-code of my research questions through this process. Sub-coding is a useful method that can be applied to almost all qualitative studies, especially to content analyses and studies with multiple participants. (Saldana, 2012: 77) These sub-codes proved valuable to a variety of my questions. Sub-coding is intended as a coding grammar, a way of initially detailing and organizing data into preliminary categories, subcategories, hierarchies, taxonomies, and indexes. (Saldana, 2012:79).

I have conducted my online content analysis on popular forums and social media platforms, striving to understand the perspective of my participants and doing some comparison between the in-group and out-group configurations and how it was framed from the Fenerbahçe's elite. This analysis indicated that some group identity measures provided a constructive role to Fenerbahçe fans more than the other teams' fans. Analysis formulated the questions to

understand their views on Fenerbahçe so as to understand if there was any link between feelings of sympathy for Fenerbahçe and donating to BL. Through many questions, the thesis aimed to discern their experience in an ontological manner of both fans and Fenerbahçe's elite.

There exist findings that show there is a link between feelings of group identity and donation to a campaign like BL. There are questions that were, therefore, directed to identify this link between their identity and the campaign itself. The analysis guided and worded the questions in a way that was easy to understand and clear for the participants while providing me with the valuable information for the theory I was seeking. The information that methods get from variables led me to understand the role of elite theory within the context of Fenerbahçe's management, which in turn allowed me to understand the coding way within the context of BL campaign. The elite's roles were evident within the social, political, and decision-making process. That is why, the coding used in the analysis part was attached to the emotions and positions of the individuals and how the individual decisions have some parallelism with campaign designers.

3.1 Ethical Considerations

While conducting a qualitative study, it is essential to be mindful of some ethical concerns as the research will include and employ human participants. Not only the data collection but also the data analysis must be compliant with the ethical guidelines to ensure the privacy concerns of the participants. As a researcher, I did my best to respect the subjectivity and individuality of the participants in my study. Munhall (1988: 150) states "Naturalistic, direct involvement and participation with people necessitates acknowledging the subjective nature and activity of the researcher as the main 'tool' of research.". This is why, in the analysis part of the thesis, it is taken into consideration that there are interpretations of the participants that reflect the writer's

position and stance.

The thesis ensured the anonymity and privacy of the participants in the study. Before starting, questions and motives explained to the participants what the objectives of the research are and how the collected data will be used. Verbally information gives them that they can, at any point during the interviews, decide to stop the interview. During the interview, it was also planned to ensure that all of the participants were above the age of 18. Due to the extreme circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, participants made sure to follow the social distancing rules suggested by WHO, maintaining at least one-meter (3 feet) distance between themselves and me (WHO, 2019). I also provided the participants with the option to conduct the interview online rather than face-to-face to ensure the safety of all involved parties. This reflects my attention to current events and reflexive methodology about the collected data. Analysis will discuss the aims of this study from the perspectives of the participants.

3.2 Limitations

During the research process, there were various limitations while I was analyzing the data. One of these problems was in the qualitative analysis practices used in this thesis. The nature of conducting a case study brings about problems regarding the framework that is being applied. Case studies might make it so that only one perspective is visible in the research, revealing a narrow construction. Coming up with generalizations about the perspectives of a community might also prove problematic in the grand scheme of things, as well as my own perspective affecting the results. While qualitative research has its many advantages, as is the case for any other method, it has its shortcomings just as well. The researcher being both the subject and the object of their research in qualitative analysis becomes problematic as they are limited by their

knowledge and insight, making mistakes unavoidable. (Faria, Almedia & Queiros, 2017: 370; King, Keohane & Verba, 1994: 9). The variable data, limitations of information and the limits of the explanation can be disadvantageous for my research.

Another possible limitation of the study might stem from the use of the participant observation method. Using this method means that the participants will be observed via the researcher's lens and filter and it is not possible to infer what may be going through participants' minds as the researcher observes them. (Saldana, 2011: 76) This, unfortunately, means that there might be other aspects to the subject that are not touched upon the research process. Moreover, while BL started in 2018, it is still ongoing and its full implications and consequences might not be visible at this time, requiring further research to evaluate its full implications in the future after the campaign is concluded. The relevance of the research could change over time as the campaign is wrapped up. It is also worth noting that the literature on this specific subject, politicization in Turkish football elites, is rather limited. All these problems proved challenging to the research especially within an anthropological sense, as there are simply not enough resources to rely on in the research.

4. Participants

In the thesis, the opinions of ten participants, aged between 19 and 73, nine of whom were Fenerbahçe fans, about the BL campaign were collected. They have also positioned themselves for the structure of the campaign. Table 1. summarizes the participants.

Table 1. Study Participants

The list of participants' age and fan status are listed in the table.

Participant	Age	Fenerbahçe Fan
A	48	YES
B	55	YES
C	54	YES
D	23	YES
E	19	YES
F	73	YES
G	22	NO
H	21	YES
I	30	YES
J	37	YES

Chapter 4 – Analysis

1. Analysis

In this chapter, the thesis is going to explain the perspectives of the individual participants, online forum comments, and how they define their own participation and non-participation of the BL campaign. Before going into that, however, the thesis will explore the relationship between the participants and institutional management. The analysis, therefore, will not only cover the participant data but also the relationship between the fans and Fenerbahçe as the organizer of the campaign.

The aim of the research is to explain the establishment of the fans' roles and how fandom is created in the institutional realm. A society is made up of humans who create systems and conventions to guide the behavior and actions of others (Cleland, Doidge, Millward & Widdop, 2018: 4). Within the framework of football fandom, the relationship between the fans and the institution has had a constructive role. "The variety of social actors in the social worlds shaping football means there are many networks that pattern social relationships." (Cleland, Doidge, Millward & Widdop, 2018: 5). Therefore, the institutional role played by the campaign should not be underestimated, which is why I will not just focus on the participants' viewpoint but also on the campaign itself and how Fenerbahçe SC administration uses institutional discourses and management to have an influential effect on the perspectives of the fans which is related with their elite position.

As Fenerbahçe's elite constructed the BL campaign not only for financial reasons but also to be able to influence the fandom practices, that leads to analyzing the campaign from the perspective of the football club as well. In the analysis chapter, online content analysis was utilized by examining the comments on the BL campaign on Fenerbahçe's official websites, official social media accounts, and the personal social media accounts of the managers. The donors' views had an influential role in forming the relationship between the fans and the club. The intersubjective dilemmas were visible from the perspective of the individuals. Football fandom is a collective behavior and it constitutes a network of fans. (Cleland, Doidge, Millward & Widdop, 2018: 48). Fans' interpretation of the campaign, therefore, reflects the social aspects of it, which is the campaign formation, led by the Fenerbahçe's elite.

For this reason, the thesis will analyze the campaign through the perspective of the participants, combined with the approaches of the football clubs elites or management and their strategies. The organic link between the participants and the club's elite will be reflected in this strategy as well. The connections between the fans and the clubs are more important than just 'mattering' in the social worlds that involve the consumption and production of football (Cleland, Doidge, Millward & Widdop, 2018: 189). Therefore, the perspective of the fans and how their connection with elites of the club to each other via the campaign is essential in the analysis.

1.1 The Driving Factors (and the Strategy) Behind the BL Campaign

There are some structural conditions that influence how Fenerbahçe's elite managed the BL campaign and these conditions should be investigated to see their impact on

Fenerbahçe's survival. Therefore, it is important to inspect the campaign page on Fenerbahçe's official website, reading through the frequently asked questions page. Information provided by the club on the web page informs the readers that Fenerbahçe was faced with grave financial problems. These problems were officially announced in 2018 after the election of the new president, Ali Koç. The newly elected president revealed the huge debt after promising transparent financial policies within the club. In a press conference on the 28th of July 2018, he stated that transparency and financial accountability were the main principles of the club and stated that he welcomed criticism to ensure a better future for the club. Koç insisted on his desire to create strong institutional management for Fenerbahçe through financial transparency and efficient management. (finansgundem.com, 2018).

Some restrictions imposed by the International Football Associations might put Fenerbahçe in a tight spot in terms of financial management and its involvement in future cups. The FAQ on Fenerbahçe's website, therefore, mentions the sanctions imposed by the UEFA on the club. "Involvement in UEFA's World Cups are essential not only for financial reasons but also for its social implications on the sports culture." (Fenerbahçe.org, n.d.) It is obvious from this statement that the Fenerbahçe's management wants to be able to join the future European cups. The statement also implies that Fenerbahçe's identity is not limited to Turkish football but also has roots in the European Football landscape as well. Putting this statement on their website is a strategic step from the Fenerbahçe management in trying to increase the popularity of the campaign by 'playing the UEFA card' with their fans. The competition in UEFA cups has an important role in gaining popularity and financial support for the football clubs.

Fenerbahçe's desire to establish transparent financial management through BL provided the fans with an organic relationship with the club. The club painted the campaign as the future of the club and as a fandom practice.

Other statements in the FAQ content refer to the uniqueness of the campaign as well as the imperativeness of working together to ensure the future success of 'the Fenerbahçe youth and kids'. (Fenerbahçe.org, n.d.) This statement highlights the communal and social aspects of the campaign, stressing the group identity. As Blackshaw (2008: 336) states, the football community is 'an agreement of cultural identity, companionship, and breathing space, one of the most intimate things permissible in a modern public space'. The victories and success of Fenerbahçe are therefore enjoyed by the fans through their strong group identities. The football clubs provide a reference point for the support identity in an otherwise fast-changing and unstable environment (Kennedy, 2012: 312).

Fenerbahçe's elites expected to receive good results from the BL campaign because the future success of the club would provide economic success as well. This is also why the involvement with the European cups is crucial for the future of the club. Berument and Yucel (2005: 843) report: "Performing a transfer function analysis on our data set, we reveal positive feedback from Fenerbahçe success to economic performance such that the monthly industrial growth rate increases by 0.26% with the number of games won by Fenerbahçe in European cups, regardless of where the game is played." All these variables combined make it easier to understand the driving factors behind the BL campaign for Fenerbahçe elites. Fenerbahçe elites also made use of this campaign to 'reach' different parts of the fanbase and to unite the fans towards a common goal.

Another expectation of the club management elites was to increase the popularity and identifiability of the club through the campaign. A slogan long used by the club, ‘Long live Fenerbahçe’ makes these aims clearer. The slogan, often associated with the phrase ‘Fenerbahçe Republic’, shows that the fans see the club and the team as a symbol of a long-lived sports institution and supporters’ strong loyalty to it. (Berument & Yucel, 2005: 843) The BL campaign, however, challenged this idea and made it so that the fans now had to show their loyalty by donating money which is measurable through the limits of money.

The last statement on the FAQ content was focused on the sustainability of the campaign. The club states that what is important in this financial aid campaign is not how much one donates but the continuous support from a large number of fans. (Fenerbahçe.org, n.d.) This remark was part of the strategy to maximize donations and to reach the maximum number of people. That statement also elaborates the aims of the elites, meaningfully that creates the tension between the fans which is hierarchically measurable with donation of money.

Easy accessibility was an important aspect of BL as well. Fans coming from differing social and financial backgrounds have different amounts of support they can provide the club without any tangible returns but the social ideas of unification pushed by the campaign would reach everyone in the fanbase and provide social cohesion. “The term social cohesion is often used to describe a positive characteristic of a society that deals with the relationships among members of that society.” (Berument & Yucel, 2005: 844). There is a large number of Fenerbahçe fans that donated to the campaign with this motivational background in mind, which provided both a sense of self and club identity.

This strategy led to a huge noticeability of the campaign among the fans with diverse social and financial backgrounds and within a short period of time. Eventually, the campaign enjoyed an extensive amount of interest and participants.

The stress on “donate however much you can afford” by the club also proved to be an effective strategy. What is more understandable from this is that the statement of the club reflects the individual stance of the fans. Fenerbahçe elites tried to get the fans to understand their economic situation and from that, get them to donate to BL. The individuals and their relationship with the football clubs elite constructed the dynamics between Fenerbahçe management and the BL campaign. These dynamics determined the dialectic relationship combined with fandom practice. “However, to claim that all fans are participatory and active on all occasions misconstrues the complex role of fandom in everyday life. Sometimes fans are not enthusiastic or participatory.” (Sandvoss, 2003: 19). So there is a tension occurring within these hierarchical relations beneath the system.

1.2 Fans and Club Relation

Now we need to understand how the Fenerbahçe administration or elites created the debate of BL related to the association of the campaign dynamics and fan base expectancies from the new management of Fenerbahçe. The relationship between the fans and the club administrator elites has had an influential role in this. The mutual trust and loyalty between the institution and the participants led to a different understanding of the campaign. Both the success and the failure experienced by the group become the members’ success and failure, the prestige and humiliation become the members’ prestige

and humiliation. (Berument & Yucel, 2005: 845). For the club elites, the campaign was a ‘win-win’ for both the fans and the club itself.

This ‘win-win’ was about the collaboration between the fans and the club elites. The Fenerbahçe administration pushed the discourse that they were providing the fans with a substantial return in exchange for their support in the campaign. For example; the future success of the club, according to Fenerbahçe, would ensure a positive and happy future for the fans. The BL campaign provided the fans with a chance to change their identity in an intersubjective way. This continuous upkeep of one’s identity is an intersubjective process that makes the self amid and through effect and by relating to other fans. (Nuhrat, 2018: 395). The campaign could, therefore, be analyzed through discourses, which have already been provided by the Fenerbahçe elites' decisions. The discourse here is “embodied in ways of experiencing, and that as a particular ‘domain of language-use’ (thinking, talking and experiencing) it resembles a paradigm, and moves beyond the ‘language-in-use’ concept.” (Hogan, 2013: 4). The ‘win-win’ discourse, therefore, would expand among the fans in many ways while increasing the popularity of the campaign from the intersubjectively related perspectives of Fenerbahçe fans. There are some fans who feel hierarchies as well.

Over time, the relationship among the fans turned into a different domain. Gillespie and Cornish (2019: 19) suggest that if we were to take social life to be founded on interactions, then subjectivity becomes a core concept for social sciences and for understanding social behavior. Intersubjectivity is visible within diverse perspectives as well, which is why the perspective of the Fenerbahçe administration and the identity of the fans collaborated with each other. These perspectives belonging to individuals,

groups, or traditions and discourses, can manifest as both implicit (or taken for granted) and explicit (or reflected upon). (Gillespie, Cornish, 2009: 20) Analyzing the campaign within these perspectives and relations is crucial. That's why there is a clear elite administrator paradigm that affects the many sides of the campaign formation.

1.3 Donation Methods Used in BL Campaign

The club's elite decisions have had an influential role in the campaign. The donation methods, therefore, reflect how the campaign is managed. The participants can donate to the campaign using one of the four methods: credit card, electronic funds transfer (EFT), SMS, or money order through PTT (Turkish Postal Service). These choices reflect a globalization process employed by the club administration, especially considering the deterritorial and fast mobilized methods listed above. The deterritorialization of both information technologies, like television, and communication technologies, like email and telephones, provide human beings everywhere with a sense of becoming contemporaries. (Erikssen, 2014: 50) There is also strong evidence of fandom becoming deterritorialized and more materialized **as well**.

Along with the deterritorialization of the campaign, media management had a crucial effect on the management of the campaign in general. Sandvoss (2003: 39) states that “media (whether electronic media such as television or simple physical media such as the football stadium) function as an extension of the world to ourselves and vice versa.” This is because the role of the media embedded within the BL campaign through deterritorialized networks became more interrelated through the media landscapes. This explains why TV channels publicized the campaign more than the official websites of the

club. These kinds of mobilizations led to advertisement effects **as well**.

Thesis tried to explain how BL was intersubjectively provided to the fans in the previous sections. This was made possible by the TV shows publicizing the campaign. Especially after the 1980s, many fandom practices had become embedded in media spheres combined with popular culture. “It is not only the media as a technological structure but also their consumption that constitutes an extension of self.” (Sandvoss, 2003: 39). This is why throughout BL, the Fenerbahçe fandom reflected some of the extension of self-models or elites, of which media was a part. In contemporary society, everyone is an audience all the time. Being a member of an audience is not exceptional anymore, not even an everyday event. It is simply everyday life. (Abercrombie & Longhurst 1998: 68-69) The campaign, therefore, was exposed to varied audiences and these audiences provided further popularity to the campaign under the influence of the elites.

There were many other complex dynamics involved in the promotion of the campaign and the TV channels as well. It is, therefore, important to understand the role of the BL campaign through these relations. Sandvoss (2003: 43), conducting a micro-level investigation on fandom, concludes that understanding football fandom as a contemporary cultural phenomenon in isolation from the prevailing macro foundation of contemporary life is not possible. Each team and their fans add some unique stance to their fandom, which is why the football fans have always had some organic relations with their favorite club. The clubs and their support exist in their own unique national and local contexts, making some clubs/fans more or less prone to being drawn into the commercial pressures sweeping through professional football. (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2012: 332).

The national TV channels and their positions formulate the fandom practices along with the club management. There are some famous and/or rich people that contributed to the process thanks to their fandom and loyalty to Fenerbahçe. These influential elite people openly offering their support on TV to Fenerbahçe was also an important step in the publication of BL. Some media channels were involved in the process during the campaign as well. It is worth noting that the popularity of BL was partly due to this involvement. The transparency behind the reasoning of the campaign also legitimized the reasons the fans should donate to the campaign.

The president of Fenerbahçe clarifying the reasons they were launching the campaign before they started BL helped this process. Koç explained that not just Fenerbahçe but all Turkish football clubs were financially struggling and that these financial problems did not happen overnight and will not be solved overnight. He insisted on the importance of short-, mid-, and long-term plans that must be concocted to prevent further financial problems. He also stressed how valuable and important it is for everyone to contribute as much as they can and take on responsibility. (futbolarena.com, 2020)

Koç's explanation of the reasons the campaign was necessary and how the huge debts of the club could be resolved helped BL gain popularity among both Fenerbahçe and non-Fenerbahçe fans. When the campaign is considered through these complex relations and dynamics, it becomes evident that there is a suitable explanation for the incorporation of communitarian ideologies into the football fandom also affected by the elite dynamics. Blackshaw (2008: 331) suggests that since football fandom is more transferrable, fan communities are becoming less likely to be bound by propinquity and more likely to form deterritorialized groupings. This is why the role of the media channels ended up being

more influential in popularizing the campaign at a larger scale combined with popularity.

1.4 Drawing Advantage from the Power of TV Shows

Some influential media-elite figures offering their support to Fenerbahçe and BL to show their loyalty to the club provided the campaign with more support from the fans. One such figure was Acun Ilıcalı, a TV producer and a TV icon, publicizing the campaign on a dedicated TV show titled ‘win-win’. Joining him on stage, Cem Yılmaz, a famous comedian, and the president of Fenerbahçe, Ali Koç, asked the public for their support. Ilıcalı announced on the show that he was going to buy 1907 football shirts and donate the advertising revenue of the program on that day. (t24.com.tr, 2019).

The involvement of celebrities and well known TV elites in the campaign provided it with huge popularity and publicity. The vice-president of Fenerbahçe at the time, Burhan Karaçam, explained how vital this publicity campaign led by Ilıcalı has been on BL. Karaçam expressed his gratitude to Acun Ilıcalı and Cem Yılmaz as well as the donors. (hurriyet.com, 2019). The involvement of such famous celebrities is bound to bring in sympathy and donations of those who are fans of these celebrities. BL became a fandom practice in the eyes of the participants and donors especially with the involvement of these well-known people.

The popular TV show win-win ensured the campaign’s involvement with the media. In turn, it became possible to reach more fans through media, both for financial donations and other non-financial voluntary services.

Financial gain was not the only positive outcome of BL in favor of Fenerbahçe elites

either. The campaign served to unify the fans and constructed new relationships both between the fans themselves and also between the fans and the club. Koç's public statements and thank-yous to the fans cultivated a positive reaction from the public towards the club. The club administration also awarded some of the volunteers for their service during BL on another dedicated TV show 'Ilker Ayrik ile Fener-ol Özel' [EN. 'BL Special with Ilker Ayrik], broadcast on Fenerbahçe's dedicated TV channel, Fenerbahçe TV. Ali Koç, attending the program via a phone call, expressed his gratitude to everyone that donated to, volunteered for, and worked on the campaign on behalf of the club administration. He added that the success of the campaign depends on the continuous support of everyone, young and old, rich or poor, famous or non-famous alike.

Koç mentioned that the day the TV show was broadcasted, the 3rd of May, was an important date for Fenerbahçe as it was the club's 'birthday' and also the day Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and the first president of Turkish Republic, visited the club. He stressed the importance of Atatürkism as a value and reiterated his gratitude to all Fenerbahçe fans before disconnecting. (Fenerbahçe.org, 2019). His statements on TV showed not only that the Fenerbahçe administration had high regard for the donations but also publicly identified what kind of dynamics and discourses were embedded in Fenerbahçe fandom identity and how these dynamics re-surfaced from thanks to the BL campaign.

Moreover, the statements on the TV shows and other events provided direction to BL for elites. For example, one explanation of this could be in the role of television and its

dynamics. During the TV show *win-win*, Ali Koç revealed that he was going to donate to BL as well. Acun Ilıcalı explains: “While some foreign football clubs like Chelsea FC are owned by private companies or individuals, Fenerbahçe does not have an owner. Any donation that is made to the club stays in the club to be spent for club-related expenses. When Abramovich gives money to Chelsea, he is investing his money, not donating it. What Ali Koç did by donating to Fenerbahçe was merely a donation while not expecting to get anything in return. Ali Koç might have set a precedent in that sense in football history. We have to thank Ali Koç with all our hearts for his donation and support to the club. His efforts are motivating us.” (superfb.com, 2020) Thus, the image of Ali Koç as an elite figure in Fenerbahçe provided some popularity among the fans which in turn motivated them. However, this image leads to some asymmetrical relations between the fans which is based on the calculation of money.

When the club atmosphere is considered in general, it is clear that there are good, positive relationships between the elite members. BL brought out the loyalty feelings in the fans and showed that the fans and the members can gather together. Here, we need to realize that both the Fenerbahçe fans and the elites that donated to the campaign showed their loyalty to the club and proved the existence of a harmonious relationship between the fans and the institutional management. This allowed BL to be part of the fandom identity in the context of the institutional landscape of Fenerbahçe. Yet, that created some tension as well which meant that fans' donations could be related with its amounts. The Fenerbahçe administration also gave out 5000 rewards to the donors to ensure larger participation. Some of these rewards were high-value items like cars and houses. During the TV show *win-win*, the club announced the winners of the 5 houses and 20 cars.

During the TV event, the fans bought more than 125 thousand football shirts to help Fenerbahçe out. The harmony between the fans and the club was made apparent during these elite guided events, which showed the success of the campaign not only financially but also socially and institutionally in favor of institutional elite management.

1.5 Alternative Methods by Fan/Volunteer Groups Used in the Campaign

Up to this point in the thesis, I mostly mentioned the financial donations, participation towards the BL was not limited to financial aid, though. That also included teams of volunteers to publicize the campaign.

These teams set up promotion tables and counters in shopping malls, university campuses, on streets and squares all over Turkey. Some of these promo tables were especially successful. For example, in a major southern Turkish city, Adana, the volunteers organized breakfast events to draw more people who could be interested in either donation or club membership. Fenerbahçe support groups and unions also built new organic relationships with the club management as well. These support groups took the opportunity to create social meetings in order to publicize BL both nationally and globally. Through these meetings and gatherings, fans had the opportunity to share their perspectives on fan identity with other fans. These relationships and intersubjective dynamics created a consensus on fandom strategy.

Because of this, the participants of the events organized by Fenerbahçe support groups to help BL have had an important role within the empirical dynamics of the research. That is why the role of the participation in these events is of great significance in the context of BL. For example, during another breakfast event organized by a support group,

Fenerbahçeliler (EN. ‘Fenerbahçe Supporters’) in Hamburg, Germany, the president of the group offered their support to BL, which was an important move in the eyes of a lot of fans. Fenerbahçe’s official website reports the event, explaining that the group’s president, Mustafa Çömlek, gave a speech during the event, declaring that they gathered together in order to help Fenerbahçe gain its financial independence. (Fenerbahçe.org, 2019: 4). That's why there is a strong coherence within these social meetings. Under the guidance of the elites of the club they shared the identity of the fans and understood how they might be more involved in the atmosphere.

Fenerbahçeliler in Hamburg was not the only group that expressed its support to the campaign. Many other groups also offered their help, including Fenerbahçeliler Sweden: “111 years and counting, our deeply loved club has encountered countless difficulties. We have always found a way to overcome these troubles through history and we have made it become one of the most beloved clubs in the World, and this would not be possible without support of our world-known loyal fan base. And today we are going through one of the most difficult times we ever had to face as a sports club. We are dealing with an extremely difficult financial situation and it’s getting harder to fix it each and every passing day.” (Fenerbahçem.se). On this website comment there was mention about the union involvement within the campaign. The role of the fan union also elaborates that relation with elites and fans as well.

These support groups, calling upon strong group identities of the members, popularized BL globally as well. While the national dimensions of football and its consumption have been reshaped, there seems to be no end to processes of globalization and localization. (Sandvoss, 2004:81). From the institutional perspective of the team, support groups,

influential people and most of the participants, the direction of the campaign was satisfactory. This means that it was under the control of the elites.

2. Online Content Analysis (Divergent Responses)

The parts of the campaign regulated and planned by Fenerbahçe administrative elites worked well and everything went smoothly. However, the parts where the Fenerbahçe elites were not involved in proved problematic. Some comments and statements about the BL campaign were rather negative. These comments were often on online forums and other well-known Turkish websites. Some of these critiques were focused on the lack of tangible commercial results even after the campaign got a lot of donations which created asymmetrical relations among the fans.

These comments were posted by anonymous users on a well-known website, Ekşi Sözlük. One such comment posted there mentioned that the Fenerbahçe administration needed to put the people responsible for racking up such huge debts and those responsible should be the ones making donations. The user also accused the Fenerbahçe administration of mismanaging the finances and club's strategic policies. (eksisozluk.com, 2019) Other comments indicated that launching the campaign was the wrong strategy to employ and what they should have done was to find the root cause of the financial problems. The problems also fit with top-down decision making as well.

Another user criticized the club for its choice of football players and added that in a world where people die of starvation, it is not acceptable to donate to a football club so that they can pay a football player millions of dollars. (eksisozluk.com, 2019) These

statements reflect the ontological placement of the football clubs in the eyes of the fans. It is obvious that not all of the fans were supportive of the campaign. Further, some fans were critical and skeptical of BL.

One user expressed his disappointment over the ratings of the show win-win. “The show wasn’t even among the top-20 in the ratings list of last night. I would expect more from the Fenerbahçe fans even if non-Fenerbahçe fans weren’t watching it. I guess the fans of Fenerbahçe are unhappy about the rich begging for money from the poor. The club itself should be donating the money instead of asking the fans for help. What about those that were responsible for this debt? I read they collected 56 million Turkish liras. I guess that’s enough to pay a footballer or two for a season.” (eksisozluk.com, 2019)

Moreover, the criticisms did not end there. Some other users drew attention to the astronomically high salaries of the football players: “Just this year Fenerbahçe will pay 350 million Turkish liras in salary to the players. This is a shakedown. As a Galatasaray fan, I wouldn’t and couldn’t donate to my club either. What is going to save Turkish football is not tax amnesties or fan donations but holding the club management responsible for their actions and their accumulated debt. Clubs need to start controlling their spending and the administrators should manage the clubs like they manage their companies. Asking the fans to cover up their financial mistakes is not acceptable.” (eksisozluk.com, 2019). Thus, in order to understand this campaign, we need to take into account fan comments. Some Fenerbahçe fans commented on how elites of the club mismanaged the campaign within many regards.

The problematic policies of Fenerbahçe’s elite have been a point of criticism for a long

time and this campaign has brought them to the surface. The abundance of criticizing comments on the internet shows us that there is some dissatisfaction about the campaign and its internal dynamics. In particular, the issue surrounding the pay gap between the football players and the donors has become a major problem. Another user comments “I will neither donate nor let any of my friends donate to this campaign. Will you really pay the salaries of players like Alper Potuk, Benzia and Comolli? Will you pay the managers that brought garbage players into the team? If they want awareness, the players can donate to the campaign, not the fans. No one should donate to a campaign like this regardless of the team.” (eksisozluk.com, 2019) The fans could understand this monetary relations in the context of some pay gap issues which also mention the mismanagement of Fenerbahçe elites.

The website does not only harbor negative comments, of course. Other commentators point out that the fans will show their support and loyalty to their team during these hard times both financially and emotionally. These comments show that self-identity of fans is embedded in BL. The fans perceive the campaign as a fandom practice, a way to show their loyalty. The campaign has raised expectations of the fans from the club. It is possible to see the trust of the fans in the club in the comments as well. That’s why the club’s elite try to promote this kind of agenda to mediate the campaign in the media and other social units to tell the fans that we are a union.

According to the findings on the internet forums, there are many comments from both Fenerbahçe fans and non-Fenerbahçe fans that criticized the BL donation campaign as being problematic. Outside of the institutionalization of the club, there are many individuals who could not donate due to their financial situation and/ or emotional stance

so that there is a some existential problem occurring within the campaign. There are some fans who criticize Fenerbahçe elites for doing a business which is seeking their own interest. For example, some of the fans accused the club of ‘running a show business’, prioritizing the well-off fans on an institutional basis. A comment states “With all the rich businessmen around, this campaign should collect 200-300 million. They are saying there are 20 million Fenerbahçe fans but not everyone can donate. The rich, however, can donate thousands, even millions.” (eksisozluk.com, 2019). So, the link between a capitalist (world) economy, industrialism and the globalization of football becomes even more evident in the analysis of football clubs as central units of production in international football. (Sandvoss, 2004: 68). That’s why Fenerbahçe’s elite lacked some understanding of the behavior of the fans while conducting this campaign. According to these explanations, apart from the institutional dynamics, the coherence between the Fenerbahçe fans and the legitimacy of the campaign had been criticized within many perspectives. The influence of elite views is also an important aspect .

3. Interviews

My interviews with the BL donors showed me some of the key-words that were necessary to explain my findings. Using these keywords, I tried to explain some important dilemmas within the campaign. The thesis also tried to frame its explanations within a relational-sociological approach in relation to the other social units, events, dilemmas, elites etc. This thesis aimed to establish the connections between the fans who perceived the BL campaign as a form of fandom practice. “Connections matter. Indeed, for sociologists they are or should be ‘what it is all about’. This is often recognized in

relation to the microcosm but is no less important in relation to the macrocosm. Social life does not cease being about what actors achieve in interaction, whatever scale we choose to analyze it and whatever abstractions we bring to bear. From children in the playground to the ‘world economic order’, societies are networks of interacting and co-constituting actors, orientating to conventions, exchanging resources and more generally ‘being social’.” (Crossley, 2011: 206). Therefore, the thesis attempts to analyze this campaign with important discourses directly from the fans’ perspective and how these discourses of the fans reflect the fandom practice constructed by elites narrative embedded within the history and social position of Fenerbahçe and its fans.

3.1 Discourses

Most fans associate BL with self-devotion and sacrifice. While answering my first question (“Why did you choose to donate?”), the participants in my study used the words self-devotion and sacrifice a lot. For instance, A said “The main reason I donated was my respect for the team that I support and my belief that I should sacrifice for the future success of the team. I don’t see BL as an ordinary financial aid event. I think most Fenerbahçe fans should donate however much they can . We should show other clubs that we are one.” By using this discourse, fans have shown their devotion to the club which is associated with the club’s elites, because the campaign was formed and publicized under the guidance of the club’s management.

The fans also name their loyalty as the reason they donated along with self-devotion. Another fan responded as follows: “At first I was skeptical of the authenticity of the campaign, which is why I refrained from donating at the beginning. However, upon

seeing most of the people around me donating to the campaign, I changed my mind and decided that it was a small sacrifice and devotion to the club.” This statement shows how BL became a fandom practice related with the intersubjective relations among the fans guided by elites. Nuhurat (2018: 392) states: “Affect engages the ‘social, relational, communicative, and cultural aspects’ (Lutz and White, 1986: 405) of emotion, but its modality is different. Affect is not the attribute of a person or group: it reaches beyond the self (Navaro-Yashin, 2012)”. That is why, there were even comments about how the campaign allowed for relations between the fans and their perceptions of the campaign’s movement.

Moreover, participant B reported: “The biggest reason I donated was to help Fenerbahçe get out of the difficult situation it was in. The direction of the campaign in general is amazing, a lot of fans and administrators are devoting themselves either financially or emotionally. Making a donation to the team I support has become crucial to me. Donations are extremely important to preserve all the work and effort that has been put into Fenerbahçe’s success.” B’s explanation shows that the reason he donated was to respect the institutional devotion and effort driven by Fenerbahçe elites. His trust in the elites and the harmony between the fans and the club during BL was a big push for B to donate. Despite a unity in the belief ‘that transactions, interactions, social ties and conversations constitute the central stuff of social life’ (Tilly 2002: 72) cümle yarım? B also associated the campaign with the institutional and fan relations and that’s why B considered the campaign as a fandom practice.

3.2 Interview Questions

In the previous chapters of this thesis, I tried to explain the administrative aspects of the campaign and through the use of some key concepts like fandom, globalization and relational sociology, I tried to establish how the Fenerbahçe administration managed the campaign. I also strived to show how the construction of the fandom appeared within these relations.

In this chapter, the thesis aims to explain the ontological statements with semi-structured interviews with the fans and to unearth how they perceive the BL campaign as a fandom practice related with political and identical approach directed from elites. Moreover, the thesis will try to reveal how the elite configuration is visible in these individual statements.

My first set of questions was “Why do you think the Fenerbahçe administration launched this campaign? What kind of internal reasons might have driven Fenerbahçe to do this? Do your main reasons for donation coincide with the reasons proposed by the administration?”. Through this group of questions, the thesis aimed to identify what the fans and institution expected from the club and from the campaign. Thesis also wished to see how much overlap there was between the participants’ perspectives and the campaign’s ideals.

The participants had differing opinions. Some of them strongly reiterated their trust in the club management and elites. D explained: “I think the reason for the campaign was the financial mismanagement of the previous administrations of Fenerbahçe. It would also be bad for the team both financially and socially to be barred from attending European

cups if the debt isn't settled. This is why I donated. Fenerbahçe's success makes all of us happy and the amount of money we donate is not that important." Participant E added: "The reason Fenerbahçe has such an outstanding debt is the high salaries paid to the players. Will this campaign solve this problem? I don't know. I donated because I hope this will bring about a change in the club's management for a better future. Especially the remarks of Koç about being more mindful of the future players in the club helped me make up my mind to donate. We, as the fans, should support our team during these strategic changes." E's remarks show that he trusts the new management to make better financial and managerial decisions. The comments reflect the importance of campaign direction and publicization guided by the elites of the club.

D commented: "To be honest, I only decided to donate after my friends asked me to. A close friend of mine especially insisted that I donate, so I did, even if it wasn't a large amount of money. So, I think the reasons Fenerbahçe launched the campaign and my reasons do not overlap much. I believe Fenerbahçe designed the campaign in a way to create a new bond between the club and the fans, and this bond was financial in this case. BL is important both for financial reasons and for receiving fan support. The campaign was unprecedented in its kind in club management history and it is timeless." D's comments could be related with intersubjective relations with friendship combined with their belief in Fenerbahçe elites. His explanations make it clear that the social bonds that have been created during the campaign are not strictly between the fans and the club but also between the fans. Other dynamics like friendship and family have had an important role in fans' lives. Dixon (2013: 48–50) suggests that these socializations may arise so early in some football fans' lives through interactions with family members that they

claim their affiliations and modes of support to be ‘natural’. Cultivation of the fandom became relevant through these ideas. Without intersubjectivity, the fans cannot provide their reason for donation. We see BL becoming more relatable through these complex relationships which are directed by elites.

The next set of questions I asked was “Do you think BL was successful? Do you think that your participation was essential for the club?” Through this question, I aimed to identify the perspectives of the fans about the campaign and how they perceived their donation in terms of their approach. This also served to explain how the fans perceived the relationship between the club and themselves.

E answered: “I think BL was successful overall. However, because the club spends a large amount of money on football players, the collected money was not as impactful as it would have been otherwise. It seems unlikely that this will solve the problems in the general sense unless the club puts an end to the extravagant spending. What I donated is probably quite insignificant when compared to what well-off fans donated. But I believe I did what I had to do to carry out my responsibility. My conscience is clear as this was the maximum amount I could donate, keeping my financial situation in mind.” E’s answer highlights the dynamics within the club such as financial management and inequalities in the club’s policies directed by Fenerbahçe elites. The hierarchy and elitist relations among the fans are also visible. The amount donated by the fans created some hierarchy within the ontological stance of commentators related with fan’s definition about donated capital. According to the Marxist analysis Brohm (1978) identifies sport as a manifestation of bourgeois industrial society. To Brohm, (1978: 49) “the vertical hierarchical structure of sport models the social structure of bureaucratic capitalism, with

its system of competitive selection, promotion, hierarchy and social advancement”. This is why there were some capital relations among the fans and elites during the campaign, which had structural importance in the dynamics of the campaign related towards the social status combined with the money that was donated. The direction and elite role model position had an effect on that as well.

F commented: “I don’t think it was a successful campaign. Especially the use of celebrities to boost the campaign’s popularity created a hierarchy among the fans. I would not have donated if I hadn’t had trust in Ali Koç as a president and his new policies. During the campaign, donations made by celebrities or rich people were talked about the most and this caused a hierarchy between the donors. Some people even donated to the campaign to gain popularity in the eyes of the public. Nevertheless, I donated to the campaign and I do not regret my participation.” F’s comments show us what some of the fans think about the collected money and the campaign in general. His comments also reflect that the essentiality of the campaign includes some top-down elite decisions related with the way of doing campaign which gives importance to elites rather than the management. So, this dissatisfaction appears in the statements of the donors. The emotions of the fans also reflect that while they talk about the rates of the donation.

G replied: “I think the campaign was successful. I’m not sure if they collected enough money but a lot of people donated, which helped create a sense of unity among the fans and I think this might be the start of a new relationship between the fans and the club. Fenerbahçe fans have had a lot of problems over the course of history and I think this campaign was a good idea to solve some of those problems. However, I’m not convinced that a donation campaign is a great idea considering the financial situation of the people

in Turkey. I try to support the club in different ways and I donated to this campaign as well, but to be fair, what I donated isn't enough to cover the daily wage of one footballer. I don't know if the amount of money collected in the campaign will ensure the team's success. An average Anatolian team can accomplish more with a strict budget but bigger teams don't consider that." G's statement also touches upon the newly formed bond between the fans and the club. The concern about the expenditure of the club is reiterated by D as well, drawn from the example of Anatolian clubs. He thinks that even after experiencing so many financial problems, the team is not taking new approaches to cut down the expenses. That demonstrates the intention of the fan towards the campaign include some un-trusted relation between the club management.

H stated: "BL was a success! From what I could see on TV, social media, and websites, I think the campaign went pretty well. I know some people are critical of the campaign but I don't think those critiques are coming from Fenerbahçe fans. I don't believe that anyone who loves their team would defame a campaign like BL. Fenerbahçe has a huge community and it shows itself in the campaign results. I donated an amount of money that was proportional to my own financial conditions and I believe all other donors did so, too." H's comments show a strong trust in Fenerbahçe as an accountable institution. His statements demonstrate how much he supports and likes Fenerbahçe as a football team. Berument and Yucel said, "Being a fan of a football team is a specific form of social identification. Fan-ship is an association in which a great deal of emotional significance is derived from membership (Berument, Yucel, 2005:845)." H also reflects how other participants perceive the group relationship as a communitarian way and how many Fenerbahçe fans perceive the campaign as a fandom practice. His remarks about

other Fenerbahçe fans prove that. For H, then, there is a strong group identity associated with Fenerbahçe and the campaign.

The next question was “What kind of external reasons, do you think, drove Fenerbahçe to launch the campaign? Do you feel your reasons you donated overlap with the reasons Fenerbahçe launched BL?”. With this question, I wanted to identify what reasons forced Fenerbahçe to launch the campaign and to see if these reasons were also relevant for the participants. I sought to clarify how these dynamics played out in the campaign.

Participant H said: “I think understanding the reasons for the campaign requires one to think beyond the current events. Fenerbahçe was under pressure for a long time, especially starting with the match-fixing allegations in 2011. Prior to that season, the team was ready for anything. The path to European cups was clear, the financial situation was solid. I think the allegations were political and the whole event still haunts Fenerbahçe. The club couldn’t go back to the success of previous years. The team itself is also under constant pressure. I don’t remember exactly when but in 2015, for example, the bus carrying the footballers was attacked by an armed perpetrator. The team was demoralized after that and lost out on the championship. So, I think my reasons for donating and the reasons Fenerbahçe launched the campaign overlap.” His answer shows that there is a strong, cohesive group and political identity among the fans. The elite polarization is also visible in this answer, the donor clearly indicates this position through his stance towards the campaign, which is positioned in favor of Fenerbahçe elites. Many Fenerbahçe fans also consider the 2011 match-fixing allegations to be a conspiracy by the AKP and Gülen against their club. (Irak, 2018: 406). For this reason, many fans explain their position towards the BL campaign in terms of this polarization in favor of

Fenerbahçe elites.

Moreover, F believes that, the reason the campaign was launched was not just the mismanagement of the funds on the Fenerbahçe front, but also other political and social reasons that legitimized the campaign as well as reasons related to fan identity and social constructions which is related with the elite polarizes according to their motives.

Participant I added: “Unfortunately in Turkey, when you talk about sports, it’s immediately thought to be about football. That’s not a good thing, if you ask me. This causes a lot of the fans to become hooligans and personal gains and certain groups take a hold of sports. In other words, if sports equal football, it leads to a world where certain people can exploit this situation and people doing other sports are alienized. Opposing inclusivity is the biggest problem of hooligans. If everyone only thought about their team and only about football when it comes to sports, that would prove problematic. I think this is one of the reasons politics and sports go hand in hand. Even in this campaign, people donated because they wanted to support the football team. I donated because I wanted to support the club, not just the football team.” I’s ideas show how sports culture in Turkey has parallelism with football-centric approaches related with clientelism among the patronage relations. The elite guidance on football also hand in hand with other aspect of the campaign. There are many donors who see Fenerbahçe as a football club, and the money that they give to the club is directly related to their expectations from football .

J commented: “First of all, the campaign shouldn’t be considered a temporary event. I don’t think Fenerbahçe would have launched this campaign if the financial problems weren’t serious. BL isn’t rooted in one reason or another but rather a combination of

reasons. Especially considering the post-2011 events, it is not surprising that the club is in shambles financially. However, we shouldn't ignore mismanagement on Fenerbahçe's part that led the club to where it is today. It's rumored that the club took on debt without much planning. Both financial mismanagement and political events are factors in this situation. Some fans don't see things like that but if I were to interpret the events and the campaign, I'd still interpret it the same way. I donated because I love and support Fenerbahçe. I also trust Ali Koç and his team and I think they will obtain great results for Fenerbahçe." The statements of J show us that J has an organic emotional bond with Fenerbahçe SC and his comments about politics and fan identity is related to how BL cemented the fandom identity in many Fenerbahçe fans under the influence of Fenerbahçe administration. This indicates that fandom within Fenerbahçe is related to a strong communitarian approach combined with organic evolutions guided by elites. The commentator also makes it clear how attached they are to the club. Some even consider themselves 'lovers' of football. Scores, fixtures, recruitments determine the course of their everyday lives. (Bora, 2006: 17) The sympathy harbored by the fans towards the club includes intersubjectivity as well. That collective intersubjectivity was the reason a lot of the fans decided to donate.

3.3 Comments About How They Donated

Some of the participants also commented on the donation methods. These comments show the influence of elite management on the campaign: "The reasons Fenerbahçe launched the campaign are obvious. They wanted to fix what the previous management did wrong, restructure the team, and reestablish the bond between the club and the fans. I

think Fenerbahçe should have employed a different solution but I guess they didn't have any other choice, so I donated as well. It is incredibly easy to donate via SMS and you can even donate via online bank transfer. They are also offering rewards to those that donate as well, including houses and cars. So, I think the campaign was well thought-out." These comments show that even though the participant did not fully support the campaign idea, he still chose to donate for other reasons like his fan identity. Also, his statements about how easy it is to donate reflect some relations about post-fandom identity, which demonstrates new dynamics surrounding the participation to the campaign, especially how the fandom has become deterritorialized. "The rise of football was as much an expression of the attempts of an enlightened middle class to establish new social and cultural values of rationalism as it was a reflection of technological change." (Sandvoss, 2003: 5). The technological change and new dynamics within the football fandom identity caused an evolution of fandom methodologies. The guidance of elites is also visible in the comment through the definition of the new Fenerbahçe administration.

The next question was "What do you think of Fenerbahçe's administration as an institution? Did your thoughts on Fenerbahçe as an institution affect your decision to donate?" K's answer to the question was important: "I think Fenerbahçe as an institution is being mismanaged. Both in terms of expenditures and financial policies, there have been a lot of mistakes made by the club over time. The club made some bad investments in the past and it is no wonder where they are now. However, it wouldn't be right to ignore the effect of politics in this. What brought Fenerbahçe here today is not just bad financial decisions. I made the decision to donate out of my respect and trust in the new

management. Especially the statements of the club about their desire to separate football and politics helped me make up my mind.” K’s comments show his trust in Koç’s team in managing the club as well as his lack of sympathy towards the previous president and his team. It is clear that the reason why some fans donated was their trust in the new management.

For Example, in making these points, Kádár (2013) argues conformity to intra-network communicative expectations, which he calls ‘conventions’, are necessary for a collective to smoothly ‘function’ and develop its own linguistic rituals (which may include ‘politeness’, a set of lexical terms and/or discursive topics). These modes of communication help to build ‘trust’ among group members and help to ‘network identity formation’ in the group (Cleland, Doidge, Millward & Widdop, 2018: 38). In addition, the communication strategy driven by the management positively has affected the campaign paradigm as well. There are some fans who trust the elite dynamic of the campaign which is why this trust had an impact on fan’s decision to participate in the campaign.

The comments also show how the club’s social responsibility policies led to an increase in the popularity of the campaign. The elites' influence over these campaigns are visible within the context of Fenerbahçe. Indeed, these policies even helped some donors make up their mind: “Fenerbahçe as a sports club have gone through some radical changes over time and some of these occurred under the leadership of Ali Koç. The *he-for-she* movement is the biggest example of this. In a country where football is pretty masculine, joining a movement focused on gender roles is a big step. I hope other sports clubs take it as an example. It is hard being a female fan in Turkey. These projects also helped me

make up my mind about donating. I wanted to support my club for running social responsibility projects like this. I hope Fenerbahçe isn't only remembered for its sports activities but also other projects like this. I believe Fenerbahçe's success in sports will be doubled with the effect of social responsibility projects." In this way, social responsibility projects such as *he-for-she* have affected the decision of fans guided by elites.

The *he-for-she* movement was launched to battle gender inequality in society. Fenerbahçe management explained: "We joined the *he-for-she* movement to create a clear and brave stance against gender inequality in sports. We, male or female, stand together in this. Achieving gender equality requires everyone's help. Together, as the Fenerbahçe community, we can make a difference." (fenerbahce.org, n.d.) The project, initiated by UN in 2014, helped the fans have a stronger bond with the club and made the stadiums and other spaces less male-dominant. This change in the dynamics helped the fans assume a more welcoming attitude towards female fans in Turkey. The Fenerbahçe elite's decision about *he-for-she* also helped the female integration on the club paradigm.

The impact of the campaign was not limited to the sports world, but spread to the rest of the world, just as Sweden's feminist foreign policy in favor of gender equality. One of the goals of the solidarity movement *he-for-she*, which is supported by the Swedish government as well, is to make men more actively engaged in feminist efforts. Ever since the Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven was appointed as an 'Impact Champion World Leader' by the UN Women in 2016, all male Swedish ministers have joined in making the Swedish government the only one in the world united in its support for the *he-for-she* movement. (Aggestam & Rosamond, 2016: 328) Some fans, indeed, decided to donate to BL for such social responsibility reasons, in which Fenerbahçe's participation to

he-for-she was a factor.

K's comments also show that gender equality and other social responsibility movements might create a new bond between Fenerbahçe as an institution and its fans as an good example. "Those ideas are inconsistent with Swedish notions of the welfare state, as the bastion of gender equality and egalitarianism, by introducing private health insurance and child care provisions, allowing for wealthy people to opt out of the universalist welfare system and others lacking the funds to do so." (Rosamond, 2020: 7). Understanding this statement lets us see how fandom practices surrounding BL might include social responsibility projects and movements, as well as how important it is to the major global changes in the society from local and institutional level. Thus it is evident there are some constructive social responsibilities guided by Fenerbahçe elites within the team management. This leads to the creation of a good atmosphere within the club.

The importance and impact of the elite influence can also be seen in the campaigns within the framework of elite theory. L mentioned: "Fenerbahçe's regime no doubt changed drastically with Ali Koç. However, if we were to look at it from a different point of view, Ali Koç's personal charm and charisma might have outshone the campaign. I think it's not okay to lay so much responsibility on Ali Koç. I agree that he can be the big break Fenerbahçe was waiting for but I'm skeptical of putting too much trust in him before he proves his worth. I think it might not be the best course of action for Fenerbahçe as an institution to rely so much on an individual. The club should give more importance to the bond and cooperation between the fans, the administration, and the athletes. I donated while keeping this bond and cooperation in mind. The idea of 'Fenerbahçe Republic' is tremendously important for our fandom, so I thought of my

place in this republic and my responsibilities to the club while thinking about donating. I hope BL will be beneficial to the club's future." L's concerns about Ali Koç's charisma and elite influence becoming the priority over the institutional management were visible in his comments. Personal motivation of L for donation took more of a communitarian approach, focusing on the bond between the fans and the institutional elites. His mention of 'Fenerbahçe Republic' reflects this communitarian ideology under the construction of group reality.

The term 'Fenerbahçe Republic' refers to Fenerbahçe as an independent institution. "What is meant by this phrase is the vastness of love for Fenerbahçe and how that love is embedded in the hearts of the fans." (Deringör, Aydinlik, 2015). Ali Koç, therefore, should not replace Fenerbahçe as an institution. Moreover, L mentions 'republic', which indicates the 'independency' of the club. However, that implies that the fans, the players, and the club management all must take on responsibility to achieve that independency.

The motto 'Fenerbahçe Republic' indicates the political nature of the club as well. That is also why there are some conspiracy theories about Fenerbahçe secretly being an opposition group. Some con-Fenerbahçe statements and even statements by the other institutional elites and representatives suggest this. Some newspapers in Turkey, for example, released some fake news regarding Fenerbahçe, which led to a popular culture clash. There also exists some fake claims that suggest Ali Koç will enter politics in the future. Con-Fenerbahçe sources mention "lobbying": "Whenever we lend an ear to a lobby, whenever they mention the failures of CHP [main oppositional party in Turkey], they also mention Fenerbahçe's president, Ali Koç. These rumors are not even being secretive anymore, some CHP members openly say that Koç will be a presidential

candidate in the future.” (Övür, Sabah, 2020). This is because there is an important elite identity construction at stake there. Moreover, in this context, stigmatization and problematic statements combined with elite perspectives have occurred.

This led me to my next question: “Why and how do you think Fenerbahçe became a topic in popular cultural debates? How does Fenerbahçe’s image play out in politics currently? Do you think the campaign reinforced this idea?” The participants’ answers exhibit the connection between politics and football in Turkey in the context of Fenerbahçe and how that connection plays out. Their comments also reflect how the donors themselves legitimized donating to the campaign in their own mind.

M answered: “One of the reasons Fenerbahçe became a political item is its ideological footsteps. Fenerbahçe was always advocating for order and an independent management. These ideals have been received as threatening by other football fans, which creates a following for being an anti-Fenerbahçe fan in Turkish football. Politics and football are intertwined in Turkey and being anti-Fenerbahçe can earn you some votes in politics too. The match-fixing allegations of 2011, Fenerbahçe fans’ stance on Gezi Park protests of 2013 and the shooting of Fenerbahçe’s bus all result from this concentric relation between politics and football. Fenerbahçe, however, always tried to distance itself from politics and the statements of the presidents prove this. The participation of the fans to the BL campaign is just an accumulation of all these facts along with the policies of the Fenerbahçe management and it is no wonder that a lot of the fans chose to donate. Using such mottos like ‘Fenerbahçe Republic’ and ‘independent Fenerbahçe’ is the biggest indicator of this.” His explanation shows how fandom identity is constructed in a way to reflect the institutional dynamics in the club. The stances and reflections of the club also

influence the fans ontological approach towards the fandom as well.

Combined with these dynamics, however, the individual ontological aspects might also lead to different virtually fandom types with the effects of institutional elites of the club. For example; McManus suggests (2012: 2): “Virtual space, I suggest, is produced dialectically, out of an opposition with 'actual' space: social processes like fandom emerge through how individuals and communities mediate between the virtual and the actual, between determined and potential notions of how to be fans.” Moreover, the cosmopolitan nature of the football clubs of Istanbul proves that. It is essential to know that combining the football fandom with different dynamics and with the notion of institutional dynamics gives us the social identity of the fans which is proven to elite dynamics and its relation with fans.

There are other explanations to reflect the dynamics of the fandom outside of the politics within a different context as well. For example; M explains: “I think the claims about Fenerbahçe being a political figure or a tool are hyperbolic and simply unrealistic. Yes, there have been some incidents in the past but that doesn't mean Fenerbahçe has a unique, marginal place in Turkish football. Especially in the case of the football teams from Istanbul, the clubs have wildly differing fan identities and every team has hooligans in their fanbase. If you ask me, I don't believe there is a political reason for the participation to BL. I myself donated but not because of politics.” His statements reflect his/her stance against political relations of the fandom. The role of fandom and his identity are situated far away from political ideas and descriptions. So that is important to understand fandom within different approaches.

Moreover, every football team in Turkey, especially the Istanbul teams, has their own dynamics and connections. So that it is important to figure out these dynamics within its own essence and type affects towards the fandom. “Each of the Istanbul teams has its own stereotype. Galatasaray, the oldest, is associated with the élite Ottoman-era Galatasaray Lycée. Fenerbahçe has the biggest budget and the most illustrious fan base (it includes Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Nobel Laureate Orhan Pamuk).” (Batuman, 2012: 687). Because of that the fans can affect the fandom, too. The plural nature of the fandom can create different types of fandom as well.

The cosmopolitan nature of the football clubs was evident in the Istanbul context, where fans are as diverse as it gets. However, there exist some incidents or tragedies that had a bigger impact on Fenerbahçe fans overall and on the construction of fandom/fan identity. Such incidents cause some common belief systems among the fans in the stadiums, during games and other deterritorial events. “As the self-reflection in football fandom prestructures membership of fan communities, these communities are themselves increasingly unbound of physical space and therefore deterritorialized.” (Sandvoss, 2003:92). Few of these mentioned incidents, some of which were political, affected participation in BL as well.

Also, football fandom in Turkey has multiple relations among the fans that’s why there different motivation might affect the dynamics of BL campaign paradigm. Participant A stated: “Everything is interconnected with politics in Turkey and football is no exception. It is a fact regardless of how anyone feels about it. This became even more evident during Gezi Protests in 2013, when fans of different football clubs gathered under the name ‘Istanbul United’ to oppose the government. Fenerbahçe fans were also a part of this

group and they fought for their ideals both on the streets and in the stadiums during games. Ali Ismail Korkmaz, for instance, a 19-year-old student who was killed by the police during the protests, left a deep mark in Fenerbahçe. The fans composed anthems in his memory and the Fenerbahçe president at the time publicly voiced his contentment about these anthems. Football and politics should go hand in hand when it comes to events and incidents like this to make sure there is enough public awareness and to ensure the people understand what is going on currently in the country. Moreover, the fact that hotels owned by the Koç family harbored protesters during the Gezi Protests was used by the pro-government media to further politicize Fenerbahçe. Ultimately, keeping all these political reasons in mind, I decided to donate to BL as a fan.” According to A, the political stance a fan assumes plays a role in his decision to whether or not to donate to BL. It is evident from A’s statements that politicization and polarization of football has had a strong impact on how fan identities and fandom practices are constructed.

3.4 Concluding Remarks

To sum up, it is possible to say that the fans’ perspectives on the campaign should be considered on an individualistic basis affected by the elites of supporters’ club. When we inspect fans’ individual stances, there are various factors that affected their choices to donate to BL. This means that it would not be correct to assume the motivation for donation was resulting simply from an elite guided stance, but it is a mix of both ontological and elite guided stances which provide the emotion of the fans. “Emotions are generally thought to be subjective, cognitive experiences that are characterized by biological, psychological, and physiological expressions and reactions (Barbalet, 2001;

Katz, 1999; Prinz, 2004; Ten Houten, 1996) that are understood as situational, interactional, and temporally situated (Denzin, 1984; Kemper, 1978; Shott, 1979).” (Cleland et al, 2018: 34). So the BL campaign affects fans according to their own decisions.

It is important to understand how individuals created a bond within institutional dynamics. Actions, Cleland et al (2018: 132) states, are isolated from neither each other nor other institutional systems that influence behavior. They are continually shaped, constrained, and distorted by network structures. Because of this, the institutional events and incidents interact with the intersubjective relations among the fans and this intersubjectivity then turns into fandom practice. The reasons behind the ontological stance of a fan also affects participation to the campaign, as this stance is also a reflection of the relational issues between the institutions and their individual dynamics.

The reason of the ontological stance has a constructive factor for or against the campaign because the ontological stance of the fan is a constructive and determinant factor within the BL campaign. The ontological stance also reflects the relational issues between the institutions and their individual dynamic. Cleland, Doidge, Millward and Widdop (2018: 4) report, according to Crossley (2011: 23), relations are real and the social world comprises actors-in-relation and for King (2012: 17), ‘society consists of human social relations which are the basis of even the most powerful associations’. Therefore, the thesis tried to form a connection between the institutional dynamics of the club like elites and other administrative members and also the participants’ approach to BL within their communitarian sense and belongings.

Cleland, Doidge, Millward and Widdop (2018: 59) explain that football rituals allow the fans to meet and interact with each other in a number of spaces, such as stadiums, supporters' clubs, bars, online. They provide 'foci' where fans can meet and 'top up' their beliefs in the movements' aims and give the avoidance of disillusionment that is needed for continued action. Working utopias provide places where the movement's culture is reformed and that 'people visit them in order to learn how to practice differently: how to perceive, think and act' in relation to other members of the community (Crossley, 1999: 817). The fact that the elites of Fenerbahçe knew this reality and constructed the BL campaign to create a dilemma within the club is aimed at establishing a group coherence.

According to my findings, then, these relations created the two sides of relationality. One of them is the person who belongs and feels involved with the communitarian dynamics in the context of BL and the other is the person who could not be involved, one way or the other. This is because the performance of the BL campaign can be explained in two ways: "However, these boundaries are culturally constructed through networks of human relations given that outsiders from beyond the elastic boundaries are occasionally allowed to join the group of 'real' traditional fans." (Cleland, Doidge, Millward & Widdop, 2018: 42). Accordingly, the dynamics and dichotomies of this relational side led to different comments about the campaign. Also, to show how elite dynamics affect the way of campaign.

The findings of the interviews have been analyzed in the context of the transformation of the fandom within a multiple extent and that fandom under the influence of the clubs combined with elite decisions. This reflects how some technological and societal changes

have driven the fans to different positionalities related with their identity and emotional attachment to the club and how these dynamics are more understandable through elites. Moreover, the analysis of the interviews reflects these positionalities in a larger context according to ontological views of the fans. Their trust in the elites related to the ontological attachment of the BL participants is also visible in the study. That is why the role of the micro-elite decisions lead us to understand the variables of the interviews within a more complex relational way. This complexity could be understood with the effects of globalization, global-economic and social transformation and how these transformations affect the beliefs of the fans within the context of the BL campaign.

4. Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I mainly aim to describe Fenerbahçe's BL campaign and its relation with club administrative elites. Thesis started off by giving a short account of the history of football and how modern football spread across the world with the industrial revolution, which created free time for people to enjoy doing sports. Shortly after that, football became commodified, which led to some social exclusion and inclusion: "The relationship of football's advanced commodification to the possible social exclusion of supporters has generated some strong critical commentaries (Conn, 1998, 2004; McGill, 2002; Wagg, 2004)." (Giulianotti, 2005: 398). The social inclusion or exclusion is becoming more evident as the influence of elites is understood.

To understand the context of BL, the thesis moved on to identifying the genealogy of Turkish football. This elite dynamic and effects analysis allowed us to understand how

football evolved in Turkey through relational aspects and clashes of the elites over the course of history. Polarization also has had an important role to play in this aspect. Yildirim (2019: 240) states that politicians, parliamentary representatives, and other state officials also benefit from their relationship with football clubs. Football clubs can command the masses' attention and tend to have the ability to shape public opinion. So that the dynamics of the fandom had been affected by these relations.

With that, the thesis proceeded to delve into the elite dynamics of Fenerbahçe Sports Club itself. Thesis analyzed Fenerbahçe's position in Turkish football, along with its function during elite effect of football in Turkey under the notion of BL campaign. Thesis investigated if the stigmatization might have had a role in the construction of fandom and how ontological fandom approaches affected participation to BL. Nuhurat (2018: 399) reports that fans of Fenerbahçe deliberately shop at the club's official merchandise store, Fenerium, to support the club, which shows Fenerbahçe's role in the development of endüstriyel futbol [EN. 'industrial football']. Some of Nuhurat's interlocutors even described Fenerbahçe's lifestyle as endüstriyel football itself. Through these dynamics, the thesis aimed to stratify the relational approach to how Fenerbahçe as an institution evolved within the elite effect under the Turkish Football context, what kind of dynamics was a reason for that construction and how the stigmatization of Fenerbahçe occurred. Bearing all these facts in mind, was the BL campaign a culmination of such relations?

Related to this, the thesis also aimed to identify the transformation of fandom over time and space. Especially the interaction between the fans and new technologies, like the internet or television, and the social effects this interaction caused was investigated in this paper. "Allied with the growth of new forms of communication, such as internet forums

and social networking sites like Facebook, the result is a pushing and pulling of the group identity away from earlier markers such as geography or family ties and toward one based on a bricolage of symbols and images, with the internet as the virtual space where assemblage often takes place.” (McManus, 2013: 21). Keeping this in mind, the thesis tried to evaluate the construction of post-fandom and how BL evolved with such relations.

To understand the evolution of Turkish football fandom, Fenerbahçe, elite dynamics and fandom, the thesis used the elite theory, which allowed to explain the power and patronage relations, polarization and how these relations are embedded in the football landscape. In the analysis section, the thesis tried to explain the institutional dynamics of Fenerbahçe and how the club used various strategies, including TV shows, to increase participation in the campaign. Thesis analyzed comments made by users online to illustrate how fans’ involvement (or the lack thereof) in the institutional and elite guided dynamics. Finally, the thesis conducted semi-structured interviews with BL donors, who participated in BL with fandom and communitarian ideologies in mind constructed by Fenerbahçe elites. The aim of this thesis was to clarify the link between institutional and elite guided positions and how individuals created a different relation based on various dynamics with Fenerbahçe as a team under the specific context of the BL campaign.

The findings of the research reflect the relational approach of the clubs and fans relations between club elites. This relational approach was also visible in the BL campaign. The transformations of the society in general in the context of economic and social globalizations had a different effect on the unions within a different relationality. The BL campaign, therefore, reflects the position of Fenerbahçe’s institutionality, related with

some macro-level transformations in Turkey, especially within the context of Turkey's elite dynamics. The club's sociological position of elites leads to narrated discourses of the BL campaign. Finally, these narrations and events have affected the role of the individual's ontological stance within the frame of the BL campaign. That is why that thesis reflects how the individuals donated to the campaign without getting any tangible return combined with globalization and elite affect.

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