

The Nascent March of “New-Generation” Food Initiatives in the Emerging Struggle for Food Sovereignty in Turkey

by

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The Nascent March of “New-Generation” Food Initiatives in the Emerging Struggle for
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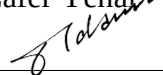
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Candaş'ımıza...

To our beloved Candaş and all the best that is yet to come...

ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the urban collective ecological food initiatives that have been increasing in number with considerable momentum in the last three years. It is based on fieldwork of one and a half years that consists of participant observation and in-depth interviews with prosumers and producers/producer organizations in the network of these initiatives. This research focuses on “new-generation” consumer food cooperatives and identifies their differences from other alternatives as follows: 1) the alternative and ecological production, consumption, and distribution relations of food they attempt to develop, 2) the horizontal and participatory organizational models they try to build. It indicates their concrete transformative practices and direct trust-based relations with small farmers and producer organizations. This dissertation suggests that they have potential to bring positive outcomes for food sovereignty in today’s pressuring corporate food regime, if they expand cooperation with various actors to impact on the state’s agri-food policies. Their consideration of food and seeds as comprising of socio-economic, ecological, and political relations and their definition of healthy food as a necessity for all, build their commoning politics of food, which also contribute to the opening of an alternative public space for citizens to engage in the emerging struggle of food sovereignty in Turkey. This study also examines alternative municipal agri-food projects. It suggests that local governments also have potential for contributing to alternative agri-food relations if they support ecological production and solidarity for diverse actors, including prosumer initiatives, in the organization of production, distribution, and consumption of food with a food sovereignty perspective.

Keywords: Ecological Consumer Food Cooperatives, Alternative Food Initiatives, Food Sovereignty, Alternative Municipal Agri-Food Projects, Alternative Public Space, Food as Commons.

ÖZETÇE

Türkiye’de Gelişmekte Olan “Yeni Nesil” Gıda İnisiyatiflerinin Yeni Doğan Gıda Egemenliği Mücadelesindeki İlerleyişi

İrem Soysal Al

Sosyoloji, Doktora, 9 Kasım 2020

Bu tez sayıları son üç senedir ciddi bir ivme ile artan kentli kolektif ekolojik gıda inisiyatiflerini incelemektedir. Bir buçuk senelik katılımcı gözlem ile bu inisiyatiflerin ağında yer alan üreticiler, üreticiler ve üretici örgütlenmeleri ile yapılan derinlemesine görüşmelerden oluşan bir saha araştırmasına dayanmaktadır. Araştırma, 1) geliştirmeye çalıştığı alternatif ve ekolojik gıda üretimi, tüketimi ve dağıtım ilişkileri, 2) inşa etmeye çalıştığı yatay ve katılımcı örgütlenme modelleri ile diğer “alternatif”lerden ayırttığı “yeni nesil” gıda tüketim kooperatiflerine odaklanmaktadır. Bu kooperatiflerin gerçekleştirdiği somut dönüştürücü pratikler ile üreticilerle kurdukları doğrudan ve güven temelli ilişkileri ortaya koymaktadır. Tez, bu kooperatiflerin çeşitli aktörlerle işbirliği içerisindeki ağsal büyümesinin günümüzde şirket egemenliğiyle şekillenen gıda rejimine alternatif ve halkların gıda egemenliği için olumlu etkileri olacak bir potansiyel taşıdığını savunmaktadır. Tohumun ve gıdanın bir takım sosyo-ekonomik, ekolojik ve politik ilişkiler barındırdığını ve sağlıklı gıdanın herkes için bir ihtiyaç olduğunu savunan müşterekler perspektifiyle bu kooperatiflerin yurttaşları gıda egemenliği hareketinde aktör olmaya davet eden alternatif bir kamunun inşasına katkıda bulunduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Bu çalışma belediyelerin alternatif gıda-tarım projelerini de irdelemektedir. Gıdanın üretimi, tüketimi ve dağıtımının organizasyonunda gıda egemenliği perspektifi ile, ekolojik üretimi ve üretici inisiyatifleri dahil birçok aktörün dayanışmasını destekleyen yerel yönetim projelerinin de önemli bir potansiyel taşıdığına işaret etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ekolojik Gıda Tüketim Kooperatifleri, Alternatif Gıda İnisiyatifleri, Gıda Egemenliği, Belediyelerin Alternatif Gıda-Tarım Projeleri, Alternatif Kamusal Alan, Gıdanın Müşterekliği.

TEŞEKKÜR

Tez çalışmam ve doktora süresince yanımda olan, araştırmama katkı sunan, tüm eğitim hayatım boyunca bana emek harcayan, ismini burada anamadığım sayısız kişi var. Tüm bu güzel insanlara teşekkürü bir borç bilirim. Özellikle, saha araştırmam sürecinde Türkiye'nin çeşitli köylerine ulaşmamda yardımcı olan, tezi yazarken bana daha verimli bir çalışma ortamı sağlamak için elinden gelen her şeyi yapan, tezim hakkında her an iyi bir dinleyici olan, en büyük destekçim eşim Alper Al'a sonsuz teşekkür ederim. Hayatımın her aşamasında yanımda yer alan anneme, babama ve ablama da şükranlarımı borçluyum. Hamilelik süreciyle birleşen tez yazım sürecinde de sağlıklı beslenmemden feragat etmeden işime odaklanmamı sağlayan aileme; Fatma ve Ayhan Soysal'a, Birnur ve Faruk Al'a tüm destekleri için çok teşekkürler. Onlar olmadan bu tezi bitirmem mümkün olmayacaktı. Tek başıma bilgisayar başında geçirdiğim saatler boyunca ve pandeminin zorlu günlerinde varlıklarıyla beni mutlu eden kedilerime de can yoldaşı oldukları için müteşekkirim.

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Son olarak, doktora sürecinde ve saha çalışmam boyunca maddi ve manevi desteğini hep hissettiren enstitüme ve lisans, yüksek lisans ve doktora eğitimim boyunca akademik kariyerimi destekleyen, bursiyeri olduğum TÜBİTAK'a çok teşekkür ederim.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	xv
List of Figures	xvi
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1. The Rising Search for Alternatives in Turkey during the 2000s	2
1.2. Research Design.....	6
1.2.1. <i>The Alternatives Around Food Sovereignty</i>	6
1.2.2. <i>The Main Research Questions and the Conceptual Framework of the Thesis</i>	8
1.2.3. <i>Methodology</i>	17
1.3. The Contribution of This Research	20
1.4. Outline of Chapters	22
Chapter 2: Peasant and Consumer Movements in the Current Food Regime with a Focus on Food Sovereignty & Alternative Food Networks	25
2.1. Food Regime Analysis and the Current Food Regime.....	25
2.1.1. <i>The Critical Discussion on the Current Food Regime</i>	27
2.2. The Global Rise of Peasant Movements	33
2.3. Food Sovereignty Movement and the Critical Literature on Food Sovereignty.....	35
2.3.1. <i>Origins of the Food Sovereignty Movement</i>	35
2.3.2. <i>The Meaning and the Ontology of Food Sovereignty</i>	36
2.3.3. <i>The Place of Locality, Long-Distance Trade, and Agro-Ecology in the Food Sovereignty Movement</i>	38
2.3.4. <i>The Strategic Role of Urban Agriculture and Urban Food Initiatives for the Food Sovereignty</i>	40

2.3.5. <i>The Role of States in the Construction of Food Sovereignty</i>	41
2.3.6. <i>The Relationship of Food Sovereignty with Right to Foods and the Rights of Peasants</i>	41
2.3.7. <i>The Promising Character of Food Sovereignty Despite the Challenging Context of Corporate Food Regime and Its Own Contradictions and Dilemmas</i>	43
2.4. <i>The Rise of Consumer Movements</i>	45
2.4.1. <i>Food Justice Movement</i>	45
2.4.2. <i>Fair Trade Movement</i>	46
2.4.3. <i>Slow Food Movement</i>	47
2.4.4. <i>The Organic and Post-Organic Food Movements</i>	48
2.5. <i>Alternative Food Market</i>	50
2.5.1. <i>Critical Literature on Alternative Food Initiatives</i>	52
2.5.2. <i>Civic Food Networks: The Rising Alternative Food Initiatives of the Last Decades</i>	53
2.5.2.1. <i>Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) Groups</i>	54
2.5.2.2. <i>Civic Consumer-Led Food Cooperatives</i>	57
2.5.3. <i>Discussion of AFNs in Different Country Settings</i>	58
2.5.3.1. <i>AFNs in North and South American Context: The USA, Canada, Brazil</i>	58
2.5.3.2. <i>AFNs in the European Context: France and Spain</i>	60

2.5.3.3. <i>Evaluation</i>	61
2.6. <i>Conclusion</i>	61
Chapter 3: The Transformation of Agricultural Policies and Agri-Food Relations in Turkey from a Socio-Economical and Ecological Perspective	64
3.1. The Agricultural Transformation in Turkey since the 1980s	64
3.1.1. <i>Turkish Agriculture between 1980 and 1999</i>	65
3.1.2. <i>Rural Transformation and the Changes in the Relations of Production</i>	69
3.1.2.1. <i>The Transformation of the Relations of Agricultural production after 1980: The Rise of International Agribusinesses and Supermarketization</i>	69
3.1.2.2. <i>The Transformation of the Relations of Agricultural Production after 1980: Focus on the Rise of Contract-Farming</i>	80
3.2. Agricultural Politics in Turkey since 2000	86
3.2.1. <i>Change of State Support Policies after the ARIP</i>	86
3.2.2. <i>Privatization and Defunctionalization of SEEs and UASCs and the Rising Sovereignty of Corporations</i>	91
3.2.2.1. <i>The Transformation of UASCs since the 2000s</i>	98
3.2.2.2. <i>Evaluation of the Decline of the Public Management of Agriculture</i>	104
3.3. The Integration of Agriculture and Industry through Legal Regulations and Laws since the 2000s and the Growth of the Agri-Food Capital	104
3.3.1. <i>The Law of Seed and the Regulation on the Registration, Production, and Marketing of Local Varieties</i>	108

3.3.2. Regulations on GMO and the National Biosafety Law	112
3.3.3. The Metropolitan Law	115
3.3.4. Draft Bill for Changing the Law on the Regulation of Foodstuff and Temporary Tanzim Sales	117
3.3.5. The Organic Agriculture Law	123
3.4. Conclusion	126
Chapter 4: Trusting an Alternative among Plural Alternatives in the (Post)organic Food Market in Turkey: The Recent Rise of Ecological Food Cooperatives and Communities in Turkey as Alternative Collective and Civic Initiatives.....	
130	130
4.1. The Rise of (Post)organic Movements in Turkey: Collective Urban Food Initiatives and Consumer-led Ecological Food Initiatives.....	131
4.1.1. The Rise of Organic and Post-Organic Food Actors in Turkey	131
4.1.2. Urban Collective Food Initiatives as Alternative Food Initiatives in Turkey.....	137
4.1.3. Food Communities and Cooperatives in Turkey from a Comparative Perspective	138
4.1.3.1. General Picture of Consumer Food Cooperatives and Communities in Turkey	138
4.1.3.2. Focus on Consumer-led Ecological and Participative Food Cooperatives in İstanbul	143
4.1.3.3. Ecological Food Communities in Turkey from a Comparative Perspective	154

4.2. Contextualizing the Different Alternative Food Channels within the Plurality of Organic and Post-organic Food Actors in Turkey.....	159
4.2.1. <i>How Do “Alternatives” Build Trust in an Atmosphere of Risk and Anxiety?</i>	162
4.2.2. <i>Searching for Hope, or Pessimism of Commoditized Solutions?</i>	166
4.3. Conclusion	168
Chapter 5: Challenging Conditions of Ecological Producers and the Local Struggle of Their Cooperatives & Collective Efforts of New-Generation Consumer Food Cooperatives for Building Alternative Agri-food Relations: Kadıköy Coop Case	171
5.1. Kadıköy Cooperative as a New-Generation Urban Consumer Food Cooperative: The Ambition of Building Alternative Agri-food Relations in a Solidary Network.....	174
5.2. The Producers in the Network of Urban Ecological Consumer Food Cooperatives...	187
5.2.1. <i>Individual Ecological Producers</i>	187
5.2.2. <i>Mixed Cooperative Organizations in the Network of Ecological Consumer Food Initiatives</i>	205
5.2.2.1. <i>Hopa Tea Cooperative (Hopaçay Cooperative)</i>	206
5.2.2.2. <i>Sındı Village Agricultural Development Cooperative</i>	221
5.3. Conclusion	226
Chapter 6: Ecological Female Producer Organizations in the Network of Urban Consumer Food Initiatives	229
6.1. Gender Perspective on Agroecology, Food Sovereignty, and Small-Scale Female Producers.....	229

6.2. Transforming Ecological Experiences of Female Producer Organizations.....	232
6.2.1. <i>The Case of Boğatepe Environment and Life Association in Kars</i>	233
6.2.2. <i>The Case of GİRKAD in Artvin</i>	236
6.2.3. <i>The Case of Nusrathı Village Culture and Tourism Association in Çanakkale</i>	237
6.2.4. <i>Yırca Female Collective (Yırca Soap House)</i>	240
6.2.5. <i>Devrek Güneşi Cooperative (Devrek Sun Cooperative)</i>	244
6.3. Conclusion.....	245
Chapter 7: Municipal Governments as Local Models for Building Alternative Agri-Food Policies and Constructing Alternative Public Space: Cases of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, Seferihisar Municipality, and Ovacık Municipality and Cooperatives	249
7.1. The Literature on Public Space and Alternative Public Space and the Role of Rural Localities	253
7.2. The Role of Local Governments in the Construction of Alternative Agri-Food Relations from within an Alternative Public Sphere.....	256
7.2.1. <i>İzmir Metropolitan Municipality and Tire Milk Cooperative Case</i>	257
7.2.2. <i>The Case of Ovacık Municipality and Ovacık Cooperatives</i>	262
7.2.3. <i>Seferihisar Municipality's Alternative Agri-Food Project</i>	272
7.3. Conclusion	284

Chapter 8: New-Generation Urban Ecological Food Initiatives: The Construction of Alternative Public Space by Building Alternative Organizational Models & Framing Food and Seeds as Commons.....	288
8.1. Traditional Cooperatives in Turkey and the Global Search of Alternative Cooperative Structures.....	291
8.2. Kadıköy Cooperative as a New-Generation Cooperative Case: Alternative Organizational Model and the Construction of Alternative Public Space	297
<i>8.2.1. Kadıköy Cooperative as a New-Generation Consumer Food Cooperative with an Alternative Organizational Model</i>	<i>297</i>
<i>8.2.2. Kadıköy Cooperative as a New-Generation Consumer Food Cooperative with Alternative Political Rationality and the Construction of Alternative Public Space</i>	<i>319</i>
8.3. Commons Literature and the Framing of Food and Seeds as Commons by New-Generation Urban Food Consumers and Local Governments	328
<i>8.3.1. Critical Review of the Literature on Commons</i>	<i>328</i>
<i>8.3.2. Framing of Commons and Commoning of Food in New-Generation Urban Food Cooperatives</i>	<i>335</i>
<i>8.3.3. Seed Politics and the Role of Varying Ecological Actors in Commoning Seeds</i>	<i>340</i>
<i>8.3.4. Alternative Food Initiatives and Local Governments as Crucial Actors to Defend Urban and Rural Commons.....</i>	<i>351</i>
Chapter 9: Conclusion.....	355

9.1. Dissertation Summary and Findings	355
9.2. Concluding Remarks on the Limitations, Risks, and the Potentiality of the Recent Wave of Cooperatives and Municipal Agri-Food Projects in Turkey.....	365
Bibliography	371



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Turkish Companies and the Share of Their Foreign Partners in Years.....	76
Table 2. Agricultural Supports 2002-2005 (US\$ Millions)	88
Table 3. Agricultural Commoditization and the Empowerment of the Capital in the Agri-Food Industry through Legal Regulations and Laws in the 2000s.....	107
Table 4. The Share of the Population of Province/District Centers and Towns/Villages in the Total Population, 2012-2019.....	115
Table 5. Population, Number of Districts, Towns, Villages, 2007-2019	116
Table 6. An Example of Pricing in the Supply Chain in Turkey: The Example of Potatoes	121
Table 7. The Share of Farmer's Gate Prices in the Retail Price by Year (%) for Potatoes	122
Table 8. UK's Farmer's Gate Share in the Consumer Price by Year (%) for Potatoes	123
Table 9. The Ideal-Typical Categorization of the Main Actors in the Organic and Post-Organic Market in Turkey.....	134

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Change in the Volume of Wet Tea (Thousand Tons) in Years Purchased by the Private Sector and ÇAYKUR.....	97
Figure 2. The Supply Chain of Hazelnut.....	102
Figure 3. Ecological Map of Turkey	135
Figure 4. Collective Ecological Food Actors: Focus on Awareness Actors and Consumer-Led Collective Initiatives (Food Communities and Consumer Food Cooperatives) in İstanbul and Producer Organizations in Their Network	142
Figure 5. The Facebook Post of Kadıköy Coop: Gezi spirit remains	322
Figure 6. Photo Taken During the Kaz Dağları (İda Mountains) Resistance	352

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Since the 1980s, globally, we have been witnessing neoliberal agri-food policies such as the decrease in agricultural supports, privatization of state-owned enterprises, and the favoring of transnational agribusinesses to the detriment of small farmers, human health, and ecology (McMichael, 2013). At the same time as a steep rise in the industrialization and corporatization of food production, we are also witnessing organic and post-organic movements, emerging as reactions to the vulnerabilities that the current food regime creates for consumers, small producers, and ecology.

Organic agriculture rose as a movement in the late 1960s in the USA and has been expanding globally, with organic certification now as a regulatory structure (Goodman and Goodman, 2007). The actors of the “post-organic” movement have been criticizing the organic movement for neglecting many social and ethical processes in the production and consumption of food. They blame the movement for ignoring fair labor relations and the affordability of healthy foods, concentrating only on the marketing of niche foods and the use of “allowable inputs” (Goodman and Goodman, 2007). The certification system is criticized for increasing dependence on organic agribusinesses and third-party certification companies while creating financial and bureaucratic obstacles for small-scale farmers. Therefore, post-organic food actors such as farmers’ markets, (online) farm shops, and food cooperatives have been emerging as other alternatives, arguing that the organic movement has stalled in its transformative potential. These actors claim to empower small-scale ecological farming and local food chains without requiring organic certification. They challenge the “food from nowhere” by emphasizing the importance of “a place-based form of agro-ecology” (McMichael, 2013, p. 156).

Turkey has been influenced by these global dynamics. Hence, there is a rise in the “search for alternatives” in Turkey, too, regarding food consumption, production, and distribution, by different actors with various economic, health-related, ecological, ethical, and political motivations.

1.1. The Rising Search for Alternatives in Turkey during the 2000s

In Turkey, neoliberal agricultural policies were increasingly introduced throughout the 1980s and embraced more visibly after the 2001 economic crisis and the approval of the Agrarian Reform Implementation Project (ARIP). Since the mid-1990s, corporate sovereignty in the food sector has incrementally been present through national and transnational corporations’ partnerships and national brands’ acquisition by transnational companies. The corporations have dominated the food and agricultural sector, especially since the 2000s, from processed and frozen food to agricultural inputs. Corporate food sovereignty has gone hand in hand with the supermarketization processes (Keyder and Yenal, 2013). The rise of hypermarkets, supermarkets, and discount markets in Turkey accelerated considerably in the 2000s. It resulted in the dependence of consumers on these retail outlets and the consumption of packaged foods. Therefore, this industrial food context increased consumers’ exposure to pesticides, food colorants, additives, food preservation agents, and their concerns about their health as a result. Food-related diseases and expert discourses on food hazards deepened food anxiety among consumers and enhanced public discussions on food and agriculture (Soysal Al, 2017).

This food anxiety has grown the search for healthy food alternatives among consumers, primarily organic products. Organic food production in Turkey more than quintupled, from the enactment of the Organic Agriculture Law in 2004 to 2017, reaching nearly 1.6 million tons (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2019), along with the state’s support for organic agriculture and the increasing consumer demand. To widen the domestic organic market in terms of size, quality, and variety, the Buğday Association, in collaboration with other

stakeholders, started an open-air organic farmers' market in İstanbul in June 2006, which reached at peak, 16 organic farmers' markets in Turkey. However, the organic market mostly remained export-oriented and accessible only to Turkey's middle and upper classes.¹

Consumers' search for healthy food alternatives thus led to the adoption of various food strategies by various social classes. The economically privileged consumers tended to buy certified organic food and "natural products" from private farms to protect themselves and their families from conventional food hazards. Consumers with lower incomes have developed different strategies of minimizing their family's exposure to the detrimental effects of conventional foods, such as asking their parents and relatives to bring foods from home villages or buying "natural" food from neighborhood bazaars. Some other consumers, who also have political concerns like protecting ecology and small-scale farmers and increasing the access of broader populations to healthy food, started to get organized in the cities.

The laws and regulations enacted in the 2000s, such as the Seed Law, Biosafety Law, Sugar Law, Tobacco Law, alongside transformations within the privatization of state economic enterprises and de-functionalization of cooperative unions, left small farmers alone in the market to face powerful corporations and agribusinesses. This context that has rendered small-scale farmers vulnerable in the landscape of industrial agri-food relations increased public reactions and farmers' need for alternative relations of food production and distribution. More and more consumers have become politically concerned about landrace seeds, GMO threat, and small farmers' production conditions. All these transformations in Turkish agri-food politics are crucial factors in the rise of civic collective and ecological food initiatives in Turkey in recent years. They aim to build production, consumption, and distribution relations that are an alternative to conventional food relations by offering their own trust and surveillance

¹ Although organic food production in Turkey rose significantly, the domestic per capita consumption of organic food in Turkey was only 1 Euro in 2014. It was 118 Euros in France, 122 Euros in the USA, and 237 Euros in Sweden in 2017 (Willer and Lernoud, 2019).

mechanisms through direct relationships. They also attempt to provide alternatives to certified organic food to make healthy food accessible to a larger population without creating another financial and bureaucratic burden for small farmers with the certification requirement.

In addition to the transformations in the agri-food sector in Turkey, Turkey's general political context has impacted the rise of searching alternatives with ethical, political, and health-related concerns. Social movements have shaped the emergence of civic, ecological consumer food initiatives in Turkey. For instance, between 2004 and 2010, several political groups and leftist organizations gathered around the coalition of "No to GMO," which increased the popularity of discussions around seeds in public (Nizam and Yenal, 2020). This coalition opposed the 2006 Seed Law and supported other ecological movements against mining and power plant projects, catalyzing the reaction and awareness about growing food and environmental hazards in Turkey in the 2000s.

The political context that emerged during and after the Gezi Resistance in June 2013 also has a significant effect on the emergence of civic collective consumer food initiatives in Turkey. The experience of the collective division of labor and democratic discussion in Gezi Park and the solidarity groups and forums that emerged in neighborhoods after Gezi created a synergy for continuing horizontal and participative platforms around a daily and common concern such as food. Most of the collective ecological food initiatives, especially the "new-generation" consumer food cooperatives, that emerged in the last five years relate their intellectual foundations to their Gezi experience. Urban citizens have increasingly been involved in these initiatives to build a public space around food in their localities. It is because the state has cracked down on mass protests after the Gezi Resistance and left very little space for citizens to voice their concerns. Thus, these collective civic alternatives have emerged not only because of citizens' increasing concerns about food risks but also due to their wish to act for changing the current agri-food order and voicing their concerns in public about many issues

from seed politics to food hazards and ecological destruction. The acute food crises have been accompanied by environmental crises in the 2000s, with climate change and increasing neoliberal projects such as the construction of mining and power plants, leading to the rise of ecological protests.

Many actors such as Çiftçi-Sen (Farmers' Union), Buğday Association, and Ecology Collective, in addition to the efforts of ecological civic food initiatives, have grown the awareness and interest of larger segments of consumers in these issues. Their efforts contributed to the relatively rapid expansion of these collective food initiatives in the last three years. Similarly, some local municipalities of opposition parties that are given only a limited budget by the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) government have also been developing alternative agri-food projects by bringing together various actors, encouraging and facilitating cooperative organizations, organizing direct ecological farmers' markets, and protecting and multiplying landraces.

Thus, both the transformations in the Turkish agri-food politics and food sector and Turkey's general political context have given rise to organic and post-organic food channels, which developed a complex alternative food market in Turkey. There are corporate actors, medium-scale commercial enterprises, small-scale organic farmers, organic farmers' markets organized by NGOs, and public actors like municipalities as actors in the organic food market. There are also corporate actors, online "natural" food shops of private-run farms at varying scales, and civic collective ecological food initiatives as post-organic actors. In addition to small and middle scale entrepreneurs, companies, and collective civic initiatives, local governments have become crucial actors in the organic and post-organic market.

1.2. Research Design

1.2.1. The Alternatives around Food Sovereignty

The main alternative actors that this thesis focuses on, among other emerging organic and post-organic alternative food actors in Turkey, are 1) new-generation consumer food cooperatives and 2) municipalities with alternative agri-food projects. Given the plurality of actors with varying motivations in the complex alternative food market, it becomes necessary to define what kind of alternativeness that this dissertation claims these two different actors attempt to offer in common, differently from other alternatives. This thesis argues that these municipalities and new-generation consumer food cooperatives both search for alternative food production, consumption, and distribution relations in favor of consumers, small producers, and ecology. They adopt a food sovereignty perspective and position themselves politically in this search for an alternative agri-food order, which constitutes the central pillar of the alternativeness that this research interrogates, from various angles, by examining these specific actors through fieldwork.

This thesis examines Kadıköy Cooperative as a case study of new-generation consumer food cooperatives for several reasons. One of the main reasons is, that it is the first and the most well-known example of recently emerging new-generation consumer-led food cooperatives in Turkey, located at the neighborhood scale. It is a pioneer actor for getting the increasing attention of consumers since its foundation. It has also motivated many other groups to start their cooperative initiatives in different neighborhoods of İstanbul with a very similar organizational model and principles around solidarity and trust-based, direct ecological relationships with small producers. It is also the first consumer food cooperative that positioned itself publicly in the food sovereignty struggle and has a crucial role in expanding the food sovereignty perspective among other new-generation consumer food cooperatives.

This dissertation investigates the alternative agri-food projects of local governments through the projects of Ovacık and Seferihisar Municipalities, as these projects are the prominent cases that have taken the public attention and support, thanks to their success that comes with a comprehensive food sovereignty perspective. This perspective prioritizes ecological production, procurement of landrace seeds to producers, empowerment of small-scale producers by offering direct sales opportunities through the establishment of direct farmers' markets and cooperatives, paying fair prices to producers, and maintaining fair labor relations. They are selected as exemplary municipal projects that have a critical position against corporate food sovereignty and care about the solidarity and participation of diverse actors in the organization of alternative food production, distribution, and consumption around peoples' food sovereignty. The mayors of Ovacık and Seferihisar Municipalities are now respectively the mayors of Tunceli (Dersim) and İzmir Metropolitan Municipalities partly due to the success of these projects. It has also made it more interesting to examine these cases and discuss the potential of such municipal agri-food projects built from the food sovereignty perspective.

The fieldwork of this research also examines, empirically, the small-scale ecological farmers and their organizations in fourteen different locations in Turkey by tracking down the network of Kadıköy Coop. The primary reason why this fieldwork examines these producers is to discuss the difficulties they face in the Turkish agri-food context and thus analyze better the production and consumption relations that the new-generation consumer food cooperatives and the municipalities attempt to transform.

The new-generation consumer food cooperatives' producer profile consists mainly of small-scale farmers practicing ecological farming, usually based on their family labor and sometimes an extra one or two employees. Of course, their producers are not uniform. They also have a few producers in their network who are more entrepreneurial and have a slightly larger production volume and stronger connections with mainstream food outlets. However,

they have a shared production mentality that unites them in these networks as a more critical factor than the size of their agricultural land and the scale of their production. They do not adopt a corporate logic that reduces all agricultural relations into the ambition of profit-maximization, and that considers their products only in terms of exchange value. They instead practice ecological agriculture from a holistic ecological perspective and respect fair labor relations. Thus, although they have a partial variety and hybridity among themselves, these are the common alternative characteristics of the producers that distinguish these producers from many other producers in the (post)organic food market in Turkey. These characteristics constitute the main reason why they are involved in the networks of new-generation consumer food cooperatives. Also, my fieldwork on the producer cooperatives in the network of Kadıköy Cooperative revealed that some producer cooperatives, such as Hopa and Ovacık, are good examples for building alternative production and consumption food relations. Thus, I also included alternative producer cooperatives in the main research question and formulated the main research questions as follows.

1.2.2. The Main Research Questions and the Conceptual Framework of the Thesis

- 1. How do new-generation consumer food cooperatives, some municipalities, and producer cooperatives –as actors that unite in the emerging struggle for food sovereignty in Turkey– try to build alternative food production, consumption, and distribution relations in favor of small farmers, ecology, and consumers?*

I argue that these actors aim to create an alternative space for building these alternative agri-food relations through an alternative organizational model and perspective regarding food politics. Therefore, the second research question is related to the first question as follows:

- 2. How do they attempt to build an alternative public space for contributing to the construction of these alternative agri-food relations? More specifically, what is the*

organizational model and political rationality they embrace for pursuing and expanding alternative food politics from within this alternative public space?

Based on these two main questions, I interrogate whether these actors have a transformative power for building an alternative agri-food order in Turkey. To interrogate these research questions, this thesis speaks to the literatures on “food sovereignty,” “public space,” and “commons.”

“Food Sovereignty” as the Theoretical Backbone of This Thesis

Food sovereignty is “a political project and campaign, an alternative, a social movement, and an analytical framework” (Alonso-Fradejas et al., 2015) that has grown since 1996 when La Via Campesina first articulated (Desmarais, 2007) the concept in public, especially after its political construction in the Nyéléni Forum in 2007. In the *Declaration of Nyéléni* (2007), it is defined as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.” The movement aims to resist the corporate food regime through constructing alternative agri-food systems with the active participation of local producers and consumers.

Food sovereignty is a comprehensive concept capable of strongly mobilizing people in different countries, because it is concerned with many issues, from the quality, quantity, and origin of food to its production form, working conditions of producers, food consumption and circulation, and rural-urban relations. It embraces a political ontology that promotes self-organization and networks in cooperation (Holt-Giménez, 2006). It considers small farmers’ rights, ecological motivations, and democratic values (McMichael, 2016, p. 649) as well as race, class, and gender equality both in the processes of food production and consumption (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007). These characteristics of the food sovereignty movement strengthen its alternative potential and inclusiveness. Such a comprehensive and ambitious

movement has surely many challenges and needs to clarify its stance with regard to questions such as the role of states in the construction of food sovereignty, the place of locality, long-distance trade, agro-ecology, and its relationship with other movements.² However, it is a promising struggle because it helps to bridge between producers and consumers, by stimulating them in their locality to challenge the dependent and vulnerable conditions that the capitalist agri-food relations create.

As in many other countries, the food sovereignty perspective has gradually been embraced politically by various actors that aim to build alternative agri-food relations in Turkey. The considerable efforts of the activists of the new-generation consumer food cooperatives and the Farmers' Union in the last five years have played a considerable role in this. "Food sovereignty" constitutes the backbone of this dissertation because the main actors researched in this dissertation —new-generation consumer food cooperatives and municipalities with alternative agri-food projects— meet in the search for alternative food production, consumption, distribution relations around food sovereignty ideals. The actors that position themselves in the emerging food sovereignty in Turkey mostly consider food sovereignty as peoples' rights to have full control over the entire agricultural production and distribution processes of their food. In addition to the autonomous control of farmers over these processes, food sovereignty signifies for them the production of healthy and ecological food that considers biodiversity and public health, small farming, local agricultural techniques, and trade, as well as the right of all consumers to access these healthy and ecological foods.

This thesis suggests that these initiatives are still marginal examples in the face of the corporate food regime's strength. However, their relatively rapid expansion in recent years is a milestone for the nascent evolution of the food sovereignty struggle in Turkey. The increasing participation of citizens in agri-food politics, and their consideration of food as commons and

² See Chapter 2 for a detailed and critical discussion of the literature on food sovereignty.

a political matter in an extending alternative public space, are valuable contributions to this emerging struggle.

Discussions around “Public Space” and “Commons” in This Thesis

This thesis also speaks to the literatures on public space and commons in Chapters 7 and 8. It argues that new-generation consumer food cooperatives and some municipalities consider essential the construction of an alternative local and civic space that invites citizens to say their words and take action in collaboration with various stakeholders to contribute to the formation of alternative agri-food relations. It suggests that the participatory, horizontal, and democratic organizational logic of new-generation consumer food cooperatives like the Kadıköy Coop calls for a broader population of consumers to become part of this counter-public in defense of food sovereignty. This dissertation names this counter-public as an alternative public space and considers its construction very important, given Turkey’s repressive political atmosphere that excludes citizens from the political sphere. It thus refers to the concept of “public space” from this perspective while examining how these emerging initiatives attempt to open up this space and how the construction of this alternative public space helps them in their struggle for food sovereignty. It also underlines the participatory, inclusive, and non-hierarchical organizational model of these initiatives as crucial factors that render this space alternative and strengthen their ties with the food sovereignty movement’s ideals.

This thesis also draws from commons literature to suggest that these initiatives embrace the politics of commoning food as a political call and a strategy for uniting all citizens and stakeholders in this alternative public space around the ambition of “healthy food for all.” It argues that these initiatives’ commoning practices of food are related to their political stance that considers capitalist accumulation processes of agri-food corporations and state’s support given to these actors as the biggest threat for the commoning of food. Thus, from the Marxist autonomist perspective on commons, it discusses how their alternative political reframing of

food as commons challenges the capitalist understanding of food and helps them building alternative agri-food relations.

Public Space

Habermas (1974) brings “public space” as an original concept to critical social theory by defining it as a guarantee for the freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and political participation for the “general interest” of citizens. Criticizing bourgeois public space, he considers this new form of public sphere as providing a proper ground for interaction and democratic negotiation among citizens, in favor of a “public body.” Although this original understanding of “public space” is critical for discussing democratic political practices in the related literature, this conception of public space is problematic because of its limited perspective regarding the ontology of “public space” that presumes that *the* public space guarantees the benefits of all citizens. This Habermasian understanding of public space has been criticized and developed by various theoreticians with a more nuanced and comprehensive perspective.

Many theoreticians redefine this concept by criticizing primarily the understanding of *the* public that ignores social inequalities and frames this new arena as the guarantee of “the interests of all” and the “common good.” For instance, Geoff Eley (1994) redefines this concept as a setting where ideological and cultural negotiations of diverse publics occur. Fraser (1990) claims that the civil republican view of the public sphere does not address the possibility of a new “hegemonic mode of domination” that the state can establish by constructing consent in the official public space. Bora (2017) problematizes this possibility as a threat that can silence alternative voices and prevent counter-publics’ expansion. As they argue, the Habermasian conception of public space remains incapable of problematizing the very assumptions regarding bourgeois public space that threaten the possibility of multiple counter-publics. Hence, these

perspectives open up room for competing publics that would also challenge official public space.

I follow these scholars' more comprehensive and critical perspective on public spaces because it helps understanding how varying publics challenge structural hegemonic relations by claiming their rights, identities, and causes such as economic justice, environmental protection, and food sovereignty. This perspective also allows problematizing the neoliberal public sphere that disregards the role of structural economic and political problems in the current food regime and the neoliberal discourses that complicate the formation of a "vibrant critical publicity" (Asen, 2017). Thus, building my discussions on the construction of an alternative public space, I problematize the dominant relations of food production and consumption and discuss the construction of alternative arenas as an attempt to challenge capitalist interests and neoliberal discourses such as market freedom and consumer choice.

I argue that in Turkey's overwhelming political and socio-economic context, the official public space reproduces state authority and the interests of agribusinesses. It silences citizens who wish to speak for themselves and leaves no room for citizens to engage in agri-food politics to transform current food production and distribution relations for their benefit. Therefore, this thesis interprets the expansion of new-generation consumer food initiatives as concrete and creative efforts of urban citizens for building counter-publics or alternative public spaces. Adopting this perspective, it interrogates how the solidarity of new-generation food cooperatives and local governments with small-scale farmers, builds an alternative public space both against neoliberal state policies and capitalist agri-food relations. It examines how these actors attempt to extend the scope of this alternative space and politics to grow their visibility and impact. It demonstrates that the exemplary municipal agri-food projects facilitate producers' self-organization and comprise of many collaborating actors, such as local organized producers, grassroots actors, and urban collective food initiatives, in rural and urban spaces. In

addition, this thesis addresses that these organizations rely on constant negotiations among these actors, rather than being realized top-down. In this way, it argues, they open up a participatory and democratic ground for constructing an alternative public space in agri-food politics. This thesis suggests that constructing an alternative public space is directly related to the causes of the food sovereignty struggle; thus, it develops the discussion on alternative public space from this perspective.

Commons, Food as Commons, and the Commoning Politics of Food

The literature on commons has considerably grown since Hardin opened a significant discussion on commons in 1968. Taking for granted an isolated utilitarian individual, Hardin suggests that the communal use of resources leads inevitably to their depletion because of the competition for maximizing individual gain. He depicts this as “the tragedy of commons,” that would result in the self-destruction of humanity. He thus underlines the necessity for a central authority to determine rules on using resources or a well-established private property regime. Hardin’s perspective of commons is shaped by an individualistic ontology that takes individuals’ actions separated from society and guided only by self-interest and gains. This understanding builds his conceptualization of commons as a place where individuals compete as isolated utilitarian beings. Hardin disregards the fact that society is more than the sum of individuals, thus he does not see the collective and social relations and motivations that form around the commons.

Ostrom (1990, 2000) argues that communities avoid the “tragedy” of resource depletion through a communal government concerning the use of commons, which determines local mechanisms of monitoring and principles. However, Ostrom also departs from the same individualistic ontology without taking an intrinsically selfish and competitive individual *a priori* to its relation to others. As opposed to Hardin’s perspective, she thus focuses on how a group, consisting of individual rational agents, determine voluntarily collective actions to

manage the “common-pool resources” (1990), without needing the rules of a central authority like the state or market to protect commons.

This understanding of commons as a social system is developed further by scholars in the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASC). Following this post-Hardinian perspective, Berkes (2009) also conceptualizes commons as “community-based resource use systems” and defines distinct property regimes, including the “common-property” regime, where an identifiable community of users shares the resource. These perspectives on commons go beyond Hardin’s individualistic and commodity-based understanding regarding the use of commons. However, these scholars ignore the possibility of individuals capable of acting rationally without a specific property regime and definitive rules over the commons. Besides, they frame commons only as a resource to benefit from and bypass the capitalist power relations around commons unlike autonomist Marxist theoreticians (e.g., Caffentzis, Federici, Massimo de Angelis, Midnight Notes Collective). The autonomist Marxist line conceptualizes commons as a moral and political counter-force to global markets for challenging social relations imposed by the market and transforming the understanding of sharing and access in the capitalist economy (Caffentzis, 2010; Holt-Giménez and Lammeren, 2018; Holder and Flessas, 2008). These scholars approach commons as social processes and relations driven by values and motivations, such as collectivity, participatory democracy, and solidarity. This understanding of commons is helpful for problematizing capitalism’s destructive economic, social, and environmental impacts that have been deepening, and building struggles of collectivity and solidarity around commons.

The Marxist autonomist line brings a moral and political proposal to considering food itself as commons, to challenge the understanding of food merely as a commodity and an object of consumption (Holt-Giménez and Lammeren, 2018). This redefinition of commons suggested by the Marxist autonomist line is very important for the analyses in this thesis, to

understand the commoning politics of food pursued by the recently emerging initiatives around food sovereignty. This thesis argues that these initiatives adopt this perspective because they do not reduce food to its exchange value and do not merely consider it a source or commodity as capitalist agri-food actors do. It suggests that this perspective helps them creating alternative spaces and critical strategies for alternative production forms and social relations around food.

This dissertation also discusses commons while elaborating on how these emerging initiatives around food sovereignty reconstruct the discourses on seeds, regarding seeds as the heritage of our shared culture and history as well as peasants' labor and knowledge for centuries. It reveals that they advocate for the preservation of landrace seeds and farmers' rights to use, multiply, and trade these seeds to defend small farmers and ecology in the face of corporate food sovereignty. It suggests that their consideration of food as commons suggests that food processes include varying actors and economic, political, ecological, and relations from the seeds used in the production to the consumption of these foods. This is why, it argues, these initiatives promote the discourse of food as something political in the public space and pay utmost attention to collaborate with producers who use landrace seeds, practice ecological farming, and respect fair labor relations in the production process.

This thesis follows the Marxist autonomist perspective on commons to understand their call for defining healthy food as everybody's need, arguing that this political proposal helps them in their food sovereignty advocacy. It considers that to actualize some crucial aspects of food sovereignty, such as the reconstruction of alternative agri-food relations in a participatory and collective way, this commons perspective is essential. It suggests that the commons perspective may also be a strategical political means of relating urban and rural struggles to strengthen the food sovereignty movement. Finally, it argues that framing food from this commons perspective also helps these emerging initiatives extend their alternative public space

by reappropriating the public space from the state and the market, along with their ambitions to build alternative agri-food relations for food sovereignty.

1.2.3. Methodology

This qualitative research is primarily based on my participant observation in Kadıköy Cooperative as an activist researcher between December 2017 and May 2019. During my membership in Kadıköy Coop, I took an active role in regular weekly meetings, several study groups, working units, and the organization of public events and workshops. My active and intense participation in the cooperative operations for a long time helped me understand the cooperative's alternative claims and efforts from the inside by being part of the change it aims to bring into the current agri-food relations. I also contributed to the opening and running of the cooperative store, thus had constant interactions with Kadıköy Coop consumers. In addition, I had several interactions with the volunteers of other new-generation consumer food cooperatives and food communities in common events, which also enabled me the close observation of other similar organizations. As a member of the Organization Unit of the cooperative for nine months, I also held meetings with several groups in becoming a consumer food cooperative and those who want to learn about the cooperative operations, to share the experience of Kadıköy Coop. These interactions also contributed to my understanding of new generation consumer food cooperatives' intense organizational strategies that aim to expand their collaborations with other actors and their networks to increase their organized power. As a member of this unit, I also became more engaged in working on the horizontal and democratic organizational model that the cooperative aims to sustain as it expands. It enabled me to reflect more deeply about the alternative public space that it aims to build in a more inclusive and participatory manner by keeping its core values as it grows. Briefly, being an activist researcher helped me to avoid making superficial analyses one would bring from outside by attending a few meetings at most.

In addition to the participant observation, I also conducted eight interviews with member-activists/prosumers³ of the cooperative and four interviews with other consumers of Kadıköy Coop, to give place to the actors' own voices. On the other hand, in the framework of my fieldwork on alternative municipal agri-food projects, I interviewed two staff members from Seferihisar and Ovacık Municipalities, who have a considerable role in these projects, in addition to my analyses of online sources on these projects. I also benefited from constant conversations with the employees of Ovacık consumer food cooperatives in İstanbul, as I frequently shop from there.

The fieldwork follows a line of research that first works on Kadıköy Cooperative and expands into the investigation of its collaborating producers that become part of their network. I visited thirteen producers/producer organizations in different regions of Turkey and conducted almost one and half-hour-long in-depth interviews with each interviewee. I recorded and transcribed all interviews and presented the quotes in English so as not to disrupt the text's fluidity. I conducted in-depth interviews with some individual producers in the network of Kadıköy Coop; Berin E. (Sakarya, Vegetable Producer), Ali Ü. (Sakarya, Dairy Products), Ali K. (Niğde, Fruit Producer), Serap K. (Manyas, Balıkesir, Pasta with Vegetables), and Koçulu (Kars, Dairy Products). The mixed producer organizations I visited are Hopaçay Coop in Artvin, Sındı Agricultural Development Cooperative in Muğla, and Ovacık Cooperatives in Tunceli (Dersim) and İstanbul. Finally, the female producer organizations that are part of this fieldwork are Devrek Güneşi Cooperative in Zonguldak, Boğatepe Environment and Life

³ The word "prosumer" is the combination of "producer" and "consumer." This word is used mostly to refer to the consumers in collective ecological food initiatives who directly collaborate with producers by sharing the responsibility of production and consumption relations mutually. The closest definition to such prosumerism is suggested as "commons based prosumerism (...) to promote civic engagement and to build relationships based on specific interests and mutual trust, through a process in which citizenship is activated in actions of mutual support" (Paltrinieri and Esposti, 2013). Kadıköy Coop members consider themselves prosumers (*türetici*) because they and their producers exchange reciprocally regular and transparent knowledge. Before the cultivation period, cooperative volunteers often plan with the producers the volume of products to be ordered in the year. The volunteers sometimes visit their producers in their agricultural fields and offer prepayment if possible when producers need it. Thus, they try to become part of both production and consumption relations rather than acting like customers who have no communication with producers. The concept "prosumer" is used in this sense throughout the dissertation, following this understanding of Kadıköy Cooperative members and others in collective ecological food initiatives.

Association in Kars, Nusratlı Village Association in Çanakkale, Girkad Women Association in Artvin, and Yırca Hanımelı Soap Collective in Manisa.

I analyze individual producers, mixed cooperatives, and female cooperatives separately to discuss the distinct dynamics and organizational forms that influence how these producers deal with the pressures of current agri-food conditions. This categorization also reveals producer organizations' role in building alternative agri-food relations from the gender perspective. It reveals how female producer organizations can build alternative public spaces for women to challenge patriarchal capitalism and relatedly create positive change for the women while opening up collective production and distribution channels for their products to make their living.

Before focusing on the main discussion on the new-generation consumer food cooperatives, this thesis presents a comprehensive picture of almost twenty civic collective ecological food initiatives examining eleven prominent examples in İstanbul. The reason why I focused mainly on the collective ecological food initiatives in İstanbul is that it is the largest and the most de-agrarianized city of Turkey where consumers are highly distanced from the interactions of the agricultural production of food in conventional food relations. Thus, there is more consumer interest in these initiatives in İstanbul, and these initiatives have a more extensive network in İstanbul than in other cities. These discussions in Chapter 4 address how the collective ecological initiatives distinguish from other food channels in the alternative food market regarding their political and ecological visions about the agri-food system. It also provides a comparison of food communities/collectives and new-generation consumer food cooperatives as two significant forms of consumer-led ecological food initiatives. It reveals that although they have similar ambitions, consumer-led food cooperatives and food communities have many distinct features concerning their legal status, practical functioning, organization models, priorities, and strategies regarding varied aspects of their food sovereignty claim. This

thesis argues that new-generation consumer food cooperatives differentiate from food communities primarily with their considerable efforts for building an alternative public space with a more inclusive and participatory character. Hence, this comparison also helps understanding why I preferred focusing on new-generation consumer food cooperatives in this thesis. These analyses in Chapter 4 are based on my close interactions with the members of food communities as well as four in-depth interviews I conducted with the members of Yeryüzü food communities and DÜRTÜK Collective in İstanbul.

1.3. The Contribution of This Research

This research aims to fill a significant gap in the literature on alternative food initiatives in Turkey, especially on those emerging nowadays in line with food sovereignty claims. This gap exists not only in the investigation of recently emerging consumer food cooperatives and communities in Turkey but also in other alternative food channels such as organic farmers' markets and online farms providing natural food.

Some of the collective food initiatives in İstanbul are investigated in a non-academic published journal, *Beyond İstanbul*. Some of the similar platforms in Izmir are studied as part of a doctoral dissertation (Karakaya, 2016), focusing on their development processes by documenting their socio-technical practices as niche initiatives. Other than these, it is only possible to find some unpublished conference papers (Kadirbeyoğlu, 2016; Kocagöz and Doğançayır, 2017) and two book chapters that present a general overview of alternative food initiatives in Turkey (Kadirbeyoğlu and Konya, 2017; Ercoşkun, 2018). There are also some mentions in papers with different foci and some papers on organic food in Turkey that are either written from agro-economy and agricultural engineering fields or are not recent articles (Demir, 2013; Kadirbeyoğlu, 2016). In addition, there are papers and books that discuss the development of organic agriculture in Turkey (Aslan and Demir, 2016; Keyder and Yenil, 2013) in general. However, they do not focus specifically on these recently emerging alternative

cooperative ecological food initiatives such as consumer food cooperatives like Kadıköy Coop and food communities of Yeryüzü Association.

Collective ecological food initiatives have recently been attracting increasing attention especially in İstanbul, İzmir, and Ankara. This is seen in non-academic food-related workshops and panels⁴ and in almost every speech, interview, and online article by the managerial staff of Çiftçi-Sen,⁵ as a crucial actor positioned in the food sovereignty struggle in Turkey. The publication of two recent books on cooperatives in Turkey, *Krize Karşı Kooperatifler* [Cooperatives against the Crisis] (Öngel & Yıldırım, 2019) and *Kooperatifler* [Cooperatives] (Aysu, 2019) also indicate the potential growth in this literature in recent years. In his book, Abdullah Aysu addresses the agricultural sales cooperatives and unions, agricultural credit cooperatives, and village development cooperatives in Turkey. *Krize Karşı Kooperatifler* examines the traditional producer cooperatives, corporate management of cooperatives, and agri-food projects of some local governments. In this book, Kadıköy Cooperative, as an ecological consumer food cooperative, also presents itself briefly. Yet, neither of these books address the consumer's recently growing network of collective ecological food initiatives as a major issue.

Considering the lack of research on recently emerging new-generation consumer food initiatives, this dissertation examines, in detail, the Kadıköy Cooperative as the main case study.

⁴ A few examples are the panels organized by Kadıköy City Council in İstanbul and by the Agricultural Engineers Chamber in İzmir on the "Global Cooperative Day," a workshop on cooperatives at Karaburun Congress in İzmir, Agro-ecology school organized by Marmaris City Council and Çiftçi-Sen, a workshop by Kadıköy Cooperative on food sovereignty and the privatization of sugar beet factories. In these particular events, at least one Çiftçi-Sen staff was also either speaker or participant.

⁵ For instance, Abdullah Aysu, the former president of Çiftçi-Sen, brings the issue into recently emerging consumer cooperatives at the end of many interviews, such as the following on Turkish Agriculture in 2018:

<https://www.karasaban.net/tarimda-2018-turkiye/?fbclid=IwAR0sYlKZXrGKKuYaF3TMPZyTklUey6GyY3cMdf1RSALmC-MgTEicRKtxD7Q>. Similarly, he underlines the importance of the collaboration and direct communication of producer cooperatives and consumer cooperatives in the cities without intermediaries in his critique of the new "Law of Marketplace" designed to authorize corporations in this organization through privatizations: http://yeniyasamgazetesi.com/yemek-yemek-politik-bir-istir/?fbclid=IwAR0vX9DW_uPb9eYTYhhzhvXJEPQB6QWfcrzW9QBd10GyVBpQ2rRGq5dOCQ. Adnan Çobanoğlu, the former president of Üzüm-Sen and the former Secretary of Organization in Çiftçi-Sen, also often writes about consumer cooperatives. See his articles in Karasaban (2018): <https://www.karasaban.net/kooperatifcilik-sinirlar-ve-imkanlar-1-adnan-cobanoglu/>, <https://www.karasaban.net/kooperatifcilik-sinirlar-ve-imkanlar-ii-adnan-cobanoglu/?fbclid=IwAR3JWtYSVs8S1bUTFVBqQjI4XlwcV-uVq4AE40qnGnVW0nE5lT2sQNL8M>

However, from a comparative perspective, it also discusses other civic, collective consumer food initiatives like food communities and other alternative food channels like organic farmers' markets and natural farms (such as İpek Hanım's Farm in Turkey). The thesis also covers both producer and consumer perspectives and investigates municipalities as important actors in building alternative agri-food relations in favor of food sovereignty. Therefore, considering the role of various actors and perspectives and adopting a comparative and comprehensive perspective, it hopes to contribute to the relevant literatures where there is a significant gap concerning these issues. This research investigating these initiatives in their very early phases also invites more researchers to study these alternatives in following years to discuss the evolution of these initiatives and evaluate their impact. This dissertation thus offers detailed research which is to be referred to in future comparative analyses, that would analyze their dynamic position in the possibly more complex alternative food market in Turkey.

1.4. Outline of Chapters

This dissertation consists of nine chapters. The Introduction (Chapter 1) has addressed the current global agri-food context, the rising search for varying alternative food actors in Turkey during the 2000s, and the emergence of ecological civic consumer food initiatives in Turkey around the nascent food sovereignty struggle. It also presented the main actors this research focuses on, the main research questions, the conceptual framework of the thesis, the methodology, and the contribution of this research. Chapter 2 reviews the current food regime and discusses the global rise of peasant movements. It addresses some peasant and consumer movements and elaborates critically on the food sovereignty movement that constitutes this dissertation's theoretical backbone. It also discusses the literature on alternative food initiatives (AFNs) critically, pointing out the complicated nature of alternativeness. In doing so, it argues that the transformative potential of alternative food initiatives relies mostly upon whether they build their alternativeness from a food sovereignty perspective. Finally, it demonstrates the

differences between varying AFNs from different country settings, along with these countries' distinct political and economic characteristics.

In Chapter 3, this thesis brings the debate to Turkey by addressing the transformation of agri-food politics in Turkey since the 1980s. It discusses Turkey's current agrarian crisis with its severe repercussions on small-scale farmers and consumers by drawing from the related literature. Chapter 4 first presents the general picture of various actors in Turkey's (post)organic alternative food market. It then examines, in more detail, consumer-led ecological food initiatives —food communities and consumer food cooperatives— from a comparative perspective. In this way, it distinguishes them from other alternative food channels in terms of their political and ecological visions about the agri-food system.

After framing this general context of alternative, collective food initiatives in İstanbul, Chapters 5 and 6 focus in detail on my fieldwork in Kadıköy Cooperative. It first elaborates on the consumer side and then the producers in its network. The first part of Chapter 5 presents the history, principles, working, and the organizational structure of the Kadıköy Cooperative. It discusses how, and through which examples and strategies, Kadıköy Cooperative adopts its vision and food sovereignty practices. It addresses the extent to which new-generation consumer food cooperatives like Kadıköy Coop establish direct and transparent relationships with ecological food producers to support them and offer alternative production-consumption-distribution relations of food. The second part of Chapter 5 and the whole Chapter 6 discuss the stories and experiences of the producers and producer organizations that are part of the Kadıköy Coop network. It examines why and how they organize in their locality and discusses their strategies, successes, and failures in the face of difficulties.

Chapter 6 focuses specifically on ecological female producer cooperatives. It does so because female producer cooperatives not only try to open up collective production and distribution channels for their products to make their living, but they also have the potential to

build alternative public space to challenge patriarchal capitalism by transforming relations in their families and locality, and relatedly creating positive change for themselves.

Chapter 7 investigates specifically the local agricultural policies of Ovacık and Seferihisar Municipalities and Ovacık Cooperatives. It discusses how municipalities, local organized producers and grassroots actors, and urban collective food initiatives collaborate to construct alternative agri-food policies, from below, for food sovereignty. It elaborates on these cases to indicate the direct marketing and distribution opportunities that this cooperation suggests and how these collaborating actors in the urban and rural spaces can create alternative and more comprehensive public space for citizens.

Chapter 8 examines Kadıköy Cooperative as a case of new-generation food cooperatives where the prosumers construct an alternative public space through their self-organization, self-management, horizontal and democratic organizational model, and their commoning politics of food. It discusses these as the main qualities that differentiate them from other food cooperatives and initiatives and render these cooperatives “new-generation.” They are considered the essential characteristics that would increase their power in constructing alternative agri-food relations throughout their emerging struggle for food sovereignty.

Chapter 9 (Conclusion) presents a final discussion on both the struggle and hope present in such alternative initiatives to create alternative agri-food relations. It summarizes their limits and potentialities, their strategies, the practical implementations of their efforts for transformative changes, as well as the risks they may face throughout their long path in the struggle for food sovereignty.

CHAPTER 2

Peasant and Consumer Movements in the Current Food Regime with a Focus on Food Sovereignty & Alternative Food Networks

Food regime analysis provides a historical method to investigate the political, economic, and ecological relations regarding the food production and circulation today, through a specific lens on the periodic transformations in social and political relations over 150 years (McMichael, 2016, p. 650). Therefore, in this chapter, I draw first from food regime to discuss the main characteristics and dynamics of current food regime. I then address the globalization of peasant movements and elaborate specifically on food sovereignty movement that becomes a relatively robust global mobilization and constitutes the theoretical backbone of this dissertation. I will also discuss the consumer movements that rise in this corporate food regime, such as fair trade movement, slow food movement, and (post)organic movement.

While analyzing the initiatives that seek to contribute to an alternative agri-food system and rural change, I discuss the “alternativeness” issue in detail, since a “corporate-environmental food regime” (Friedmann, 2005) is also emerging. While counter-movements and alternative initiatives challenge this context, they also face the repositioning of the global corporations that learn systematically from these movements to adopt the words “ecology,” “sustainability,” “healthy food” in their corporate rhetoric.

2.1. Food Regime Analysis and the Current Food Regime

Food regime analysis interrogates the relations of production and consumption in the capitalist economy and the economic, social, and ecological consequences of each food regime. It comparatively analyzes agricultural capital accumulation and global food distribution patterns under different food regimes (Bernstein, 2016, p. 613). Although food regime analysis reveals the transitions in the capitalist food relations, it is not only about “food.” Addressing relations

of food through which capitalism is (re)produced, it also addresses the history of capitalism (McMichael, 2009a, p. 282). The food regime analysis has explored so far, the interrelation between agriculture and the rise of the industry at an international level. It has analyzed the power shifts in world capitalism, the financial arrangements that underpin world markets, international and state policies that influence patterns of agricultural production and their relationships with the global financial system. It has also indicated the rise of corporate agribusiness as a new type of capital organization and accumulation (Bernstein, 2016, p. 636-637).

Friedmann is the first theoretician who utilized the “food regime” primarily as a concept in 1987 and developed it further theoretically in 2005 by investigating the emergence of food regimes from colonialism to “green capitalism.” Later, the discussions on food regime analysis are developed significantly, notably by Philip McMichael’s “A food regime genealogy” (2009b), “Food regimes and agrarian questions” (2013), Magnan’s “Food Regimes” (2012), Bernstein’s discussions in 2016 on the contributions of food regime analysis to the agrarian political economy, as well as by Friedmann-Bernstein-McMichael dialogue on food regimes in 2016 in the *Journal of Peasant Studies*.

Today our analyses of agrarian change would be insufficient without incorporating the food regime analysis. McMichael argues that food regime analysis presents crucial insights to analyze contemporary transformations too by revealing the reasons why and how peasant mobilization has come about today and with which repercussions (McMichael, 2016, p. 654). The analysis of the political history of capital through this perspective also helps to understand the dynamics behind the rise of the alternative food networks as a reaction to the current production and circulation relations that “privilege agribusiness and investors for whom small-scale producers represent an obstacle to capital accumulation” (p. 654).

2.1.1. The Critical Discussion on the Current Food Regime

The current food regime is considered as a new moment in the history of capitalism, being marked by neoliberal politics that has started from the 1980s (Bernstein, 2016; Friedman, 1993, 2005; Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; McMichael, 2005). It functions through neoliberal politics that include the global deregulation of financial relations, setting of monetary value by credits and the corporatization of agriculture and agro-exports (McMichael, 2013 p. 266). McMichael (2009b) suggests that states and the international institutions like World Trade Organization and European Union become the facilitator of the empowerment of the corporations in the third food regime by following the market ideology and applying rules to institutionalize their power (p. 153) in this “corporate food regime,” as McMichael names. The third food regime has sustained since the 1980s through reduced farm supports, privatization of formerly public services, transnational corporations and financial houses (McMichael, 2013, p. 277), privileging agribusiness and investors.

In the South, the appropriation of massive lands, “a land grab express” as McMichael names (2013, p. 118), contributes to dispossession and the displacement of peasant cultures (Araghi, 2009); in other words, “agriculture without farmers” (McMichael, 2016, p. 666). It also leads to the land conversions to produce raw materials such as industrial inputs for animal feeds, mostly for biofuels, or to produce food on large-scale farms for export to their domestic economies (2013, pp. 125-128). Corporate agribusinesses that dominate global commodity chains sustain this process in detriment of small farmers and the ecosystem that is cumulatively degraded with each food regime.

Besides, the ambition of capital accumulation in the current food regime deepens the dispossession and marginalization of agrarian populations. It increases the number of poor consumers unable to consume at all (Friedmann, 2005, p. 257). The promise of the conventional agri-food systems to “feed the world” and the discourses of food safety and food security fail,

as 821.6 million people globally are undernourished, and 26.4% of the world population (nearly 2 billion people) are moderately and severely food insecure (FAO, 2019). Alternative experimentations of agricultural production and rural practices that criticize this food regime as unsustainable have been emerging in this atmosphere. They mostly claim to provide alternatives to capital's obsessive relationship with exchange-value, considering the mutually reproductive relationship between society and nature. McMichael's analyses on the corporate food regime are valuable to understand the ecological dynamics behind the production and circulation of food in the capitalist world economy as opposed to previous analyses of food regimes. Earlier analyses of food regimes focus only on the political economy of agrarian change without elaborating its political ecology. As McMichael (2009) argues, even when they address ecology, they approach it only as a biophysical obstacle for capital that is to be surmountable by mechanization, trans-genetic seeds, and synthetic fertilizers (p. 63).

Food regime analyses have revealed so far, the imperial/national tensions and national/transnational tensions. However, in the analyses of the current food regime, it becomes almost impossible to ignore the political ecology of the food as well as the significant tension of transnational/local as “world agriculture” (food from nowhere) vs a place-based form of agro-ecology (food from somewhere) (McMichael, 2009b, 2013). Today, we live in a food regime, where the questions of where, how, by whom, what kind of food is produced have intensified the most, and we witness the “neoliberalization of nature” (McMichael, 2013). The “neoliberalization of nature” does not only refer to the mechanization and chemicalization of agriculture through industrialization. It also refers to the genetic modification of animals and the patenting of re-engineered plants and seeds through “bio-piracy” and then with private property rights under the provisions of its Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (Bernstein, 2016, p. 627). Furthermore, as McMichael suggests, the corporate food regime undermines the conditions of human survival through its incremental dependence on petro-

fertilizers, degradation of soil and biodiversity, by “wiping out smallholder diversified farming” (McMichael, 2009b), and expanding the global corporate market of seeds and agricultural chemicals. Thus, the environmental and health-related concerns also accelerate in this context, making an issue of genetically modified organisms, considerable levels of toxicity, and ecological footprint.

The tension between “world agriculture” and a place-based form of agro-ecology has been revealed in the endeavors of the growing alternative food networks such as solidarity purchase groups, consumer food cooperatives, and community-supported agriculture. However, while some of these alternative food initiatives have transformative ambitions, some only become new venues of food purchase. In those without transformative ambition, mostly wealthy consumers mostly pay attention to buy healthy foods with a place of origin (in addition to certified organic food). These products might have also travelled long distances (Friedmann, 2016) and might not have fair production conditions. Friedmann (2016) asks whether a “corporate-environmental food regime” is emerging and whether “ecological intensification” and “climate-smart agriculture” are more than mere rhetoric or “greenwashing” (p. 675). She argues that “corporate-environmental food regime” is a “convergence of environmental politics” and corporate repositioning aimed at “increasingly transnational classes of rich and poor consumers” (Friedmann, 2005, p. 251–252). She refers to the change of the meaning of words such as “sustainability” and “food security” towards a “globalization project” in the corporate rhetoric, as McMichael (2016) also addresses.

Also, it is crucial to bear in mind that “once capitalist firms and international organizations adopt the rhetorics of their critics, those wishing to change food systems must adapt to a new game” (Friedmann, 2016, p. 676). It is crucial to pay attention to this corporate-environmental dimension of “green capitalism” as it distracts people from resisting and being critical to the existing system and increasing corporatization of agriculture. Thus, we need to

analyze meticulously the initiatives that seek to contribute to an alternative agri-food system. It is vital to interrogate whether these new initiatives allow small farmers to be able to get into new relationships other than the ones dominated simply by the exchange-value system. These points are to be explored further in alternative farming and food literature through different cases in various locations by looking at all levels of food growing, distribution, and preservation (p. 676). Hence, I also try to elaborate on some cases of alternative food initiatives in the world and discuss the literature critically on alternative food initiatives, bearing in mind these remarks and questions, in the following sections.

As Bernstein (2016) suggests, I also consider that McMichael does not only conceptualize well the current food regime but also elaborates on the social forces and the resistance to the corporate food regime. Addressing the third food regime meticulously with all its impacts on small-scale farmers, consumers, and ecology, he also focuses on the food sovereignty struggle. Doing so, he criticizes the social and ecological instability and nutritionally impoverishing repercussions of the current food regime (McMichael, 2013, 2016). Food sovereignty is the programmatic goal put by *La Via Campesina* (The Peasant Way) at the international level as a response to the vulnerabilities that the current food regime creates. The food sovereignty struggle is becoming more and more embraced by both small-scale producers and consumers. Peasants and consumers, through alternative initiatives and movements, have been increasingly problematizing the existing food relations, global commoditization of food, ecological degradation, and urban/rural distantiation. They make an issue of the decreasing control of peasants over their lands and our loss of knowledge regarding ecological farming. I will discuss in detail the peasant and consumer movements and especially the food sovereignty movement in the following sections in this chapter. Thus, I address here the food sovereignty struggle only briefly by referring to McMichael's discussions.

McMichael (2016) discusses the food sovereignty movement in his analyses on the current food regime. He presents it as having two claims. First, McMichael says, there is a worldwide emergency to increase the rights and the capacity of small producers pressured by the state-supported corporate attacks on their farm economy. Second, he argues, as a counter-movement, it aims to voice a broad vision of restoring landscapes (p. 659) as well as to challenge the unsustainable consequences of the contemporary trade and investment regime. It envisions reshaping international political economy by building a political ontology that values self-organization and networks in cooperation (Holt-Giménez, 2006). It also offers an alternative narrative and practices against the premises of the current food regime, with emphasis on the struggle on farmers' rights, democratic values, and ecological motivations (McMichael, 2016, p. 649).

McMichael (2013) suggests that capital only privileges monetary value, but value theory implies other relationships having distinct understandings of value (p. 137). Saying this, he argues that “peasant practices” force such recognition insofar as they address the agrarian question by seeking to repair the metabolic rift. In other words, the food sovereignty movement offers an alternative to capital’s value relations that privilege economic principles of commodification and efficiency for the expansion of exchange value, profit and accumulation. It takes into account the mutually reproductive relationship between human society and (extra) human nature (McMichael, 2013, p. 107-108). Thus, such resistance can be thought of as “a reflex of the neoliberal project— seeking to reverse its catastrophic social and ecological impacts.” Doing so, it desires “to develop an alternative political ontology constructed around values that are the antithesis of capital accumulation (the self-valorization of capital at whatever cost).” (McMichael, 2012, p. 117). In other words, the food sovereignty movement has emerged because of the “violence of value relations” and put “sovereignty” as the counterpart to

“neoliberal food security” by bringing a sharp critique of marginalization of small producers and reclaiming for small producer self-determination as producers of society.

Therefore, McMichael (2013) puts the contemporary agrarian question as something that concerns how to transcend the exchange-value consensus in agricultural relations (p. 137). Having food sovereignty movement as an essential political category in his analysis, McMichael reformulates agrarian question as “who shall farm the land and to what socio-ecological end?” (p. 64-45) rather than merely framing it as a question of class alliances. He suggests that food regime analyses provide broad perspectives and open in-depth discussions about political history, geopolitical ordering, and accumulation forms of capital. However, while doing so, they also need to see the “cumulative deterioration of ecosystem sustainability” because with each successive regime natural “exhaustion” (Moore, 2015) has been becoming more threatening (McMichael, 2016, p. 661).

To conclude, the increasingly claustrophobic atmosphere of the present socio-ecological emergencies is generative of real utopias (McMichael, 2013, p. 156). In this atmosphere, peasant mobilizations politicize “the epistemic surrender to value relations in the food regime” (p. 156) and aim to redefine the material relations of development (McMichael, 2005) through new languages of food sovereignty and new practices. These movements represent the revaluation of agriculture as central to social and ecological reproduction (McMichael, 2013, p. 138). The peasant mobilizations that bring together class, gender, ethnic, and ecological approaches in solidarity have the potential to open up the possibility of alternative values as well as “a healthy logic of reproduction of social and ecological relations” (p. 131). McMichael (2009b) asserts that the concentration on peasant mobilization reveals clearly that the social and ecological destruction resulted from the globalization of the corporate food regime constitute the principal contradiction of 21st-century global food system (p. 147). From this perspective,

to discuss the new peasant question in the current food regime, it is necessary to analyze the peasant movements deeply.

2.2. The Global Rise of Peasant Movements

There are several movements of landless peasants, small-scale farmers, and waged agricultural workers in the world. However, Borras et al. (2008) suggests that there is an only limited number of researches in the academic literature that analyzes the interrelations between local, national, and international scales of peasant movements as well as the own dynamics of these movements that continue for more than five decades. Also, as he expresses, only some of them, such as the Landless Workers Movement (MST) and La Via Campesina (LVC), are more paid more scholarly attention. As Borras et al. (2008) suggests, LVC, the international organization of national agrarian movements, has the widest and the most politically coherent peasant movement in the world. LVC has been evolving since the early 1990s as the movement of small farmers and peasant from North, South, and Central America, Europe, and in other parts of the world. Food sovereignty as a global social movement. It has been offering a “food sovereignty” model to oppose the “market economy” of the “corporate food regime” by offering a common agenda in global North-South contexts (Claeys, 2015; Martinez-Torres and Rosset, 2010). Food sovereignty as a global movement and an idea for alternative agri-food relations has also developed since its launch by LVC, during 1993-1996. Nearly 500 advocates from 80 countries gathered in Mali in the food sovereignty world assembly in 2007 and prepared the Nyéléni Declaration. This declaration has become an essential reference for what, how, where, and why questions related to the food sovereignty movement (Alonso-Fradejas et al., 2015).

MST in Brazil, which emerged through a process of occupying large landed estates and became a national movement in 1984, also positions itself as part of La Via Campesina, being the largest organization in this international body. MST consists of landless workers, cooperative farmers, and others. It struggles against the destructive impacts of the global

industrial agriculture, domination of transnational agribusinesses, dispossession, and monopolization of property rights in Brazil. It also fights against social inequality in rural areas and advocates the social, economic, environmental rights of 150000 landless families in nearly 900 encampments across Brazil (MST Brazil, 2020). Its slogan “Occupy, Resist and Produce” summarizes their struggle. Its occupations have led so far to the settlement of nearly 400000 families (2 million people) on nearly 7.5 million hectares of land on which they get organized mostly around producer cooperatives, and the struggle continues to press for access to healthcare, schools, and loans for cooperatives.

The success of MST comes mainly from their organization model, strategies, and main principles, which Metin Yeğin (2015) summarizes as follows: First, it is a movement that not only aims to transform economic relations but also ecological and social relations. The struggle for the dignity and equality of ethnic minorities and women in the movement is one of the distinct qualities of MST. Half of the budget of the movement is spent on the training and seminars for their militants. Second, MST has a local and democratic organization model where all actions are taken according to discussions and decisions taken in the assemblies to which each cooperative attends, and the protests are locally organized. Third, MST builds cooperation with human rights organization and syndicates, as well as those who support and defend the movement against the state pressures. Fourth, its organizational model brings together mass mobilization, direct action, and local and democratic organization with long-term ambitions. Its strategy is the change from below by organizing masses, collaborating with urban movements, and pressure for urgent reforms while getting prepared for a socialist transformation (p. 14-15).

There are various peasant movements at local and national levels and some at the global level like the food sovereignty movement. It is not possible to discuss each of them in detail here. However, I will discuss some considerable food movements that are influenced by the global rise of peasant movements. It is because the rise of the peasant movements, hand in hand

with consumer food movements, has led to the emergence of alternative food networks, which are primary concerns of this dissertation. I will address the literature on alternative food initiatives by elaborating on the matter of “alternativeness” addressing varying localized agri-food initiatives. I will also present some AFN cases from the world, addressing the distinct political and economic characteristics of each country. However, first, I want to discuss in detail the critical literature on food sovereignty, which has recently drawn considerable scholarly attention.

2.3. Food Sovereignty Movement and the Critical Literature on Food Sovereignty

2.3.1. Origins of the Food Sovereignty Movement

Food sovereignty visions have been crucial in reviving movements around the world to demand radical transformation in the current agri-food system. The political construction of food sovereignty in the public space was when La Via Campesina “first articulated” (Desmarais, 2007) food sovereignty at the Rome World Food Summit in 1996. It has been important for the global resistance to capitalism, especially since the Seattle protests against the recently founded World Trade Organization. Food sovereignty rose in a context marked by the rise of transnational agrarian movements and their coalitions with advocacy organizations in the world (Edelman et al., 2014, p. 914). Its political construction was catalyzed publicly in Nyéléni Forum in 2007 and continued during the post-2007 period. Thus, it has gradually expanded “as a political project and campaign, an alternative, a social movement, and an analytical framework,” (Alonso-Fradejas et al., 2015) across different countries. It has been penetrating the academic and political discourses and mobilizing peasant and food movements, NGOs and alternative agri-food initiatives as well as activists and academics.

In academia, food sovereignty has been discussed in various disciplines, from political ecology, agrarian political economy, sociology, social anthropology to international relations, and law. In order to extend the conversation around food sovereignty, two international

conferences were also organized in 2013 and 2014 around “Food Sovereignty-A Critical Dialogue” with 300-350 activists and academics (p. 433). The expansion of food sovereignty has rendered it not only an agricultural, rural, production-related concept but a concept, an analytical tool, and a social movement that also concerns food consumption and circulation, urban relations, state-society relations, classes, and identities. This both makes it a robust and comprehensive concept and a complex issue to negotiate between classes and across societies (p. 433).

2.3.2. The Meaning and the Ontology of Food Sovereignty

In the 1980s, as food politics started mostly to focus on the production place and forms, such as organic, sustainable, and local production, the topics like the working conditions of farmers and labor exploitation of rural workers have lost interest amid the rise of these issues. Food sovereignty thus rises as a movement that considers, as opposed to many others like organic movement, the rural labor relations as well as class, ethnic, and racial divides that have retarded the collective action in the rural North. Food sovereignty is defined as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.” It offers strategies to resist the corporate food regime and the demands of corporations, through food and farming systems determined by local producers and users. It also aims to remove inequalities between racial groups, men and women, as well as social and economic classes (Declaration of Nyéleni, 2007). We live in a context where small farmers are expelled from their lands, give up farming, lose their control over their agricultural processes, and do not get the fair compensation of their labor. Landless contract workers work under alienating conditions. Consumers are distanced from the producers and production conditions of the industrialized food, and ecological destruction has been getting more severe every day. Under these conditions, these ambitions of food sovereignty are very valuable and urgent.

Food sovereignty is clearly an essential concept to reveal the similar relationships and linkages apparent, for example, between the dispossession of rural indigenous communities in the South and low-income communities of color in the USA, or, for instance, between the immigrant workers in a Southern European vegetable farm and its Latino counterparts in North America (p. 437). However, there is a combination of various factors and contexts (North-South, rural-urban dynamics, unevenness among communities) that complicate the success of collective action. Social attributes like gender, race, nationality even make food sovereignty's practical ambition of collective action harder to achieve. The analysis of the barriers and dilemmas that food sovereignty movement can face as well as the re-politicization of food sovereignty, accordingly, are fundamental to advance the food sovereignty movement.

It is also essential to discuss how food sovereignty distinguishes itself from concepts like food security and food safety. FAO (1996) defines food security in terms of the physical and economic access of all people to sufficient, nutritious, and safe food. This approach is criticized for having a technocratic approach (Edelman et al., 2014, p. 914). It is criticized for ignoring the fact that the corporate transnational food chains have considerably concentrated their power, thus led to power asymmetries and unfair production relations of food. Some academics put food security in opposition to food sovereignty and consider this opposition as "a global conflict" (Martinez-Torres and Rosset, 2014; Schanbacher, 2010), while some others like Edelman (2014) and Trauger (2014) see food security and food sovereignty as overlapping concepts instead of binary oppositions. I regard "food security," "food safety," and "food sovereignty" as complementary approaches. Food sovereignty as a more comprehensive notion considers the perspective that "food security" and "food safety" define and care for; however, it does not only approach from technical and legal perspectives. It thus also addresses the political ground for how to get and sustain these rights defined by these notions. For instance, it problematizes farmers' right to have their control over their agricultural practices. It brings

to the table the political discussions, strategies, and ways to do so as well as problematizes the so far ignored “ecological” dimensions, such as respect to biodiversity and ecosystem, in current agri-food production.

Food sovereignty is becoming increasingly more ontologically comprehensive than a nationalist framework positioning against WTO. There are “multiple sovereignties” including a variety of communities, actors, and institutions that try to impose sovereign power over farming systems as well as social and ecological goods. These social and ecological goods include “cultural heritage, scientific and traditional knowledge, technologies, environmental resources such as water, biomass, minerals, and energy, and genetic resources such as seeds” as well as genes, materials, and peoples (Iles and Montenegro de Wit, 2015, p. 485). Besides, sovereignty is a social construction that has been continuously negotiated over time and space. It is dynamic, historically contingent, and socially constructed “living process” that consists of the constant building of relationships between institutions, people, ecosystems.” Therefore, there is also the possibility to resist the corporations, states, and other actors, and reshape the sovereignty over food and agricultural systems (pp. 482-486).

2.3.3. The Place of Locality, Long-Distance Trade, and Agro-Ecology in the Food Sovereignty Movement

There are also discussions in the literature on food sovereignty about how and in which aspects long-distance trade comply with food sovereignty. Today, the durability of food, combined with the rising power of the corporations in the agri-food system, leads to the rising distance of food transportation, especially with the increasing imports of cheap surpluses from industrialized countries (Edelman et al., 2014, p. 915). As a result, long-distance trade increases our dependence on fossil fuels and threatens the limits of future energy supplies. It augments greenhouse gas emissions, and thus results in incremental degradation of the environment, as opposed to small-scale farming that “cools the earth” as claimed by LVC (La Via Campesina,

2009). The localization becomes an essential criterion for food sovereignty to decrease the “distancing” in the food relations (Clapp, 2014), and to minimize the final cost of the products. However, the increasing rates of urbanization is a significant challenge for reducing geographical distance.

There are also discussions in food sovereignty literature on the advantages and disadvantages of centering agro-ecology as a strategy of resisting industrial agriculture in the food sovereignty movement. “Agro-ecology-based food sovereignty” is the dominant perspective in food sovereignty advocacy. However, some suggest including organic farming or fair-trade oriented agriculture, and even more industrial yet localized farming systems. As Altieri and Toledo (2011) and the food sovereignty advocates associated with LVC put, I believe that the main principles of agro-ecology must be the backbone of the food sovereignty struggle. It is because it seems unlikely that food sovereignty can be built based on the industrial inputs of the market and the logic of industrial agriculture.

For the construction of food sovereignty, rather than relying on external inputs, expensive certification proofs, and monoculture, farmers must increase the soil biological activity, diversify plant varieties over time, integrate plants and livestock, and optimize interactions of the whole farming system (p. 588). Thus, instead of organic farming that does not challenge monoculture and relies on foreign certification seals, and fair trade models that render farmers more dependent on external inputs and volatile foreign market, localized agro-ecological agri-food systems are more compatible with the food sovereignty logic. Marc Edelman et al. (2014) ask, “if agroecology is the aspiration, how can food sovereignty movements contribute to transitional efforts for less-than-ideal farms and farming landscapes?” (p. 922). However, I believe that as the emerging cases of agro-ecology-based food sovereignty increase and show that the ecological food production, consumption, and distribution of foods

have a share in the market, they would encourage these “less-than-ideal farms” for this transition in time.

2.3.4. The Strategic Role of Urban Agriculture and Urban Food Initiatives for the Food Sovereignty

The strategic role of urban agriculture and urban food initiatives for food sovereignty is also a discussion topic in the literature on food sovereignty. Food sovereignty movement gives importance to direct, transparent, and solidary relationships between consumers and producers. It suggests that these relations would enable trust in the foods consumers buy, decrease the environmental costs of “distance,” and provide fairer compensation for the labor of producers as well as more affordable prices for consumers to buy healthy products. Despite the potential synergy and symbiosis between consumers and producers, there are also some obstacles for producer-consumer solidarity. Edelman et al. (2014) suggest that more and more people live far away from the places of agricultural production (rural-urban divisions) and that many peasants today are also food buyers (rural-rural divisions). They consider these divisions as contradictions and tensions within the producer-consumer relationships that can hinder food sovereignty (p. 918).

However, the role of urban food initiatives in food sovereignty advocacy is considerable. There is an increasing number of urban food initiatives that do not only aim to build solidarity within farmers in the distant countryside but also have concerns about building healthy, accessible, fair food systems. They care about the culture and working conditions of producers as well as ecology. Of course, urban and peri-urban food initiatives have diverse political positions. Those with food sovereignty perspective are not majority now, especially in Europe and North America (Román-Alcalá, 2013). However, they are fertile grounds for developing new alliances in the future and expand consciously in favor of food sovereignty (Edelman et al., 2014, p. 919).

2.3.5. The Role of States in the Construction of Food Sovereignty

Another critical discussion in the literature is on “who will administer food sovereignty” and the role of the state in the construction of food sovereignty. It is a complicated issue, and there are several approaches. Desmarais and Wittman note that the varying approaches regarding the role of the state in food sovereignty struggle sometimes divide the initiatives. Some advocate for state-led food sovereignty, while others consider food sovereignty as the synonym of producers’ autonomous control over the production processes (p. 920). Trauger (2014) suggests that “food sovereignty may implement its radical vision within the existing structures of the modern liberal nation-state by working with, against and in between its juridical structures by reworking the central notions of sovereignty: territory, economy and power” (p. 1145). She adds that food sovereignty practices are vulnerable to state power if the territorial and economic alternatives it offers are not given place in the national state constitution (p. 1148).

Nevertheless, some researches (Giunta, 2013; McKay et al., 2014) indicate that the constitutional recognition of food sovereignty has contributed only little to challenge the power of agro-industry in Ecuador, Venezuela, and Bolivia. Thus, the endorsement of food sovereignty as the objective of state may lead to new contradictions (Bernstein, 2014), for instance to the “reduced protagonism of social organizations that originally sponsored the proposal of food sovereignty” as in Ecuador (Giunta, 2013, p. 20). Alternatively, as in the case of Bolivia, governments may adopt rhetoric that is coherent with conventional agriculture and “state-controlled” GMO (Cockburn, 2013, p. 3).

2.3.6. The Relationship of Food Sovereignty with Right to Foods and the Rights of Peasants

The issue of how food sovereignty relates to other rights-oriented food movements and the relationship between food sovereignty and rights are also important discussion topics in food sovereignty literature. Many right-to-food activists approach with suspicion about the potential of food sovereignty movement to problematize issues like malnutrition and hunger. On the other

hand, many food sovereignty activists (Desmarais, 2007; Martínez-Torres and Rosset, 2014) suggest that the food sovereignty concept addresses even a wider range of issues than the right to food raises as a problem. Food sovereignty has been developing especially for the last decade its rights repertoire in a way to address the “right to land and territory,” the “right to means of agricultural production,” the “freedom to determine price and market for agricultural production,” the “right to the protection of agriculture values,” the “right to biological diversity” (Claeys, 2015; La Via Campesina, 2008). These rights address long-term and multi-dimensional “agrarian transformations” (Borras, 2009), and thus food sovereignty is more comprehensive, motivational, and adaptable than the “right to food approach” or “peasants’ rights” frame that remains disconnected from grassroots movements, as Claeys (2015) suggests.

Also, La Via Campesina, with the support of human rights experts, has worked in the last years to bring the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). On 24 September 2012, the HRC adopted a resolution (A/HRC/21/L.23) leading to the formation of an intergovernmental working group and then negotiations starting in July 2013. After the adoption of a new resolution in June 2014 (Claeys, 2015, p. 459), these efforts have finally concluded. After UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution adopting the rights of peasants at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on September 28, 2018, it was voted by the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) of the UN General Assembly.

“United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas” (Resolution No. A/C.3/73/L.30) was approved by 119 countries in favor, and 7 votes against the declaration. There were also 49 abstaining countries, including Turkey. The approval of this resolution is a considerable development on the long path of struggle led by LVC. The declaration aims to better defend the rights and enhance the living conditions of peasants, agricultural workers, fisherfolks, as well as to protect biodiversity, mitigate climate change, promote agroecological family farming, and make food sovereignty stronger (La Via

Campesina, 2018). The approval of the declaration as a legal basis recognizing these rights signifies the beginning of a new period in the long path of global struggle against the politics that favor agri-businesses in detriment of rural workers and peasants. Now, the related countries need to apply this resolution in their domestic law.

Recognizing that the UN recognition of peasant rights and food sovereignty is very critical, it is also important to note that direct dialogue with governments and the on-going organizational efforts of producers and consumers are even more critical to continue this international legal achievement in practice and at national levels. We need to keep in mind that the institutionalization of food sovereignty is never enough. Bearing in mind the little impact achieved by the constitutional recognition of food sovereignty in Bolivia, Venezuela, and Ecuador, the organizations that work for the legal change also need to get prepared to develop new strategic plans and continue advocacy for pushing for structural changes in the countries who would recognize food sovereignty in their constitutions.

2.3.7. The Promising Character of Food Sovereignty Despite the Challenging Context of Corporate Food Regime and Its Own Contradictions and Dilemmas

There is a challenging context for the food sovereignty movement because of the rising corporate control in politics and global food chains. The growing market for industrial inputs, including seeds, industrial “cheap food model,” global agri-food trade supported by states and international institutions, and the negative impacts of all these developments on biodiversity, climate, and ecology constitute a very challenging context for food sovereignty movement while working on transformational reforms and/or “transitions to a post-petroleum, post-growth and/or post-capitalist society” (Edelman et al., 2014, p. 927). It is because of this highly challenging context that the food sovereignty movement needs to diagnose the deep structural changes needed in this economy and the liberal state to sustain food sovereignty. As food sovereignty is starting a new stage, we need more clarity in the movement and a straight ahead

advance in light of the points needed to be improved that are indicated by food sovereignty scholars and activists so far. This is why, in this section, I have focused on these critical points discussed in the food sovereignty literature, instead of the strengths of the food sovereignty movement. I believe that it is more likely for the movement to go on with a better-informed dialogue and widening collaborations between consumers and producers, and better engagement with agro-ecology, equal and fair relations in agriculture and food system.

Food sovereignty has the potential to be a comprehensive concept capable of strongly mobilizing people in different geographical areas, as it has the promise of covering several issues, from a quality, quantity, and origin of food to the production form and conditions of producers, their livelihoods, and dignity. Food sovereignty is a promising concept and struggle, to summarize in Van der Ploeg's (2014) words, it "(1) helps to build bridges between urban consumers and farmers; (2) triggers active food democracy by (...) stimulating local actors to co-design their food systems; (3) strengthens (...) social relations; (4) helps reduce the insecurity, instability, volatility, and dependency created by global commodity markets; and (5) helps agricultural producers to pursue more agroecological production methods" (p. 1000-1001). Hence, food sovereignty is more and more embraced by a large variety of actors across countries in both Global North and South.

Briefly, several alternative food initiatives and farmers' unions in the world that associate themselves with the food sovereignty movement and La Via Campesina have many reasons to position themselves in this movement and embrace its ideals and motivations. I believe that a movement like food sovereignty that does not only consider the benefits of producers and consumers but also the (extra-) human nature in a food regime shaped by commodification, expansion of exchange value, and profit and accumulation has a great value. This value gets bigger as it tries to offer an alternative political ontology that aims to transform the catastrophic economic, social, and ecological impacts of the current food regime, by

expanding democratic relations that aims to go beyond the inequities and injustices resulting from social attributes like class, gender, and race. Such a comprehensive and ambitious movement has surely many things to learn and contribute to, as it moves on a long path to go in this challenging context of the corporate food regime.

2.4. The Rise of Consumer Movements

Witnessing the tensions and the repercussions of the corporate food regime, consumers are increasingly losing their faith in the reliability of the foods they consume and become more anxious about the food and production risks impacting on their health, climate, and ecology. They are incrementally concerned about the inequalities and injustices that this food regime creates in detriment of, especially, some producers and consumers. The consumer food movements started to become visible particularly since the 1960s, with concerns mostly focused on the environment, health, and production forms. However, the 1980s became a turning point for these movements. “Voting with mouths” as a paradigm became popular, emphasizing the importance of consumers’ preferences to show their reaction to these problems of the current food regime (Karakaya, 2016, p. 65). Now, I will first discuss food justice, fair trade, and slow food movements, which are the prominent consumer food movements. I will then address in greater detail the organic and post-organic food movements, one after another, to better put forward the position of post-organic initiatives I focus on this research before I elaborate on the critical discussion on alternative food initiatives.

2.4.1. Food Justice Movement

Food justice movement aims to react against the food-related injustices that people face based on their class and race (Mares and Alkon, 2012). Since the 1970s, it has been “possibly the largest and fastest growing grassroots expression of the food movement” in the USA (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2011, p. 124). It is mainly because its main tenets are to fight the food injustices due to race and class inequalities, which are so visible in the USA, particularly

concerning African-American and Hispanic communities (Clendenning et al., 2016, p. 170). Food justice is defined as “the rights of communities everywhere to produce, process, distribute, access, and eat good food regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, religion, or community” (Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, 2012). It embraces values like respect, empathy, pluralism, and defending gender equity as well as the ending of racism and white privilege in agriculture and food relations. However, some theoreticians suggest that food justice movement does not have a strong position in face of other structural problems of the food politics nor engage in long-term national and international networks to impact on economic change, fair policies, and restructuring of global, national, and community pathways (Clendenning et al., 2016; Gottlieb and Joshi, 2010; Heynen et al., 2012).

2.4.2. Fair Trade Movement

Fair trade movement emerged in the 1950s and evolved to develop the supply chains in developing countries to enable fair trade between these countries and the Global North. Sharing a similar line like IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements), fair trade became a labeling initiative in 1997. In the 1990s, companies that aimed to create profits from ethical consumers constituted a niche market for fair trade. Later, several other companies initiated fair trade label and enlarged the product types, ending up with a mass-market era of fair trade (Davies and Crane, 2003).

Fair Trade International works today with 1.7 million farmers and workers (International Fair Trade Organization, 2020). World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO, 2009) considers fair trade as enabling “sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to and securing the rights of marginalized producers and workers.” Also, some scholars like Raynolds (2000) argue that fair trade develops “equitable social relations” through “values of solidarity and fairness” instead of the “values of the market” (p. 496). They argue that having direct trade with marginalized producers and shortening the conventional supply chain, these

solidarity networks can facilitate the connectivity between Southern producers and Northern consumers (Wilson and Mutersbaugh, 2015, p. 284).

On the other hand, many scholars suggest that to expand its market share, fair trade movement has become a political movement that has lost its radical innovativeness as an alternative social movement (Low and Davenport, 2005; Raynolds and Wilkonson, 2007). Fair trade is criticized for becoming a part of a “certification economy” and a marketing model that leads to emergent types of value creation by capitalist companies (Mutersbaugh, 2005). They also criticize that certification processes mostly reduce “fairness” into what producer does to meet the standards of fairness imposed by NGOs and other actors (Wilson and Mutersbaugh, 2015, p. 295).

2.4.3. *Slow Food Movement*

The Slow Food movement originated in Italy in the late 1980s in a context where consumers react to McDonaldization and massification of tastes. Slow food was officially founded as an international organization in 1989 by Carlo Petrini. It aims to preserve local foods and cuisines and unique flavors by building strong social relationships between producers and consumers, rejecting the fast, industrialized, corporate, and standardized mass-produced foods. It also defends the conservation of biodiversity, nature, small local producers, as well as to increase knowledge about food production.

There is a variety of approaches concerning the impact of the movement among scholars. The supporters of this movement believe in the power of our food choices to collectively impinge on how foods are grown and distributed (Wexler et al., 2017, p. 2). Pietrykowski (2004) argues that “both desire and resistance can play in creating a politically active consumer movement” (p. 318). On the other hand, Lotti (2009) draws attention to the increasing commoditization of the values and products that Slow Food has determined for its singularity. Jones et al. (2003), Chrzan (2004, p. 127), and Donati (2005, p. 229) question the

capacity of the movement to problematize the wider food policy issues and the challenges in the corporate agri-food system.

2.4.4. The Organic and Post-Organic Food Movements

The organic agriculture became a recognizable movement in the late 1960s paralleling back-to-the-land movement in the radical political context of the 1960s and 1970s that was activated through mobilizations like civil rights movement and anti-war activism (Goodman and Goodman, 2007, p. 26). It was also influenced by the criticisms of the advocates of sustainable agriculture against industrial agriculture and agribusinesses in that period and later by the popularity of localized agri-food systems in the 1980s. The establishment of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) in 1972 institutionalized the movement and catalyzed the movement in the 1980s by building collaborations with national and global policy actors for necessary regulations. In the 1990s, we witnessed the adoption of regulations on organic food, primarily in the USA and EU, which has led to the certification and standardization of organic agriculture in the 1990s in several countries (Karakaya, 2016, p. 52).

During the 1990s, consumer demand also increased, and certified organic foods began to be a well-marketed property in the USA and EU, paralleling the rise of supermarketization, targeting middle and upper classes (Reardon et al., 2005). In 1996, policymakers started to fund the companies for advisory services that were used to be given by organic institutions, which helped farmers to gain necessary knowledge and competencies for the production of organic food (Smith, 2006, p. 450). During the 2000s, the share of organic products in the market and the area of certified organic land have also grown significantly. By 2014, there were around 81 million hectares of certified organic land in 172 countries. The purchases of certified organic goods of textiles, body care, and foods reached at \$80 billion worldwide (FIBL & IFOAM, 2016, p. 26).

Nevertheless, the organic movement is criticized by many scholars from various angles. Goodman and Goodman (2007) present the technocratic regulatory structure behind the “organically grown” label as a crucial element in fragmenting the sustainable agriculture movements (SAMs) and dissipating hopes about the transformative potential of organic agriculture to challenge dominant industrial agri-food system (p. 23-24). This structure is largely criticized by the “conventionalization thesis,” arguing that organic standards concentrate on inputs rather than processes (p. 24). As a result, the focus of many large companies was merely the production of certified organic goods that would bring more profit in the niche organic market (Buck et al., 1997, p. 8). Saying this, the conventionalization thesis criticizes conventional agribusiness companies for reducing “organic food” merely into the use of allowable inputs and the production of privileged products. It suggests that they simply continue to adopt industrial processes and are not concerned with ecological sustainability that indeed requires practices like rotations, biological pest control, and non-exploitative labor relations and easier access of consumers to their organic products (Goodman and Goodman, 2007, p. 24).

Many scholars (Guthman, 1998; Jordon and Shuji, 2004) underline that it is inescapable for the organic movement to be incorporated into the mainstream capitalist accumulation. Following the criticisms towards the regulations on organic agriculture and certification, SAMs mostly shift their debates from the social agenda of sustainable agriculture into the local production of small growers who try to diversify their strategies of competition by adopting artisanal methods (Buck et al., 1997, p. 8). In fact, this situation also creates a problematic dichotomy between “industrial” vs. “local” or “artisanal” with the assumption that artisanal and local foods are always healthy, sustainable, and progressive as the counterpart of the industrial.

The post-organic movement thus has been emerging with the above-mentioned criticisms towards organic movement, briefly, suggesting that organic movement does not offer any more

a powerful transformative alternative because of its certification standards that favor organic agribusinesses rather than small farmers (Jordon and Shuji, 2004). Some post-organic actors like food cooperatives and farmers' markets have been rising in this context with ambitions to strengthen small farmers and localized food channels, through direct consumer-producer relations, demanding no organic certification. Some others like online natural food farms and even some intermediary online platforms of "natural food" also problematize in their discourses global agri-food relations and commoditization of foods, the distance between urban and rural spaces, and the transmission of local knowledge and techniques of agro-ecology by small farmers. Therefore, their most common emphasis is on that they try to create alternatives by adopting local agricultural techniques and valuing small-scale farming without pressuring the small producers with organic certification requirements.

It is Moore who uses the concept "post-organic" for the first time in a conference in 2003, "to refer to farmers who appeared to be no longer following the example of earlier organic farmers but who were demonstrating their own innovative activities" (Holt and Reed, 2006) through direct producer-consumer relations and trust. However, Moore suggests, it is not so possible to see at some points a sharp difference between organic and post-organic movements that the post-organic movement underlines in its discourses (pp. 25-33). As he underlines, it is important to analyze these movements without assuming an absolute dichotomy and trying to reveal the complexity and plurality of the actors, especially in the post-organic movement.

2.5. Alternative Food Market

Alternative food markets are mostly categorized as localized agri-food systems (LAS), short food supply chains (SFSC), and civic food networks (CFN). LAS is a model that is based on the development of small and medium enterprises for local rural development. Local food supply chains do not prioritize ecological or organic initiatives but they rather consist of initiatives that adopt market-oriented practices to contribute to the local rural economy

(Muchnik, 2009). These initiatives market their foods as “symbolic constructs” with locally distinctive characters, such as the climate and traditional techniques that add value to agricultural products (Cook and Crang, 1996). Shortened food supply chains concentrate on shortening the physical distance in delivering food to consumers from producers, by removing or sometimes reducing the number of intermediaries in the supply chain. SFSCs put forth the value-laden information on the production region and quality of foods (Renting et al., 2003) and construct the value of a product relying on the direct relationship between consumers and producers (Marsden et al., 2000).

Nevertheless, some theoreticians criticize the initiatives of LAS for only focusing on rural development and SFSC for merely considering the physical distance between producers and consumers. Goodman (1999), for instance, problematizes the exclusion of human and non-human elements and social ecosystems of the rural while designing rural economic development. Requier-Desjardins (2010) underlines that in many cases of LAS, the added-value of a product goes to non-local actors instead of small-scale local actors because of the lack of processing facilities, which contradicts with one of the major ambitions of the local agri-food systems. They emphasize that local food systems and SFSCs do not necessarily sustain genetic diversity, wildlife, and a clean environment, and local foods are not necessarily tasteful and GMO-free. It is suggested that LAS initiatives may simply be local actors that operate in localized contexts according to the market relations and the rules of the corporate food regime. Similarly, most SFSC initiatives may only problematize the existence of many intermediaries in the distribution of food but not how the products are produced (e.g. industrial or ecological production?) under which conditions and labor relations, by whom, as well as other market relations they are embedded in.

Civic food networks are models based on the cooperation of producers and consumers, by founding community-supported agriculture (CSA) groups, consumer cooperatives, etc., to

develop new relations of food production, consumption, and distribution. Civic food networks offer new relations between engaged producers and consumers in forms of food citizenship and new forms of cooperation between varying actors. They suggest reinventing rural-urban relations and production-consumption relations. They develop new knowledge and discourses on sustainable, local, ecological/organic foods, and mostly develop relations with new social movements (Renting et al., 2012). I will investigate in detail some cases of civic alternative food initiatives by presenting and discussing some cases from different geographies. However, I will first discuss the critical literature on alternative food initiatives.

2.5.1. Critical Literature on Alternative Food Initiatives

Alternative food initiatives are elaborated in the literature by addressing new livelihood strategies for small farmers with the search for autonomy from corporate commodity chains (Goodman and Goodman, 2007), consumers' search for trust (Goodman, 2003), and diverse actors collaborating for new systems of food provision (Brunori et al., 2011; Guthman, 2004). The literature explores these new experiences of small farmers, the functioning of these systems, and its social and economic implications in terms of agriculture, environment, and food relations.

There is a difference in the elaboration of “alternative” in the North American and the European literatures. Goodman (2003) asserts that the alternativeness is discussed in the North American literature as part of a political agenda for environmental and social justice and economic relations, while European literature mostly associates “alternative” food with a series of characteristics such as “localness” (e.g. Norberg-Hodge et al., 2002), “quality” (e.g. Gilg and Battershill, 1998) and puts it in a binary relation with “conventional” food (p. 79). We need to investigate the geographical and temporal contingency of “alternativeness” (Crewe et al., 2003) because it is “a slippery concept, resisting definition and shifting as soon as attempts are made to tie it down” (Holloway et. al, 2007, p. 80). There is no singular “alternative” food

system or a monolithic conventional food system. Besides, many actors have branches both in conventional, local, and alternative food production. Therefore, we need to elaborate diverse cases exploring “where”s and “why”s of each case and focusing on the implications of their combinations.

As Goodman and Goodman (2007) also put, many scholar-activists discuss local food networks (LFNs) as sites of resistance to the time-space distantiation and corporate power (p. 28). However, “normative localism” also creates an illusory image of local places as carrying entirely conflict-free values and knowledge to resist capitalist forces (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005, p. 359). DuPuis and Goodman (2005) offer a distinction between “reflexive” and “unreflexive” localisms, based on whether local initiatives become simply a way for empowering local elites or they are developed democratically in the local as part of their resistance against global conventional food chains. The “local” label does not guarantee that a product is grown in alternative relations of production. Some local producers utilize this notion of localness to overcome their vulnerable position in the market while some use it as a value-adding strategy for their capital accumulation. The increasing danger of absorption of “locally grown” foods by mainstream food chains may incrementally decrease the real capacity of local food movement. Thus, it is always necessary to pay attention to what kind of social relations and relations of power are seen and theorize well the notions of (re)localization to avoid the marginalization of the real implications of AFNs. Paying attention to these critical points would enable healthier analyses of alternative food initiatives to discuss whether they are “meaningful” AFNs to catalyze the transformation of the current agri-food relations (Jones et al., 2010, p. 95-96).

2.5.2. Civic Food Networks: The Rising Alternative Food Initiatives of the Last Decades

Civic food networks (CFN) is a recent conceptualization of some AFNs that have been rising to offer a solution to the above-mentioned critiques. In the literature, civic food initiatives are

linked to political notions like food democracy (Hassanein, 2003), food sovereignty (Hospes, 2014), and food citizenship (Lockie, 2009; Seyfang, 2006), distinguishing CFNs from other AFNs especially by referring to the quality of interaction between the actors as well as the more participative and active character of citizens as actors (Mount, 2012).

Civic food networks have been rising in the last decade in parallel with the changing role of the consumers who take initiative to cooperate directly with producers. In civic food initiatives, consumers are more connected to production and more active in consumer-producer relations than in other forms of AFNs. CFNs have their own criteria of food quality as well as flexible coordination and control systems based on direct face-to-face communication and mutual trust of consumers and producers (Renting et al., 2012). Food communities, consumer food cooperatives, CSA groups, collective urban gardening are some examples of civic food networks. Most consumer food cooperatives and CSA groups are also politically engaged, differently from many LAS and SFSCs. Especially the consumers in CSA groups and food cooperatives in civic food networks (CFN) have ecological, social, and ethical concerns in addition to concerns related to their bodily health. These initiatives invite citizens to actively participate in food politics by becoming part of their community.

2.5.2.1. Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) Groups

CSA is a direct partnership and mutual commitment between one or more farms and a consumer community (IFOAM, 2014) based on local production and consumption and periodical deliveries to community members. CSAs (Teikei in Japan) emerged first in Japan in 1971 with the idea of offering an alternative distribution of food, with environmental motivations and the emphasis on the hazards about the agricultural chemicals in the conventional food systems (Kondoh, 2015). In the late 1970s, there were similar initiatives in Switzerland and France in Europe, but they could not form a network until the 2000s (Henderson, 2010). Since 1986 when CSAs started in the USA, the number of CSA groups in the USA rose to 60 in 1990, 1150 in

2005, and 4000 in 2013 (Ernst, 2013). As the CSA initiatives have grown more considerable since 2000, the International Network of Community Supported Agriculture (URGENCEI) was established in 2008 as the leading organization for these networks worldwide to maintain coherence between CSAs at local, national and global levels (URGENCEI, 2020).

The functioning of CSAs in different countries is independent of each other due to their social and cultural differences. However, their common principles are to build direct trust-based relationships between farmers and consumers in their locality, determining a fair price for healthy, fresh, and environmentally friendly food. Differently from the disconnected relationship between consumers and producers in conventional agri-food relations, producers and consumers of a CSA network are expected to exchange regular and transparent knowledge between each other and share the responsibility of production and consumption relations. Consumers are ideally considered as partners in the CSA and usually expected to share the risks and benefits of production that respects the natural rhythm of seasons, environment, cultural heritage, and health. They usually try to guarantee the small producer the purchase of a share of the harvest of that season and to provide a sufficient fair price up-front to support farmers, especially when agreed upon Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS). These alternative relations are designed to overcome the current vulnerabilities created by the risks and the ambiguity of the market such as the instability of prices.

In Germany, it is estimated that there are around 50 farms in Germany that operate as CSA farms (Solidarische Landwirtschaft, 2020). Consumers work with farms usually 30-40 kilometer away from their community. These communities finance a farm by paying for seeds, equipment, and the labor of farmers and deciding together with the farmer about the production form. In return, they share the products of the farm or farms they collaborate with. They pay their money to the farmer in advance and share the responsibility of the farm with the farmer as well as the products of the farm. In this way, they offer a regular income to the farmer and

render the farmer more independent from the ambiguous and pressuring dynamics of the market.

CSA networks in France, called AMAP (Association pour le Maintien d'une Agriculture Paysanne-Association for Maintaining Peasant Farming), are quite widespread. According to URGENCI, there were around 3600 CSA farms in France by 2015. AMAPs started in 2001. Some groups collaborate with more than one farmer (David-Leroy and Girou, 2009). There are regional and national networks of AMAPs and an official AMAP charter. By respecting this charter, each community can, however, determine its structure and operations. The respect and protection of biodiversity, the non-use of pesticides and chemicals are the essential characteristics of AMAP farms. In general, communities form an AMAP by collaborating with a vegetable producer and then build one or two more with other farmers, through an official contract. Similar to most CSA farms in Europe, they work by sharing the risks as well as the products of a farm they are associated with. In that sense, they differ from other projects like box schemes (Schlicht et al., 2011, p. 27-28). Like in Turkey and Germany, AMAPs in France also do not usually demand organic certification from the farmer.

In Turkey, producers of CSA have some disadvantages compared to those in German and French cases. The CSA groups in Turkey also work without intermediaries with producers who respect biodiversity, cultural heritage, and health and they pay fair prices to producers. However, it is not a rule for them to share the risks of the production. Prosumers do not usually guarantee the purchase of a predetermined volume of the harvest, because there is no contract or agreement signed by a certain number of persons in a community in advance to assure such a guarantee. The number of consumers in the network and the foods they order change from one month to another. These fluctuations in the orders avoid producers' planning of orders in advance.

2.5.2.2. *Civic Consumer-Led Food Cooperatives*

Civic consumer-led cooperatives have been emerging in the last three decades, especially in the 2000s, around ecological, organic, local food supply, and most with more participatory and democratic ambitions than earlier food and agricultural cooperatives. Differently from the traditional producer and consumer cooperatives, these recent experimentations of civic consumer food cooperatives do not form only to satisfy the needs of producers or the material needs of consumers but also the new social demands of citizens, such as emotional, environmental, expressive needs concerning food (Jackson et al., 2004; Max-Neef, 1991)

Compared to other civic food networks, civic consumer food cooperatives are less instrumentalist and individualistic (Cox et al., 2008; Pole and Gray, 2013). In general, they are seen as an “expression of food citizenship as consumers take control over the distribution in the food system” (Jaklin et al., 2015, p. 45). Citizens take an active role as members to contribute to the alternative distribution of foods (Little et al., 2010). However, of course, they are not homogenous. Some mostly prioritize the easier supply of local and affordable organic food (Grasseni, 2014; Little et al., 2010). Some others are more critical of the current food regime (Montiel et al., 2010) with a strong political position. In recent civic consumer food cooperatives, trust, solidarity, and transparency (Grasseni, 2014; Lutz and Schachinger, 2013) appear as crucial values. In these aspects, they differ from many other direct marketing initiatives in AFNs.

The members of civic consumer food cooperatives are different from the consumers of the farmers’ markets. They are no longer ordinary consumers, but they are co-producers or collaborators of an institutionalized form of interaction with farmers (Haedicke, 2012). As in CSA initiatives, the direct collaboration of consumers (or prosumers) with farmers offer the opportunity of mutual learning (Milestad et al., 2010). Of course, only engaged consumers and members benefit from this learning process (Tregear, 2011). In these initiatives, prosumers also

contribute to the production of new knowledge and discourses on local seeds, seasonal nutrition, and biodiversity (Lutz and Schachinger, 2013). The production of new knowledge and discourses in civic consumer food cooperatives is more visible compared to other AFNs including CSAs, as they are more apparent in the public space.

In these civic consumer food cooperatives, consumers' common priority is to know how the foods on their table are grown. Thus, when the products meet their criteria and consumers understand the production conditions of the farmer, they appreciate the product quality and the labor of the farmer and they are more open to paying for increased costs of production (Grasseni, 2014). Farmers also get more autonomy and higher income as they get fairer prices for their labor and sell their produce directly to consumers. This helps farmers to sustain their local production with organic or ecological peasant farming techniques (Kerton and Sinclair, 2009).

2.5.3. Discussion of AFNs in Different Country Settings

2.5.3.1. AFNs in North and South American Context: The USA, Canada, Brazil

The USA

According to the data of Agricultural Resource and Management Survey (ARMS) and census of agriculture, local food sales in the USA were \$6.1 billion in 2012. In 2012, 7.8% of farms were marketing their foods by direct-to-consumer (DTC) or intermediated sales. 70% of them were using only direct-to-consumer market channels that largely consist of CSA initiatives and farmers' markets (Low et al., 2015). Consumer food cooperatives in the USA are also an essential actor of the alternative food movement, together with CSA, farmers' markets, and community gardens. In total, the food cooperatives in the USA have tripled their sales in the past ten years (Zitcer, 2015).

Canada

In Canada, there have been an increasing interest in local food cooperatives and farmers' markets in the last two decades. These direct food channels provide a fairer income for farmers. Canadian farmers earn only twenty cents per consumer from conventional sales, whereas they get sixty cents or more per consumer from local organic food cooperatives (Renglich, 2012). Besides, differently from the earlier cooperatives in the 1960s and 70s that are supply-focused, food coops in Canada today bring together farmers, consumers, and community members in solidarity and integrate the needs of all these stakeholders (Giddens, 2015). The local networks of these cooperatives are also very large. For instance, Local Organic Food Coops Network (LOFC) consists of more than 90 active cooperatives, aiming to cultivate and supply local healthy food, bring local farmers and consumers together, protect soil and water, value community culture and good food, and influence public policy (Sumner et al., 2014, pp. 51-57).

Brazil

AFNs in Brazil are usually concerned with the autonomy of farmers and consumers in food production, distribution, and consumption, family or peasant farming, as well as landless farmers with the influence of MST (Lamine, 2012, p. 390). The participatory guarantee system, which is also addressed in the Brazilian decree (Dec. 6.323/2007), makes possible the participation of all stakeholders that shape together the processes of food production, distribution, and consumption and integrating them into the certification process. It renders them less dependent on distant actors, institutions, and mechanisms like third-party certifications (p. 394).

All different forms of AFNs in Brazil try to influence public policy on rural development and production, participating in public debates, advocating for agro-ecology and local economy, food consciousness, and the access of all people to safe and nutritious food. As the AFNs and agro-ecology in Brazil have increasingly been recognized in Brazil, the focus

on family farming in the national food program and the impact of civic food networks on public policies have also been rising (pp. 386-389).

2.5.3.2. AFNs in European Context: France and Spain

France

Food networks such as box schemes, farmers' markets, and collective producer shops have emerged in France since the 1990s. These networks do not entirely consist of organic producers, yet they have a considerable share. Only 45% of organic products in France are sold in supermarkets (Agence Bio, 2010). Differently from the Brazilian AFNs advocating for agro-ecology and alternative legal certification systems from the beginning, the French AFNs mostly rely on organic movement and strict certification requirements since the 1980s. AFNs in France have an impact on agricultural policies and institutions due to their growing expansion. The public institutions recognize their impact and devote more financial support to AFNs. They have been used as a tool by policymakers to support rural development (Lamine, 2012, p. 396).

Spain

Civic food initiatives in Spain have been emerging in a context where the domestic organic market is less developed and more export-oriented compared to West and North European countries. In Spain, organic certification systems and state regulations on organic/ecological farming are not as dominant as in the case of French and Canadian agricultural markets. Mainstream actors are not much involved in new marketing channels. Furthermore, organic products are usually expensive and unaffordable for many consumers and limited to certain varieties of foods.

The lack of public institutions to support the domestic organic market renders alternative food initiatives in Spain more radical. They have been rising more independently from below and mostly led by farmers' unions and consumer groups. They aim to redefine

“consumers” and “producers” and the relations between them by maximizing collective action from a political standpoint integrated into a broader agro-ecological movement (Calle et al., 2009; López and Badal, 2006; Montiel et al., 2010). CFNs in Spain consider values like solidarity, participatory democracy, and economic and environmental concerns. There are also CSA networks of ecological consumers and producers in Andalusia and the Basque Country, which are respectively supported by the Union of Land Workers and the Basque Farmers’ Union. The unions adopt food sovereignty perspective and facilitate the collaboration between consumers and producers around agro-ecological criteria (Montiel et al., 2010, pp. 1769-1778)

2.5.3.3. Evaluation

These case studies put forth that collective civic alternatives with more transformative ambitions from below emerge mostly in countries with a less developed domestic organic market. They also rise mostly in places where organic certification systems and state regulations on organic farming are not very dominant, and organic products are usually unaffordable for many consumers. Those emerging alternatives with a more robust political stance mostly relate themselves directly with agro-ecology and social movements, mainly the food sovereignty movement. They are mostly autonomous entities from the government and institutions despite their collaborations with some external actors. Their demand from the state is not its intervention to their internal dynamics but its direct support for agro-ecology, small farmers, and the organizations of ecological farmers by consulting and collaborating with them to enact agricultural policies that favor them.

2.6. Conclusion

The analysis of the third food regime suggested that the existing food regime has been sustained through decreased farm subsidies, privatization of public services, favoring of corporate interests and financial institutions to the detriment of small farmers, consumers, and the environment. The persistence of capital accumulation in the present food regime intensifies the

dispossession and marginalization of agrarian communities. Besides, it augments the number of economically disadvantaged consumers who are unable to afford their food. In other words, the pledge of modern agri-food systems to “feed the world” and discourses on food safety and food security have already failed. The use of artificial fertilizers, growth hormones, chemicals, antibiotics, and food processing, increases the food fear in the absence of intangible threats on which experts do not present conclusive results. After having addressed these issues, this chapter elaborated on the global agri-food context in which alternative experimentations of agricultural production have been emerging. It also investigated the rise of peasant and consumer movements such as food sovereignty, the slow food movement, organic and post organic movements.

The discussions on the food sovereignty literature suggested that the food sovereignty movement distinguishes from others for being capable of strongly mobilizing people in different geographical areas. It has the promise of covering several issues, from quality, quantity, and origin of food to the production form and conditions of producers, their livelihoods, and dignity. However, food sovereignty movement now need more clarity in some respects and what is apparent is the different approaches of various actors in the movement regarding certain issues.

This chapter thus discussed the varying positions concerning the place of locality, long-distance trade, and certification systems in the food sovereignty movement as well as the role of the state in food sovereignty. Some activists and scholars advocate for state-led food sovereignty. In contrast, others consider that state-led food sovereignty may endanger the autonomous control of producers over their production and reduce the protagonism of social organizations for food sovereignty. They argue that a simple constitutional recognition of food sovereignty may contribute only a little to challenging the power of agro-industry.

Furthermore, the discussions of food sovereignty underlined the strategic role of urban agriculture and urban food initiatives for food sovereignty. They addressed that many actors in the movement favor the agro-ecology of peasants rather than organic agriculture. There is a potential cumulative effect of interconnected networks and relationships in the food sovereignty movement, as well as networks of collaborations with other communities and movements at multiple levels to make their voice and actions stronger. Finally, this chapter suggested that alternative food networks have a complicated nature in the sense of what kind of “alternative” each alternative offers, and the meaning of the existence of an alternative initiative for contributing to the transformation of the current food relations. It also discussed the AFNs in different country and demonstrated that similar types of alternative channels in different geographies have different characteristics, dynamics, and functioning along with the political, social, economic, and ecological dynamics of each country.



CHAPTER 3

The Transformation of Agricultural Policies and Agri-Food Relations in Turkey from a Socio-Economical and Ecological Perspective

This chapter elaborates the history of agricultural transformation in Turkey, focusing on the neoliberal transformation of Turkish agriculture since the 1980s. It also discusses the current agrarian crisis, recent agricultural laws and regulations; briefly, the severe repercussions of neoliberal agricultural transformations on consumers and producers in Turkey, by drawing upon the existing literature.

3.1. The Agricultural Transformation in Turkey since the 1980s

The neoliberal policies have incrementally been adopted in the Turkish agri-food system throughout the 1980s, but they have accelerated, especially after the enactment of the Agrarian Reform Implementation Project. The agricultural reform has enforced the direct income support as current policy, brought the 2006 Seed Law, and gradually resulted in the privatization of the of state's agricultural initiatives as well as the defunctionalization of cooperatives (Keyder and Yenal, 2013, pp. 198-200). Of course, this reform and related changes in agricultural laws and politics, in other words, the changes in the superstructure, are not independent of (indeed the results of) the changes in the relations of production (infrastructure) in the previous years, from a Marxist perspective. Interdependently, these changes in the superstructure deepened the transformation in the infrastructure, leading further transformations today in the superstructure (Gürel, 2013, p. 51). As suggested by Gürel, this approach based on historical materialism is essential to be considered in analyzing the new infrastructure in agricultural production in Turkey in the last decades. This chapter aims to provide a better understanding of the changes in the agricultural laws and politics in the 2000s and its repercussions on agricultural production

and small farming today. Thus, it investigates further the transformation of infrastructure (as a result of the infrastructure-superstructure interdependence) since the 1980s. This perspective would also help discuss later the potential of collective civic food initiatives in transforming production relations in infrastructure and agricultural politics at the level of the superstructure.

3.1.1. Turkish Agriculture between 1980 and 1999

During the period 1945-1980, the state enterprises and the unions of agricultural sales cooperatives were purchasing many agricultural products like hazelnuts, tea, and tobacco, with a predetermined minimum price. TIGEM (General Directorate of Agricultural Enterprises), TÜGSAŞ (Turkish Fertilizer Industry Incorporation), TZDK Agricultural Equipment Institution, Turkish Fodder Industry (YEMSAN) were producing inputs. The Meat and Fish Board (EBK), Turkish Dairy Products Industry (TSEK), ÇAYKUR (The General Directorate of Tea Enterprises), TMO (Soil Products Office), TEKEL, and the Unions of Agricultural Sales Cooperatives were procuring, storing, and marketing farmers' products. The possible loss had usually been compensated by Ziraat Bankası (TCZB), which was also providing agricultural loans with low-interest rates (Keyder and Yenal, 2013, p. 196). The state was also increasing the number of subsidized products in the times of elections.

The first radical diversion from these politics was seen in 1980, realizing “24 January Decisions” after the coup d’état in September 1980. 24 January Decisions was including many aspects of structural adjustment programs of the World Bank and the stabilization policy package of IMF, such as devaluation, the removal of price rises in state economic enterprises and price controls, restriction of support purchases, customs exemption for import inputs (Günaydın, 2014, p. 519). These decisions also marked a turning point for ending the politics of import substitution and benefiting from the advantage of the cheap labor force for export policies (p. 519). The post-coup atmosphere, including the repression of the syndical movement, prepared the suitable ground for the implementation of neoliberal policies by 24

January Decisions. During this period until the 1987 elections, the scope of agricultural supports narrowed significantly, and some crucial general directorates regarding agriculture and animal husbandry were closed. For instance, the General Directorate of Land and Water, which had determined restricted areas for factory building, was closed by Turgut Özal during this period. Similarly, the General Directorate of Agricultural Quarantine, which was inspecting the safety of agricultural products (e.g. pesticide residues) and the General Directorate of Food which had laboratories in each region of Turkey were closed. Corporations have gradually replaced these institutions. These policies represent a sharp rupture from the planned development policies in the period 1963-1979 where the agricultural supports increased, and the industry for agricultural inputs developed, following import substitution policies.

In the period between 1980 and 1986, total agricultural support of Turkey was far below the average of OECD countries (Keyder and Yenal, 2013, p. 196). The minimum prices for support purchases and the number of subsidized products, so the income of farmers declined. In contrast, the subventions for agricultural inputs, hence the expenses of farmers, increased remarkably. The number of subsidized products was twenty-nine in 1970; however, decreased to thirteen in 1985 (Abay et al., 2001, p. 9). The share of agricultural subventions in GDP decreased from 0.9% to 0.3%, from 1980 to 1991. The share of agriculture in GDP also declined to 14.97% in 1993 from 22.47% in the period 1980-1985 (Çakmak and Zaim, 1998). Thus, in this period, the terms of trade turned against agriculture, indicating that the return from agriculture decreased significantly relative to other sectors (Güven, 2009, p. 165).

Although the state started to implement neoliberal policies in these years, the minimum prices and subventions increased again before the general elections in 1987. They rose even more significantly after farmers' revolts culminated in 1989. The revolts of farmers and workers cut this neoliberal atmosphere that started by 24 January Decisions and the 12 September coup in 1980 (e.g. Spring Revolts in 1989, Zonguldak Strike in 1990 and 1991) and then accelerated

after they weakened (Gürel, 2013, p. 56) with 5 April Decisions in 1994. The change in the number of subsidized products reflects the social dynamics and related economic policies during these years. With the rise of revolts against neoliberal policies, the number of subsidized products increased to twenty-four in 1991, twenty-six in 1992, from ten in 1990. However, after the 5 April Decisions, it declined again to nine in 1994 (Günaydın, 2014, p. 521).

The agriculture felt the 1994 crisis in Turkey deeply. As a result of the stabilization policies by the IMF and the World Bank, many state economic enterprises were defunctionalized, privatized, or closed. The privatizations started in the state economic enterprises in the area of animal husbandry. The state-owned Meat and Fish Board (EBK), Turkish Fodder Industry (YEMSAN), and Turkish Dairy Products Industry (TSEK) were some of the SEEs privatized during the coalition of DYP-SHP between 1993 and 1995. These were state economic enterprises regulating the market in favor of farmers and consumers, by producing animal feed for affordable prices and purchasing milk and meat from farmers with fair prices. Thus, their privatizations led to the rise of the dominance of big companies and their joint ventures with transnational companies. For instance, 48 public enterprises, 1197 private enterprises, and 1197 cooperatives were operating in the dairy sector before the privatization of TSEK (Suiçmez, 2003, p. 30). However, after its privatization, Turkish holdings with their dairy brands, e.g. Süttaş, Pınar Süt (Yaşar Holding), Mis Süt (Nestlé), SEK (Koç Holding), Danone-Tikveşli-Birtat (Sabancı Holding), Ülker (Yıldız Holding), have started to dominate the sector, mostly with their international partners (Aydın, 2010, p. 169).

TZDK was also included in the privatization process in 1998. It was providing agricultural inputs, machines, and equipment at low prices since 1944. However, after being incorporated, it has become defunctionalized, and all its branch offices were closed. TÜGSAŞ that had become a state economic enterprise in 1954 was also privatized in 1998. It used to regulate the fertilizer market in favor of farmers with large production. Therefore, farmers now

depend on the fertilizer prices determined by private companies, with 150% raised pay (Aysu, 2019). However, in this period, the state did not fully follow neoliberal policies. To give an example, during the coalition of RP and DYP, the share of agricultural producer support (as per cent of gross farm receipts) rose to 31.6% in 1997 from 25.5% in 1996 (OECD, 2018).

To sum up, the period 1945-1980 started with national development policies which aimed at agricultural growth by protective subventions and price supports. The commercialization of products and inputs, as well as the integration of agriculture into the national economy, were realized largely by state policies. In other words, while producers were adapting to new products and technologies, the state was acting as an important actor to ensure a stable market (Keyder and Yenal, 2013, p. 99). Nevertheless, in the 1980s, along with the influence of global actors such as IMF and World Bank, Turkey started to prevent from regulating the agricultural market, which was not yet entirely brought in life because of public reactions and populist concerns. The privatizations of many state economic enterprises started in the 1990s. However, it is still not possible to argue that the 1990s embraced the neoliberal logic completely, because the political parties did not want to lose the votes of the rural population.

This neoliberalization process was indeed triggered by the Uruguay Round Agreement on Agriculture and the foundation of World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995, like in many developing countries. The decisions taken in the Uruguay Round were followed by North American Trade Agreement and EU's Common Agricultural Policy; expanding free trade for agricultural products and imposing the reduction in the subventions by signatory countries, especially the developing countries like Turkey. Hence, the radical changes in the Turkish agriculture were especially seen after the Standby Agreements with IMF and Turkey's letters of intent given to IMF in 1999.

3.1.2. Rural Transformation and the Changes in the Relations of Production

Before focusing on the agricultural legislation in the 2000s (changes in the superstructure), I would like to address the rural transformation and the relations of production (infrastructure) since the 1950s. It is because the recent legislation in the 2000s is not built upon the changes in the relations of production in the previous decades. Therefore, this section aims mainly to address the rural transformation, the rise of transnational agri-businesses, and contract-farming, to understand better the recent agricultural politics and its impact on the relations of production in detriment of small-scale farmers, as well as to analyze its other social, economic, and ecological repercussions.

3.1.2.1. The Analysis of Agricultural and Rural Dynamics in Turkey

This chapter elaborated above the economic development, industrialization, and agricultural modernization processes in the 1950s. In this period, we witnessed the formation and expansion of a national agricultural market as well as the increase in the petty commodity production in the rural space following the Land Reform. The state's distribution of land mainly empowered politically powerful landowners but also other peasants who had no or only little land (Keyder, 1985, p. 102). The number of families who cultivated their land increased to 3.1 million in 1963 from 2.3 million in 1950 (Keyder and Yenal, 2013, p. 146).

The empowerment of small-scale farmers in this period avoided the sharp rupture of otherwise dispossessed rural population from their villages in times of their migration to urban spaces in the following years. From the 1950s to 1980s, farmers had relatively safe conditions, because market conditions were not threatening the production and sale of their products. It was mainly the result of state policies which regulated the market by providing subventions, low-rate loans, and minimum price politics for agricultural production. The state was also intervening in the field of cooperative organization in agriculture during this period of planned development. One of the reasons that support the existence of small farming before 1980 was

the relatively robust state of cooperatives. Many small-scale farmers were the members of the agricultural sales cooperatives as well as village development cooperatives in the 1960s and 1970s.

The village development cooperatives became, however, mainly an intermediary for migrating labor force to Germany, rather than becoming as effective as expected for agricultural development. They started to be established in 1965 and were included in the Law on Cooperatives (Number 1163) in 1969. The villagers establishing cooperatives were given priority, with the promise of investing in their village cooperative as members, while the migrants were working in Germany. Thousands of workers went to Germany through this process. Nevertheless, a limited number of village development cooperatives could prepare a development project approved by the state. Most village cooperatives did not even operate, and they became a means of providing loans and inputs to traders and wealthy peasants (Aysu, 2014, p. 578). Although there was a restricted number of successful village cooperatives, they were important for getting organized from below to respond the local necessities, covering comprehensive operations in many areas such as animal husbandry, stocking, and transportation.

Their central union, KÖY-KOOP, was established in 1971. These cooperatives became an alternative form of organization because they were not established from above and state-mandated like agricultural sales cooperatives and agricultural loan cooperatives, which indeed postponed the organization of democratic and independent cooperative structures in Turkey. Most of the village cooperatives had the facilities to process and sell their products. Until the 1980s, these cooperatives were offering organized farmers an opportunity to sell their products without intermediaries. Cooperative organizations lost all the support and were considerably damaged after the coup in 1980. Military commissions judged many of the members of KÖY-KOOP.

In 1989, with some amendments in the Law 1163, the ministry restructured cooperatives and put the village development cooperatives under the umbrella of “agricultural development cooperatives” with other type of cooperatives. They formed four unions, as KÖY-KOOP, OR-KOOP, ÇAY-KOOP, HAY-KOOP. Afterwards, the state did not pay attention to increase the number and the efficiency of these cooperatives. The number of agricultural cooperatives declined dramatically in the 1980s, especially after these amendments. The number of cooperatives in the rural space was 1915 in 1957, 5973 in 1970, 13,123 in 1980; however, it decreased to 7462 in 1990 (Geray, 1992).

However, we shall not romanticize the structure and functioning of village cooperatives in that period. These cooperatives usually did not have democratic mechanisms in practice. The presidents of cooperatives and their board of management operated for very long years, establishing their hegemony, avoiding the diversity, and eventually threatening the sustainability of the organization. They also usually did not have an egalitarian structure. They were male-dominated, and wealthier villagers were having more share and vote than the others. This hierarchal and unsustainable structure of traditional agricultural cooperatives still has a bad reputation in Turkey, avoiding potential cooperative endeavors both on the side of producers and consumers. The “new generation” consumer food cooperatives that are the focus of this research also aim to struggle against this bad reputation and reconstruct the perception of cooperative organizations as flat, equal, transparent, and participative structures. I will discuss this ambition of new-generation cooperatives, especially in chapters 5 and 8.

To investigate the rural dynamics in this period, we should also elaborate on the changes related to land. The rise of the tourism sector, especially in the period after 1980, the land was opened incrementally to summerhouses, hotels, and touristic facilities, particularly in the Western regions of Turkey. Besides, the access to common lands of villagers such as meadows decreased gradually in years. This commoditization of formerly agricultural lands empowered

the market logic. Thus, many peasants either started to work in non-agricultural sectors and search for entrepreneurial commercial activities or focus on the production of labor-intensive products (Keyder and Yenal, 2013, p. 156). In the 1990s, the dismissal of the traditional farmers in the eastern regions of Turkey from their land, because of the forced migration of Kurdish people, thus completed the reign of the market-oriented and technology-intensive agriculture in all rural areas (p. 162), turning these dispossessed former farmers into urban proletarians.

Today, along with the decline of the developmentalist period and the incremental penetration of transnational actors in the agri-food sector, the model of the peasantry that sustains through state supports in production and marketing has gradually declined. Thus, agriculture is no more the main or the only subsistence form for many peasants. The variety of non-agrarian income activities have also been rising since the 1980s. Besides, the development of communication and transportation, the spatial and temporal space between the rural and urban spaces have approximated (Keyder and Yenal, 2013, pp. 172-175). Therefore, the rural model in which peasants are relatively isolated citizens who make their living solely out of agriculture has lost its significance.

In this context,⁶ seasonal workers play an important role in agriculture, from picking hazelnuts, cotton, tea, and fruits to harvesting lentils and beans. Many of them are dispossessed Kurdish people, but there are also local people in the region working as seasonal workers as well as Syrian migrants or foreigners like Georgian workers in tea harvest. They are all unorganized workers in insecure working conditions, whose labor is usually exploited for surplus. The exploitation of child labor and female labor was also widespread in Turkish agriculture. Women workers both deal with house works and children and work in agriculture for significantly lower prices than even low-income male workers. Hence, it becomes vital to

⁶ The transformation of labor relations concerning small farming, the significant role of seasonal workers in agriculture, and the destruction of rural land by capital will be better understood when read together with the section on the agrarian politics since 2000. Therefore, these discussions need to be read as the reality since 1980s but becoming more evident since 2000.

consider these inequalities and labor exploitations in discussions of food sovereignty and implementations of alternative agriculture.

Other than fully proletarianized former farmers, most small-scale farmers in Turkey continue family farming in their village while working in other agrarian or non-agrarian works under insecure and temporary conditions. Since they continue to make their living and cultivate their small agricultural land, they yet define themselves as small-scale farmers, not as workers (Keyder and Yenal, 2013, pp. 161-167).⁷ These are mostly men who work in non-agrarian seasonal works. Since the family does not pay for an additional worker, women take the whole responsibility in the house and the field, but they are not paid for their labor. The long-term seasonal works of men and the unpaid labor of women in their field thus become a widespread form of preserving the land property for small-scale farmers, of which the title deeds generally belong to men. Under these conditions, the organization of women in cooperatives and associations to get the fair compensation of their labor becomes a crucial issue. I will discuss these matters through my fieldwork on some female cooperatives, collectives, and associations in Chapter 6.

To understand the rural and agricultural transformation in Turkey fully, we also need to elaborate on the impact of international dynamics. As addressed in the previous sections, the global crisis in the 1970s put an end to the economic development of the post-war era and the 1980s witnessed a neoliberal economic restructuration led by the IMF and World Bank. Many reformist and precautionary actions started to be implemented to restrict public expenses and liberalize the market, starting from the 1990s but especially 2000s. In this period, global agribusinesses and global retail companies have incrementally dominated the agri-food sector in every step of food production from modifying and patenting seeds to determining production conditions, food prices and the distribution forms of food within their global-wide supply

⁷ Contract-farming is also a mostly preferred subsistence form for small-scale farmers today, which is indeed a process which proletarianize them in their own land. I will elaborate contract-farming more detailly in this section.

chains. The agricultural inputs have increasingly been commoditized and become quite expensive, while the instability of food prices have also been pressuring small-scale farmers. The small scale-farmers feel considerably insecure and get into debt by loans to survive under these conditions. Transnational agribusinesses and big-scale Turkish companies also started contract-farming with small farmers, especially since the 1990s, dictating their own rules and decisions such as food prices, inputs, and production conditions, but not sharing the risks related to production.

Briefly, the dependence of small-scale farmers on the market conditions has made them more vulnerable, as a result of the neoliberal politics of the state which incrementally empowered the sovereignty of corporations. The internationalization and deregulation of the agri-food sector in Turkey, particularly since the 1990s, have complicated market dynamics and labor relations in agricultural production. I will first elaborate below the transformation of the relations of agricultural production after 1980, by focusing on the rise of international agribusinesses and supermarketization, then on the rise of contract-farming.

3.1.2.1. The Transformation of the Relations of Agricultural production after 1980: The Rise of International Agribusinesses and Supermarketization

The entrance of transnational companies in the food sector was in the 1950s. However, their role has increased since the late 1980s. Unilever and Nestlé were the pioneer transnational actors in the Turkish food market. In 1953, Unilever entered Turkish food market becoming partners with İş Bankası and started the production with two butter brands, Vita and Sana. In 1986, after the opening of the tea industry to the private sector, Unilever also started its operations in the tea sector with the Lipton brand. Later, Unilever bought many well-known national brands such as Komili and Aymar, in the mid-1990s, increasing its scale. The supermarketization process in the same years facilitated the enlargement of these transnational companies like Unilever, by providing a better capacity of stocking, preservation, promotion,

and sale (Keyder and Yenal, 2013, p. 128). Nestlé was not quite active since the 1990s in the Turkish market. In 1995, it bought the 25% of Mis Milk and then its whole share in 2000. After this, it also increased well its product varieties (p. 128).

Hence, beginning from the late 1980s, especially in the 1990s with a high speed, transnational food and agricultural corporations have increased their role in the Turkish market, particularly by having partnerships with the national corporations. Some of the main reasons were the state incentives for international investments, the growth potential of FMCG sector in Turkey, cheap labor force and raw material, and the young population in Turkey (Keyder and Yenal, 2013, p. 129). The number of transnational corporations in agriculture increased to 65 by 1998 from 32 by 1987. Their number in the food sector also rose from 38 to 139 (Undersecretariat of Treasury and Foreign Trade, 1999). Compared to the late 1980s, foreign capital investments in the late 1990s almost quadrupled. However, the level of foreign capital investment in Turkey remained lower than in the Latin American countries (Tozanlı, 1998).⁸

Since the mid-1990s, national corporations have incrementally penetrated the food sector, having partnerships with transnational corporations, from the dairy products to processed food, frozen food, packaging, marketing, and retailing of food. These partnerships (e.g. Pepsi-Fruko partnership) and the acquisition of national brands by transnational companies (e.g. Danone's acquisition of Tikveşli) helped transnational corporations easily enter the domestic food market. They benefited from the existing knowledge, network, and experience of national brands in the market as well as their market reputation. They also took advantage of the decreasing costs in case of partnerships. These transnational companies also supported them with their technology as well as their brand and advertisement experiences (Oman, 1993, p.

⁸ In the 1990s, transnational companies mainly invested in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, the investments in Middle East and Mediterranean countries declined, with exception of Turkey (Tozanlı, 1998). The earlier intensive attack of transnational companies especially in Latin America might be one of the many reasons why the food sovereignty movement is now more mature and stronger in Latin America than in other countries such as Turkey.

182-183). It is also important to note here that the share of the food sector in the foreign investment of 1.5 billion dollars was 25% in the production industry between the years 2006 and 2007 (Tozanlı et al., 2007).

The business partnerships ended and are rebuilt in years, while both food brands and supermarkets under a holding company pass in other conglomerates. For instance, instead of Koç Holding, it is now Anadolu Holding, which has 40.25% of Migros A.Ş. since 2015 (Migros Kurumsal, 2019). On the other hand, Sabancı Holding and Carrefour are still business partners, but Sabancı Holding does not have any more a partnership with Danone Tikveşli. Thus, the rows in the table below indeed increase rapidly and get complicated because the foreign partners and their partner holdings change frequently. However, it is clear that, from the mid-90s until today, we have been incrementally witnessing joint ventures and acquisitions. The table below that exemplifies some of them gives a good sense of this on-going process.

Table 1. Turkish Companies and the Share of Their Foreign Partners in Years

Date	Company Name	Foreign Partners	Share (%)
1994	Filiz Gıda (Doğuş Grubu)	Barilla	55
1995	Komili (Unicom)	Unilever	100
1996	Sabancı	Carrefour	60
1997	Sabancı	Danone	50
1998	Doğadan Gıda	MKT Holding	50
1999	Birtat	DanoneSA (Sabancı/Danone)	100
1999	Cadbury Schweppes Türkiye markaları	Coca-Cola Company	100
2000	Bozkurt Helva (Bestfoods)	Unilever	100
2001	Türk Tuborg (Yaşar Holding)	Carlsberg Breweries	95.7
2002	Mis Süt (Tekfen)	Nestlé	100
2002	Kent Gıda (Tahincioğlu)	Cadbury Schweppes	51
2002	Fruko AŞ	Pepsi Bootling Group (PBG)	100
2002	Kar Gıda	Kraft Foods	100
2003	Filiz Gıda (Doğuş Grubu)	Barilla Alimentare SpA	45
2005	Gima (Fiba Holding)	CarrefourSA (Sabancı/Carrefour)	60.2
2005	Tansaş (Doğuş)	Migros	70.8

2006	Mey İçki (Nurol-Limak-Özaltın-TÜTSAB)	Martini Paz. (Texas Pacific Group)	99
2006	Erikli Su	Nestlé Waters S.A.	60
2007	Doğadan Gıda	The Coca-Cola Company	100
2008	Türk Tuborg (Carlsberg Breweries)	Israel Beer Breweries (CBC Group)	95.7
2008	Migros Türk (Koç Grubu)	Moonlight Capital	50.8
2009	Burgaz Rakı (Garipoğlu Grubu)	Mey İçki (Texas Pacific Group)	100

Sources: Oral (2006 and 2009)

I also would like to address here the current business volume and the operations of some transnational companies and national holding companies in the Turkish food and beverage market. For instance, PepsiCo has globally a net income above 63 billion dollars in 2017, with its various companies like Fritolay, Tropicana, Gatorade, PepsiCola, and Quaker (PepsiCo, 2019). PepsiCo Turkey has 14 brands in Turkey. Being one of them, Lipton Ice Tea, for example, has a considerable position in the Turkish market, especially after the partnership of PepsiCo Beverages and Unilever in 2003. The company dominates the potato chips production in Turkey. It produces Lays potato chips and Tropicana fruit juices by contract farming.

Other examples for illustrating the increasing corporate sovereignty by acquisitions and partnerships can easily be given from the dairy industry. Before its privatization, SEK had 27.4% capacity of the dairy industry. SEK was sold to Koç Holding with its 32 establishments and the right to the brand name for 1.8 million Turkish liras. Four of its establishments were sold to Mis Süt which belonged to Tekfen Holding that time, which was later purchased by Nestlé. DanoneSA also purchased Tikveşli and became Danone-Tikveşli in 1998. Today, the actors dominating the dairy industry were few and powerful; e.g. Pınar Süt (Yaşar Holding), Süttaş, Danone, Dimes, Sek Süt (Koç Holding), İçim Süt (Ülker, Yıldız Holding). These actors have a say in each step of dairy products, and small-scale breeders even have difficulty to afford the prices of animal feeds with the money they gain.

On the other hand, in the production and marketing of milk, cooperatives in Germany, Netherlands, France, and Belgium have almost 50% share and cooperatives in Denmark, Switzerland, England, Ireland, and Finland have nearly 95% share in the milk market. However, in Turkey, the role of cooperatives in this sector is only 5% (Başkavak, 2019). Tire-Süt Coop was one of the successful examples with its cooperative model for the production, marketing, and sale of their milk. The cooperative sells seeds and fuel oil to its member breeders for lower prices and provides cash support to members in need to protect them against money lenders. It processes its milk to produce other dairy products in its plants and packages all its products in these plants. It sells most of its products directly to consumers in their stores and distributes its milk products in Izmir in collaboration with Izmir Metropolitan Municipality (Kuş, 2015).

The merges, joint ventures, and partnerships of transnational corporations in the agri-food sector have been increasing the last decades in the world. Doing so, they aim to capitalize on their intellectual and industrial sovereignty over agricultural sources and products. The seed sector merits discussion in this regard. Benefiting from the widespread acceptance of genetic technologies and patents for drugs, agricultural chemical and food industries and pharmaceutical companies have been merging in the last decades. They aim at increasing their dominance in the agricultural sector and dealing with the potential resistance to patent control over seeds (Friedmann, 2016, p. 674).

A crucial example is a transnational drug and pesticide manufacturer Bayer's acquisition of Monsanto, a giant actor in seed and agrochemical sector, in 2018, "to create a global leader in agriculture," as indicated in Bayer's website (Bayer, 2019). Chemical industry giants Dow Chemical and DuPont also merged in 2017, forming DowDuPont (DowDuPont, 2019). The state-owned China National Chemical Corporation (ChinaChem) also took over Swiss agrochemicals Syngenta in 2017 and has been in merger talks with Sinochem Group, as of 2019 (Reuters, 2019). In Turkey, too, the role of transnational agribusinesses is very significant. They

control the whole agricultural market of seeds, synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. The state politics, in terms of input production and procurement, support the empowerment of corporate sovereignty in this regard. Therefore, in Turkey, 45% of synthetic fertilizers, almost 85% of fertilizer inputs, and 90% of the pesticide inputs are imported. The agribusiness such as Bayer, Pioneer, and DowDupont has been dominating the 40% of the agro-industry in Turkey (Oral, 2010).

Finally, the rise of the supermarkets needs to be addressed here. Until the 1980s, there were only little independent stores (*bakkal*), neighborhood bazaars, some consumer cooperatives and few markets like Migros that belong to the private sector (Keyder and Yenal, 2013, p. 130-131). However, in the late 1980s, the supermarketization and the internationalization of the agri-food sector have accelerated hand in hand. The entry of supermarkets in the Turkish market in the late 1980s with their national partners is one of the main reasons that facilitated the penetration of transnational corporations into the market (e.g. Metro Hypermarkets as the German capital, Carrefour as a French capital, with their stocking, sale, promotion capabilities).

The partnerships of Sabancı-Carrefour and Koç-Migros were examples of vertical integration in the same period, as both holdings also had companies in the food sector (e.g. Maret as a Koç Holding company, Tikveşli and Birtat as Sabancı Holding subsidiaries). Migros merged with Tansaş markets in 2007 and continued its operations with Tansaş, Şok, Macrocenter, and Migros Online markets, after this merge. Koç Holding had the majority of Migros's shares yet sold its shares in 2008. These shares of Migros A.Ş were transferred to Moonlight Retail company in 2008, then to Anadolu Holding in 2015. The company also purchased 95.5% of Kipa market shares form Tesco Overseas Investments (Migros Kurumsal, 2019). This history of Migros indicates well the growth of Migros by acquisitions of other

markets and exemplifies well the continuous partnerships of national and transnational companies in the retail sector.

In the mid-90s, supermarkets were controlling 30% of the retail sector (ZT Nielsen, 1995). From 1998 to 2008, the share of *bakkals* and middle-scale markets decreased by 23.3%. The total number of hypermarkets, supermarkets, and chain markets almost quadrupled by 2008, reaching at 8254, compared to 1998 (Oral, 2010). The number of stores owned by Migros Group, CarrefourSA, Real, Tesco, Macro was 2629 in 2016, while the number of discount market stores (BİM, A101, Şok) was 15.344. The share of discount markets increased by 21% from 2015 to 2016 (Nielsen, 2016). These markets multiplied significantly, as the power of Islamic green capital also rises. The dominance of these markets has been increasing with merges. Briefly, the internationalization of agribusinesses and their symbiotic relationship with supermarkets have deepened in detriment of small-scale actors in agriculture and food retail.

3.1.2.2. The Transformation of the Relations of Agricultural Production after 1980: Focus on the Rise of Contract-Farming

The contract-farming has been expanding in Turkey since the 1980s. There are two main reasons why corporations make farmers produce by contract-farming, rather than farming themselves. First, corporations prefer semi-proletarianization of farmers over their full proletarianization, because in this case, most small-scale farmers do not see the agricultural income as the only source of subsistence. It makes an organized political resistance against the oppression of capitalists harder and avoids labor conflicts. Second, the contract-farming does not require full control and responsibility in each step of agricultural production, reducing operation costs and risks (e.g. seasonal instability of harvests) of the corporations. They also reduce their expenses, since they do not need to buy agricultural land. As the corporations organize the production only indirectly, they also have the flexibility to cancel their contract-farming operations, if needed. Therefore, before and even after the 1980s, big agri-food

corporations have mostly not preferred a production organization similar to factories by direct control of production means and use of paid labor force. They instead prefer leaving the agricultural production to farmers and take only the direct responsibility and control of food processing and marketing (Gürel, 2013, p. 54).

The private companies do not have direct control over agricultural activities both in the period 1945-1980 and the period after 1980. However, there are differences in terms of the ways and the degree of indirect control of agricultural production (Gürel, 2013, p. 53-54): In the second period, farmers are more strongly dependent on corporations by contract farming. The primary reason is that they can meet the demand of corporations for standardized production, as agriculture is more industrialized today, compared to the first period. Furthermore, the use of standardized technology brings incremental expenses for small and medium-scale farmers. The contract-farming thus seems to many farmers as a solution to cover these expenses, because corporations provide them necessary inputs and equipment, which are now industrialized and expensive under the sovereignty of corporations. It also seems to many farmers as a remedy to the problem of marketing under the pressuring corporate and ambiguous market dynamics.

There are several forms of contract-farming between farmers and agri-food companies. In the most common form, the company that signed the contract provides agricultural inputs, such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, credits, technical training if necessary, in return of a predetermined amount of standardized quality product, of which it already determined the properties and prices. Being the only buyer in the contract, the companies also have the opportunity to reject the products they consider below its standards. All these conditions are determined in a way to maximize the interests of corporations that accumulate capital without taking risks. The sustainability of corporations is favored in detriment of the interests of farmers, ecology, and rural populations. In contract-farming, farmers are thus proletarianized

on their own land. Their knowledge of farming loses its importance. It is because corporations decide for them the type of the crop and seeds, the time of cultivation as well as the amount of fertilizers and pesticides to be used. The worse is they are obliged to use pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, and industrial seeds, as imposed by the corporations, unless they implement organic production. Even in organic production, they have no choice to use their own ancient and local seeds, but mostly the hybrid organic seeds provided by corporations.

These conditions result in the alienation of farmers from their production. In the last decades, we have incrementally been witnessing “metabolic rift” and relatedly an “epistemic rift,” not only on the side of consumers but also of producers. When we interpret Marx’s concept “epistemic rift” with ecological concerns, the concept helps to understand both the rupture of agriculture from its biological roots and the rupture of people from nature (Moore, 2011; Schneider and McMichael, 2010, p. 461). This biological rupture is not complete because human beings always need the soil, sun, water, and some natural alimentations for their reproduction (Mann and Dickinson, 1978). However, the agri-food industry pushes the limits of this bond between people and nature, by imposing the use of pesticides, herbicides, and synthetic fertilizers in cultivation and a variety of food chemicals such as artificial sweeteners, coloring and stabilizing agents, preservatives, and trans-fats in processing food. This logic and practice of “substitutionism” in industrial agriculture and food aim to decrease the dependence to the “natural” (Goodman and Redclift, 1991) so that corporations could create more stable and predictable production conditions, maximize standardization, and increase efficiency.

The standardization and productivity focus of industrial agri-food production also constitutes the *raison d’être* of contract-farming. These qualities of industrial agriculture, which crystallized in contract-farming, interrupts not only the connection of farmers with ecology but also the transmission of indigenous knowledge of traditional farming to future generations. Many farmers even today are not knowledgeable about the techniques of ecological farming

and the particularities of their local habitat, land, and seeds. The majority does not know how to cultivate the land and protect their crops without using pesticides and herbicides, because they are used to the hybrid seeds of global seed agribusinesses, which also require a high amount of synthetic fertilizers and agricultural chemicals. Many of local landrace seeds are also not known by most farmers, let alone consumers.⁹

Contract-farming in Turkey started in the second half of the 1960s in Turkey. The General Directorate of Agricultural Enterprises (TİGEM) started contract-farming with farmers for the production of cereal seeds and Turkish Sugar Factories for sugar beet production. The private sector started contract-farming in the 1970s, in the fields such as chicken and tomato sauce production (Aydın, 2010, p. 178). The role of the state in the expansion of contract-farming is essential. The state enacted a decree in 1999, which laid down contract-farming as a condition for benefiting from the state subsidies for animal husbandry and bee breeding. It also forces farmers to shift their production to particular crops that agribusinesses demand, by associating its agricultural support to the size of farms and the crop type they cultivate in each production zone (p. 178).

The “Good Agricultural Practices” was also initiated in 2004 and is now an expanding project in Turkey. It is because Turkey exports a large share of its fruit and vegetables to EU countries that expect specific standards and food security. The certification of “Good Agriculture” also becomes the new marketing technique for supermarkets. Being one of the

⁹ This epistemic rift is, of course, sharper among consumers. It is because, first, packaged convenience foods have rapidly increased and the perception regarding the quality food is reduced into package designs and standardized shape and colors of food, along with supermarketization in the last decades. Second, consumers distanced largely from rural space. Many consumers do not witness even at once an agricultural production process. Therefore, they have lost the idea of which crops grow naturally in which seasons and are even not capable of recognizing the names of some vegetables. As the fast consumption becomes the lifestyle of especially urban populations, these consumers mostly do not interrogate how and in which labor conditions the food on their table is produced. However, some consumers in cities are aware of this metabolic and epistemological rift and get organized in consumer food cooperatives and food communities, to be prosumers in direct contact with producers and having transparent knowledge about production processes of the food they eat.

pioneers in Turkey, Migros signs contracts with small-scale farmers in the framework of “Good Agricultural Practices.” It provides farmers purchasing guarantee, yet for low prices, and markets these foods for higher prices to its relatively higher profile consumer segments. Many products that have the brand label of supermarkets are indeed produced by contract-farming.

Contract-farming has been deepening since 2006, after the enactment of the Agricultural Law (Number 5488). This law heralds that new regulations and state support will be offered to encourage contract-farming. Ziraat Bankası thus extended its credits to companies implementing contract-farming (Aydın, 2010, p. 179). Many big-scale landowners also made contracts with supermarkets and became suppliers of supermarkets, developing their technical capacity because of state subsidies and credits for contract-farming (Gürel, 2013, p. 79).

An increasing number of farmers today work under contract-farming, for instance by producing potatoes in Niğde, Sakarya, Nevşehir, vegetables in the Mediterranean and Aegean regions of Turkey for processing companies (Oral, 2006, p. 308), or sunflowers and maize in Mustafakemalpaşa, Konya, and Aegean regions, as Cargill does (Oral, 2010, p. 179). I have already mentioned some other companies implementing contract-farming (e.g. Tropicana, Frito Lay) in the discussion about the rise of internationalization of agri-food sector and supermarketization. I will also address the processes that strengthen contract-farming, such as the Tobacco Law, while I will elaborate detailly, in the following section, the agricultural politics in Turkey since 2000. However, I believe that this discussion also indicates clearly that especially since the 1980s, farmers have become proletarianized on their own properties, following the global trend in the transformation of the relations of production. As the state has also been consolidating the corporate sovereignty in agri-food production, contract-farming is also becoming a more and more widespread form of production.

I argue that a dignified survival of small and medium-scale farmers under these conditions would only be possible by the active organization of farmers in their syndicates to

say an organized “stop” to the destruction of ecology, rural life, and small-scale farming as well as to the exploitation of farmers’ labor even on their own lands. They also need to organize independent and democratic cooperative structures to sell their products by breaking the long supply chain of food, being in direct contact with organized consumers.

On the other hand, consumers need to accelerate their food organizations in participatory cooperative structures. They need to realize the importance of their support to small ecological farmers, in order to eat accessible healthy and ecological food, which they otherwise could hardly find or need to pay a lot to purchase. The farmers being aware of the importance of farmer organizations shall also struggle for the organization of other farmers in other villages in their entourage. They need to guide them to connect with these consumer food cooperatives in Turkey, which also need to multiply with similar efforts. Only by an organized collaboration of farmers and consumers demanding people’s food sovereignty, the possibility could arise to stop these savage neoliberal attacks to small-scale family farming, ecological agriculture, and our commons. It is because the addressees of these attacks are not only the small-scale farmers. The addresses are all people from various classes who want a dignified life, with an easy access to non-toxic alimentation, air, and water, which are the basic biological needs of human beings.

Under these conditions, especially the collaborations of those to whom this non-toxic alimentation, air, and water are hard to access for various reasons (e.g. poor economic conditions, a sharp rupture from nature) need to be more engaged in the food sovereignty struggle now. It is because the conditions are getting worse even more rapidly since 2000, with the agricultural politics of the state in favor of corporations, against people’s food sovereignty; as the following section will also detailly discuss. The agricultural laws and regulations (the changes in the superstructure) in the 2000s are the continuum of the rural transformation and relations of production (infrastructure) elaborated above. Therefore, this section and the

following one need to be interpreted together from a Marxist perspective. The demands for transformation start from understanding better the relationship of the recent agricultural politics and their impact on the relations of production in detriment of small-scale farmers, as well as its other social, economic, and ecological repercussions.

3.2. Agricultural Politics in Turkey since 2000

The milestones at the international level that shaped the transformation of Turkish agriculture after 2000 are the Stand-by Agreement signed with the IMF in 1999 and the ARIP (Agricultural Reform Implementation Project) signed with the World Bank in 2001. These international actors catalyzed the capitalist dynamics in Turkish agriculture by providing fundings and credit opportunities, and these international agreements constitute the basis of many legal regulations in the Turkish agriculture that came into force in the 2000s. The legal transformation of the agricultural sector that started with these developments have become more systematic and had a hybrid character consisting of old and new support instruments (Güven, 2019, p. 323) in the period after the enactment of the Agricultural Law (No. 5488) in 2006.

3.2.1. Change of State Support Policies after the ARIP

The agricultural developments of the 2000s were primarily marked by the agreements in the framework of IMF stabilization programs. The Economic Reform Loan (ERL) was signed in May 2000 with the World Bank to provide loans for financing IMF stabilization program. The World Bank imposed specific requirements in return, such as the autonomization of the Unions of Agricultural Sales Cooperatives, the privatization of state economic enterprises in agriculture, the gradual removal of subventions for agricultural credits, and the implementation of direct income support. Afterwards, under the influence of the economic crisis in 1999 and 2001, the Agrarian Reform Implementation Project (ARIP) was signed with the World Bank. The World Bank reveals the objectives as “low distribution costs of the subsidies,” “increased efficiency of resources devoted to agriculture,” “better budget planning and execution,” and

“reduction in food prices” (Akder, 2011). ARIP was thus based on projects such as direct income support (DIS), a transition program for farmers, the restructuring of agricultural sales cooperatives, linking of domestic prices to world prices (Günaydın, 2014, p. 524). ARIP aimed at a gradual transformation towards a free market where the state does not manipulate market conditions, the prices, and the volume of agricultural products, according to the changing government policies. The objective was that the farmers make their own decisions in production and sale, considering market conditions and finding loans from private banks (Keyder and Yenal, 2013, p. 201).

Along with these objectives, ARIP also required the removal of the practice of minimum price and the subventions to fertilizers, oil fuel, seeds, and agricultural credits; leaving farmers to the free-market dynamics (Keyder and Yenal, 2013, p. 198). As a result, the share of agricultural support in gross farm receipts declined to 16.87% in 2001 from 36.44% in 1999 (OECD, 2018). The real interest rates increased from -20% from the 1990s to +30% in the 2001-2002. The prices of fertilizers also augmented considerably in this period. However, the DIS payments funded by the World Bank compensated for nearly half of the income loss of the farmers (World Bank, 2004, xii).

The AKP revised its support policy as the economy recovered in 2003, and the local elections of 2004 were approaching. The table below shows the implications of reform reversal. The increase in the market price supports (MPS) and the producer support estimate (PSE), particularly from 2003 onward, were significant. The sharp recovery of MPS (for products such as wheat and sugar beets) indicated the return of old support instruments and were market-distortive. However, the “modern” support instruments such as “payments based on output” and “DIS payments” were also in the scene. Thus, these years’ support policies were mostly based on “tactical compromises between older and newer instruments” and have been a part of “a hybrid institutional regime” (Güven, 2009, p. 320).

Table 2. Agricultural Supports 2002-2005 (US\$ Millions)

Years	Market Price Support	Payments Based on Output	DIS	PSE
2002	4,357.7	135.0	1,246.2	5,958.5
2003	8,739.6	206.8	1,560.3	10,750.7
2004	9,010.0	346.9	1,743.8	11,396.6
2005	9,623.6	804.2	1,755.1	12,614.9

Source: OECD Producer and Consumer Support Estimates Database (online)

The Agricultural Law (No. 5488) offered a compromise between old and new support instruments to satisfy varied policy needs. It put the DIS in the law as a major support form but also included deficiency and compensatory payments, rural development supports, and “other support payments” that could be utilized for previous subsidy instruments such as marketing and input supports. Deficiency payments are product-based support that covers the products with supply deficit, such as oil plants primarily. It aims to incent the supply of these products by offering the guarantee of paying the difference between the low domestic market prices and the high production costs. Compensatory payments are designed to support producers who shifted from the products with excess supply, such as hazelnut or tobacco products, to an alternative product, to compensate their income loss. As the Article 6 of the Agricultural Law suggests, one of the main objectives of the law was to “increase the efficiency, product diversity, quality and the power of competition” (Official Gazette, 2006). The law also covered many issues such as insurance schemes and organic farming, along with the objective of harmonization with EU legislation, as already revealed in the Agricultural Strategy Document for 2006-2010 (Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, 2006)

DIS, as a primary support instrument of ARIP was abolished at the end of 2008, and the state started to work on the basin-based production model after 2008. Following the annulment of DIS, the state supports continued with a neoliberal character aiming to increase the volume

of certain products and production forms, such as basin-based or certified production, geographically indicated products, products meeting foreign demand and the demands of the agri-food industry. These are designed for the products that have a competition advantage in the market rather than an artificial advantage with support prices and minimum prices like tobacco (Keyder and Yenil, 2013, p. 200).

DIS (Direct Income Support)

DIS entered into the application in 2001 by the credit support of the World Bank and ended with the deadline of the World Bank project in December 2018. DIS was given only to producers who registered in the National Farmers' Registry System that started in 2006 (İslamoğlu et al., 2008). In this way, the objective was to register the size of the agricultural field each farmer has.

DIS payments were given to farmers cultivating less than fifty hectares. Some big-scale producers reregistered their lands in the name of their extended families at parcels smaller than 50 decares to benefit from this system. In contrast, some small farmers did not prefer to register in this system because the high costs of application fees often exceeded the registration expenses (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, 2004, p. 336). DIS was based on the size of cultivated hectares of registered land, no matter the (in)existence of farming on it. It was decoupled from production and productivity. The cash payments were given so that producers did not continue to produce crops considered undesirable by the EU and transnational agribusiness companies (Aydın, 2010, p. 177). However, there were some points missed in the application of this idea. For instance, many hazelnut farmers who lived in the nearby cities and towns were visiting their land only a few times in a year for maintenance and harvest. Yet, the alternative products they started to cultivate were requiring the farmer to live on the land. This situation resulted in the non-cultivation of many lands by farmers, who gave up farming in the following years (Güven, 2009, p. 318). DIS broke the long-standing bond between agricultural

production of farmers and state supports but helped to avoid the adverse reactions of farmers to the agricultural reform.

Basin-Based Support Model

The basin-based production and support model started in 2017. This model was designed in conformity with the plans of the Presidency of Strategy and Budget. It was suggested that “the transfers for agricultural supports will be determined in the framework of the objectives of productivity and the increase of the added value” (Presidency of Strategy and Budget, 2014, p. 14). It divides Turkey into basins based on the competitive advantage of certain products. This model aims to support products that have regional and strategic importance. The idea is to support farmers considering the agricultural productivity instead of the product type farmers cultivate. For instance, farmers might cultivate 600 kg of wheat per decare in a basin whereas 200 kg/decare in another. This support is not given for the basins with the productivity of less than 200 kg/decare (Değirmenci, 2019, p. 131).

It is suggested that from 2018 onwards, 40% fertilizer subsidy and 50% fuel subsidy will be given to 21 products (e.g. grain corn, soy, cotton, canola, sunflower, tea, hazelnut, olive oil, fodder plants) in determined agricultural basins (Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Livestock, 2018, p. 41). Nevertheless, this support also favors medium and big scale producers than the small-scale farmers because it is given only to those whose land is above a specific size or who has a certain number of animals (Aysu, 2014, p. 602; Oral, 2010). Also, the basin-based support is given to the legal owner of the agricultural field. Many producers could not benefit from them, while many owners of the land are supported despite they are not the ones who produce there. Besides, this basin-based support encourages monoculture and the abandonment of other products there. Therefore, on the one hand, it does not consider the biodiversity. On the other hand, it confines the producers to the production of certain products, mostly under contract-farming, like in the example of Ferrero and Cargill elaborated above.

Furthermore, as in the model of basin-based support, many other agricultural supports of the state aim to develop the capital. For instance, according to the regulation on the “Good Agricultural Practices” enacted in 2010, in order to get the certification for “good agriculture,” like in the case of organic certification processes, there are many technical requirements, legal procedures, and financial capability for the application. These criteria are quite hard to be met by small-scale producers (Keyder and Yenal, 2013, p. 78). Therefore, these supports are mostly for the benefit of big-scale producers and contract-farming.

3.2.2. Privatization and Defunctionalization of SEEs and UASCs and the Rising Sovereignty of Corporations

In April 2001, Sugar Law No 4634 was enacted, aiming at removing the burden of the sector from the Treasury, by quota planning, price deregulation, self-financing of farmers, and contract-farming (EU, 2006). It thus left the sector to market conditions. Sugar prices have been determined by sugar companies freely in the market conditions, and the state’s sugar factories have been privatized since then. The factories are privatized with the excuse of financial loss in these plants. Their loss indeed results from the limited quotas consecrated to them by the Sugar Institution in the framework of the Sugar Law. With the granted authority by the Sugar Law, the Council of Ministers has gradually increased the quota of starch-based sugar since then, meeting the demand of transnational companies in the sector of starch-based sugar. After this law, two subsidiaries of Türkşeker (TŞFAŞ) were privatized in 2004 and 2005 (EU, 2006). Its factories were then gradually taken into privatization program since 2000, following the letters of intent sent to IMF in 1999. TSFAŞ was the largest company in the sector with 22 factories. Besides, the Sugar Institution was closed in 2017 with a decree-law, delegating its authority to the Ministry of Agriculture. Right after this, the sale of remaining sugar beet factories has again on the state agenda following the report of Cargill.

American transnational companies, such as Cargill and Amylum, and Pendik Nişasta in partnership with Ülker —known as the Islamic “green capital” connected to the AKP government—dominate almost 90% of the starch-based sugar market in Turkey. Also, the import tariffs have considerably reduced and even cancelled out for some countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kadıköy Cooperative, 2018). Indeed, Cargill had already been lobbying the Turkish government and even the US government for a long time. Bush had sent a letter to Erdoğan before he visited the USA in 2004. He asked for the elimination of all legal impediments for the establishment of its Orhangazi factory on prime agricultural land as well as a considerable increase in the starch-based sugar quota. A year later, Orhangazi plant of Cargill was legalized. Related court injunctions were preempted, with the enactment of the Law on the Land Protection and Land Use (Number 5403), which granted amnesty to all industrial plants built on prime agricultural lands on the condition they paid only 5 TL per square meter (Aydın, 2010, p. 167). The starch-based sugar quota has also been increasing significantly since then.

In Turkey, the quota of starch-based sugar was approximately 250-300 thousand tons. However, the starch-based sugar has incrementally been imported and reached at more than one million ton today (Kadıköy Cooperative, 2018). The permission was given by the Council of Ministers when requested by private companies that favor starch-based sugar in the industrial production because of its more comfortable use for processing. These recent events indicate the significant influence of the capital, mainly the transnational companies, on the agri-food policies of Turkey.

When approached from the perspective of food sovereignty, the sale of sugar beet companies and the rise of starch-based sugar, correlated with the rise of processed food, also have a visible impact on the health of consumers (e.g. the rising risk of obesity) as well as on the ecology. Abdullah Aysu, the president of Çiftçi-Sen, draws attention to the negative impact

of these politics on ecology, in the workshop of Kadıköy Coop, “Food Sovereignty and the Privatizations of Sugar Factories.” In an open workshop organized by Kadıköy Coop, Abdullah Aysu indicates the significant extent of the ecological destruction. He suggests that the oxygen that one decare field of sugar beet produces equals to the oxygen that three decares of pine forest produce; thus, the terminated production of sugar beet in 180 thousand hectares equals to the loss of 540-thousand-hectare forest today. He adds that sugar beet production provides four kilogram of phosphor and fifteen kilogram of potash in each decare, reducing the necessary amount of potash and phosphor to be added in the next year. In addition, he says, the leaves and other parts of sugar beet that are left in the agricultural field become animal feed that equals almost to 500-kilogram barley, which thus save approximately 1.5 billion Turkish Liras to be spent for animal feed.

Besides, the increasing use and production of starch-based sugar will expand both the monoculture cornfields and the corn imports, leading the decline in the productivity of soil and the rise of import expenditures. The loss of sugar beet production that results from the current sugar law and the privatization of sugar factories thus has negative economic, ecological, and health-related consequences today in detriment of food sovereignty.

In 2002, the Tobacco Law 4733 was enacted by the coalition DSP-MHP-ANAP to eliminate state procurement of tobacco. Before this law, TEKEL as a state economic enterprise had 25 plants for the roll of tobacco, eight cigarette plants, 28 factories and workshops for an alcoholic beverage (Aysu, 2019). The newly founded Regulating Agency and Board for the Tobacco, Tobacco Products and Alcoholic Beverages Markets thus ended the nearly one-century-long state monopole over tobacco until its sale to British-American Tobacco Company. After the enactment of this law, TEKEL was divided into two groups, one for tobacco and the other for alcohol, and they were privatized separately. Mey Beverages purchased the alcohol part and then sold 90% of its shares in 2006 to an American monopole, Texas Pacific Group.

British-American Tobacco Company (BAT) purchased its tobacco part in 2008 (Aydın, 2010, pp. 163-173; Öztürk et al., 2008, p. 92-93).

After the sale of TEKEL's cigarette factories to BAT, 8,247 over 10,818 workers were fired in 2008. In December 2009, a long-standing protest started with substantial participation. On February 4, 2010, a national-wide work stoppage was organized to support TEKEL workers (Bor and Leblebici, 2014, p. 311). The TEKEL protests continued until March 2, 2010. Despite the extensive support to TEKEL protests, the state continued its neoliberal politics in tobacco production in favor of corporations. The Tobacco Law 4733 put an end to support purchases for tobacco, started contract-farming between farmers and private corporations for tobacco production. The regulating agency and board of tobacco and alcohol market was also liquidated with a law-decree in 2017. Its authority was transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (ZMO, 2018a). During these years of transformation, the production volume of tobacco and the number of tobacco producers declined significantly. This transformation, like many others in agriculture, has not only economic but also environmental impacts. Oriental tobacco is grown only in rough terrains, where it is usually not possible to cultivate other products. Therefore, the non-cultivated productive land carries the risk of erosion, leading to the loss of the land at the end (Aysu, 2014, p. 592).

The tobacco-producing households reduced from 583,400 in 2000 to 56,000 in 2018 with an 86% decline in sixteen years. The consumption of tobacco was also 170,000 tons by 2000 (ZMO, 2018a). Many big scale producers that have more than 500 decares benefitted from DIS by transferring their title deeds to their relatives. They cultivated other products instead of tobacco and fired their sharecroppers. Many tobacco producers gave up tobacco production and started other occupations such as mining, likewise many former farmers who lost their lives in 2014 while working as mineworkers in Soma because of unsafe work conditions. Thus, these

laws, especially the Law of Tobacco, resulted in the dispossession and proletarianization of many farmers and workers (Gürel, 2013, p. 65; İslamoğlu, 2008, p. 29).

ÇAYKUR (The General Directorate of Tea Enterprises) and TMO (Soil Products Office) are not yet privatized, despite being incrementally defunctionalized SEEs. TMO was founded in 1938 as an autonomous SEE running on the state capital and is now a subsidiary organization of Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock. The main objective of its foundation was to purchase grain from farmers and regulate product prices in the domestic market in favor of consumers and farmers to avoid unfair prices of traders. However, because of TMO's defunctionalized role, farmers abandoned wheat production on 28 million decares in seventeen years. The size of the cultivated land for wheat production was 77 million decares by 2017, while it was 92 million decares by 2000 (ZMO, 2018b). With the recent implementation of zero import tariff in 2017 for wheat, barley, and corn, TMO also revealed clearly that its structural transformation is in favor of traders, but not farmers.

The General Directorate of Tea Authority was responsible for all activities including agriculture, production and marketing of tea. It was transformed in 1983 into as a state-owned enterprise, ÇAYKUR, which started to support tea agriculture with generous support purchases. In 1984, the monopoly of ÇAYKUR in tea agriculture, processing, and the sale was removed, and private companies were involved in the market. ÇAYKUR was then excluded from state-owned enterprises and taken in the scope of Public Economic Enterprises in 1994. It continued its activities from 1996 to 1999 under the Prime Ministry and became an establishment of Turkish Ministry of Agriculture in 2002.

ÇAYKUR still has 47 wet tea processing factories, one tea-packing factory and a market share of almost 65% in domestic dry tea market (ÇAYKUR, 2019). It has recently been handed over Turkish Wealth Fund, and there are plans of privatization of ÇAYKUR. It continues its purchases with fairer prices than the private sector, but only to a certain extent with quotas, in

line with the neoliberal policies in Turkey. The constrictions created by the quotas of ÇAYKUR put today many tea farmers in a weak position in the face of the private sector. ÇAYKUR determines quota for the maximum kilogram of wet tea leaves that it receives per acre from the tea garden of each owner registered in its system. It also has a daily quota for the kilogram of tea that it receives per acre, with fluctuating amounts each day. Hence, farmers need to sell the daily wet tea they cannot sell to ÇAYKUR, in very few days, for the prices that the private tea companies determine, because farmers have no luxury to stock wet tea leaves for a long time. Briefly, in the absence of farmers' tea cooperatives in the region, the ambiguity of planning and constricted purchase of ÇAYKUR leave farmers no other option than to sell their wet tea leaves to private sector despite considerably unfair prices below the minimum price that ÇAYKUR determines.

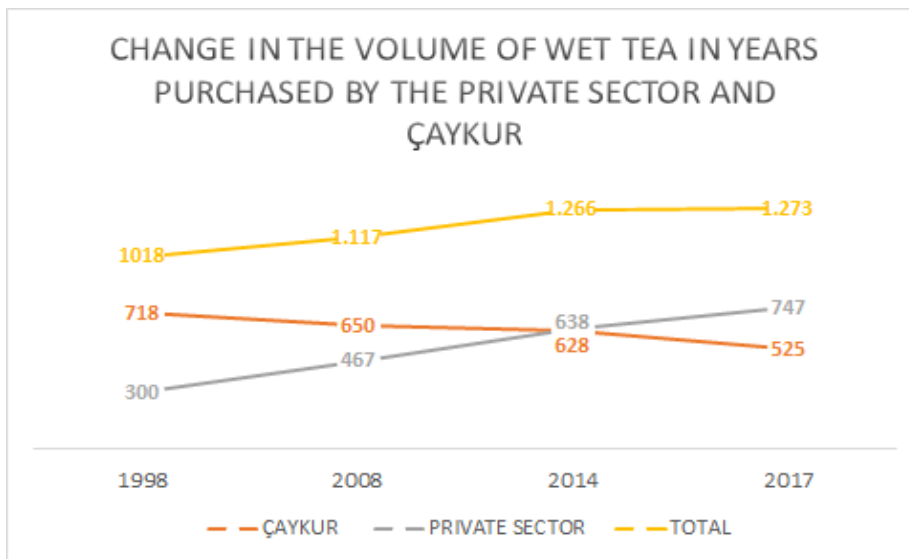
Besides, companies often make payments by offering dry tea in return for the specific amounts they receive. ÇAYKUR is one of the last functioning SEEs in Turkey and authorized as responsible for the distribution, sale, and marketing of tea. However, it is partly privatized because it transferred the sale and marketing of dry tea to a few private agents/stores. These agents later united as a company called ÇAYTAŞ, making ÇAYKUR its shareholder with a 10% share. Hence, sharing a significant value received from its processing activities with some private companies, ÇAYKUR has increased its debts (Çepni, 2018).

Meanwhile, the private companies in the tea sector, especially transnational actors, have been increasing their power. With its factories in Arhavi, Fındıklı, and Pazar, Lipton has been marketing Black sea tea by blending them with teas from Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Kenya. Coca Cola Company purchased Doğadan Çay in 2007, entered first the herbal tea, then black tea market in 2008 (CNN Türk, 2008). Its import of 21.7 tons of dry tea has the second position in tea import after Lipton (Başkavak, 2019). Another example of the increasing share of

transnational actors in the tea sector is the recent purchase of Ofçay by Jacobs in 2018 (Diken, 2018).

The chart below exemplifies the rising power of private companies in the tea sector in years, despite the ongoing but decreasing role of ÇAYKUR as one of the few SEEs which is not privatized yet in the last two decades. In the last twenty years, the share of ÇAYKUR and the private companies in the tea sector has reversed. The share of the wet tea purchased by the private sector increased to almost 60% by 2017 from 30% in 1998 (State Planning Agency, 2018; ÇAYKUR, 2017). This table helps to understand the greater vulnerability of small-scale tea farmers who have no option but to sell their wet tea to the private sector for prices quite lower than the minimum price determined by ÇAYKUR.

Figure 1. Change in the Volume of Wet Tea (Thousand Tons) in Years Purchased by the Private Sector and ÇAYKUR



Sources: Chart Prepared by Compiling the Data of the Report of the Commission of Tea Sector in 8th 5-year Development Plan of the State Planning Agency and the 2017 Tea Sector Report of ÇAYKUR)

Furthermore, state policies do not efficiently support or protect hazelnut producers in the face of the private sector, especially the transnational company Ferrero in the Black Sea Region. The hectares on which hazelnut is cultivated have not decreased (560,000 hectares in

2002 and 705,500 hectares in 2007) (ZMO, 2018c). Turkey is still the global leader in the export of hazelnuts (80% of the global production in 2017 according to FAOstat) (Agriculture and Forestry Directorate of Samsun Governorship, 2019, p. 4). Nevertheless, as the growing rate of the business volume of Ferrero, with its six production plants in Turkey indicates clearly, the transformation of hazelnut production in Turkey is in favor of a transnational corporation, which determines both the market conditions and prices in hazelnut sector in Turkey.

3.2.2.1. The Transformation of UASCs since the 2000s

While these politics of transformation regarding SEEs have incrementally separated the historical bond between the state and farmers, the neoliberal politics of transformation of the Unions of Agricultural Sales Cooperatives (UASC) have also increasingly separated farmers from their own organizations. Agricultural sales cooperatives had started to organize under unions, after the Law 2824 enacted in 1935. Some examples are *Tariş İncir Birliği* (Tariş Union of Fig Cooperatives) founded in 1937, *Tariş Üzüm Birliği* (Tariş Union of Grape Cooperatives) in 1937, *Fiskobirlik* (Union of Hazelnut Cooperatives) in 1938, *Çukobirlik* (Çukurova Union of Cotton Cooperatives) in 1940, *Tariş Pamuk Birliği* (Tariş Union of Cotton Cooperatives) in 1949, *Trakyabirlik* in 1967 for sunflower oil, Tariş Olive and Olive oil Union in 1949, and *Marmarabirlik* in 1954.

The state was supporting producers since 1935 to regulate the agricultural market, through price and input subventions and readily available credits as well as by supporting the UASC in solving their problems of processing, stocking, and marketing their products. The number of the UASCs declined from 33 to 16 from 1980 to the late 1990s. However, there were still 400 sales cooperatives benefiting from the limited state support at the end of the 1990s (Kazgan, 2003, pp. 379-398). Nevertheless, the ARIP was aiming to render cooperatives functionally autonomous and financially independent. Along with this vision, a new law on cooperatives was approved in 2000 to cut all the financial support to cooperatives and their

unions, requiring their transformation into incorporated companies to build factories, by restricting their operations only to simple products. This law thus forced them either to sell their factories to private companies or to transform their marketing and integrated plants into incorporations similar to private companies, and they have turned into free-market actors. Besides, this law enabled political control and inspection over the daily operations of these cooperatives by forming a committee of restructuration, of which most members were delegated by the state (Oyan, 2001, p. 35-36). The cooperatives and their unions thus lost their capacity of production, distribution, and marketing to regulate the market of many products such as tobacco, grapes, hazelnuts, and figs.

For example, Fiskobirlik (Union of Agricultural Sales Cooperative of Hazelnuts) is one of these unions, of which the structure changed in 2006, in line with IMF structural adjustment program. By 2006, the state gave up supporting Fiskobirlik in hazelnut purchase. From 1994 to 2000, Fiskobirlik was purchasing hazelnut by benefiting from the DFIF (Support and Price Stabilization Fund). In 2002, upon the decision of the Council of Ministers, it purchased hazelnuts on behalf of Treasury.

Nevertheless, since 2003, Fiskobirlik has been implementing its sale and purchase operations for its own account (Fiskobirlik, 2019). It purchased the kilogram of hazelnuts for 9-15 TL in 2016, 8-11.18 in 2017. These prices are almost no different than the prices in the market (7.5-12.5 TL/kg in 2017) (Samsun Provincial Directorate of Agriculture, 2019, p. 12). Although Fiskobirlik, like other UASCs, had a state-controlled, anti-democratic structure at the level of management also before 2006, it used to have a crucial role with its facilities for hazelnut purchase, stocking, processing, and marketing (Fiskobirlik, 2019) likewise other UASCs. This role of Fiskobirlik was yet defunctionalized, and Fiskobirlik has become almost another actor in the market with its currently inefficient role.

In 2006, TMO was authorized to intervene in the hazelnut market, yet this authorization was taken back in 2009. To regulate the hazelnut sector, due to the decrease of prices because of low harvest, TMO was given the authority to purchase hazelnuts in 2017 and bought almost 137 tons shelled hazelnut, for 8.0-11.8 per kilo, while it was 7.5-12.5 in the market (not significantly different though) (TMO, 2018a). This role has continued for the years 2018 and 2019. However, TMO does not process hazelnut, but only stocks it and sells it when necessary. It prevents hazelnut producers from having a similar gain from production as before because hazelnut is a value-added product when processed. It is thus always the companies which process hazelnuts who benefit from this system, especially the chocolate industry giant Ferrero in the Black Sea Region of Turkey. As hazelnut farmers do not have any more the common facilities to process and market their products they cultivate and the state does not consider itself responsible for implementing necessary policies, the farmers do have any option but to obey the fluctuating and unfair prices of the market.

Briefly, the former structure of Fiskobirlik was enabling the regulation of the market in favor of farmers, by providing purchase guarantee and using its facilities of processing, stocking, and selling hazelnuts. However, it has now become a market actor that left farmers alone and unorganized, thus vulnerable in the neoliberal agri-food conditions. The sale of hazelnuts started in August 2018 with 10-14 TL per kilo, varying according to localities. In the absence of a minimum price declared by TMO until November, Ferrero declared its purchasing price in August as 11.25 TL (almost 1.8 Euro) (Yıldırım, 2018). These prices were considerably lower than the minimum price (18.25 TL or nearly 3 Euro in August 2018) demanded by Fındık-Sen (Union of Hazelnut Producers).

The minimum price suggested by Fındık-Sen was calculated in a way that hazelnut the sale of hazelnuts could compensate the expenses of farmers' labor force, bring 15% profit, and enable the humane subsistence of a farmer family of four (Karasaban, 2018). TMO determined

its purchasing price in November 2018 as 14 Turkish liras (2.2 Euro) per kilogram of shelled hazelnuts (TMO, 2018a).¹⁰ This price is still not fair. It is because the expenditures for all agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and fuel oil have risen with the considerable loss of the value of Turkish Lira relative to Euro. 1 Euro was almost to 6.33 TL in June 2018 while it was almost 4 TL in June 2017 (European Central Bank, 2018). Besides, many farmers in shortage of cash had already sold their products for lower prices before TMO declared its minimum prices.

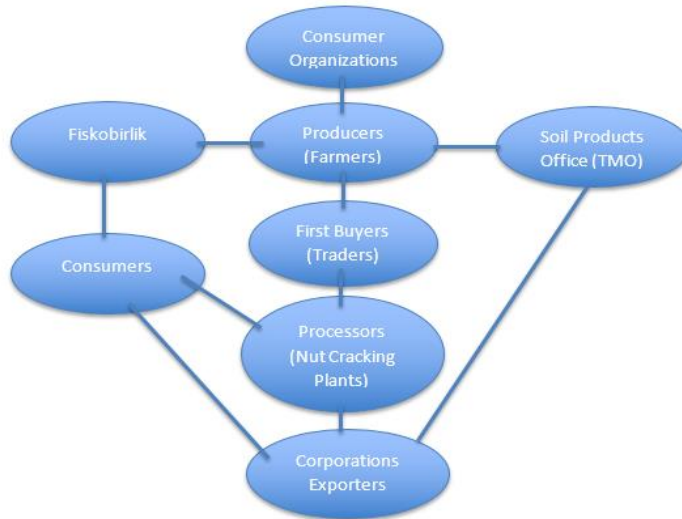
Therefore, there is a question in farmers' mind about who benefitted from the purchases of TMO (Kocagöz, 2018). Fındık-Sen states that TMO uses the stock infrastructure of Fiskobirlik and releases its stock in the years where the production volume of hazelnut is low, to satisfy the demand of companies in the market. It says TMO releases the hazelnuts it purchases, for lower prices, before the harvest period, so that the prices are set in favor of companies (Fındık-Sen, 2018). However, small-scale producers expect from TMO to regulate every year the hazelnut market, by declaring a fair minimum purchasing price in favor of farmers, before the harvest, to avoid the uncertainty in the market. In this way, small farmers having no stocking capacity could also get compensation for their labor. Otherwise, they mostly need to sell out its harvest for lower prices (Samsun Provincial Directorate of Agriculture, 2019).

Thus, the current defunctionalized role of Fiskobirlik and TMO as market actors has put into a fragile position the producers of the Black Sea region of Turkey which indeed has occupied an enviable position in world hazelnut production. Meanwhile, Ferrero increased its business value in Turkey 4.5 times in ten years, as stated by the general director of Ferrero in Turkey (Aygün, 2017). These disadvantages are not valid only for producers. Consumers also

¹⁰ Besides, it purchased only 6.994 tons hazelnuts in 2018, while its purchase was 136.872 tons in 2017. TMO, 2018, Annual Report, <http://www.tmo.gov.tr/Upload/Document/maliisler/2018faaliyetraporu.pdf>

buy hazelnuts for at least 60-70 TL/kg (almost 9-10 Euros) in 2018 because of many intermediaries in the supply chain.

Figure 2. The Supply Chain of Hazelnut



Source: The Hazelnut Handbook 2018, Fındık-Sen.

In the workshop organized by TMO in April 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry suggests that the current state support needs to be alternated by a support program for encouraging “ideal” tea gardens. Fındık-Sen considers that in saying so, the ministry paves the way for contract-farming under Ferrero, as Ferrero already started ‘model hazelnut gardens’ which it presents as examples of “valuable agriculture.”¹¹ Fındık-Sen thus puts that Fiskobirlik, as the union of organized farmers, is still crucial for the survival of farmers and needs to become the voice of farmers, unlike its silence in this workshop (Karasaban, 2019).

The transformation of Fiskobirlik to a defunctionalized powerless actor is disappointing for farmers. The farmers, as Fındık-Sen also highlights, need to have a visible and organized pressure on Fiskobirlik to take action now in favor of farmers, although it does not have a

¹¹ Ferrero’s project “Valuable Agriculture” comprises now six thousand farmers cultivating 75 thousand hectares, evaluated and certified in the framework of higher quality farming parameters that Ferrero expects. The size of project area equals now to 10% of Turkish hazelnut gardens. Telling this project, the general director of Ferrero states that Ferrero has already started its infrastructure works for contract-farming. Milliyet, 2019. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/ekonomi/italyan-devinden-turk-findigina-ozel-calisma-2829289>.

functional role in terms of market regulation. By rendering Fiskobirlik the functional union of farmers again, the organized farmers would have a greater negotiation power in the market against the dominance of corporations.

Small-scale hazelnut producers, like many other exemplary cooperatives such as Tire-Süt (İzmir), Hopa-Çay (Artvin), Sındı Coop (Marmaris), Devrek Güneşi (Zonguldak), also need to organize around cooperatives from below, based on self-organization and self-management in their own districts. These organizations can be built through small-scale yet trust-based steps and collaborations with consumer food cooperatives in cities and/or by opening their own sale offices in cities as Ovacık Coop (Tunceli) have already been doing. Such cooperation of hazelnut farmers would enable direct sale of hazelnuts from farmers to consumers, opening up a room for the consumption of healthier and more quality hazelnuts for consumers with accessible prices and the opportunity for producers to sell their products for fairer prices.

This cooperation on the side of producers would also grow the cooperation of producer and consumer cooperatives. The rise of consumer cooperatives already started to encourage the rise of producer cooperatives and collaborations among them in other regions. The joint purchase of a few consumer food cooperatives in İstanbul from ecological hazelnut producers in the last two years is a symbolic sign of such a beginning of cooperation with an increasing potential between hazelnut producers and consumers. Such cooperation would undoubtedly be easier to make between the cooperatives of hazelnut farmers and consumer cooperatives.

Furthermore, these hazelnut cooperatives can empower themselves if they focus on ecological production of hazelnuts, for two main reasons. First, it creates an opportunity to reduce input costs and increase their profit by adopting agro-ecological production techniques, as it was before the expansion of the industry of fertilizer and chemical inputs. Second, the production of ecological hazelnuts would meet consumer demand. Consumers would prefer these products both for being healthier than the conventional products and for being cheaper

despite they are fairly paid and more quality foods. The collaboration of producer and consumer cooperatives has potential to break the long supply chain by removing the intermediaries in favor of both consumers and producers. A possible solution to this crisis led by neoliberal transformations of SEEs and UASC could thus still be the self-organization of producers and consumers, in the long path to build the food sovereignty of people against the sovereignty of corporations supported by the state.

3.2.2.2. Evaluation of the decline of the public management of agriculture

The defunctionalization and privatization of SEEs and UASCs, thus the decline of public management of agriculture, have left alone unorganized farmers to confront powerful organized capital. (Günaydın, 2014, p. 527). By having discussed the negative impacts of the transformation of SEEs and UASCs in Turkey, I do not aim to romanticize the functioning of cooperatives, unions, and SEEs. These organizations were also criticized rightly for being anti-democratic in their management and decisions. New regulations were being demanded in favor of producers and consumers from production to marketing and consumption of food. However, the regulations made have been to the contrary to their expectations. The integrated plants of the farmers' cooperative unions were privatized, the SEEs making support purchases and providing inputs were closed, defunctionalized, or privatized. These developments created visible disadvantages for small-scale farmers but considerable advantages for the capital.

3.3. The Integration of Agriculture and Industry through Legal Regulations and Laws since the 2000s and the Growth of the Agri-Food Capital

It is not possible to summarize the current picture of farmers today in positive terms. In a context where the agricultural inputs have increasingly been more expensive, farmers cannot get stable and fair prices for their products. The state charges producers and consumers nearly the amount of the budget of agricultural supports, through many taxes such as value-added tax (KDV) and

special consumption tax (ÖTV) in the final price of products. These taxes are already included in the price of agricultural inputs (Günaydın, 2014, p. 526).

This discussion addresses clearly that the neoliberal attack did not destruct the agriculture as a whole, but certainly threatened the survival of the small-scale farmers, especially those who cultivate products that are not competitive in the market. The production of capital-intensive products like grains have significantly reduced and many farmers in their production quitted farming as explained above. It is because capitalist EU countries and the USA have been exporting these capital-intensive products to developing countries like Turkey. Thus, Turkey abandoned its supports to these products after ARIP but shifted its support to some labor-intense products such as fruits and vegetables and certified products (Gürel, 2013, p. 56-57). Yet, the small-scale farmers that cultivate products with export value have also been suffering from these transformations. The production of certain products, especially the ones such as sugar beet, tobacco, wheat, which were being supported with subsidies and through SEEs and UASCs, is visibly reduced and that many farmers quitted farming. Most of them also started contract-farming like tobacco producers, because the existing system imposes the contract-farming as the most suitable model to integrate the agricultural production to the food industry. The cultivated area of hazelnuts and tea has not reduced despite the defunctionalization of Fiskobirlik, TMO, and the restricted role of ÇAYKUR. However, tea and hazelnut producers do not get fair compensation for their labor force, because the role and the control of the private sector and transnational corporations in these areas have also significantly risen since the beginning of 2000s. Turkey does not have an advantaged position in the processing and pricing of these products in the face of developed countries.

The discussion above does not indicate a complete deagrarianization in Turkey. Like Değirmenci (2019) argues, it instead suggests that the developments in the 2000s, mainly the transformation of the support policies as well as of SEEs and UASCs, are legal regulations and

plans that aimed to build a model that integrates the agriculture into industry. The logic of agricultural supports that considers productivity is a sign of this ambition. As we see clearly in the case of basin-based support model, the state aimed in each region to construct a production model that includes the petty commodity producers in a system designed for the continuation of production for the food industry (Değirmenci, 2019, p. 249). It is because the state aims to make stronger the structures that enable the capitalist accumulation in agriculture.

It is necessary to note that the state also aims to open up space for new corporations that start to operate in the agricultural industry by providing support payments (p. 129). For instance, the report of the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee of the Food and Agricultural Markets demands the termination of the physical storage operations of the TMO and transfer of this capacity to licenced warehousing business. It also informs that the legal and institutional regulations will continue to expand the licenced warehousing (Presidency of Strategy and Budget Planning, 2018, p. 32). The demands of deactivating the state's role in the storage facilities entirely, especially for grain products, indicate the plans of transferring storage activities to the private businesses and open up space for the capital in this area, too. The same document also suggests that the legislative efforts concerning the modernization of wholesale markets will continue. It means that the state works on the plans of transferring the current responsibility of municipalities to organize these marketplaces to corporations, as discussed later in this chapter on the draft bill on the wholesale market. Another example that reflects the state's ambition to integrate agriculture to industry is the legislations on seeds in the 2000s. It is because the expansion of the use of certified seeds is a crucial means of standardization for the industry.

To sum up, the legal regulations and laws enacted in the period after the ARIP and the related agri-food policies of the AKP government aim at the increase of the productivity and the integration of agriculture and industry. It is a process that continues by deactivating

gradually the role of the state in manipulating the market conditions, regulating the warehousing and distribution fields, standardizing agricultural inputs, and collecting information on the agricultural capacity in favor of the industry and the capital. The following table indicates this ongoing process and perspective that favors the capital and increases the agricultural commoditization to the detriment of small-scale farmers and ecology. This table is provided by drawing from a more extensive table presented by Değirmenci (2019, p. 214). In the following sections, I would like to investigate more closely some of the laws and regulations addressed on this table, which are more related to the discussions in this dissertation.

Table 3. Agricultural Commoditization and the Empowerment of the Capital in the Agri-Food Industry through Legal Regulations and Laws in the 2000s

<i>Means of Production</i>	<i>Production Process</i>	<i>Transportation, Storage, Labelling/Packaging</i>
● Soil: - Forest Law (2012) - Amendment Law on the Pasture Law and Some Laws (2004) - Metropolitan Law ● Seed: - Seed Law (2006) - Regulation on the Registration, Production, and Marketing of Local Varieties ● Water: - Law on Water Unions (2011) ● Fertilizer: - Regulation on Fertilizers (2012)	- Agricultural Insurance Law (2005) - Organic Agriculture Law (2004) - Biosafety Law (2010) - Regulation on Good Agricultural Practices (2010)	- Law on Organization of Trade of Fruit and Vegetables and Other Goods with Sufficient Supply and Demand Level (2012) - Draft Bill for Changing the Law on the Regulation of Foodstuff - Turkish Food Codex (2011) - Turkish Food Codex Regulation on labeling and provision of food information to consumers (2017) - Law on Licensed Warehousing (2005)

3.3.1. The Law of Seed and the Regulation on the Registration, Production, and Marketing of Local Varieties

Before discussing the enactment of the Law of Seed in 2006 and recent regulations on this law, I would like to address the politics of seed in Turkey briefly. In 1925, the state established seed production and breeding places, and after 1950, with the establishment of state hatcheries, it started to organize more systematically varied seed production and distribution. In 1963, the state enacted a law on the registration, control, and certification of seeds to regulate seed production and the seed imports and exports.

The politics of seed in Turkey started to change in the 1980s, along with neoliberal policies. By 1983, the state permitted the production of seeds by private companies and then the import of seeds and saplings, with the demand of the World Bank. In 1985, it enacted a decree on seed incentive, which increased the power of private seed companies gradually. The state removed the monopoly of TZDK in the trade of fertilizers in 1986 and allowed the trade of fertilizers by private companies in 1988 (Kendir, 2003, pp. 290-292). Briefly, during the 1980s, the state facilitated the import of both seeds and fertilizers and helped to increase the number and the power of private seed companies.

Nevertheless, a radical change in seed politics was seen after the enactment of the Seed Law (Number 5553) in 2006 by the government of AKP. The Seed Law is based on EU Seeds Law and a continuum of the ARIP. The law aimed to prevent the marketing of unregistered seedlings, thus prohibited the sale of seeds that farmers reproduce from their own crops.¹²

According to Article 7 of the Law 5553 on the trade of seedlings:

Domestically, the trade of seedlings belonging to only registered varieties shall be permitted. These seedlings shall be supplied for trade in a manner that conforms to the qualities and standards established

¹² I will elaborate “Seed Exchange Festivals” started by civil actors, to resist this law by laying claim to our commons, later in Chapter 8. These festivals are also embraced by some local governments such as Seferihisar Municipality, which considers seeds at the center of their alternative agricultural projects. I will also focus on these projects of municipalities around the seed in Chapter 7.

by the Ministry, certified or accepted to be registered in the log or standard seedling appropriately packed and labelled (Official Gazette, 2006).

The Article 15 on the assignment of power put that “the Ministry may assign, with defined conditions, its duties specified in the articles 5, 6, 7, and 8, hereof in full or in part to the Union, public institutions and unions, special law legal persons or universities for a defined or non-defined period.” With these articles, the law authorized the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) and MARA authorized the Turkish Union of Seed Businesses for laboratory tests and for the control of the compliance of seeds to certain standards before certification. In other words, the certification, trade, and inspection of seedlings are left to the private sector, as the law authorized for these the Turkish Union of Seed Businesses. In this way, the operation of TAGEM, General Directorate of Agricultural Research and Policy, and TİGEM, General Directorate of Agricultural Enterprises, is reduced.

The continuum of the plans regarding the decreasing role of state enterprises on the production and distribution of seeds can be seen in the documents of the State Planning Agency and the related state policies in the following years. The 9th Development Plan suggested that it was planned to double the use of certified seedlings in grain production compared to 2005 and demanded the transfer of enterprises like TİGEM to the private sector for seedling production and distribution (State Planning Agency, 2007). Today, the state support for seedlings only covers certified seed and seedlings of farmers registered on the National Farmers’ Registry System.

The Seed Law has resulted in the exclusion of ordinary producers and public enterprises that are incapable of competing with the private market actors in affording the costly certification processes (Keyder and Yenil, 2013, p. 67). It has rendered more dependent the farmers on private companies for an essential input of agricultural production, increasing the vulnerability of thousands of farmers who use and market traditional seeds. Briefly, this law has gradually been taking control of seeds from farmers and strengthening the power of agri-

business companies that dominate the sector introducing new seed varieties, mostly hybrid seeds, which also require more chemical inputs.

Peasants have inherited us a large variety of seeds, by exchanging them, crossbreeding and reproducing them. The seeds that adapt well to the geography where they are grown have already been used by farmers for centuries in their locality having considerable productivity in respective regions. The farmers inherited us not only various kinds of seeds but also the techniques and the knowledge on the particularity of each seed and seed production. Thus, these neoliberal seed politics aim at breaking the connection of farmers with the basis of farming, namely the reproduction of and the knowledge on seeds. The objective of the Seed Law is stated as to increase the quality of crops, but what it causes indeed the increasing dependence of farmers, who have been saving landrace seeds and transmitting the knowledge of traditional seed varieties for centuries, on agribusiness companies.

The law provides the ground for agribusinesses to claim their intellectual property rights on these traditional and local varieties when they have any modification on them. These seeds are then considered as their own plant varieties because Article 3 in the law distinguishes plant varieties from genetic resources (Aydın, 2010, p. 175). Therefore, when seeds are registered as their own plant varieties, private seeds companies may use their intellectual property rights to avoid farmers to grow and these seed varieties. However, seeds are our commons for thousands of years; they belong neither to companies nor to states.

The industrialization of agriculture developed the industry of agricultural inputs, with the promise of soil fertility. Neoliberal agricultural policies have increased the dependence of farmers on industrial inputs, as farmers have been distancing.¹³ However, farmers have not yet lost many of their ancient and local seeds, and they continue to exchange these seeds and trade

¹³ Abdullah Aysu, the former president of Çiftçi-Sen, translates agroecology to Turkish as '*bilge köylü tarımı*'. Activists in Turkey embrace this translation. It is because it does indicate not only the ecological agriculture but also the importance of indigenous knowledge of ecological farmers on local and landrace seeds and techniques of ecological farming as well as the transmission of this knowledge to future generations for centuries in agroecology.

products grown from them. This law reveals the increased level of neoliberal attack of transnational agri-food companies like Bayer and Monsanto, Syngenta and Sinochem, and DowDupont on farmers. The pressures of these companies have led to recent seed patenting regulations in many countries, including Turkey.

The Seed Law enacted in 2006 was detailed and solidified by September 2018, with the Regulation on the Registration, Production, and Marketing of Local Varieties. Article 4(1) of the regulation suggests that “the trade and the reproduction of local seed varieties are allowed on the condition that they are registered in the Registration List of Local Varieties.” This article seems to have a room for the trade of local seeds that farmers reproduce themselves, after registering their local seed in this list. Nevertheless, it needs to be read together with the Article 5(1): “Professional organizations, NGOs, public research institutions, and local governments and universities can apply for the registration if they are concerned.” Therefore, this article clarifies what is indeed meant by Article 4(1). The new regulation does not allow farmers — the long-rooted actors who have used and reproduced seeds for centuries — to apply for registration. Moreover, even if they were authorized to do so, small-scale farmers do not have the financial capacity to afford the costs of registration and the knowledge and time to deal with a lengthy bureaucratic process. Article 9 states the expenses of registration: fee for the examination of the application, enrolment fee, fee for the production permit, standard fee for seed registration, the registration fee for genetic resources, fee for certification services, the fee for field and laboratory inspections, documentation fee, labelling fee, publication fee, and others.

The articles in the Seed Law (Number 5553) and other related laws that this regulation refers to needs to be changed, first of all, in favor of peasant rights, so that this regulation could favor farmers because the regulations need to follow the lines of laws. However, the Seeds Law enacted in 2006 and this regulation that solidifies it does not recognize farmers’ universal rights

about seeds. Article 19 of “United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas” (UN, 2018) defines “Right to the Seeds,” as peasants’ right to control, maintain, save, use, exchange and sell their seeds. It puts that “states shall recognize the rights of peasants to rely either on their own seeds or on other locally available seeds of their choice and to decide on the crops and species that they wish to grow.” Similarly, the article says, “States shall take appropriate measures to support peasant seed systems and promote the use of peasant seeds and agrobiodiversity.” Turkey needs to abide by this declaration in its national law and regulations and that it must recognize the right of peasants by respecting and encouraging biodiversity.

The development and registration of seeds would be beneficial on the condition that it aims to protect biodiversity and that it does not exclude farmers from their protection, saving, reproduction, and trade. Thus, their registration needs to be conducted by public institutions, encouraging farmers to certify them in the seed varieties list with no charges, instead of leaving seeds in the hands of private seeds companies, mainly the transnational actors in the sector. However, the current agricultural policies do not position public and state initiatives as influential actors in agriculture, thus do not open room for the intervention for such protective measures for small farmers’ rights.

3.3.2. Regulations on GMO and the National Biosafety Law

Until 2003, when the transport ship carrying soy from Argentina to Turkey was stopped by Greenpeace and the soy was later analyzed as genetically modified, there was a massive denial of GMO by the authorities in Turkey. This incident motivated many associations, chambers, and activists to establish the platform “No to GMO.” The coming into the agenda of the Biosafety Law Draft in 2005 accelerated the opponent actions of this platform to GMO.¹⁴ The

¹⁴ The coalition was consisting of actors such as Ecology Collective having lawyers specialized in environmental cases and carrying out legal struggle, Greenpeace organizing social media campaigns and bringing forward international regulations and related protests against GMO, Çiftçi-Sen informing small farmers about the risks of GMO and organizing them to save their seed. A year before the establishment of this platform in Turkey, there was strong GMO opposition in the world. An

platform presented 100,000 signs in 2005 to the Parliamentary Petition Committee. Nevertheless, the state enacted regulations on genetically modified organisms and products without consulting any actors in this platform.

According to Article 5(6) of the “Regulation on the Import, Processing, Export, Control and Inspection of Genetically Modified Organisms and Products for Food and Feed Purpose,” “if food or feed contains one or more GMO in a total of minimum 0.9% then it is regarded as a GMO product,” and these products are not allowed to be imported. Also, Article 5(8) of the regulation suggests that “products that do not contain GMOs cannot be labelled as ‘GMO-free’” (Official Gazette, 2009), favoring biotech companies and agribusinesses instead of peoples. It was amended a few times until the enactment of the Biosafety Law.

The Turkish Biosafety Law No. 5977 entered into force on 26 March 2010 concurrently with two related regulations: Regulations on Genetically Modified Organisms and Products Thereof (the “New GMO Regulations”) and the Regulations on the Operating Procedures and Rules for the Biosafety Council and Committees (the “Biosafety Council Regulations”). The regulations have both been published in the Official Gazette No. 27671, 13 August 2010. The new regulations were partly responding to the public reactions, allowing, for instance, having a positive claim label such as “GMO-free.” The “threshold” of GMO is defined in section 4(k) of the “New GMO Regulations” No. 27671 as “the minimum limit for approved genes, to be determined by the Ministry in the light of the Council’s opinion, above which a product shall be required to be labelled as containing GMO” (Official Gazette, 2010). Also, the sections 18(1)(g) and 19(1)(e) suggest for food and feed labels to have positive claim labelling on products that are GMO-free that they “do not contain,” “do not consist of” or “do not derive from GMOs.”

environmental organization, Friends of the Earth International, started the campaign “WTO - Hands Off Our Food” representing 35 million people and 350 organizations. In 2003 and 2004, a giant tomato-shaped balloon travelled Europe, collected signs from many countries, and delivered them to national parliaments and WTO.
<http://www.gdoyahayir.net/category/makale/>

The Biosafety Council Regulations provided for the foundation of a Biosafety Council, consisting of experts and committees (Section 3, Article 9), which is responsible for the examination of applications about the placing on the market of genetically modified products and the contained use of genetically modified microorganisms. It suggests that the Council will establish a committee of eleven members for conducting a scientific assessment of each application. Article 5 of the Biosafety Law banned the production of genetically modified plants, animal feeds, and animals (Article 5c) as well as genetically modified baby foods and follow-on formulas (Article 5d) in Turkey. However, Articles 3 and 7 of the Biosafety Law permitted the import of genetically modified animal feeds, upon the evaluation of the Biosafety Committee, detailing the application and evaluation procedures.

Nevertheless, until the effective date of this law in September 2010, along with the “Practice Direction of the GMO Regulation,” the scientific committee permitted the import of thirty-two GMO varieties (corn, soy, cotton, potato, etc.) in Turkey as food and animal feed. A year after the inurement of the Biosafety Law, the commercial enterprises of the Turkish Union of Animal Seed Businesses and the White Meat Businesses (BESD-BİR) and Central Union of Egg Producers (YUM-BİR) applied for the permission for importing thirteen genetically modified corn varieties as animal feeds. Their application was approved despite public reactions. After this permission, the Federation of Turkish Food and Beverages Industry Associations applied for the permission to import 29 genetically modified foods (No to GMO Platform, 2012). Their application was denied, due to a broad public reaction (e.g. “Yemezler” campaign of Greenpeace, collection of 300,000 signatures demanding the rejection).

The opposition to GMO, led by the coalition consisting of activists, consumers, scientists, has a considerable role in the process of the development of national legislation on GMO and the evaluation of the applications for import of GMO foods, after the Biosafety Law. The opposition was partly successful because the production of genetically modified food and

animal feed is forbidden in Turkey. However, genetically modified animal feeds have easily been imported with the permission of the Biosafety Committee. Besides, there is no information on the labels of the animal products we consume, about the GMO and non-GMO seeds that these animals are fed.

3.3.3. The Metropolitan Law

The latest legal regulations concerning metropolitan municipalities were the Metropolitan Law (Number 6360), namely the “Metropolitan Law No. 6360 on the establishment of thirteen metropolitan municipalities and twenty-seven districts and amendments at certain law and decree-laws” in 2012 and the Metropolitan Law (Number 6447). The latter was enacted in 2013 to make some partial changes on the Metropolitan Law 6360. By the Law 6447, with the conversion of Ordu to a metropolitan city, the number of metropolitan cities reached at 30.

As the table below indicates, there is a significant difference in the population of “province and district centers” and “towns and villages” compared to the previous year in 2013 due to the administrative division changes regulated by Law No. 6360. After this law, the share of the population of the province and district centers rose to 91.3% in 2013 from 77.3% in 2012. Also, the share of the population of towns and villages in the total population decreased. It declined from 22.7% in 2012 to 8.7% in 2013 and 7.7% in 2019.

Table 4. The Share of the Population of Province/District Centers and Towns/Villages in the Total Population, 2012-2019

Years	Province and district centers	Towns and villages
2012	77.3	22.7
2013	91.3	8.7
2014	91.8	8.2
2015	92.1	7.9
2016	92.3	7.7
2017	92.5	7.5
2018	92.3	7.7
2019	92.8	7.2

Source: Results of Address Based Population Registration System, 2007-2019 (TÜİK)

According to these laws, the villages within İstanbul and Kocaeli provincial administrative boundaries were removed and they became neighborhoods in their district municipality. Also, the villages and *belde* municipalities within the boundaries of the 13 new metropolitan municipalities have lost their village entity. Thus, 1583 towns and submunicipalities and 16,220 villages in total have lost their village legal entity and been transformed into neighborhoods. As the table shows, this law abolished undemocratically almost half of the villages in Turkey without asking the opinion of these villagers.

Table 5. Population, Number of Districts, Towns, Villages, 2007-2019

Year	Population	Number of districts	Number of towns (<i>belde</i>) and submunicipalities (<i>ilk kademe belediyesi</i>)	Number of villages
2012	75,627,384	892	1,977	34,434
2013	76,667,864	919	394	18,214
2014	77,695,904	919	396	18,340
2015	78,741,053	919	397	18,362
2016	79,814,871	919	397	18,373
2017	80,810,525	921	396	18,380
2018	82,003,882	922	386	18,275
2019	83,154,997	922	386	18,280

Source: The results of Address Based Population Registration System (ABPRS), 2012-2019 (TÜİK)

According to Article 35 (3) of the Law 6360, “the staff members, all movable and immovable properties, rights, holding and debts of the municipalities and villages of which the legal entity is removed will be transferred to relevant ministries, metropolitan municipalities and their subsidiaries or district municipalities.” This article led to the loss of common properties of many villagers and their income from these land properties when their villages became neighborhoods in metropolitan cities. Besides, despite the Article 16 says that the tenancy of meadows belongs to former villagers continues within the frame of the Pasture Law

4342, the conversion of many villages into neighborhoods of metropolitan municipalities has opened the possibility of expropriation in practice. Besides, the “Amendment Law on the Soil Protection and Land Use Act No. 6537” legislated in 2014, which is supposed to protect the fertile lands in these areas, is also not implemented in practice.

Thus, Law 6360 has made it more challenging to sustain animal husbandry and earn a livelihood for the former villagers. Many of the fertile land and common areas such as meadows are either confiscated. Some of these common lands are rented to these formerly villages who used to benefit commonly from these areas. As the value of the land in the metropolitan city increases, these lands have become more open to capital invasion. Therefore, the agricultural lands have increasingly been used for different purposes, such as construction projects and these conditions make harder for these populations to live on these lands. The opening of rural space to capital accumulation, through projects of HES, JES, RES, becomes a threat for agriculture and the biological richness of the flora of the former villages, which are essential for the ecological balance. Another impact of the recent Metropolitan Law would be the change of lifestyles of former villagers from agriculture and animal husbandry to a new and unfamiliar lifestyle, including an increase in food consumption than production and the gradual loss of traditional agricultural products and rural culture. All these recent developments indeed respond to the demands of the capital in detriment of peasant farming, rural lives, and ecology.

3.3.4. Draft Bill for Changing the Law on the Regulation of Foodstuff and Temporary Tanzim Sales

In November 2018, the Ministry of Trade proposed a draft bill on central marketplaces (*hâl*), while the discussions around the significant increase in the prices of fruits and vegetables revived before the local elections on March 31, 2019. The discussion of this draft bill was yet postponed in order to avoid possible adverse reactions before the elections. The “Law No. 5957 Regulating the Commerce of Fruits and Vegetables and Other Goods Having Enough Supply

and Demand level” (Official Gazette, 2010) and “Regulation on fruits and vegetable trade and wholesale food markets” (Official Gazette, 2012) are still in effect as of 2020. In November 2018, in parallel to the proposal of the bill, the government organized the sale of foodstuffs in 80 spots in Turkey (known as *Tanzim Satışlar*) announcing that citizens could buy cheaper foods in this way, as these are the direct sales of the Central Union of Agricultural Credit Cooperatives. These sales were, however, temporary and ended before the elections.

The bill concerns all foodstuff from fruits and vegetables to animal products and pulses. It mainly aims at the privatization of wholesale markets, by transferring the current responsibility of municipalities to organize these marketplaces to corporations. Article 4 of the draft bill predicates that wholesale markets will be organized and managed by corporations that conform to the qualities defined in Article 3. The Article 3(16) defines these necessary qualities as having laboratories, private storehouses, and cold storage depots, waste processing and stocking areas, electronic trade platform, management buildings, car parks, and other infrastructural and service facilities. If this bill was enacted, the Ministry of Trade would be responsible for giving the authorization to companies meeting these criteria to organize and manage the wholesales. The Ministry of Trade would not issue a tender but form a commission to evaluate applications of corporations. With Article 4, the draft bill proposes to change Article 3(8) as “the authorized corporations that are selected as investors by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization would be given continuous and direct appurtenances without charge for 49 years.”

This draft bill seems to be designed as the continuum of the process that eliminated farmers’ marketing power of their products via their UASCs. It aims to consolidate the corporate sovereignty by giving the control of the wholesale markets to corporations, to facilitate their role in the distribution of food to the supermarkets and chain markets and to make more farmers bound by contract-farming. The former president of Çiftçi-Sen, Abdullah

Aysu, says that if this bill became legalized, it would open for the corporations as the managers of these wholesale markets, the opportunity to make one-sided contracts with farmers and dictate their final product prices and payment terms. It would thus leave farmers even more vulnerable, in the face of corporations, with no control mechanisms. Both the former general secretary of Çiftçi-Sen, Ali Bülent Erdem, and the former president of Çiftçi-Sen, Abdullah Aysu reveal in their interviews that the current conditions of wholesale markets need to be improved. However, they say, the solution is not to give the authority to corporations because when the corporations as profit-oriented private entities become in charge of wholesale markets instead of municipalities, the role of public actors is taken (Artıgerçek, 2019).

The consumer price index per year (*TÜFE*) was 22.35% in January 2019, while this was realized as 64.11% for fruits and vegetables in the same month. The increase in the prices of fruits and vegetables was 29.71% in January (Turkish Republic Central Bank, 2019). It is in this context that the AKP government organized in February, right before the local elections to be made on March 31, temporary Tanzim Sales, with populist concerns, only for a month. Since the TMO purchased the foods in Tanzim Sale spots directly from the Central Union of Agricultural Credit Cooperatives, the prices were relatively lower, compared to wholesale markets and supermarkets. However, even in a system without intermediaries, the prices were still high for many citizens. It is because all steps of conventional farming already operate through the dependence of farmers on corporations, as elaborated in this chapter. Besides, many citizens were disappointed that each person could only buy three kg of fruits and vegetables in total.

These temporary sales were in contradiction with the agrarian politics of the AKP, including the draft bill on wholesale markets proposed only two months before these sales. In this period, the government adopted the discourse “we will eliminate intermediaries so that the prices will decline.” The government will continue this discourse while promoting this bill and

point out their “exemplary” Tanzim Sales to cover the reality that this law would only facilitate the distribution of food through corporatized wholesale markets to the supermarkets.

These Tanzim Sales would be exemplary if organized from a holistic perspective that valued the participation and the voice of farmers’ organizations in this system, instead of being temporarily organized with a chauvinist approach. It is because an exemplary system would also encourage the increase of the number of participative and democratic producer and consumer cooperatives and their collaboration. Leftist governments in Turkey already implemented Tanzim Sales. The Izmir Metropolitan Municipality opened the first Tanzim Sale store (Tansa) in 1973 under the Directorship of Tanzim Sales. Tansa had a considerable role in providing accessible food needs for thirteen years until 1986. However, in the period of Anavatan Party, Tansa first became a corporation (Tansaş), and then the shares of the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality were sold in 1994.

However, the criticisms of the opposition to the recent Tanzim sales were mostly along with neoliberal lines. Although their points about the temporary and populist character of the recent Tanzim Sales were right, it was an irony that leftist opposition was emphasizing the economic loss these sales caused. I argue that the opposition instead needed and still needs to underline the importance of permanent projects that are led by citizens and/or initiated by local governments as a participative and democratic way, with motivations to transform these current relations of food production, consumption, and distribution. As the state politics discussed in this chapter indicates, the state would not propose a transformative model by enacting laws similar to the law (Number 1590) that allowed Tansa in that period. However, the transformation would be more likely to be pushed by the local organizations from below, demanding by doing. I will thus investigate detailedly some local citizen-led and municipality-led examples emerging as alternative initiatives and projects in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

For now, I would like to present only a table that summarizes the recent discussion of Hüseyin Songül, an expert in Turkish Central Bank, about the pricing in the supply chain of fruits and vegetables (Songül, 2017). It reveals well the necessity of initiatives struggling for alternative production, consumption, and distribution relations and an organized demand in the transformation of the state's current agri-food policies. This table draws attention to the significant increase in the final prices of products because of commission agents, transportation costs, and taxes, while the price rise does not have a repercussion on the income of farmers.

Table 6. An Example of Pricing in the Supply Chain in Turkey: The Example of Potatoes

Farmer	Trader	Commission agent in Antalya Hali	Consignor	Transporter	Commission agent in Ankara Hali	Market	Consumer
10,000 kg potatoes 10,000 TL (1TL/kg) The income of farmer = 10,000 TL - Bağkur (1%) - income tax withholding (2%)	Settle net after VAT: 13,000 TL (1.3 TL/kg)	Commission price: 8% Commission VAT: 18% VAT over total price: 1% Hal taxes: 1%	Transportation VAT: 1% Sales VAT: 18%	10% loss 9 kg potatoes 18,000 TL 2 TL/kg	10% loss 8.1 kg potatoes 21,060 TL 2.6 TL/kg	Sales VAT: 8% 8.1 kg tomatoes= 22,748 TL 2.81 TL/kg	2.81 TL/kg

Sources: Table is prepared by the author by compiling the data from Songül (2019) and Aysu (2019).

Even this simple calculation reveals that intermediaries take 45.5% of the final product price, and 11.5% of the final price constitutes the taxes paid to the state. The price consumers pay nearly triples the income that the farmers get from the sale of the potatoes they cultivate themselves. The share of the farmer's gate price in the consumer price is 35.5%, yet the farmers also spend more than the half of this price only to input costs by already paying 18% VAT for each input (Songül, 2017). Of course, there are many products, especially processed ones like

dairy products, for which the share of farmgate prices in consumer prices becomes less than for staple food products. The solution is apparently not to include more corporate actors in the supply chain with claims of removing intermediaries. It is because the empowerment of corporations would certainly not result in price reductions. The solution needs to be searched in a shortened supply chain formed by the direct cooperation of participative consumer and producer organizations, which would aim to shape the food relations in favor of themselves. The share of the farmer's gate price in the consumer price is even less in many countries like the USA and UK.

The table below compares prices paid by consumers for food with prices received by farmers for potatoes in the USA between the years 2011 and 2018. It indicates that the farm share has been decreasing in the last seven years and only 15-16% in the last five years.

Table 7. The Share of Farmer's Gate Prices in the Retail Price by Year (%) for Potatoes

Year	Retail ¹	Farm ²	Farm share ³
	<i>Price (cents/lb)</i>		<i>Percent</i>
2011	68	15	23
2012	66	10	16
2013	67	11	18
2014	67	10	16
2015	65	9	15
2016	68	11	16
2017	72	11	15
2018	74	11	15

¹U.S. monthly average retail price data is reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

²Monthly farm prices provided by NASS.

³Calculated by assuming that 4 percent of the volume of the farm commodity is lost through spoilage and trimmings.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service calculations, using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

According to the farmer's gate prices taken from DEFRA (Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs in the UK) and retail prices from the Office for National Statistics and the Agriculture & Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), the farm share of

the same product, potatoes, in the UK varies between 17% and 25% in the last years, thus in between Turkey and the USA. Of course, this share changes for each product; for instance, it is 38% for eggs and apples.

Table 8. UK's Farmer's Gate Share in the Consumer Price by Year (%) for Potatoes

Year	Farm share (Percent)
2012	23
2013	22
2014	17
2015	8
2016	26
2017	25

Sources: Office for National Statistics in the UK, Report on the Agriculture in the United Kingdom 2018 (Data taken from the DEFRA & AHDB)

As the consumer price paid is shared between the farmer and various other processors, distributors and retailers, the share of the farmers does not seem like a fair compensation of the labor of farmers who are the producers of these products. Also, it is important to note that these statistics indicate the share of farmer's gate prices in retail consumer prices for indirect markets. The factors like the greater or less prevalence of the farmers' market and other direct channels and the prices of inputs (including taxes) farmers pay for the production in each country need to be considered better to understand the survival conditions of farmers in a country. Given the insufficient presence of direct market channels and significant input prices and other expenses for the production in Turkey, the seemingly higher share of farmer's gate prices than in the UK and USA is insufficient for farmers to continue farming.

3.3.5. The Organic Agriculture Law

In 2004, the Turkish Parliament passed the Organic Agriculture Law No. 5262 as part of the EU harmonization process and its governing regulations were published in 2005. In 2004, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock started to lead two committees separately for advisory and regulatory purposes. It delegated the control and the certification processes to the remote control and certification companies instead of authorizing its provincial agriculture

directorates in 81 cities and their district directories for organic certification. There were also appendixes to “Organic Agriculture Law and Regulation” No. 5262 in 2006, 2008, and 2009 in line with the new EU regulations, and the current law finalized in 2010.

Along with the state support, organic production in Turkey more than quintupled from 2004 to 2017, reaching nearly 1,611 million tons from 278,726 tons. The state supports especially the production of organic fruits and vegetables and locally valuable products, such as organic olive and olive oil production in Çanakkale, which have export potential. The cultivated land for organic farming increased from 162,193 hectares in 2004 to 348,460 hectares in 2019 (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Turkey, 2019). In addition to farmers converted their agriculture to organic farming in years, transnational and national corporations have also incrementally penetrated the organic market likewise many urban entrepreneurs. The share of organic agriculture in total agricultural activities rose from 0.3% in 2002 to 2% in 2016 (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Turkey, 2019).

Nevertheless, this rising volume of organic production and the popularity of organic food in Turkey do not indicate a significant rise in its domestic per capita consumption and easy and sustainable conversion to organic farming for small-scale farmers. The Turkish organic market is still export-led. The domestic per capita consumption of organic food was only 1 Euro in 2014, whereas it was 118 Euros in France, 122 Euros in the USA, and 237 Euros in Sweden in 2017 (Willer and Lernoud, 2019). Therefore, only middle and upper-class consumers can access certified organic food in Turkey and solely to a limited extent.

Also, the export-oriented character of the Turkish organic sector requires producers to meet European organic food standards; however, small-scale organic farmers are not sufficiently knowledgeable about the conversion processes, bureaucratic and technical requirements, and marketing relations. The Turkish government does not support small farmers in this process, while European countries have policies supporting marketing and processing as

well as advice and training activities (Ataseven, 2014, p. 208). Many organic producers are contract-farmers. Their certification is provided by the company they produce for. However, as these producers are entirely dependent on the private company that provides the certification, they are not able to sell their organic products to elsewhere (Hanoğlu, 2015, p. 393). Additionally, support for organic products in Turkey varies according to the amount of land owned by producers. Thus, small producers cannot benefit from this support as effectively as big scale organic producers (Keyder and Yenal, 2013). The value of this support lessens when one considers the Turkish Lira because certification costs are calculated in Euros, and the Lira has lost considerable value relative to the Euro.¹⁵

The organic sector in Turkey is dominated by private actors, mainly private-run farms and corporate brands. Organic farmers' markets in Turkey emerged not only as an alternative to conventional food but also to the conventional distribution of certified organic products in supermarkets and organic stores. To widen the domestic organic market in terms of the size, quality, and variety, the Buğday Association, in collaboration with other stakeholders, started the first organic farmers' market in İstanbul in 2006 (Ecological Farmers' Market, 2018). It was followed by Slow Food and the EÜD (Ecological Producers' Association) with a couple of organic farmers' markets in İstanbul. There are also a few organic farmers' markets organized by municipalities. In all these farmers' markets, only certified organic products are allowed to be sold. However, there is no strict rule for accepting small-scale farmers. In addition to the small farmers, importers and intermediaries such as distributors and farmers' representatives are also allowed.

¹⁵ According to the data of the European Central Bank in June 2019, 1 Euro equaled nearly to 6,5 TL in June 2019. It was almost 4 TL in June 2017 and 2.90 TL in 2014. European Central Bank, 2019, http://sdw.ecb.europa.eu/quickview.do;jsessionId=782FBE71E90C841856120CF8468E08DE?SERIES_KEY=120.EXR.D.TRY.EUR.SP00.A

Post-organic initiatives emerged in this very context, only a few years after organic food became popular among economically privileged consumers. The post-organic movement in Turkey appears to have two “alternative wings.” The first wing consists primarily of private farms which assert to produce natural village products without having an organic certification, and the second wing is led collectively by citizens through participative cooperative initiatives. Differently from many countries in the Global North, organic and post-organic movements in Turkey have recently been emerging in an intersection with each other only in the last two decades. The more participatory and collective wing of the post-organic movement is even more recent; rising especially after the Gezi Resistance in 2013.

Briefly, many farmers who can hardly make a living in conventional agriculture under these pressuring conditions of Turkish agriculture for small and medium-scale farmers have been trying to shift their farming into organic or post-organic alternatives. Many formerly urban peasants, following the trend of back-to-the-land, also engaged in organic or ecological farming in the last decade in Turkey. This alternative (post) organic market also has a complex structure with various actors, in which many small farmers implementing organic or ecological farming live still considerable difficulties. I will discuss the dynamics of this complex alternative market in the following chapter, based on my in-depth interviews with varied significant actors in this market.

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter presented the history of agricultural transformation in Turkey, mainly focusing on the neoliberal transformation of Turkish agriculture since the 1980s. It addressed the fact that Turkey has been adopting neoliberal agricultural policies, particularly in the 2000s, following the Agricultural Reform Implementation Project. It indicated that neoliberal agricultural policies have increasingly been creating a free market where the state does not intervene in the market conditions and the pricing of agricultural goods in line with changing

government policies. It showed that the state, as the major actor for agricultural transformation before 2000, began to adopt new policies starting from the 2000s, along with the demands of international institutions like the World Bank, IMF, and the EU. It underlined the state's withdrawal from the credit mechanisms and the decrease in the input and price subsidies. It demonstrated that, over the last two decades, state economic enterprises that support purchases and supply input have been closed, dissolved, or privatized like the integrated processing plants of farmers' cooperative unions.

It addressed that since 2000, the state developed policies and legal regulations that aimed to minimize the sources of agriculture and integrate agriculture with industry. It proposed that the dynamics of Turkish agriculture today conform to the demands and functioning of the agri-food industry that conforms to international dynamics, in rapport with the trajectory drawn with the ARIP. It argued that the current support policies reflect a logic that aimed at productivity and the production of value-added products at large scales. To support this argument, it elaborated on the Basin-Based Production Model and some legal regulations that came into force since the 2000s. It also investigated some prominent laws like the Seed Law (No. 5553), Organic Agriculture Law (No. 5262), Tobacco Law (No. 4733), Sugar Law (No. 4634), and the Metropolitan Law (No. 6360). It argued these laws contributed to the empowerment of capital in many sectors, primarily the agri-food sector, but also the energy and construction sector.

It suggested that the Seed Law and related regulations were designed in a way to expand the use of certified seeds. Similarly, the state helped to adapt new production techniques and forms like organic agriculture and "good agricultural practices" to capitalist production by requiring industrial inputs of agribusiness and certificates of third-party institutions. It also proposed that the state also integrated its agri-food policies with the financial system by making farmers dependent on the credits of private banks. It framed the expansion of contract-

farming and the seasonal employment as processes that contribute to the growth of the large food corporations that have been becoming more powerful with their partnerships with transnational corporations, especially for the last three decades, in Turkey.

This chapter discussed, critically, the existing agri-food relations marked by the intermediaries, expensive agricultural inputs, unfair compensation of the farmers' labor, and the unaffordable prices of even unhealthy conventional foods for consumers. It emphasized that as the visibility of consumers' food anxiety, the vulnerability of producers, the metabolic rupture, and ecological devastation increase, the demand for organic and post-organic alternatives also rises. It argued that the organic food market that arose as a reaction to the detrimental impacts of industrial agriculture could not provide an efficient solution for small producers for a variety of reasons. It suggested that the state's support for organic producers are product-specific, export-oriented, and correlates with producers' land size. Thus, this support is unable to cover the certification expenses of small farmers, combined with the drastic fall in the value of the Turkish Lira compared to other payment currencies.

Presenting this picture of both SEEs, UASC, and the logic of state support since 2000, this chapter addressed the dissolution of small-scale farming and the abandonment of the previous agricultural structure of Turkey in which small-scale farmers used to be supported by the state and had greater sovereignty within their own production processes than today. It showed that all these developments left small farmers alone in the market to face powerful corporations and agribusinesses, with the decline of publicly controlled agriculture. It highlighted that farmers have increasingly been compelled in the corporate food regime to utilize the pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, and industrial seeds of these companies. However, it argued, these conditions also grow the demand of large populations for accessing direct, fair and healthy foods.

These discussions also prepared the historical background to understand the emergence of collective ecological food initiatives that constitute the main focus of this dissertation. An important question appears as how to struggle for the revival of small-scale ecological farming by which small producers could get a fair price for their labor, and consumers could eat healthy, ecological food for reasonable prices. Therefore, the rest of this dissertation studies alternative efforts for building together people's sovereignty, despite the increasing neoliberal pressures that instead strengthen the sovereignty of corporations by the help of the state.



CHAPTER 4

Trusting an Alternative among Plural Alternatives in the (Post)organic Food Market in Turkey: The Recent Rise of Ecological Food Cooperatives and Communities in Turkey as Alternative Collective and Civic Initiatives¹⁶

There are various actors in the organic and post-organic market in Turkey that present themselves as alternative to the current food system, for being healthy alternatives, with or without political and ecological visions. This chapter aims primarily to elaborate on these actors, by putting forth the plurality of them and their varying motivations, based on a fieldwork on the producers and consumers of three prominent actors in the alternative food market. In doing so, it also aims to discuss how and why civic-led collective alternative food initiatives differentiate from other alternatives, carrying which socioeconomic, ecological, and political potentials for creating alternative agri-food relations.

The first half of this chapter (4.1) presents primarily the general picture of various actors in the Turkish alternative food market and addresses the rise of organic and recent post-organic movements in Turkey. It then elaborates collective food initiatives in the urban space, mostly focusing on consumer-led ecological food initiatives that emerge as part of the post-organic movement and distinguish from other food channels in the alternative food market, in terms of their political and/or ecological visions about the agri-food system. I discuss food communities/collectives and consumer food cooperatives as two significant forms of consumer-led ecological food initiatives and present some salient examples of these initiatives by comparing them in terms of their main motivations, organization models, and functioning.

¹⁶ The first half of this chapter is based on my following article: Soysal Al, İ. (2020). The promising momentum and collective practices of the recently expanding network of consumer-led ecological food initiatives in Turkey. *İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyoloji Dergisi*, 40, 129–162. The second half of this chapter is based on the following paper: Soysal Al, İ., & Küçük, B. (2019). In-between Anxiety and Hope: Trusting an Alternative Among “Alternatives” in the (Post) Organic Food Market in Turkey. *The International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food*, 25 (2), 173-190.

These data are based on my participant observation through constant interaction with the members of these initiatives as a Kadıköy Coop volunteer for more than a year, in several meetings and workshops as well as through my visits to these groups.

Then, based on my thirty in-depth interviews, the second half of the chapter (4.2) examines empirically the plurality of alternatives within the alternative food market by addressing three different food channels in İstanbul from a comparative perspective: a popular natural food shop, an ecological consumer food cooperative, and an organic farmers' market. This helps to analyze detailly the context in which the civic-led collective alternative food initiatives –the main subjects of this dissertation– try to emerge with some political ambitions to change the current production and consumption relations differently from many other “alternative” actors. This empirical discussion also provides a deeper understanding of how consumers' varying forms of relationship to each alternative is intermingled with and impinge on those consumers' social and political visions about alternative agri-food relations and vice versa.

4.1. The Rise of (Post)organic Movements in Turkey: Collective Urban Food Initiatives and Consumer-led Ecological Food Initiatives

4.1.1. The Rise of Organic and Post-organic Food Actors in Turkey

I would like to present here, first, the rise of the organic and post-organic movements and the complexity of this alternative food market in Turkey. I will then address the general characteristics of the Turkish post-organic movement in which the collective food initiatives I elaborate are positioned. The organic agriculture policies in Turkey started in 2004, with the enactment of the law on organic agriculture, as part of the EU harmonization process, as I explained in Chapter 3. After this law, organic production in Turkey increased almost fivefold from 2005 to 2017, reaching nearly 1,611 million tons (Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Livestock, 2006, 2018). The volume of organic production increased significantly, and organic

food has become increasingly popular in Turkey. However, the Turkish organic market is still export-led and the domestic per capita consumption of organic food is quite lower (only 1 Euro in 2014) compared with European countries (118 Euros in France, 237 Euros in Sweden in 2017).¹⁷ Hence, only middle and upper-class consumers can access certified organic food in Turkey and this solely to a limited extent. Organic food is mostly marketed via online sales of private-run farms and corporate brands or organic stores especially in big cities. In this context, organic farmers' markets in Turkey emerged as alternative not only to the conventional distribution of certified organic products in supermarkets and organic stores, but also to expensive certified organic foods. To widen the domestic organic market in terms of the size, quality, and variety, *Buğday Derneği* (Buğday Association) in collaboration with other stakeholders, started the first organic farmers' market in İstanbul in 2006. In all these farmers' markets, only certified organic products are allowed to be sold and there is no strict rule for accepting only small-scale farmers. The prices of certified organic foods are still expensive even for many middle-class consumers, especially because of the higher prices of certification costs.

Post-organic initiatives emerged in this context, a few years after organic food became popular among economically privileged consumers. It is a very recent movement in Turkey and appears to have mainly two "alternative forms." The actors of the first form of post-organic initiatives vary from natural food stores and online sale channels at varying scales to natural food chains and small-scale farmers. They assert to produce natural village products without having organic certification, with their emphasis on small-scale local agriculture and trust instead of a formal certification system. Popular village farms mostly sell their products to consumers in big cities, mainly İstanbul, based upon their orders via e-mail or online shopping.

¹⁷ FIBL and IFOAM, "The World of Organic Agriculture: Statistics and Emerging Trends 2019," p. 72-73. The latest data about per capita organic consumption in Turkey is available for 2014.

Some of these actors have become very well-known and been transformed into middle- and upper-scale enterprises for capital accumulation rather than being in favor of small producers in the region. They enlarge their scale by opening stores in İstanbul after a while, like in the case of *İpek Hanımın Çiftliği* (İpek Hanım's Farm). Besides, there are some middle-scale private farms that both collaborate with participatory collective food platforms by selling their ecological products at more accessible prices and provide food to mainstream channels and natural food stores like İpek Hanım's Farm. There are also small-scale ecological farms, of which most are run by back-to-the-landers, which also usually function by sending their products by cargo to İstanbul and other big cities. Some of them collaborate with food communities and consumer food cooperatives, because private distribution does not usually offer fair prices and mostly search for organic certification as proof.

Consumer-led collective and participatory ecological food initiatives constitute the second form of post-organic initiatives, emerging as an alternative both to conventional food and to certified organic food. These initiatives have emerged in the last decade, without pursuing monetary gain but instead only their own sustainability. Their main aim is to provide consumers ecological products without intermediaries, for more affordable prices and to support small-scale ecological producers. Consumers are invited not only to buy products but also to engage in the functioning of these collective platforms through participatory and horizontal relationships and democratic decision-making processes. Doing so, they aim to maintain alternative production, consumption, and distribution relationships that are not present in conventional relations nor in most certified organic food and natural food channels. Despite being few in number, they also collaborate with some organic producers in their network.

It is not possible to conceptualize the organic food and post-organic food actors in an absolute dichotomy, thus we need to consider the intersections and sometimes collaborations

among these actors.¹⁸ However, the table below may help readers visualize more easily the main actors in the organic and post-organic market in Turkey.

Table 9. The Ideal-Typical Categorization of the Main Actors in the Organic and Post-Organic Market in Turkey¹⁹

ORGANIC MARKET (Venues for Certified Organic Food)	POST-ORGANIC MARKET (Venues for “Natural” and “Ecological” Food)
1. Corporate Organic Chain Markets (e.g. <i>City Farm</i>)	1. Corporate “Natural” Food Websites
2. Small and Middle-scale Commercial Websites	2. Websites of Private-Run Farms at Varying Scales (e.g. <i>İpek Hanım’s Farm</i> , <i>Gündönümü Farm</i>)
3. Supermarkets	3. Direct Natural Food Stores of Private Farms (e.g. <i>İpek Hanım’s Farm</i>)
4. Organic Food Markets	4. “Natural” Food Markets
5. Organic Farmers’ Markets organized by NGOs and Public Actors like Municipalities (e.g. <i>Feriköy Organic Farmers’ Market</i>)	5. Civic and Collective Ecological Food Initiatives (e.g. <i>Kadıköy Coop</i> , <i>BÜKOOP</i> , <i>Yeryüzü Food Communities</i>)

The period where the organic and post-organic movements rise considerably in Turkey is a period that also marked an increasing number of ecological actors in Turkey, including not only ecological/natural/organic food actors such as ecological farms, ecological collectives, and organic farmers’ markets but also ecological schools, urban gardens (*bostans*), ecological associations and other awareness actors.²⁰ The following map that *EkoHarita* gives a comprehensive idea about the expanding network of ecological actors in the last two decades.

¹⁸ I exemplify *İpek Hanım’s Farm* for both the second and third categories in the post-organic market, as the owner of the farm opened several shopping stores after her online business becomes a well-known example for natural food channels, as explained above. Also, please note that I write the word ‘natural’ in inverted commas here in this table, as it is not me but the actors themselves who claim for naturalness of their products. The word *natural* that appears throughout the text needs to be read in inverted commas each time by considering this remark.

¹⁹ I revised here our chart presented in the following article: Soysal Al, İ., & Küçük, B. (2019). “In-between Anxiety and Hope: Trusting an Alternative Among ‘Alternatives’ in the (Post) Organic Food Market in Turkey.” *The International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food*, 25 (2), p. 177.

²⁰ This period also witnessed many ecological protests in framework of the defense of commons against the HES, JES, RES, and mining and construction projects. I will address these in Chapter 8 in terms of how and to what extent these struggles are related to the struggles of urban ecological food initiatives around commons.

Figure 3. Ecological Map of Turkey

Please see the symbols and their meanings below for reading this map:

 Food communities and ecological/organic farmers' markets	 Ecological campuses	 Eco-farms
 Urban collective initiatives	 Botanical gardens	 Ecological NGOs
 Ecological museums	 Eco-tourism	 Ecological blogs
 Urban vegetable gardens (<i>bostans</i>)	 Ecological training	 Alternative Economies

Source: Ekoharita, <https://www.ekoharita.org/>

The map illustrates many consumer-led ecological food communities and urban collectives as well as ecological food cooperatives, if not all of them: *Çanakkale Ekolojik Yaşam İnisiyatifi-ÇAYEK* (Çanakkale Ecological Life Initiative) in Çanakkale; *Doğal Bilinçli Beslenme Ağı-DBB* (Natural and Conscious Nutrition Network) and *100. Yıl Gıda Topluluğu* (Centenary Food Community) in Ankara; Homeros Food Community, *Batı İzmir Topluluk Destekli Tarım Grubu- BITOT* (West İzmir Community Supported Agriculture Group), and *Gediz Ekoloji İnisiyatifi* (Gediz Ecological Initiative) in İzmir; Antalya Food Community; Bandura and *Kuzey Adana* (North Adana) Food Communities in Adana. It also illustrates more than ten organic farmers' markets in Turkey: organic farmers' markets of the Buğday Association in Feriköy, Kartal, Bakırköy, Beylikdüzü, İzmit, and Kocasinan with relevant municipalities; of *Organik Yaşam Derneği- ORYAD* (Association of Support for Organic Life) in Kemerburgaz, Göztepe,

Maltepe, and Bodrum in collaboration with municipalities; Slow Food's *Şile Yeryüzü Pazarı* (Earth Market); and Tepebaşı Municipality's Organic Farmers' Market in Eskişehir.

Underlining again the role of organic farmers' markets as crucial alternatives to conventional food and the significant role of the Buğday Association in starting organic farmers' markets in İstanbul, it is important to note here that I consider the project of the Buğday Association as a non-participatory alternative example.²¹ Buğday Association acts a significant actor in terms of raising awareness and training about the dangers of conventional farming and the expansion of organic agriculture. However, as opposed to the functioning of food communities and cooperatives, Buğday Association has not included consumers in the organization processes of the organic farmers' markets. Other farmers' markets have also been organized by NGOs in collaboration with municipalities, not by consumers themselves. In this regard, I do not put them in the same category of consumer-led urban collective initiatives with more inclusive and participatory characteristics, where I position food communities and cooperatives in the following section. Consumers in these organic farmers' markets do not participate in decision-making processes, nor do they take responsibilities in the functioning of these initiatives. Thus, if NGOs and municipalities, as the only actors in the organization of farmers' markets, wish to terminate their projects, the organization of these markets would not be sustainable. Furthermore, this initiative differentiates from the "new-generation" ecological food communities and cooperatives for representing the alternative form in the organic movement and thus working only with producers having organic certification and by allowing

²¹ Buğday Association has recently decided to transform its project of organic farmers' markets into a more citizen-led platform. It initiated a Communication Network of Prosumers and working units where producers, consumers, municipality, and NGOs act together as decision-makers and organizers of the organic farmers' markets. These developments are apparently influenced by the rise of food cooperatives and communities led by citizens and may also change the dynamics of organic farmers' market into a more participative and inclusive one. This may also transform the consumers' relations and consideration of these markets (more than a food channel) because they will also have the opportunity to engage actively in this project embracing the political perspective of the Buğday Association that has a leading activist stance with its criticisms against and awareness about the risks of conventional agriculture..

intermediaries in the market.²² Buğday Association considers consumer-led ecological initiatives such as Kadıköy Coop also as reliable food initiatives when asked, however, they also express that they consider organic certification as the only source of trust. Therefore, the distinctions among “ecological,” “organic,” and “natural” are thus not random but deep and intentional. I thus follow in the text these word distinctions of different actors as “ecological,” “natural” or “organic” to qualify the foods they provide. In general, while the word “organic” is used to indicate certified organic products in the organic market, the post-organic sector uses the words “ecological” and “natural.” The word “natural” is embraced by private-run farms and companies, referring to foods grown without the use of pesticides, herbicides, synthetic fertilizers, and preservatives. The word “ecological” is used by food communities/cooperatives to emphasize a holistic approach to ecology (e.g. respect to the whole ecosystem and biodiversity) that they consider ignored in the natural production that is only concerned with the natural quality of food. Although these words are usually used interchangeably by consumers, these distinctions are constantly made by producers and crucial actors in organic movement as well as activists in the post-organic food communities/cooperatives.

4.1.2. Urban Collective Food Initiatives as Alternative Food Initiatives in Turkey

The number of urban collective food initiatives has been increasing in the last decade. They differentiate from other alternative food channels for being organized collectively by consumers and/or producers, yet these initiatives are far from being a homogenized whole in terms of how they present themselves, their main motivations, functioning, and organization forms. I categorize these collective initiatives as food communities, consumer food cooperatives, food collectives, and community kitchens.²³ Komşu Kafe Kolektifi (Neighbor Café Collective),

²² Buğday Association puts that intermediaries allowed in this market are different from other intermediaries in the sense they offer fair prices to producers and share the loss of the producers in the process of transportation.

²³ In general, people do not make a difference between these actors and generalize them as food communities. I also do not consider them as completely independent actors from one another. They are usually in close contact with each other and even some cooperative volunteers also work voluntarily in food communities. However, it is important to examine these in different categories, especially to analyze the implications of the different organization models of food communities and consumer food cooperatives. I will analyze their differences as well as their similarities later in the chapter.

Kadın Kadına Mülteci Muftağı (Kitchen of Refugee Women), Bombalara Karşı Sofralar (Food, Not Bombs), and Kuçe Food Collective are some examples of food collectives and community kitchens in Turkey. However, I will discuss here only the urban collective and *ecological* food communities and cooperatives organized by consumers.

4.1.3. Food Communities and Cooperatives in Turkey from a Comparative Perspective

4.1.3.1. General Picture of Consumer Food Cooperatives and Communities in Turkey

There is heterogeneity among food communities and cooperatives likewise in other collective urban initiatives. However, they have some common aspects that differentiate them from many organic food alternatives. Their primary common objective is to support small-scale farming and grow solidarity relations with small farmers, through a *locally organized collective effort* in the city. The locality may mean the spatial organization of consumers in a neighborhood as in the case of Kadıköy, Koşuyolu, Beşiktaş cooperatives and at a university like in *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Mensupları Tüketim Kooperatifi- BÜKOOP* (Boğaziçi University Members Consumer Food Cooperative). Or consumers may work in collaboration with the producers of a particular local space, e.g. the project of *Direnen Üretici-Tüketici Kolektifi- DÜRTÜK* (Collective of Producers and Consumers in Resistance) in Piyalepaşa Bostans. They also target to subvert the conventional distanced relations of urban consumers from production conditions, by having *direct and transparent relations with producers*, which enable more information on the cultivation processes of the food they consume. Consumers in these initiatives also care about paying *a fair price* for small-scale farmers. In a context where the conventional farming has incrementally been rising food anxiety and threatening biodiversity, most of the collective food initiatives in İstanbul work with ecological farmers who farm without agricultural chemicals and using local and landrace seeds. *Trust* becomes the main component of these relations between these initiatives and producers. The food communities and cooperatives I address here do not require organic certification but mostly establish trust by increasing their

interaction with small farmers in their networks, via field visits and direct relations and references of similar initiatives and producer unions. Trust-building becomes an important factor also for consumers in terms of determining which food cooperative or community the urban consumers prefer and/or feel related. Briefly, most consumer food cooperatives or food communities are organized collectively by citizens in their locality to supply healthy food directly from ecological small farmers, based on direct and trust-based relations; to both access ecological food more easily and support farmers who care about agroecology.

I will elaborate on the differences of food communities and cooperatives, especially in terms of their organization model. However, there are also differences among consumer food cooperatives/communities in terms of how they experience collectivity and participatory relations in practice. Some, like Kadıköy Coop, care utmost attention to collective and participatory relations, while some others may not pay the same attention to the equal participation of each member in decision-making processes and daily operations. This is related to what kind of organization model they prefer and whether they prioritize expanding ecological and fair consumption and production relations over building flat and equal member relations.

Furthermore, ecological consumer cooperatives/food communities are not the same in terms of their ecological expectations. Some may make concessions to an ecological criterion and prioritize others in practice, along with their daily dynamics and collectively defined expectations from products and production conditions. For instance, one cooperative may work with a farmer who produces pasta from vegetables grown without the use of agricultural chemicals but makes the pasta with industrial flour instead of ancient wheat flour, while the other considers the use of landrace seeds essential. Alternatively, one ecological food community may consider very important the ecological packaging of food, while the other may not be equally concerned with their packages.

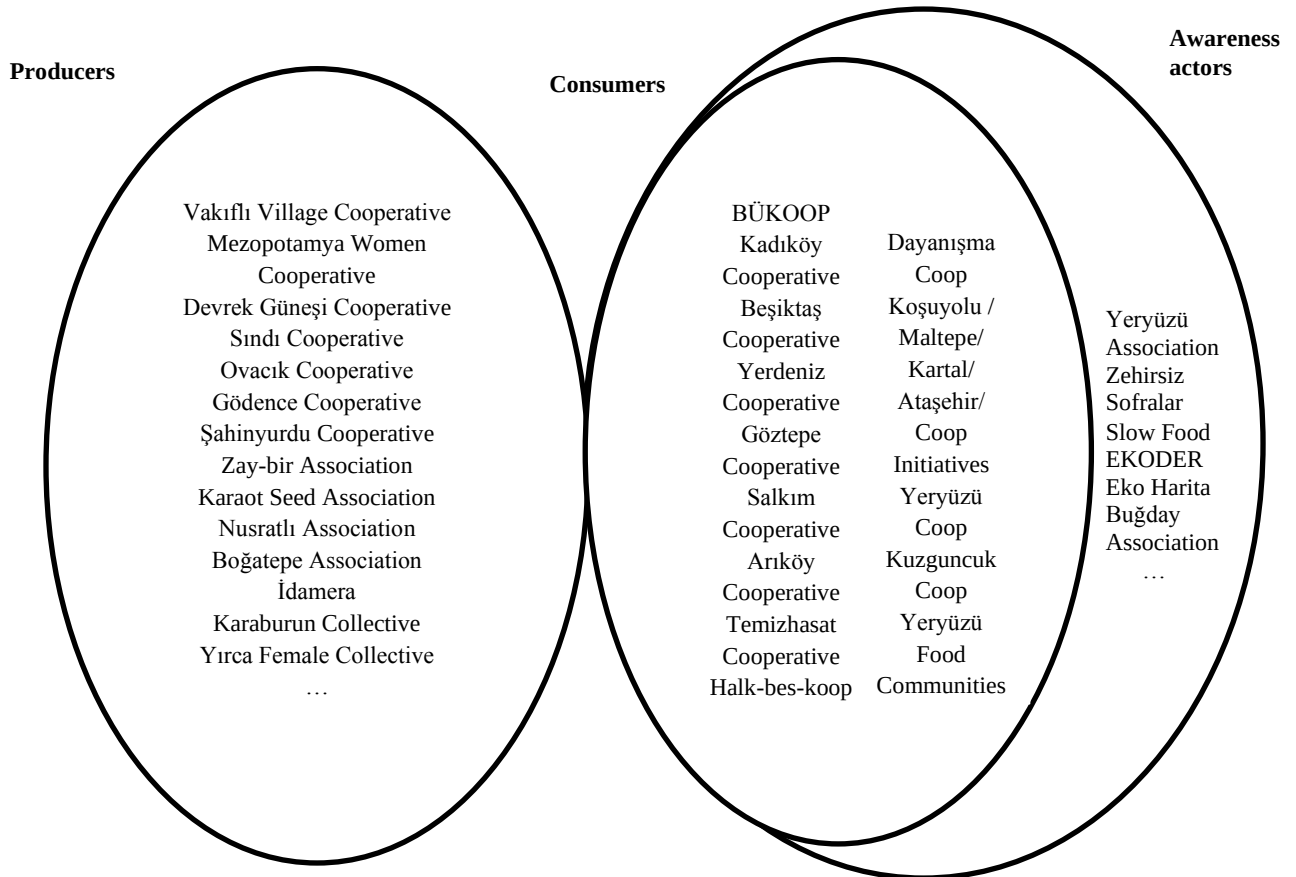
In addition, it is crucial to note that all consumer-led food cooperatives are not necessarily and purely ecological food initiatives. It is because the main characteristics of a cooperative are shaped according to the expectations of its members and the socio-economic realities of the neighborhood in which these initiatives are carried out. *Anadolu'da Yaşam Kooperatifi* (Life in Anatolia) Cooperative, for instance, prioritizes providing affordable healthy food from the small producers they trust, despite they also consider important procuring healthy food and paying a fair price. These prioritizations are determined along with the needs of the lower-class residents of the neighborhoods like Gülsuyu and Sultanbeyli in İstanbul where this cooperative operates. However, after their close relations, discussions and common events around food sovereignty, and collaborations with ecological consumer food cooperatives like Kadıköy Coop, the volunteers of Anadolu'da Yaşam Coop have also started to pay more attention to ecological relations too. These cooperatives and food communities consider important interactions and do not exclude one another because of their varying prioritizations. The existence of all these initiatives is quite valuable because there are various problematic aspects in conventional production, consumption, distribution relations of food and it becomes an urgency today for citizens to start acting together to change these relations through collective efforts in the public space.

Finally, the meanings these food cooperatives and communities attribute to being “political” varies. Most of the collective ecological food initiatives in İstanbul do not have relations with political parties but describe their efforts as political along with their ambition to transform the current dominant form of production, distribution, and consumption of food. The majority defines themselves clearly as political actors in the struggle for food sovereignty, yet they do not prefer having organic bonds with political parties to remain more inclusive and participative. Some of them such as *Halk İçin Doğal Gıda ve Sağlıklı Beslenme Tüketim Kooperatifi- Halk-bes-koop* (Consumer Food Cooperative of People's Natural Food and

Healthy Nutrition), *Dayanışma Kooperatifi* (Solidarity Coop), and Ovacık Coop, are, however, organized by those having close ties or affiliations with leftist organizations and parties like *Halkevleri* (Community Centres), *Türkiye Komünist Partisi- TKP* (Communist Party of Turkey), and *Sol Parti* (Leftist Party), formerly named ÖDP. They also share the same ambition of supporting small-scale farmers who are under the pressure of the corporations in the food and agricultural sector, expressing their political position clearly as against the capitalist industrial agri-food relations.

In the following sections, I will first focus on the workings and the organization of the model of the *ecological consumer food cooperatives* that I consider as “new-generation civic food cooperatives.” I then discuss ecological food communities in Turkey, from a critical and comparative perspective with their counterparts in some European countries. Before going into details, I would like to simplify the picture I will further elaborate and have presented so far. I schematize below the consumer-led (prosumer-led) ecological food communities and cooperatives in İstanbul and the producer organizations in their network, which constitute the primary actors that this dissertation focuses on. I list here almost all consumer-led ecological food cooperatives and food communities in İstanbul as well as some producer organizations in their networks and prominent awareness actors in ecological living and food.

Figure 4. Collective Ecological Food Actors: Focus on Awareness Actors and Consumer-Led Collective Initiatives (Food Communities and Consumer Food Cooperatives) in İstanbul and Producer Organizations in Their Network.



Consumers' collective ecological food initiatives, such as BÜKOOP, Kadıköy Coop, Beşiktaş Coop, also act as actors raising awareness especially on the small-scale agroecological farming. Thus, I illustrate in this schema the consumer-led food initiatives also as actors for expanding awareness on issues related to food and agriculture. The members of these initiatives do not engage with farming unlike the producers. However, they are prosumers in direct contact with producers and have transparent knowledge on the production conditions of the food they supply. Especially some collective consumer initiatives regularly and reciprocally exchange knowledge with their producers, often visit them in their agricultural fields and help them; plan together with producers the amount of certain products to be bought before the cultivation period; offer prepayment if possible when producers need; and thus try to become part of both production

and consumption relations. Therefore, I position prosumers' cluster tangent to producers' cluster.

4.1.3.2. Focus on Consumer-led Ecological and Participative Food Cooperatives in İstanbul

In this section, I would like to address the consumer-led ecological and participatory food cooperatives in Turkey. As these initiatives are recently emerging, the vast majority of them is organized by the inhabitants of İstanbul, citizens of the biggest and industrialized city of Turkey with a considerably distanced position from the ecological agricultural production. I present here some ecological consumer food cooperatives in İstanbul, based on my knowledge and interactions with them as a volunteer of Kadıköy Coop, with their common objectives and relationships among themselves. I also address Kadıköy Coop in this chapter, but I will investigate it in detail throughout Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 in terms of the alternative production, distribution, and consumption relations it tries create, by focusing more on its collective work, principles, and producer network, as well as in Chapter 8 by discussing its alternative organization model and politics of commons.

BÜKOOP (Boğaziçi University Members Consumer Food Cooperative)

BÜKOOP was established in 2009 as the first consumer-led ecological and collective food cooperative in İstanbul. The cooperative is located in the campus of the Boğaziçi University and managed collectively by the volunteer members consisting of students, academics, administrative staff, and other personnel. The cooperative members are volunteers and do not gain money from their labor in the cooperative. Their objective is thus not income or profit but mainly to provide healthy products for affordable prices, while paying a fair price for the labor of small-scale ecological farmers and encourage them to continue producing sustainably and ecologically. The cooperative has a store of 40-meter square. Like in other cooperatives, the existence of a store allows bulk orders and decreases the labor and transportation expenses of producers, as opposed to individually sent cargoes by producers.

The cooperative does not demand from producers an organic certification, in order not to pressure them with the burden of certification costs and bureaucratic procedures. However, their producers implement ecological farming respecting nature and human health. They find their producers by consulting the references of Çiftçi-Sen and other food cooperatives/communities as well as through their research and the application of producers. Their products range from pulses and rice to olives and mandarin. Their producers care for local agroecological techniques and local seeds, which consider the environment, biodiversity, and the traditional peasant knowledge, and the value of local products in their region. They try to establish trust-based relations with producers who conform to these production criteria by direct contact with producers. They also value the importance of visiting their producers and witness their production process, yet these visits are not very often because of a lack of time and money. The time shortage results mainly from the restricted number of active volunteers. Indeed, the cooperative has almost 200 official members and 40 volunteers by 2018. However, the number of active volunteers is mostly less than ten people, mainly because of the outgoing and graduating students and the intense course schedule of current students. Each volunteer is responsible for managing the relations with one or more producers to arrange orders. Volunteers manage collectively the cargo receiving, storage and sale of products as well as the bookkeeping, payments, and the cleaning of the store. Considering the lack of active volunteers and the most active visiting hours of their store on the campus, volunteers open their store only on weekdays between 13:00-13:30 and 17:00-17:30. The limited open hours, of course, restrict the number of consumers and relatedly the volume of products they order from producers.

The cooperative welcomes the participation of other citizens outside the campus, however, practically; it remains close to the participation of others because the cooperative store is on the campus. Therefore, it is a publicly visible and easily accessible place only to Boğaziçi students and staff, restricting its reach to producers and consumers, and narrowing its participative

structure. Nevertheless, the contribution of the cooperative to support small-scale ecological farming and work for affordable healthy food for consumers is significant, especially because it has become a pioneering example for the similar cooperatives emerged in the following years, especially for the Kadıköy Coop that opened the first ecological consumer food cooperative store in the neighborhood scale in İstanbul. Their efforts to make consumers familiar with the producers and the production conditions of the food they eat are quite valuable in a context where consumers, especially young people, do not know how and through which production processes foods can be grown ecologically and conforming the natural rhythm of seasons. Their collective work in the campus is also considerably important especially because it also invites every person in the campus to this experience of collectivity around a common theme like food, to participate equally the discussions, decision mechanisms, and the division of labor, by challenging the hierarchies among academics, students, and personnel. This is an exemplary organization model in a campus, motivating young people to become agents having their own words in an agri-food context that severely threaten their future and health and to communize the politics of foods as citizens through horizontal participative, and democratic relations.

Kadıköy Cooperative

The idea of establishing a food cooperative in Kadıköy emerged during the discussions in the forums and solidarity groups formed after the Gezi resistance in 2013. In early 2014, with the participation and guidance of BÜKOOP, Çiftçi-Sen, Anadolu'da Yaşam Coop, and Tohum İzi Association, the participants of these forums discussed the possibility of an ecological food cooperative in Kadıköy and a possible organization model of such a cooperative led by consumers. In 2015, a group of citizens in Kadıköy started the collective work, prepared a draft of the cooperative's organization model, and determined the main principles of the Kadıköy Cooperative Initiative. Before establishing formally the cooperative and opening its store in Kadıköy, volunteers practiced the dynamics of such cooperation and witnessed the support of

the Kadıköy residents to this food cooperative, by organizing sales of food boxes (pre-ordered number of food boxes containing a few products) five times during the years 2015 and 2016. Since November 2016, Kadıköy Cooperative has been continuing its collective work around ecological food, as a citizen-led collective and participatory initiative, having similar principles with BÜKOOP. BÜKOOP and Çiftçi-Sen contributed largely to the formation of ecological producer database of the Kadıköy Cooperative in its early phase. Kadıköy Cooperative have later collectively developed its organization model as they experience and learn. Like in the case of BÜKOOP, volunteers do not earn money from their collective efforts to organize producer visits, receive cargoes, and open the cooperative store by turns. Hence, working collectively to build ecological social relations constitute a main principle of Kadıköy Cooperative.

The cooperative operates through various working units of which the responsibilities have collectively been defined according to the changing dynamics of their operations and strategies. Volunteers work rotationally in these units such as Education Unit, Unit of Product-Producer Relations, Financial Unit, Communication Unit, Organization Unit. Differently from BÜKOOP, volunteers get together very often to discuss their collectively pre-determined weekly agenda and make their decisions based on consensus. The decisions are implemented by relevant working units and/or additional working groups, if needed.

One of the main principles of the cooperative is to work with small-scale ecological farmers based on their mutual initiative and collaboration to contribute to create alternative production and consumption relations. Along with this principle, the cooperative works only with producers who use local and/or landrace seeds in their production, but no pesticides, herbicides, or synthetic fertilizers. The cooperative does not demand organic certification from its producers, because of the same economic and political concerns with BÜKOOP that I addressed above. It also pays attention to the production processes and continues their

collaboration only with producers who mostly employ up to three workers but no children, while also prioritizing working with women organizations.

Since the beginning of the Kadıköy Cooperative, volunteers of the cooperative have been spending considerable effort to expand similar food cooperatives and share objectively their cooperative experiences. After the foundation of Kadıköy Cooperative, the first neighborhood-scale ecological consumer food cooperative in İstanbul, citizens established thirteen consumer food cooperatives and initiatives one after another within just three years, with more or less similar motivations and principles. In the formation of these recent food cooperatives, the role of the confidence that the successful working of Kadıköy Cooperatives gives is important. I will elaborate on these points and more in the following chapters, which focus on the Kadıköy Cooperative case.

Koşuyolu and Beşiktaş Cooperative Initiatives (Koşuyolu ve Beşiktaş Kooperatif Girişimleri)

The residents of Koşuyolu, Acıbadem, Altunizade, and Barbaros neighborhoods founded Koşuyolu Cooperative Initiative in January 2017. Similarly, a group of fifteen citizens from Beşiktaş started their consumer food initiative in July 2017. These groups started their collective work sharing the same motivations with BÜKOOP and Kadıköy Cooperative. Their main objectives are thus to know closely the producers and the production conditions of the foods they eat and support small-scale producers who cultivate healthy, safe, and ecological food without labor exploitation, by procuring their food directly and collectively from producers for fair prices. They order foods from the producers who use no agricultural chemicals but local seeds and agroecological techniques. From the first day of their initiative, the volunteers of these cooperatives define their ambition and efforts as part of the struggle for food sovereignty, following the growing public discourse of the Kadıköy Cooperative and Çiftçi-Sen on food sovereignty in these years. In 2017, Beşiktaş and Koşuyolu Coop Initiatives declared their final objective as to establish an ecological consumer food cooperative, yet continue their

cooperation today in the form of a food community in terms of the distribution of foods. These initiatives have strong relations with Kadıköy Coop and BÜKOOP from the beginning. For instance, the first event Koşuyolu Coop organized was a forum with other cooperatives and initiatives right after its foundation, where other cooperatives shared their own experiences with this emerging cooperative initiative. Kadıköy Cooperative also shared its producer database with Koşuyolu and Beşiktaş Cooperative Initiatives to help them to start rapidly their cooperative activities.

The political acquaintance of the group of neighbors in Koşuyolu started after the Gezi Resistance in forums, which consolidated through their solidarity in Validebağ Resistance against the destruction of the woods in the neighborhood. This later created synergy to open further discussions and collaborations around food, which led to the establishment of the Koşuyolu Coop Initiative. Indeed, it is possible to relate the roots of most food initiatives to the Gezi Resistance and the post-Gezi solidarities. Most of these groups share similar social and political sensibilities. They show their reactions to many problematic issues in Turkey — mostly but not limited to ecological destructions, food-related hazards, and unfairly dismissed workers. Especially, Koşuyolu and Beşiktaş Coop Initiatives and Kadıköy Coop act in collaboration in doing so. For instance, they stood together in a coop cortege for the first time in the last Labor Day on May 1, 2019. They also visited unfairly dismissed Flormar workers in resistance and shared small food boxes with them as a gesture of solidarity. They went together to the trials of Bülent Şık who was sued for publicly sharing the results of his scientific works about the relationship between the industrial wastes, food hazards, and increasing cancer rates in the Ergene Basin. Similarly, these cooperatives shared many reactive social media posts about the mining project in the Ida Mountains and participated collectively in the climate strike in İstanbul. They relate publicly all these issues and events to their struggle for food sovereignty, addressing that sustainable healthy food production is directly related to our

respect to ecology and the sustainability of the whole ecosystem. Beşiktaş, Koşuyolu, and Kadıköy Cooperatives organize collective workshops on several occasions, such as the workshops in the Karaburun Scientific Congress, on the possibilities and limits of cooperatives and solidarity economies. They usually attend together ecology festivals and panels on consumer cooperatives. Besides, they sometimes make collective orders from common producers to facilitate the transportation of foods and reduce transportation costs. They also predetermine and inform their common producers in the sowing and planting time about the volume of their orders that year, to help their producers preplan their production. There is also a case where they found a producer to start to cultivate green lentils for these cooperatives with landrace seeds, according to their collectively defined criteria. Despite not being so often, these cooperatives also sometimes visit together their common producers, like in the case of their visit to Devrek Güneşi Cooperative in 2018.

The volunteers of Koşuyolu Coop Initiative have been organizing from the beginning of its formation several workshops (e.g. ecological bread making and pickling workshops) and panels (e.g. Food Security Panel with Bülent Şık, “No Patent for Seeds” Panel with other cooperatives) in their community house that Kadıköy Municipality provides. They have also been organizing events for children (e.g. exchange of books and toys) and documentation screenings about food and ecology (e.g. Food Coop, Seed: The Untold Story, Yırca Resistance). The existence of this community center enables volunteers to invite their neighbors to such events and increase the interaction and support to this consumer food initiative. They also gather once in a month with other consumers in this community center for the distribution of foods. Volunteers organized their first sales day a few months after their foundation in April and the second in October, selling respectively 50 and 100 food boxes. Similar to other ecological consumer food cooperatives in İstanbul, they also do not earn money from these sales, because they do not aim at profit-making but the expansion of such cooperation for food sovereignty.

Volunteers prepare these food boxes (e.g. a small box of tea, beans, honey, and hazelnuts) considering the e-mail orders from consumers who get together on a predetermined distribution day. They organized their first biggest distribution event in September 2018, selling 250 kg of chickpea from Ovacık Coop and 50 kg of sun-dried apricots that day. The volunteers have been organizing these sales once a month for a while.

Koşuyolu Coop Initiative discussed in their second-year celebration events in 2019 their projections and options of continuing as a formal food cooperative with a store or as a cooperative initiative. It is still a cooperative initiative acting as a food community in terms of their procurement and sales of food, yet they are publicly more active than many food communities in Turkey in terms of acting with cooperatives and organizing food-related events. The volunteers of the Beşiktaş Coop Initiative, who started their collective work in the same year with the Koşuyolu Coop Initiative, however, established a formal consumer food cooperative with a store in early 2020.

Beşiktaş Coop Initiative started their cooperation in July 2017. It has similar motivations and principles as well as many common producers with the Kadıköy Coop and Koşuyolu Coop Initiative. Being in close interaction with Kadıköy Coop volunteers, they also follow a very similar working model. For instance, they also meet weekly to discuss collectively their routine tasks and decide about plans. They work in distinct working commissions in the division of labor, such as Products/Producers Commission and Communication Commission, of which the responsibilities are collectively predetermined. Like Kadıköy Cooperative, they also organize events to present the cooperative initiative and increase the support and volunteer participation in the neighborhood. Some Kadıköy Coop volunteers also started working in the Beşiktaş Coop Initiative, as they live in this neighborhood. The consumer cooperatives in İstanbul usually guide some of their consumers to shop from other cooperatives in their own neighborhood and

start a new consumer cooperative in their locality, if there is none, to catalyze local cooperation around ecological food.

Beşiktaş Coop Initiative started the food sales in January 2018 with their motto “fair ecological food has arrived in your neighborhood.” The volunteers first organized events for the distribution of food boxes (summer box and winter box) upon pre-orders collected via google forms. They have later started to organize monthly distribution days, collecting online orders for nearly twenty different products for food boxes. In late 2019, almost 60 households were buying from Beşiktaş Coop Initiative. Having thus the support of their neighbors and feeling ready for being a legal consumer cooperative, volunteers started their search for a cooperative store and bureaucratic procedures to open their store at the beginning of the new year. For their new start as a cooperative, they also prepared in September 2019, solidarity packages where they sell cloth bags with a logo of Beşiktaş Coop, inviting their neighbors to provide support for the extra expenses in this period of officialization. Having this cooperative store in Beşiktaş means having a permanent place to store and sell products and thus being able to give more voluminous orders with fewer transportation expenses. This means supporting a greater number of small-scale ecological producers and giving more support to their existing producers. With a cooperative store, the cooperative will also become more visible for a greater number of consumers, which would also increase the number of volunteers engaged in this cooperation as well as the awareness to expand such collective and participatory cooperatives.

Dayanışma Cooperative, Halk-bes-koop, Temizhasat Cooperative

There are also consumer-led ecological food cooperatives established by the collective efforts of the citizens affiliated with leftist political parties such as ÖDP, CHP, TKP and political organizations like Halkevleri. Their foundations also correspond to the emergence of other ecological cooperatives like Koşuyolu and Beşiktaş Cooperatives and they share similar motivations of supporting small-scale farming that respects ecology and human health. They

also do not aim at profit-making but to support small farmers and ecological farming in a context where these farmers are rendered vulnerable in capitalist and industrial agri-food relations. They express that they favor small farmers, ecology, landrace seeds, and more comprehensively the food sovereignty of people over capitalist profit maximization and corporate food sovereignty with industrial agriculture. They also aim at making healthy food accessible to a larger population, underlining that food is a social and classed matter. They thus try to offer reliable ecological food for cheaper yet fair prices, without any intermediaries, through their collective and solidary organization against food monopolies. Dayanışma Coop, Halk-bes-koop, and Temizhasat mostly sell the products of independent small-scale families who engage with subsistence farming. They mostly form their producer list from their political network. Ovacık Consumer Cooperative sells the products of Ovacık Producer Cooperative as well as the products of many small producer and producer cooperatives they have in common with Kadıköy, Koşuyolu, and Beşiktaş Cooperatives. Ovacık consumer cooperatives are the most popular among them, with the rising support given to the local project of Ovacık Municipality, which led to the formation of Ovacık producer cooperative and later to many consumer cooperatives in Ankara, İzmir, Adana, Mersin, Bursa, and Eskişehir.

These cooperatives invite other citizens outside their already existing political network to participate in their organization. However, they do not usually organize public events for presenting themselves to include more volunteers in this cooperation. Besides, they mostly do not work in clearly defined working groups and by organizing regular publicly open meetings. In that sense, they are not as participatory as other citizen-led consumer food cooperatives with no political party affiliation. Thus, although they focus on their political ambitions of offering alternative agri-food relations, they ignore the other alternative pillar on which Kadıköy Coop, for instance, positions itself; namely, an alternative organizational model, which prioritizes

horizontal participatory relations with transparent and democratic decision-making mechanisms to expand the experimentations of local participative democracy in Turkey.

Dayanışma Coop, Halk-bes-koop, and Temizhasat Coop started consecutively their collective work between November 2017 and January 2018. Dayanışma Coop has two cooperative stores in Beşiktaş and Kozyatağı. Halk-bes-koop sells its products in Halkevleri Taksim branch in İstanbul and Temizhasat in its cooperative store in Şişli. Ovacık Consumer Cooperative also has three stores in Göztepe, Şişli, and Sultangazi neighborhoods. These cooperatives also sell their products online, sending the orders by cargo, unlike Koşuyolu, Kadıköy, Yerdeniz, and Beşiktaş Cooperatives that consider cargo deliveries as an obstacle for developing face-to-face and close relationship with consumers who are potential participants of this and other collective works alike. This is, of course, a choice between selling larger volume products to provide more financial support to small-scale producers and realizing and expanding democratic participatory collective organization while supporting small ecological producers.

There are also recent consumer-led ecological cooperatives (Kozyatağı Salkım Coop and Göztepe Coop) and cooperative initiatives (Ataşehir, Maltepe, and Yeryüzü cooperative initiatives) emerged a few months ago, and others like Şişli and Üsküdar cooperative initiatives that are either stopped their collective work or continue mostly as a close group not being present at the public space and interacting with other initiatives. Arıköy Cooperative in Sarıyer, is also an example of cooperative work with similar motivations, which is, however, mostly disconnected from other initiatives especially because of their distant location. Being founded in September 2018, Arıköy Coop has been carrying on its cooperation with small-scale ecological farmers without intermediaries, benefiting from its advantage to be closer to rural space, and organizing workshops with producers, if not with other consumer cooperatives.

Presenting this expeditiously expanding network of recent yet more and more visible consumer-led ecological cooperatives/coop initiatives in a few years, I aimed in this section to draw attention to the momentum cooperative works around ecological food gained in this risk environment that the corporate sovereignty on agriculture and food stimulates. This momentum is created hand in hand by consumer cooperatives and food communities. Thus, I would like to focus now on food communities in Turkey, also by comparing them with others in some European countries.

4.1.3.3. Ecological Food Communities in Turkey from a Comparative Perspective

I would like to address first some ecological food communities in İzmir and Ankara, before focusing especially on ecological food communities/collectives in İstanbul. For instance, DBB (Natural and Conscious Nutrition Network), a collective ecological food network in Ankara, has been an influential actor in raising awareness and in giving life to many contact-based systems. Besides, it has a considerable amount of interaction among producers and consumers, including direct sales, around community-supported agriculture principles. DBB aims to bring ecological farmers and consumers together in its network to facilitate their communication and to establish trust mechanisms and means between consumers and producers for a direct supply of food. It is not an intermediary but a network with an e-mail group that is designed for information exchange between producers and consumers and announcements about workshops and meetings. Group participants are indeed collectively responsible for managing these processes, yet there is now a small number of participants in charge of communication and events. However, DBB is a good example of a network for increasing the interaction between producers and consumers, through its online platform and physical contacts. Like many food communities in İstanbul, this network also does not require organic certification but include only nature and human-friendly agroecological products in its network. They collaborate with

farmers who conform to their collectively defined criteria and they organize field visits as part of participatory guarantee systems.

In Izmir, the first food community was established by the Department of Agricultural Economics at Ege University, under the leadership of Professor Tayfun Özkaya in 2013. Ege University community-supported agriculture (CSA) groups today consist of three faculty groups, which periodically supply food from one or very few producers. They thus benefit from the advantage of having a rural hinterland in Izmir, instead of collecting orders from different locations in Turkey as it is the case for most food communities in İstanbul. This community has also inspired others in Izmir, such as BİTOT, which was established in 2014. BİTOT is organized around principles such as co-learning, co-producing, and collective task management to access to clean local food and support small farmers who practice such farming. They increased the number of volunteers in their network through their involvement in Buğday Association's "Seeds to the Campus" project and by organizing training of permaculture for Campus Garden. However, they also experience the problem of finding enough active members who are responsible for the organization of deliveries and task-sharing (p. 244).

I would like to discuss more detailly the food communities in İstanbul, presenting DÜRTÜK and Yeryüzü food communities. I will focus mostly on the latter, as Yeryüzü food communities are the primary, most known and expanded example of food communities in Turkey. DÜRTÜK (Collective of Producers and Consumers in Resistance) is a collective food initiative in İstanbul, organized by the collaboration of both urban consumers and producers. The collective provides vegetables directly from the small farmers of İstanbul's historical vegetable gardens, Piyalepaşa and Yedikule Bostans, as well as some other small farmers around İstanbul. The collective emerged in 2015 with motivations to defend the cultural heritage of bostans and urban food production. The volunteers collect the orders by an excel sheet via e-mail and handle the logistics by receiving the orders by hand directly from the

producers. They do not make a profit out of these sales. They aim to struggle for sustaining both practically and legally the last bostans of İstanbul, of which the existence is severely threatened by massive urban projects, by building solidarity with the farmers of these historical gardens. As noted before, that idea emerged during the forum and solidarity groups formed after the Gezi Resistance, which sprouted many collective initiatives of today. A few years ago, a large part of Yedikule Bostans were destroyed by the municipality, with claims to transform it into a public park. Piyalepaşa Bostan was saved in 2015 from being transformed into a car park, yet there are still rumors about its transformation into a hobby garden for the recently gentrified neighborhoods around it. Thus, it becomes even harder for farmers in these bostans, who cultivate these lands for generations, to produce under the precarious conditions of insecure land tenure, while already getting unfair prices in the market. Unfortunately, DÜRTÜK also stops its operations on and off, because of the lack of active volunteers who take responsibility in weekly operations. The collective seems to have ended its operations in September 2018, after losing the collaboration of their main contact-person Ö. Ökten, who gave up farming and all his volunteer efforts as the head of the association of farmers in Yedikule, because of the pressures of various powerful actors, mainly those having construction plans in the bostan area.

The food communities of Yeryüzü Association started in 2012, with the emergence of Küçükalyalı food community in İstanbul. Today, there are food communities also in different neighborhoods of İstanbul, such as Kadıköy, Taksim, Kuzguncuk, Kartal, Beykoz, Göztepe, and Bahçeşehir. Their main aim is to provide consumers ecological products without intermediaries, for more affordable prices and to support small-scale ecological producers who implement subsistence-farming by using local and landrace seeds but no pesticide, herbicide, or synthetic fertilizers. The communities do not pursue monetary gain but instead only their sustainability. Consumers are invited not only to buy products but also to engage in the

functioning of these collective platforms through participatory and horizontal relationships and democratic decision-making processes.

In the last eight years, especially after 2016 when the first public workshop was organized by Yeryüzü Association, we have been witnessing an increase both in the number of consumer food cooperatives and food communities. In this first public workshop of food communities, Yeryüzü food communities, DÜRTÜK, BÜKOOP, and Kadıköy Coop presented their organizations, motivations, the ways of forming food communities. Small groups were formed to discuss the problems of producers, the limits and possibilities of food communities, ecological production and consumption relations, etc. It was a good start to catalyze the interactions of food communities and motivate other groups to form such communities. The workshop has been collectively organized by Yeryüzü Food Communities and consumer food cooperatives for the last two years. This co-organization experience started with those in İstanbul in 2017 and continuing with those in Turkey, with a common call to get together to solve the common problems hand in hand, by discussing collectively the next steps to take in this struggle. The workshop in 2019 was organized under the name of the “Workshop of Food Communities and Cooperatives” for the first time. This co-organization process of the workshop also increased the interactions and the bond between Yeryüzü food communities and consumer food cooperatives. Both food communities of Yeryüzü Association and consumer food cooperatives have been gaining popularity, especially in the last few years, as they increase their visibility in the public space together with an increasing number of local communities. Also, as the interaction between food communities and cooperatives increase, many Yeryüzü food communities today have been discussing to transform into consumer food cooperatives in the short-term.

The model of organization and logistic strategies are similar but not uniform in each Yeryüzü food community. The number of volunteers in each food community change, but

usually does not exceed ten active volunteers. The number of consumers who do not actively volunteer but shop from the community is much higher. Food communities are mostly autonomous in their management and independent from each other. However, some communities are more dependent on the executive board of the Yeryüzü Association than the others in Kadıköy and Taksim — the largest food communities in İstanbul — in terms of getting in touch with new producers and in managing collective orders. The lack of entirely autonomous management in each community is a point open for improvement. It is because each community needs to manage fully all its operations and decide collectively in their group, according to the particular needs and the motivations of consumers in each locality and to implement more effectively participatory democracy — the crucial objectives of Yeryüzü food communities like many consumer food cooperatives in İstanbul.

In terms of the logistics of food orders, food communities circulate an excel sheet containing the information on products and producers and products each month, mostly get together in the predetermined distribution day on monthly basis, to receive their collective orders. Each producer cargoes all his/her orders together for these network members to reduce the cargo costs and minimize their time and effort. Only the small-scale producers who implement ecological/organic farming are included in the list. Producers can apply for being included in the list by contacting the relevant community and consumers decide collectively whether her/his products and production conditions satisfy their collectively defined criteria. Unlike consumer food cooperatives, the number of producers practicing small-scale family farming is higher than the number of producer food cooperatives in collaboration.

Forming a food community is easier compared to the establishment of a formal consumer food cooperative with a cooperative store. The absence of legal procedures and extra efforts to run a physical store in food communities is a considerable practical advantage for consumers to get together in their neighborhoods. However, it also becomes an obstacle for

food communities in terms of their public visibility despite all their efforts. It is because the local cooperative stores in neighborhoods are publicly visible collective spaces inviting more consumers to become active agents in the collective work as well as to become consumers, by being in face-to-face interaction with a larger range of consumers and informing them about their collective work and ideals. A similar problem of lacking active volunteers is also seen in the organizations of consumer food cooperatives, yet not to a similar degree. There are always some volunteers joining and leaving new-generation consumer cooperatives with similar ideals, but the number of active volunteers is always sufficient for the sustainability of these cooperative works, as opposed to what is experienced in most food communities. This difference between these cooperatives and food communities in Turkey also derives from the relatively good transfer of knowledge on collective works and the principles of the food cooperatives, compared to food communities.

4.2. Contextualizing the Different Alternative Food Channels within the Plurality of Organic and Post-Organic Food Actors in Turkey

This second half of the chapter examines what it means to be “another” alternative among these plural alternatives in the (post) organic food market in Turkey. It addresses, against what exactly, and how each actor emerges and positions itself as alternative. It also interrogates the *hows* and *whys* of *what* becomes a reliable alternative and *for whom* in this recent complexity. It discusses how the meanings given to a reliable alternative are dynamically (re)constructed through certain trust-building strategies of various actors (producers, marketers, cooperatives) and the ways consumers negotiate them. It finally discusses consumers’ varying forms of food anxiety and relationship to each alternative, which are in parallel with whether they prioritize their bodily health with daily neoliberal practices or share some political ambitions and hope for transforming collectively the current agri-food system.

Since there is a very restricted literature on the variety of these channels in Turkey, my colleague Bermal Küçük and I conducted an additional fieldwork for this particular topic,²⁴ apart from my fieldwork with the producers and consumers of civic and collective food initiatives such as Kadıköy Cooperative. This joint research project is based on thirty in-depth interviews with the consumers and producers of the most prominent alternative food channels in İstanbul by varying consumer segments, namely of İpek Hanım's Farm, Feriköy Organic Farmers' Market, as well as of Kadıköy Cooperative. I prefer focusing on İstanbul's alternative food market because it is a city where the number of alternative food channels and food activism are more diverse compared to the other cities of Turkey. Also, it is the most industrialized city of Turkey "where social relations are much more removed from the interaction of the agricultural production of food than in the countryside or smaller cities, or even in other large cities (...) which still have an ongoing relationship with their rural hinterland" (Soysal Al, 2017, p. 68). This leads especially its larger middle and upper middle-class consumers to shop using these alternative channels.

One of the cases studied in this research, Feriköy Organic Farmers' Market, is being organized by the Buğday Association. This case was chosen because it is the first and the most known of four different organic farmers' markets in İstanbul supervised by this NGO. For cases of post-organic channels, two different alternatives are chosen: İpek Hanım's Farm and Kadıköy Cooperative. İpek Hanım's Farm is a private-run farm which sells natural food both in its stores in İstanbul and via email orders. It was selected as a case because it is a prominent example of these popular alternative food channels in terms of its production capacity, product range, and the number of workers employed in the natural food production. Also, being the first online natural food shopping site in Turkey makes it popular to urban consumers. The other

²⁴ The following discussion is derived from our co-authored article: Soysal Al, I. and Küçük, B. (2019). "In-between Anxiety and Hope: Trusting an Alternative Among 'Alternatives' in the (Post) Organic Food Market in Turkey," *The International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food*, 25 (2).

post-organic case chosen is Kadıköy Cooperative as a significant actor among civic and collective alternative food initiatives. It is selected as a case because it is one of the main cases of this dissertation, being the first ecological consumer coop at the neighborhood-scale, which aims to collectively transform the production, consumption, and distribution relations of food. It is an important case not only for getting the increasing attention of consumers, but also because its one-year long experience motivated some other groups to start their cooperative initiatives in different neighborhoods of İstanbul with very similar models, principles, and functions, as I elaborated detailly above.

Just as the alternative food channels are various, so too is the variety of consumer and producer profiles of these channels. From a Bourdieusian perspective, differences exist among the consumers of İpek Hanım's Farm, Kadıköy Cooperative, and Feriköy Organic Farmers' Market in terms of their economic, social and cultural capital. In this study, the monthly household income of the consumers interviewed in İpek Hanım's Farm varies between 15 and 25 thousand Turkish liras. It is slightly higher than the income of the consumers of organic farmers' market and Kadıköy Coop. However, what differentiates these initiatives from each other is their varying social and cultural capital rather than their economic capital. The intellectual and political baggage of the cooperative volunteers helps them to position food as a political matter and to develop broader insights about the history of neoliberal transformation in Turkish agriculture. Other consumers of the cooperative also share their political concerns. For the consumers of other cases, however, it is the health and bodily concerns and the references of their friends which play a significant role in leading them to these alternatives. In other words, their food choice among plural alternatives is not only influenced by economic capital and simple cost and benefit mentality but also by their internalized dispositions and social network (Bourdieu, 1984).

On the part of the producers, the profile of Pınar Kaftancıoğlu, the owner of İpek Hanım's Farm, is visibly different from the others. She is an urban-raised, college-educated middle-class entrepreneur who has decided to try to benefit from a growing niche market. She has a social network by which she can create a demand for her products as well as the cultural capital through which she can share her confidence with her customers. The producers of organic farmers' markets and cooperatives also benefit from their social capital by making contacts with these consumer organizations. For the case of the cooperative producers, the contacts from their political engagements in other organizations such as Farmers' Union are like the gatekeepers that facilitate their participation and integration in these networks. Most of them have entered the alternative food sector after retirement, to earn a side income. The producers of the organic farmers' market also differentiate from the producers of Kadıköy Cooperative, mainly in terms of their financial capacity to get organic certification.

4.2.1. How Do “Alternatives” Build Trust in an Atmosphere of Risk and Anxiety?

The food anxiety in Turkey has incrementally been shared among consumers, combined with the neoliberalization of agriculture in Turkey since the early 2000s. It is becoming harder to deal with this situation, especially for consumers in İstanbul, the biggest city of Turkey, which is sharply distanced from the agricultural relations of food production. Thus, the search for trustworthy food channels becomes a visible concern, so as to have a “relative feeling of invulnerability” in this risk atmosphere (Hier, 2003, p. 12). However, there is no single, objective way for enhancing trust. While consumers seek healthy products they can trust, producers provide various reasons to convince their customers why their method of production is the most reliable. They are involved in the “manufacturing of meaning” of their products (Jackson et al., 2004, pp. 12-24). Therefore, their discursive strategies and the ways they are negotiated are crucial in understanding the hows and whys of what becomes a reliable alternative food channel for whom.

Kaftancıoğlu, the owner of İpek Hanım's Farm, builds the trust through weekly emails she sends to her customers, where she appraises her ethical values as a producer and the uniqueness and reliability of her products by a constant emphasis on their local and natural character. She also frequently highlights the distinctive character of Nazilli, where she grows her products and other places like Kars from which she procures geographically indicated foods.²⁵ This emphasis is indeed a globally adopted strategy to empower small producers in newly emerging agri-food markets. The narrative of localness turns into a trust-building mechanism that facilitates Kaftancıoğlu's capital accumulation, rather than being a mechanism in favor of the small producers in the region. The fieldwork indicates that despite her benefiting from local and indigenous knowledge of her local community in the production processes, the compensation increase (that the marketing of localness brings) is not fairly distributed between the local community and Kaftancıoğlu.

This valorization of localness is usually followed by the emphasis on nature in the discursive arena. Rural areas are promoted as places where pure nature can still exist among the remnants of industrial occupation. Following this perspective, Kaftancıoğlu and the producers of the organic farmers' market give the impression that their consumers are a small fortunate group having access to the last remnant of pristine nature. Such an impression has a direct repercussion in narrative of their consumers: "I believe that there is no more a safe soil in Turkey. But Pınar, the owner of this store, pays utmost attention to the safety of her land. For this reason, I trust her. She produces food on the very last remnants of safe land" (Aslı, Consumer of İpek Hanım's Farm).

²⁵ It is also interesting to note that the producer of this Kars cheese who initiated the project of promoting local Kars cheese provides food both to mainstream channels and natural/organic stores like İpek Hanım's Farm and to consumer food cooperatives but he sells the same products at lower prices to cooperatives. This example shows that these initiatives are more like "hybrid alternatives" (Watts et al., 2005) where alternative and conventional food relations cannot be sharply separated and are fundamentally related within an overall system (Hinrichs, 2003, p. 35).

Likewise, Kaftancıoğlu appraises the taste, smell, and quality of her food, associating them with those in “good old days” on her web page. The emphasis on the values of the past enables consumers to chase the dream of rediscovering the taste and quality that were experienced in a particular period of past times imprinted on memories. The revitalization of the memory of childhood is a prominent theme in the narrative of both the consumers of the organic farmers’ market and İpek Hanım’s Farm.

This nostalgia is not significant among the consumers of Kadıköy Cooperative. What makes cooperatives alternatives for their consumers and producers is not based on the promise of providing the “perfect food” of the past but on a comprehensive set of motivations. This includes political concerns about the vulnerable position of small producers in the market, expanding ecological agriculture, eliminating intermediaries from the distribution mechanisms, and accessing healthy food more easily. In other words, instead of being stuck in the past, they rather aim to build the political alternative both in the present and the future through solidarity and struggle: “The hope is here. I am fully sure of it. If some things are going to change, this will certainly be from here and through such cooperatives. Food communities, associations and unions, all of them have valuable efforts. We will all bring this change together by becoming a part of it. But I think we have this significant potential only and only if we work altogether.” (Gökçe, Volunteer of Kadıköy Cooperative)

The consumers of Kadıköy Cooperative mostly rely upon the references of the Farmers’ Union and the regular field trips of cooperative volunteers. They select producers according to certain criteria and principles they adopt collectively. This collective decision-making and direct communication with producers strengthen their trust in producers and their products. Most consumers in organic farmers’ market and İpek Hanım's Farm trust these food channels most because they consider them as the proper way of protecting their health. Many consumers also highlight that they started to buy from these channels after a serious health problem in their

family or the birth of their children. For the consumers of the organic farmers' market in Feriköy, the existence of Buğday Association in their organization is a great source of trust. For the case of İpek Hanım's Farm, the fact that Pınar Kaftancıoğlu is a mother increases the trust of mothers who shop from there for their children. They do not trust certified organic products, thus do not shop from organic farmers' markets. Positioning İpek Hanım's Farm as opposed to other organic food channels, Kaftancıoğlu also explains (İpek Hanım's Farm, 2018) why it is hard to develop trust in certified organic food:

In order to get this certification, you have to apply to third party certification institutions, and it is enough to show them the land on which you implement your organic agriculture. You can produce organic agriculture on certain agricultural land, get your certification, and sell your 'awkward' products that you grow somehow along with products from other lands, hiding this reality behind your certification (Kaftancıoğlu, Owner of İpek Hanım's Farm).

The regular consumers of İpek Hanım's Farm and organic farmers' market reveal that they feel so anxious when they need to shop from somewhere else, because they automatically consider these foods as potential health threats. This emphasis on the "individualized risk of illness" is criticized by many consumers of Kadıköy Coop. Relatedly, their anxiety is strongly expressed through another "othering" process which problematizes the anxieties of many natural and organic food consumers as blind to social and ecological threats in food relations. They also feel anxious but the food anxiety they feel manifests itself in a different form than that felt by the consumers of İpek Hanım's Farm and the organic farmers' market. Instead of being felt at the level of health concerns, their anxiety is mostly expressed at the level of political concerns. These concerns are related to ecological destruction as well as socio-economic injustices in the food system against small-scale producers and consumers. Jackson (2010) suggests that "anxiety is not wholly negative in its social effects" and "may provoke creative and inventive responses" (p. 154). From a similar standpoint, the consumers of Kadıköy Cooperative do not consider this alternative initiative to be another "option" among many others. Rather, they see it as an alternative which tries to challenge and replace the existing food system.

After all, the idea for such an organization emerged after the Gezi resistance. So, of course, I consider it very important. I always support such initiatives where small producers are empowered in a system where there are no intermediaries. I am always against the capital and take the side of cooperatives as they are really important for the survival of small producer (Ceyhan, Consumer of Kadıköy Cooperative).

In addition, the consumers of Kadıköy Cooperative do not necessarily search for organic certification as proof and believe that it is an economic and bureaucratic obstacle to small producers.

4.2.2. Searching for Hope, or Pessimism of Commoditized Solutions?

In an atmosphere marked by the rise of risk discourses and the expansion of alternative food channels, the neoliberal ideology encourages us to take the individual responsibility of choosing proper products for our health and safety. The neoliberal governmentality is not directly imposed, “but operates through the embodied actions of free subjects—often by exercising choice in the market” (Cairns and Johnston, 2015, p. 156). Sezin’s narrative exemplifies this: “It is the citizens who are responsible. Everything is gone today, both animal husbandry and agriculture. So, we try to find alternative ways as individuals. After the appraisal and recommendations of my friend, I said ‘Ok, I will try this one too’” (Sezin, Consumer of İpek Hanım's Farm).

This “hopeless” perspective of “everything is already gone” is indeed very frequent among the consumers of İpek Hanım's Farm and the organic farmers’ market. Even the consumers who mention the state’s responsibility to change its agricultural policies do not consider themselves as agents in this change: “In developed countries like in Europe, states have some responsibilities (...) Yet, it does nothing in this area like in others. So, we need to manage this (...) We can do something only by shopping from this shop. We cannot revolt to shout that ‘agriculture is in a terrible situation’ right?” (Elif, Consumer of Feriköy Organic Farmers’ Market).

Adopting the position, most consumers of İpek Hanım’s Farm and the organic market do not get involved in a detailed discussion on the policies behind the existing state of the

agriculture but tend to complain about the current functioning of agriculture and the unsafe food quality. They only emphasize visibly the role of consumers in making proper choices. Framing food practices in the private sphere, most consumers are not engaged in any political action to change existing agri-food relations, contrary to the cooperative consumers. They mostly adopt a hopeless perspective which is accompanied with a constant emphasis on the loss of taste and smell of the foods in past, with a nostalgic state of mind. Thus, they dream for a “back to the past in the future” instead of engaging with the imagination and the reconstruction of an alternative future. In this way, they try to make their nostalgia come true for them in the present by making “proper” choices when compared to other commoditized options. Their pessimism about the future of the agri-food system results significantly from the ways they relate themselves to the present and the future. Their limited interaction and agency in their preferred food channel is decisive in this way.

The consumers of Kadıköy Coop consider the state responsible for adopting policies that are in favor of small producers, consumers, and ecology. However, they are reluctant to lose hope while waiting for state to take action. Therefore, they regard both the consumer and producer food cooperatives as crucial actors to push for the state and trigger change. Also, all the volunteers of Kadıköy Cooperative consider the unfavorable state of the agri-food system to be at such a point that there is no option but the need for collective action. They prefer seeing this as ground which motivates them to finally initiate a collective and practical struggle for changing the agri-food system, and for collaborating with other actors in agroecology. In other words, they share a wishful “anxious hope” (Ahmed, 2010, p. 183), because rather than considering their anxiety in contradiction with their hope for transformation, they consider it as something that increases the possibility of hope. It is for this reason that they regard the present state of agriculture “not at the expense of struggle but [as something that] animates a struggle”

(Ahmed, 2017, p. 2). The cooperative volunteers see their hope in the “act[ing] (...) rather than being a promise of what might come” (Ahmed, 2010, p. 191).

The producers that are part of the network of Kadıköy Coop also share the hope that the cooperative produces:

When we are organized as producers and consumers, nobody can freely tread on us. Say that the number of such cooperatives became 10, 20, 30, and even 100 and that they would build a confederation of consumer cooperatives. Just think how much this could empower us (Ayhan, Producer of Kadıköy Cooperative).

They bring us the hope to transform current agri-food relations. We live in a world where we cannot manifest ourselves as a unified power (...) That is why I perceive every single attempt, every little task as important progress. I take the emergence of such small alternatives very seriously. We are not yet strong enough, but we are indeed more crowded than it seems. And the number of actors in collective networks is growing every day. Looking solely from the global perspective may lead to overlooking many things. It is mostly such seemingly unimportant things which carry the significant potential and power to develop the alternative future (Birnur, Producer of Kadıköy Cooperative).

Such civic and participatory collective alternatives are ambitious with their hope for transforming current agri-food relations for peoples' food sovereignty. This section does not discuss in detail whether their efforts to widen their cause into larger segments of society will help the struggle for food sovereignty, but this issue will be thoroughly discussed later in the dissertation. However, it is clear that they visibly differentiate themselves from other post-organic initiatives in Turkey with this ambition, hope, and related efforts in their search for alternative agri-food relations.

4.3. Conclusion

There are many difficulties that small producers face in organic agriculture and considerable demand from large consumer populations to access healthy foods. These conditions gave rise to post-organic initiatives that do not name their products as organic nor guarantee the quality of their products through the organic certification system. This chapter framed the actors in the organic food market as corporate actors, middle-scale commercial enterprises, small-scale organic farmers, organic farmers' markets organized by NGOs, and public actors like municipalities. It listed the post-organic actors as corporate “natural” food chains, online

“natural” food shops of private-run farms at varying scales, independent small-scale ecological farmers, ecological producer cooperatives, and civic collective ecological food initiatives.

The empirical investigation of some of these organic and post-organic food channels suggested that trust is at the very heart of building alternativeness because consumers want to get rid of a sense of vulnerability by relying on certain actors in this risk society. It suggested that consumers of natural food shops and the majority of consumers of organic farmers’ markets buy from these places for health-related reasons. In contrast, most consumers of collective ecological initiatives, especially their volunteers, do not primarily relate the consumption of ecological food to their physical well-being. They consider the critical aspects in agri-food relations such as the fairness of labor relations and affordability of ecological food, which they find neglected in other alternative and traditional food outlets. Shortly, this fieldwork showed that that the primary difference in the selection of a particular alternative for consumers comes from whether they prioritize their health or a comprehensive motivation to contribute to the transformation of the existing agri-food system for the benefit of small producers, consumers, and the environment. It also found that hope for challenging existing agri-food relations has been increasing among the consumers of civic and collective alternative initiatives, as the number of such platforms has been rising at a significant pace in very recent years.

Furthermore, this chapter presented a comprehensive picture of almost 20 consumer-led ecological food initiatives and focused on 11 prominent examples of these in İstanbul. It analyzed and compared food communities and consumer food cooperatives in terms of their motivations, organization models, and functions. It argued that the common characteristics of consumer-led ecological initiatives in Turkey are as follows: 1) They build solidarity with small ecological farmers through locally coordinated collaborative efforts in cities. 2) They seek to establish ecological relationships collaborating only with smallholders who adopt ecological techniques utilizing their local or landrace seeds and no pesticides and herbicides. 3) Their goal

is to promote direct and equal relations between ecological producers and consumers based on their mutual collective efforts. They do not demand organic certification primarily since they do not want to complicate the problems of producers with the additional procedural and economic burden of obtaining a certificate. 4) Many of the collective ecological food initiatives are not associated with political parties. However, they identify their activities as political because of their desire to contribute to the transformation of today's dominant mode of food production, distribution, and consumption. 5) Gezi Resistance constitutes the common political background that has fueled the emergence of these civic initiatives that aim to build horizontal and democratic organizational structures.

This fieldwork also revealed the differences between ecological food communities and consumer food cooperatives. It suggested that the absence of legal obligations and additional work to manage a physical store offers food communities a substantial logistical advantage to come together in their neighborhoods. However, it claimed, local cooperative shops have more considerable advantages as they are publicly accessible collective spaces that help to inform consumers about their organization and enable more consumers to become involved participants in the collective work.

Finally, it is suggested that ecological consumer food cooperatives try to offer a political alternative to existing agri-food relations, which constitutes a crucial alternative pillar from which they get strength. Many of them offer an alternative organizational model that prioritizes constructing horizontal relations and expanding citizen participation in public space to impinge upon food politics. The democratic participation of citizens in local consumer food cooperatives constitutes a crucial alternative that they all consider very important to build.

CHAPTER 5

Challenging Conditions of Ecological Producers and the Local Struggle of Their Cooperatives & Collective Efforts of New-Generation Consumer Food Cooperatives for Building Alternative Agri-food Relations: Kadıköy Coop Case

We have been living in a political context in Turkey where the dynamic political atmosphere emerged after the Gezi Resistance is repressed by restricting street protests and silencing anti-democratically any opposition, despite the fact that the social and economic problems are worsening. However, and because of this, citizens have headed towards local organizations to find solutions collectively to their daily problems and take the initiative on matters that they are politically intrigued. They bring these local organizations into life by trying to build horizontal, participatory, and democratic relations. As the access to healthy food has been becoming a challenging but crucial matter, alternative food initiatives have emerged as one of the primary actors experiencing these new forms of organization at the local level. Among them, neighborhood-scale consumer food cooperatives come to the front as major organizations to access ecological food and support small ecological farmers facing many difficulties in the corporate food context. Besides, in the rural space where the agri-food transformations have severely influenced farmers in the last 20 years, the rural actors have also opted into this dynamism considering the rising interest for healthy ecological food and cooperatives in the cities. Local governments become prominent among these rural actors, with their alternative agri-food projects.

Without discussing empirically these recently emerging initiatives, the discussions on how to construct an effective and multifaceted alternative to current production-consumption-distribution relations of food remain too abstract and superficial. We need to address the

alternative aspects of this new wave of cooperatives and agri-food projects of local governments as well as to problematize its weaknesses and faults. It is necessary for discussing the strategies that these actors need to develop in the long-term, in order not to lose the core idea behind the emergence of these initiatives as these cooperatives increase in number.

Bearing in mind the importance of these points, I will examine in the following four chapters new-generation consumer food cooperatives by focusing on Kadıköy Cooperative and its producer network as well as on recent alternative agri-food projects of municipal governments in Turkey, especially addressing Seferihisar and Ovacık cases. These four chapters are based on comprehensive fieldwork for one and a half years, starting from January 2018. I will investigate all these cases by adopting a multi-faceted perspective from consumer and producer sides and other actors like municipalities, to understand how, from which aspects, and to what extent they produce collectively 1) alternative agri-food relations, and construct 2) alternative publicity and politics by building an alternative organizational form and considering food as commons. Indeed, the construction of alternative agri-food relations and the building of alternative public space and food politics go hand in hand. However, these are intermingled and complex issues. Thus, it is impossible to discuss all these points in Chapters 5 and 6, especially concerning Kadıköy Coop, which have already a very comprehensive perspective focused both on the consumer and producer sides. To investigate them more systematically, I have two separate chapters for my main case-study, Kadıköy Cooperative, by following an analytical distinction between 1 and 2 addressed above. For the Kadıköy Cooperative case, I focus on point 2 in Chapter 8.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I will investigate Kadıköy Cooperative as a case study of new-generation consumer food cooperatives and track down the independent producers and producer cooperatives in its network. I analyze in these chapters how and to what extent these urban ecological food cooperatives led by consumers establish direct and transparent relationships

with ecological food producers to support them and offer together alternative production-consumption-distribution relations of food. I also examine the producers and producer organizations in the network of Kadıköy Cooperative and alike. It is because, to understand better what and how these ecological consumer food cooperatives try to transform, we need to analyze also the producers they collaborate and their relations with these actors. Thus, while discussing how these consumer food cooperatives try to stand in solidarity with small ecological producers, I also address the difficulties these producers face, why and how they get organized in their locality, as well as their strategies, success, and failures. In doing so, I aim to discuss the limits and potential of the direct producer-consumer communication and solidarity, on the one hand, the problems of small farmers in production and afterward and space their local organization open up for themselves, on the other. I analyze independent producers, mixed cooperatives, and female cooperatives separately to focus on the distinct dynamics and organizational forms that impact on overcoming the pressures of current agri-food conditions and relations as well as positively transforming the producers themselves.

I would like to start with the investigation of Kadıköy Cooperative case, based on my fieldwork. My participatory observation in Kadıköy Cooperative lasts for the entire 2018 year. I took an active role in regular weekly meetings, several working units, study groups, events, and workshops as well as in the running and opening of the cooperative store. I have also kept my close relations with the cooperative and my friends in the cooperative, continued to shop from Kadıköy Cooperative, and attended its public events. Thus, I never broke my connections with Kadıköy Cooperative. I also conducted in-depth interviews with five cooperative volunteers. Each interview took approximately 1.5-2 hours. For the part of producers, I tracked down the producer network of new-generation consumer food cooperatives, especially of Kadıköy Cooperative. I interviewed five independent producers in this network, in Sakarya, Niğde, Kars, Balıkesir and interviews in seven producer organizations (associations,

collectives, cooperatives) in Manisa, Muğla, Artvin, Zonguldak, Kars, Çanakkale. I interviewed one or two persons in these organizations, for approximately 2 hours, usually spent two days with producers, and witnessed their production if possible.

5.1. Kadıköy Cooperative as a New-Generation Urban Consumer Food Cooperative: The Ambition of Building Alternative Agri-food Relations in a Solidary Network

I name most of the collective ecological citizen initiatives in this research as “new-generation” cooperatives because of their horizontal and participatory organization model and alternative production, consumption, and distribution relations they aspire to cultivate. The number of these initiatives has significantly increased, especially in the last three years. There are certain common points separating them from other “natural product” channels and “organic food” alternatives as well as some differences among themselves, which I had already addressed in detail in Chapter 4. Being one of the most known and earlier examples of these initiatives, I now would like to focus on the main principles and objectives of the Kadıköy Cooperative that also considers itself as a new-generation cooperative.

Kadıköy Cooperative has five main publicly-declared principles:²⁶

- 1) *Working with small and middle-scale ecological farmers without any intermediaries:* In the selection of these farmers, the scale the cooperative indicates is indeed not only about the size of their land. The limits of what is small-scale land is a complex issue after all. The type and the value of the products grown on this land and the location of this agricultural land determine the value of that land and the product, thus the same size of the vegetable garden near İstanbul and a tea garden in the Black Sea cannot be compared only in terms of the scale. The most important criterion for the cooperative

²⁶ The discussions in the following ten pagens are based on my earlier published paper: Soysal Al, İ. (2020). The promising momentum and collective practices of the recently expanding network of consumer-led ecological food initiatives in Turkey. *İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyoloji Dergisi*, 40, 129–162.

that determines this principle and for considering a producer small or middle scale is whether or not these producers adopt a corporate logic that reduces the production into exchange value and focuses on profit-maximization. If they are not producer cooperatives, they are usually family farms which employ only one or two employees except the family members, if necessary. The cooperative only collaborates with producers who do not act with this corporate logic. This means that it only supports farmers and producer organizations who do not exploit labor, does not employ children in their production, and regards fair and ecological production conditions. When I address 'small-scale farmers' in this study, I also use this term as it is used by Kadıköy Cooperative and other similar urban consumer food cooperatives. It is also important to note that Kadıköy Cooperative considers crucial the organization of farmers in cooperatives, associations, and unions, and prefers working with organized farmers or those who are willing to get organized. The cooperative gives priority to include female producers and organizations in its producer network.

- 2) *Building ecological social relations*: The cooperative does not work with any small farmers but with those who use agroecological techniques and local, landrace seeds. These producers also do not utilize any agricultural inputs like pesticides and herbicides, as well as additives, food colorants, and food preservation agents that all threaten public health. It supports production and consumption relations that are environmentally friendly and for the benefit of society. In a context when it is a luxury to have access to healthy food, it aims to build ecological and reliable food relations for all.
- 3) The cooperative aims at *building direct and fair production and consumption relations based on reciprocal initiatives that ecological food producers and consumers take collectively*. Neither consumers nor producers alone can transform current agri-food relations. These reciprocal responsibilities and initiative-taking are vital in the struggle

for food sovereignty, according to Kadıköy Cooperative. It aims to encourage farmers for the ecological production and to establish cooperatives in the countryside by providing the opportunity, in collaboration with similar urban cooperatives, to bring their products directly to urban consumers and get fair prices for their labor. It is because many ecological farmers today are obliged to sell their products to intermediaries for the same prices as conventional products at the absence of direct sales channels.

For Kadıköy Cooperative, remaking a strong connection between consumption and production processes as well as urban and rural spaces is essential. One of the most prominent motivations of volunteers in Kadıköy Coop is to build direct communication and a trust-based interaction with producers. The volunteers have constant relations with the producers and also try to visit these producers and witness their production on their land. These processes strengthen the ground for solidarity and mutual trust. The volunteers try to construct such mechanisms that can enable a healthy dialogue between those who produce and those who consume these foods. Both consumers and producers engage in dialogue directly without any hesitation. In this way, consumers know whether their producer is facing trouble in the production or needs any support. Producers also get feedbacks from the consumers. For example, volunteers ask the producer to keep its ecological packaging when s/he wants to give up this package or they may recommend a producer to buy an ingredient that is to be used in the production.

In Kadıköy Cooperative, the product prices are not determined by the cooperative but upon the information and the price suggested by the producer. The cooperative considers important the fair compensation of the labor of the producers, thus it does not ask for any discount. The cooperative members adopt a perspective that counts the value of a product not only by regarding the price but also the labor and production processes. Thus, they do not expect each product to have the same price as

conventional products and as the products for which the consumers pay the least to the producer but the rest to intermediaries and supermarkets. However, this does not mean that the cooperative is not concerned with the accessibility of consumers to these products. A food system where ecological and fair food is no longer a luxury is indeed the ultimate goal of Kadıköy Cooperative, which is to be reached by the common efforts, collaboration, and solidarity of consumers and producers. The cooperative works increasingly with producer cooperatives as they have processing and packaging facilities which reduce production costs. It orders from individual producers with some other consumer food cooperatives to decrease cargo expenses. Some products sold in the cooperative are a bit lower than the average market price like in the case of the ecological honey of Sındı Cooperative that is cheaper than the honey of *Balparmak*. Some products have the same price as those in the market, and some are more expensive than their conventional counterparts. Kadıköy Cooperative decreases the prices of some fundamental foods like rice, lentils, beans, by increasing a bit the prices of more luxury foods like gruyere cheese or olive oil and honey if their prices are the same with or lower than the market price. Also, it suggests that to be able to render more accessible the healthy, fair, and quality products, both the number of such ecological producers, the consumers who recognize the value of these products, and the consumer food cooperatives need to augment. As the network of consumer food cooperatives enlarges, Kadıköy Cooperative and others have started to plan common storage and logistics facilities to decrease their costs and thus the prices of the products.

4) *Operating through Participatory Collective Work and Decision-Making Mechanisms:*

Kadıköy Cooperative is not the sum of consumers who gathered together. The volunteer-consumers in the cooperative take all decisions collectively and share systematically the routine duties by taking an active role in its working units. The

cooperative aims to build a participatory platform where anybody can attend weekly meetings that are open to the public, become a volunteer at the cooperative, and attend and witness transparently all decision-making processes. I examine this participatory and horizontal organization model and consensus-based decision-taking processes very comprehensively in Chapter 8, drawing attention to the importance of this principle in creating an alternative public space and politics of food.

- 5) *Contributing to Social Solidarity*: Kadıköy Cooperative designs all its principles and operations to contribute to social solidarity. The aim of the cooperative is not to earn money from the food sales, but to enable a platform for producers to deliver their products directly to the cooperative store and get fair income from their production, and for consumers to access reliable, healthy, ecological food. The cooperative members/volunteers do not get any share from the sales, because the cooperative only adds a little amount to the price determined by the producers. This amount is spent on expenses such as cargo, rent, electricity, and water bills, as well as for the cooperative fund. The cooperative fund is used for covering expenses to organize workshops, events, and join cooperative workshops elsewhere. As to solidify social solidarity, Kadıköy Coop collaborates with other groups and cooperatives in a solidarity economy. It prioritizes solidarity with disadvantaged and marginalized groups such as unfairly dismissed workers, refugees, and migrants. The hand-made products of Migrant Women (*Göçmen Kadınlar*), Collective Kitchen of Refugee Women (*Kadın Kadına Mülteci Mutfağı*), foundations like Alikev (Ali İsmail Korkmaz Foundation) are sold in the solidarity shelf. The cooperative is in close communication and tries to grow the collaboration with other consumer food cooperatives. It spends considerable time for expanding the network of and the awareness on urban consumer food cooperatives, by organizing and joining several public events, workshops, and panels on cooperatives

and responding to the meeting demand of many groups who want to establish their cooperative, to share its experiences.

To sum up, the cooperative has two main objectives that might pose an alternative to contemporary relations of food production, consumption, and distribution: 1) transforming their relationship as urban consumers who are separated from the countryside and the production process of the producers, by establishing direct and transparent ties with the producers; therefore, establishing an alternative consumption relationship in which they know by whom, under what circumstances and where the food they consume is produced. 2) the producers to deliver their products without labor exploitation keeping in mind public health, nature, and biodiversity with the help of a direct food supply chain; therefore, establishing an alternative production and distribution relation wherein access to healthy, ecological, and fair food is not a luxury. The cooperative also has crucial objectives regarding its organization model and mentality which, I argue, gives room to the construction of alternative public space for citizens and alternative politics of food. However, I will elaborate on this point in Chapter 8.

Kadıköy is a district that has a relatively educated population of which young people have a considerable proportion. The considerable number of young people in the Kadıköy district increases its potential to organize such a cooperative. The main prospect of consumers in Kadıköy is to have access to food produced by trust-worthy producers under conditions that they are informed about. Kadıköy Cooperative volunteers do not expect the products to be certified as organic. The main reason for this is that the state's organic agriculture incentives per decare do not sufficiently support producers to get an organic certificate. Especially due to the serious value loss of the Turkish lira over the dollar, the state support for organic production by no means contribute to the producers to get a certificate. Therefore, Kadıköy Cooperative volunteers choose their small-scale producers according to the criteria that I explained above, so as not to put an extra burden on their shoulders with the certification requirement. They also

frequently have referrals from similar initiatives and producer organizations as Çiftçi-Sen to have access to appropriate producers.

During the last three years, thirteen ecological food cooperatives and cooperative initiatives and many food communities have been established only in İstanbul. Their relatively rapid numerical expansion in a few years, as well as their collective practices and efforts to expand solidarity, seem to be hopeful. These initiatives organize common visits to producers, share their information and experience for the propagation of similar organizations, organize joint workshops, and aim to build a common logistic network and storage, to enable more accessible food prices. The increasing cooperation in the network of these consumer food initiatives is remarkable. One of the concrete collective practices they realized is the collective order of these initiatives in İstanbul from some producers, to support them in higher volume and decrease the logistics expenses. These cooperations that I deem hopeful baby steps towards a full-fledged ecological production, having started just two years ago when BÜKOOP and Kadıköy Cooperative got a producer to cultivate ecological lentils from local seeds inherited from the ancestors are being evolved today into comprehensive solidarity involving many food initiatives in İstanbul. For instance, at the end of 2019, Kadıköy, Beşiktaş, Koşuyolu, BÜKOOP, Maltepe, Üsküdar, Ataşehir, Halkbeskoop, *Anadolu'da Yaşam* (Life in Anatolia) and Salkım cooperatives and cooperative initiatives and Yeryüzü Association, Kadıköy, and Permakamp food communities came together to make a joint purchase. These initiatives came together to plan the production of 1.5 tons of lentils from local seeds inherited from ancestors with ecological methods by two small scale producers in a village in Kars, and distributed the end product via a joint logistic network, amounting to one of the concrete examples showing that urban citizen initiatives can establish a solidarity network of great potential in case they sustain a healthy expansion in terms of cooperation and communication. Although 1.5 tons of lentil purchase is not yet a big amount, it signifies a very valuable concrete cooperation practice

demonstrating that there exists a network in solidarity with small scale farmers making ecological production that is ready to directly purchase their products for fair prices. The following objectives would turn these initiatives into significant actors of the solidarity economy: propagating and systematizing planning before October concerning the purchase amount for the entire year, and the pre-payments producers receive when necessary, expanding the network without losing direct, confidence-based relations between the producers and consumers, supporting producers with larger amounts of purchases, promoting more producers to get organized, and common storage and logistic strategies available for these initiatives in the same city.

Some other concrete examples that I want to address here are about how Kadıköy Cooperative and some producers/producer cooperatives have taken initiatives based on sincere and direct communication, which ended up with the transformation of its production form into ecological production for Devrek Sun (*Devrek Güneşi*) Female Cooperative, and the sale of the “fairest hazelnut” in Turkey. Devrek Cooperative contacted Kadıköy Cooperative to sell traditional noodles (*erişte*), but they were using industrial flour from hybrid wheat seeds. Kadıköy Cooperative requested them to produce ecological noodles and tarhana from ancient wheat seeds. They told that they would like to do so, yet they did not know any ecological wheat producer. Kadıköy Coop volunteers offered them to contact directly one of their wheat producers and they started to sell the cooperative ecological noodles and tarhana from landrace seeds. The final product was more expensive than the previous one, however much cheaper than its certified organic counterparts, and it became a product in demand by the consumers in Kadıköy. Both cooperatives on producer and consumer sides thus transformed collectively the production form of a cooperative by direct communication. Kadıköy Cooperative’s offer to Devrek Cooperative was the start of raising awareness among these producers about the value of landrace seeds and the dangers of industrial ones. These processes also impinged on

positively other consumer initiatives, for instance, Şişli Coop Initiative included these products in their food boxes at that time, and these products of Devrek Cooperative are now sold in many consumer food cooperatives in İstanbul. The next step is indeed much more valuable. These women in the cooperative told Kadıköy Cooperative that they do not want any more to “poison” consumers, so they wanted to cultivate ecologically their wheat from landrace seeds. A group of architects, of which some are from Beşiktaş and Kadıköy Coop, offered them later to design a project of a stone mill by getting funds. The women in Devrek Cooperative started now to produce ecological products made from their wheat from landrace seeds. Thus, this is one of the concrete examples of how producer and consumer food cooperatives can build together similar transformation processes in direct communication and solidarity that are based on mutual initiative-taking. The example of the “fairest hazelnut in Turkey” is told by a Kadıköy Cooperative volunteer as follows:

When we contact directly the hazelnut producer and say “we will buy 300 kg ecological hazelnut for a fair price you offer,” we exclude all other intermediary actors from the system. Based on direct communication, we then make sure that producer does not use chemicals and synthetic fertilizers and do not exploit labor, including of migrants. In this process, we witness the dynamics and the production conditions of this family farming as well as the meaning of the fair compensation he gets from this production. We did this by taking initiatives mutually with the producer and paying the fair price determined by Fındık-Sen. This is how we can change production, consumption, distribution relations of food. Local newspapers published this news as “the fairest hazelnut is in Kadıköy Coop.” We ordered these hazelnuts following year with Koşuyolu Coop. This year, Fındık-Sen says, “Go away corporations, long live cooperatives, cooperations.” They did not have this slogan last year.

Working with an ecological hazelnut producer and paying him a fair price, 15 TL per kg (2.25 Euros in June 2019), was symbolically very important both for Kadıköy Cooperative and the hazelnut producers. It is because hazelnut-processing companies operating in the Black Sea region such as Ferrero has never taken the fair price determined by the Union of Hazelnut Producers (Fındık-Sen) seriously. Hazelnut producers have to sell their products to Ferrero for only 7-8 TL (1 Euro) per kg because of the lack of any state protection mechanism. The further step to make a collective order from this producer in the following years as four consumer food initiatives in larger volume was also a valuable concrete example of how to strengthen the solidarity with producers, and among consumers. I also want to note here that this “fairest

hazelnut” in Turkey is also for the benefit of consumers, as the consumers in Kadıköy can buy the kg of hazelnut for almost one-third of its average market price.

These concrete examples of transforming consumption and production relations are quite valuable. To have a more visible impact, the network of urban ecological food initiatives needs to keep growing constantly as in the last three years without losing the focus on diversifying rapidly such examples. However, all initiatives cannot establish a balance between prices and the principles of working only with producers who make environmentally friendly production. For instance, despite recognizing the ethical and ecological production, Anadolu’da Yaşam Cooperative cannot provide all its products regarding these criteria because its cooperative stores are located in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. The strategies the urban consumer food cooperatives develop depends also on their socio-economic dynamics. In this case, the existence of both Kadıköy Coop and Anadolu Yaşam Coop is important and their interactions also widen their perspectives. For instance, Anadoluda Yaşam Coop was established before Kadıköy Cooperative and shared its experiences with Kadıköy Coop in workshops when some volunteers came up with the idea of starting a consumer food cooperative in Kadıköy. In years, Anadolu’da Yaşam Coop, which used to have no ecological concerns but only the aim of providing relatively good products for lower prices, updated its objectives. It now cares about the ethical concerns about labor relations and ecological concerns in some of its products, especially the staple food like rice, lentils, beans, that are still affordable despite being ecological. It also collaborates with cooperatives like Kadıköy Cooperative and aims to give more importance to these criteria, as they bring into life new strategies like common storage and logistics that would reduce the prices. Besides, it is important to expand the network of these cooperatives by comprising a wider range of population, including those who see no problem in paying a little more for a clean and healthy product, which is still less expensive than its certified organic counterpart, so that their contribution can subvent a person

with limited financial means (Adaman, 2018, p. 125). I believe that this perspective will grow as more people consider gradually these food initiatives as part of a solidarity economy.

Today, we have started to observe the positive signals of webbing the solidarity in this network by regarding more the economically disadvantaged consumers' position, both in routine and crisis periods. For instance, some cooperatives offer free food boxes consisting of foods bought by some consumers, so that those in need and students can pick up. Some cooperatives also prepared free food boxes (solidarity boxes) to share with economically disadvantaged citizens in the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Dayanışma Coop, for example, delivered 500 solidarity boxes in the first two months of the pandemic, with the help of institutions and individual consumers who purchased solidarity boxes via its website. These consumer food cooperatives also prioritize the employment of those who lost their job suddenly with a decree-law as well as their unemployed volunteers. Some cooperatives also consider providing the opportunity to their members taking freely some products from the cooperative store in exchange for the hours they spent voluntarily for taking care of the sales in the cooperative. In this way, they want to have more consumers and volunteers from a wider population in this network.

It will be more possible to expand these networks in a more comprehensive and multilateral way, as these initiatives grow and increase collaboration among themselves, the demand for and production of ecological food augment, and more visible attention is drawn to the need of state support for ecological production as well as to the collaboration of local governments with cooperatives. On the other hand, it is very difficult for the ethically and ecologically grown products to compete with industrial products having no concern regarding production conditions. Referring to the concrete efforts of the new-generation urban food cooperatives, we can now address, for now, a promising yet nascent march towards an order where small producers can get the fair compensation of their intense and valuable effort in

ecological production. It is because as the producers that I discuss in this chapter, especially the individual producers, indicate, they try to continue their production under very competitive market conditions. Also, from packaging to product labeling, they are situated in a legal context where small-scale producers are expected to comply with the same criteria of the Food Codex, survive in a commercial order where merchants pay quite lower than what they deserve and treat their ecological products as conventional products in calculating their price. The cooperatives alone cannot help them in overcoming these difficulties, yet the consumers' organization and collaboration with producers as well as their discussions and strategies on how to support them more efficiently are very valuable and vital. They are becoming a source of motivation, above all, for producers, and encourage producers to get organized in cooperatives, which solves some problems of the producers to a certain extent. They also started to get packaging and labeling permits as consumer food cooperatives, to be able to package properly the products of small farmers according to the Food Codex, which is very hard for the producers to deal with because of bureaucratic and financial reasons. The compliance with this codex is an obligation for both the producers and the consumer food cooperative, otherwise, they risk being charged when inspected. Kadıköy Coop could not open the cooperative store within the official working hours of inspectors in weekdays, for a long time, until when it solved this packaging and label requirements. They try to develop similar strategies for the benefit of producers as they learn through their experience.

Briefly, there are promising concrete examples and collaborative efforts in the growing network of urban collective ecological food initiatives in Turkey, which may support and encourage small-scale ecological producers in this pressuring agri-food system. Also, the momentum of this network as well as the increasing collaborations and collective plans of these initiatives in recent years are quite hopeful. However, it does not seem possible for them to actualize alone their potential for transforming current consumption, production, and

distribution relations of food. Despite the growing potential of these initiatives, which is indicated in the above discussion, the problems of the current agri-food system and the vulnerabilities that small producers experience today are also considerable, as I addressed in this dissertation so far and the following section will elaborate on more detailedly drawing from my fieldwork. The significance of these problems necessitates not only the local intervention and efforts but also the state's consistent and supportive policies in favor of small producers, consumers, and ecological agriculture, to bring into life stronger transformation. In order to not stay as marginal actors and to fulfill their potential, these initiatives, as a network, need to expand their scope effectively to build the cooperation of a wide range of actors like mass organizations, syndicates, and unions and comprise a larger scale of consumers. While working hard from their locality to contribute to the transformation of the current agri-food relations in favor of producers, consumers, and ecology, they thus need to make together their voice stronger and pressure more the central government to carry into effect and sustain steadily in long-term the necessary policies they demand together, to transform more effectively this system.

To discuss better what these urban ecological food cooperatives aim to transform in long-term about the current production-consumption-distribution relations of food, I will analyze now the difficulties small ecological producers in their networks experience, their production form, and strategies they develop to survive despite the increasing pressures of today's agricultural context. I will discuss the limits and openings of the cooperation of these producers in their locality as well as of the direct relations of producer and consumer food organizations.

5.2. The Producers in the Network of Urban Ecological Consumer Food Cooperatives

5.2.1. Individual Ecological Producers

I conducted in-depth interviews with five individual producers that I tracked down through the solidarity network of urban ecological consumer food cooperatives, especially of Kadıköy Cooperative. I have visited all these producers in their production site. I conducted detailed interviews taking around 2 hours in 2018 and 2019 and witnessed most of their production process. I also made the transcription of each interview.

The consumer food cooperatives in this research usually prefer working with the producers' organizations as it is easier to work with the cooperatives in terms of their suitability with different legislations. However, there are also individual producers that the cooperatives work with. The number of individual producers is higher in some consumer food cooperatives like Dayanışma-Koop or Halk-Bes-Coop, which are affiliated with specific political groups. Nevertheless, this producer type is less with the Kadıköy or Beşiktaş cooperatives that have no political bounds. Most producers of Kadıköy Cooperative, especially ones who have been in its producer network for a long time, have a cooperative or other organizational past, and some were already in the social network of cooperative members. As the recognition of the cooperative has augmented, new producers get into contact with the cooperative. They fill up the producer form and are accepted as a producer, should their production type and conditions conform with the principles and expectations of the cooperative. The five independent producers that I have visited following the Kadıköy Cooperative's producers network produce in Sakarya, Niğde, Kars, and Balıkesir. Four of them are university graduates, and their ages are between 50 and 70. Two of them took part in different cooperative organizations before, and one of them started to work as secretary-general of Farmers' Union starting from 2020.

I first examine the experiences of Ali and Hacer Ünivar and Berin Ertürk who produce fruits. I elaborate on why they are into ecological agriculture and the difficulties they have been facing up with as small producers. I also discuss their relationships with alternative food initiatives and how they evaluate the today and future of these initiatives. I discuss them together as those two producers already know each other and organized a producer cooperative together, as their product types are not very different. Then, I examine two small producers in the segment of processed products; two dairy producers and a vegetable pasta producer.

Ali and Hacer Ünivar implement family-farming in Kılan Village, Ulukışla, Niğde. They have a fruit garden around 20 decares, in which around 500 fruit trees grow, consisting of cherry, apple, plum, and apricot trees. They are working there with an employee. They are also cultivating forest products like walnut, almond, and rosehip in a land of 10 decares next to theirs, which they have hired from the state for 49 years besides their private-registered land. However, as only 40-50 of the 200-250 walnut trees are old enough, so they are mostly producing other fruits now.

While they produce the cherries mostly for covering the house expenses, they produce the other fruits for meeting the family needs. They make use of these products by drying some of them and making jams. Their main products are cherries, and like the cherries being grown up in that region, most cherries are exported by letting the tradesmen decide for the price. They dry the rest of the products and sell them to the consumers directly. Ali Ünivar was graduated from an agricultural school and then studied Economics at university. He started to produce actively after retirement by taking advantage of his individual experiences and knowledge as a person who spent many years as a cooperative consultant. The family earns their living from farming and the retirement pension. He has the experience of founding an ecological production cooperative with his 8 producer friends. The ecological production cooperative that this producer in Niğde talks about is Kibele Cooperative. Berin Ertürk, a vegetable producer in

Sakarya of whom I will introduce below, is also one of the founders of this cooperative that is not active today but affected the rise of consumption cooperatives in İstanbul by leading the BÜKOOP. I will soon elaborate on this Kibele Ecological Life, Culture, Environment, and Management Cooperative.

Berin Ertürk produces vegetables in Maksudiye Village of Sakarya on joint family land of 186 decares. She harvests leek, spinach, chard, potato, squash, tomato, cucumber, and pepper in different seasons. Ertürk does not possess the entire land; the family land is not separated and belongs to three siblings who inherited the land from their grandfather. Ertürk has taken responsibility in this family land after her retirement and subsists her life from her retirement pension and agricultural production. She practices ecological production without any agricultural chemical inputs and benefiting from agro-ecological technics for tackling the insects. We can define her as a small producer because her income from the production is hardly enough for her subsistence without any other income. Also, she only owns 60 decares of this family land and cultivates the land herself with the help of only one or two workers. Thus, it is possible to argue that she does not farm with the logic of a profit-making company. She even took an organic agriculture certificate in 2002 when she started producing. The support of organic agriculture given by the government for the land of the three siblings let her have no economic problems during the certification process. However, she now says that she would not get certification because the state support would not be enough for 60 decares. She also adds that she might give up on the organic agriculture certificate as the support of the government is not enough anymore regarding the sharp increase of the euro.

Ertürk's story of organic and ecological production started after his retirement. She says that this land used to be processed by the sharecroppers, as his father was not interested in agriculture. The garden fell into disuse in which ivies were dangling from apple trees in its last three years. Thus, it was appropriate for taking the organic agriculture certificate and that she

could easily handle the transition process as it was an untouched land. She started organic agriculture when it was not much known in 2001. There was not a considerable domestic market and awareness about the dangers of industrial agriculture back then. Ertürk is also a producer with an organic agriculture certificate. However, she emphasizes that the most critical point is not the possession of a certificate but the need for building a system that regards ecological and ethical values. She underlines that the problem with the organic agriculture is that it has turned into a system in which small producers produce under the authority of big companies signing low priced contracts and produce by the organic inputs provided by these companies.

Ali Ünivâr also urges that the ecological perspective is a holistic and multifaceted approach and that it is hard to make an ecological and honest production when the producers do not embrace it this way. Ali and Hacer Ünivâr had been implementing conventional production for ten years until 2009, with agricultural chemicals and synthetic fertilizers. They realize that the expenses of industrial inputs were high, and the productivity of the land still depended on the dynamics of nature. They started organic agriculture by doing their researches and reading the regulations of organic agriculture and had difficulties, especially in the transitional period, for 2-3 years in the beginning. They also get state support for organic certification. However, Ali Ünivâr says, this support means nothing at all for a land of 20 decare because the support is provided per decare: “Support of just 1.500 TL cannot encourage a producer. We have to pay 4.000-5.000 TL to the certificate institution per year. Besides, to keep up with the desired quality, we need organic fertilizers and organic pesticides, and this makes us face up with an agricultural input of more than 50% of the market.”

Ali Ünivâr says that this is why he started to use traditional ecological ways to protect trees and land. He tells that he started to keep up the excellent quality by drip irrigation and get good harvests, especially after three years. He says that he is focused on ecological agriculture today, and it is better to lead up the producers with alternative organizations instead of being

dependent on a certificate. He exemplifies the solidaristic Kibele Cooperative that as ecological agriculture producers, Ali Ünivar and his friends Berin Ertürk from Sakarya, İlhan Koçulu from Kars and two other producers from Afyon and Çanakkale founded in early 2000.

The Kibele experience pioneered the producers about how to get organized and how to contact the consumers. Moreover, this process was also an experience leading the foundation of BÜKOOP. Ünivar and Ertürk underline that they wrote the code of the Kibele Ecological Life, Culture, Environment, and Management Cooperative collectively. They argue that this was an organization that does not only focus on producing organic walnuts or cherries, but that takes the ecological life as a whole. They define their cooperative as an organization that regards the collectivity of production, the need for protecting the environment, and creating its culture. They explain this organization as a place where they apply pluralistic democracy and as a network in which people can share their experiences and cultures. They emphasize that the relations were not top-down but designed in a way that they can think together and cooperate in spreading similar experiences. Ünivar and Ertürk consider this experience as pioneering the foundation of BÜKOOP, with the help of Farmers' Union:

As Kibele, we thought that we could not create the marketing opportunities by ourselves as producers and that the consumer cooperatives need to spread, too. Then we contacted the Farmers' Union for their help. We created this culture together and saw the first core with BÜKOOP. We, as producers, started to give them our products, as Kibele producers and members of Farmers' Union. We could not keep the process as we wanted because, as Kibele producers, we were geographically distant from each other. But Kibele kept its mission in that way.

Ali Ünivar adds that he also inspires other farmers in his region, and they start to see the possibility of producing without chemicals. He also works for the promotion of cooperation in his locality. However, Ünivar also emphasizes that there is a severe lack of information about the hazardous effects of conventional agriculture among most producers and those producers are estranged from their production processes. He urges that the reason for that is the existing agri-food policies of the Turkish government that favor the interests of agribusinesses. Ertürk also explains that most producers consider their product not as nourishment but as a sales value.

Like Ünivar, she argues that they are not aware of the consequences of their production form and that they forget the ethical responsibilities of a farmer, as they are alienating from their production.

Both independent producers and organized farmers in cooperatives complain very often about the exploitation of tradespeople and monopolized companies as the major actors that aggravate their conditions. Ünivar, for instance, says that merchants pay the same price for his organic cherries with the conventional ones. He explains that the tradesmen arrive 3-4 days late on purpose as they know that the fruits are fresh products, and they should not wait. Thus, he says, they give no opportunity to negotiate the price. This is why; he and some of his friends sometimes get organized and try to raise the price of 20% by harvesting 2-3 days later. However, he adds, this price only covers their expenses. Ünivar tells that he could not even sell 1 ton of his cherry for the price of organic because merchants usually try to cut under saying that they demand larger cherries. Underlining that cherries in his region are conventional export products, thus tradespeople's attitude encourages farmers to use chemical inputs.

Ertürk emphasizes that Cargill has been buying an increasing number of small starch factories in Sakarya and stops the production in those factories to make Cargill the only buyer. Therefore, even though the corn production is popular in the region, producers cannot make sufficient income from their products, because they have to sell their products to Cargill, which has become a monopoly in the market. Ertürk says that the producers were 'thankful' to Ülker because it was their only option against Cargill, yet ironically, they were surprised to see Ülker and Cargill becoming partners. She also implies the fact that both the tradespeople and food monopolies exploit the labor of small producers, as Ünivar also said. I examined in Chapter 3 the details on the role of transnational factors like Cargill in the policies limiting the sugar beet-based production and favoring starch-based sugar and elaborated on the privatization of sugar beet factories. As a small farmer, Berin Ertürk tells this story of how small-scale corn producers

in her region are put in a vulnerable position and have lost their power of negotiation, as a witness of these processes.

As alternative food initiatives do not have enough capacity now to make bulky orders from individual producers, they mostly sell their products with intermediaries. They thus continue to experience difficulties, having almost no power in determining the sales prices. Still, they emphasize that they see the value and the potential of these alternative solidaristic networks that try to change the current relations about consumption and production by valuing producers' labor and building a direct, transparent relationship with them, to overcome difficulties together.

The individual producers in these solidarity networks are well aware of the importance of getting organized with the producers around. These producers are trying to organize the producers around them, too, as they know that getting into contact with the consumer networks in an organized way will give them more opportunities even in these networks. They consider vital this solidarity between producer and consumer organizations also to demand policies favoring small-scale farmers from the government. They suggest that the existing system equates the small producers with large-scale industrial producers and demands the same production conditions, for instance, the same packaging facilities, from them, and puts them under unbearable conditions.

It does not matter if you produce one kilo of tomato paste or ten tons. The state expects the same conditions from us with the TAT factory. All the products should comply with the food codex. There's not a facility where the small farmer can process his product. A producer has 100 kilograms of tomato paste and puts them into jars. He sells them illegally, saying it's Vehbi's tomato. If the government takes one of them, he has to pay a fine of at least 5.000-10.000 TL. I have to sell the dried apples for 100 liras if I pack them regarding the food context. I think that the government is mocking us when they say that they are paying 70 liras per 1 decare to protect the small farmers. On the other hand, there's no point in demanding something alone to make the government do something about that. Only if we found cooperatives and higher institutions (...) The government should credit more people who found cooperatives. They have to make incentive payments for people who want to set up a facility. The problem will be solved when there is a facility which can process 1 ton of products in one day in this village. We'll already be solving the marketing problem, too now as the consumer cooperatives spread around (Kuşçu)

The small producers that I interviewed in this network underline the necessity of building solidaristic partnerships where they learn from each other, check on and organize others, as a way of handling the hardships that the state policies cause. As most of the producer organizations, individual producers also associate the birth of the alternative food networks with the agriculture policies that favor corporate sovereignty on food in Turkey. Ünivar argues that benefiting from the lack of government's supportive policies, private companies and merchants drive them into a corner. He thinks that it is essential and an obligation for producers to enrich the trials of creating alternative trust relations and solidarity between producers and consumers for keeping the small producers alive. Ünivar and Ertürk stress the need for working hard to spread the Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) certificate. They tell how they experience this system and how to apply PGS as follows:

We, as producers, think about how to create the PGS process. We can create a mechanism where producers and consumers control each other and trust each other. Examples of these exist in the world. The producers in PGS declare that they do not use chemicals or fertilizers and explain their production type detailly. Consumers interlock five declarant producers in their region, who will check on each other and whom consumers can visit anytime on their production site to see if it is a production process that meets their expectations. Consumers can also propose some recommendations. "If you want so, we'll then get the herbs torn out," the producer might say. Or, if they want, consumers can say 'it's better for us if you could dry the cherries in the greenhouse are, and we can cover it.' We can think and act together. In a while, the trust will also be built. The consumer's trust certificate can be an alternative to the certificate that the tertiary control companies give. We have a new project named Dokuzköy Cooperative, and we are trying to build this system. (Ünivar)

Referring to her experiences, Ertürk also highlights the importance of creating networks where producers can observe each other's production and be a guarantor of each other, to facilitate producers' relationships with consumer organizations. A sourdough bread baker who produces from ancient wheat flours, two ecological cosmetic producers, a vegetable producer (Ertürk), and an ecological egg-honey producer established a few years ago the "Solidarity Network of Small Producers in Sakarya" (SAKÜDA). These small-scale ecological producers know and trust each other's production. They deliver their products weekly to alternative food initiatives and groups in İstanbul (cooperatives and shopping groups) with a truck without intermediaries:

I trust each product of Koray. I know what EPPEK is doing. So we stand surety for each other. I think that a producer checking on another is a type of self-control actually. It is the basis of the Participatory

Guarantee Certification. I do not know when we will be doing it with certification, though... For example, an agricultural engineer always comes to check me about the organic certificate, but tell me, how can he realize if I am up to do the trick. However, I can understand the moment I see a vegetable land or a fruit garden if it is organic production or not. Because I have been occupying in agriculture for 18 years. Like that, similar producers can create a network, too. (Ertürk)

Both Ertürk and Ünivar have connections with Farmers Union. Although they are not members of any producer cooperative now, they have already met many activists in these networks, thanks to their organized past. Çiftçi-Sen was one of the many actors in the platform “No to GMO” established in 2004. Thus, many farmers and other activists met each other on this platform and then started to act together. As they are the producers of vegetables and fruits, and there was no syndicate that they can join in the Farmers’ Union, they started to work with Farmers’ Union as volunteers. Ertürk has also participated in the meetings of the international farmers' organization, La Via Campesina, of which Farmers’ Union is also a member.

Farmers’ Union has recently started a new organizational model by including many farmers who could not get organized in Çiftçi-Sen in the previous model, as there was no syndicate for their product segment. Farmers’ Union now comprises all farmers, including small ecological farmers producing vegetables and fruits. In this model, Berin Ertürk also actively takes her place as the first woman general secretary of the Farmers’ Union.²⁷ I consider this reorganization very important because both the vegetable and fruit producers, dairy, and pasta producers that I will examine later have been experiencing the negative impacts of the current agricultural and breeding policies of Turkey in more or less similar ways. For example, Ali Kuşçu, a dairy producer in Sakarya, also often complains that the government forces small

²⁷ Farmers in Turkey first started to get organized in 2004 in the form of product-based syndicates such as Üzüm-Sen and Tütün-Sen and later merged all these syndicates in the form of a confederation called the Union of Farmers (Çiftçi-Sen) in 2008. Since 2004, the weight of certain products in Turkish agriculture changed considerably. For instance, tobacco and cotton production declined while the maize production increased, along with the changing agricultural policies. Similarly, contract-farming has been expanding with conditions that are detrimental for the small-scale farmers of varying products, albeit in different degrees. As the meaning of product-based organization lost its significance and the need for including other small-scale farmers in its organization increased, Çiftçi-Sen transformed its model in a way that makes possible the inclusion of any farmer to the union (“Çiftçiler Sendikası” as of February 2020). It is still going to have organizational units, such as the unit of vegetable producers or maize producers. Nevertheless, this new model is supposed to create a more participatory and inclusive organization with farmers of all products, who experience more or less similar problems and vulnerabilities, to have a more united power in the struggle for food sovereignty. Kocagöz, Umut, 2020, <https://birartibir.org/emek/621-urun-kursuleri-koy-meclisleri-koy-temsilcilikleri?fbclid=IwAR3BB2wx6KQjgXLvZyBF8OalXoWaYSeb89Mz5O8yil8FRMxesIdMlaT1ong>

producers to comply with the same production requirements with the big companies. He emphasizes that these processes pressure them considerably while empowering constantly the big companies:

For example, there is a company named AK GIDA just 10 kilometers away from here. A French company owns it now. They collect milk from Sivas and Isparta, from everywhere. The legislation that's applied to this company is the same as the one that is applied to us. They come to check us and ask: 'Is there a responsible coordinator for controlling the critical checkpoints at the production process?' It is not possible in such a small place. Only one woman is working here besides me. Or, let's say that there is a problem with a few of my products. They tell me to take these products to the municipality's waste collection center. But their bascules can weigh, starting from 50 kilos. I can only get them 20 kilos, and in that case, the worth turns out to be zero. The system of the government, above all, is not proper for small businesses. We can follow the rules in terms of hygiene and safety, but there must be different legislation compatible with our scale.

Kuşçu also adds that for the annual analyses, he has to pay 20.000 TL cash, because KOSKEB was covering 60% analysis expenses in the previous years but does not provide this support anymore. He tells that all these processes make it more difficult for small producers but opens more space for the larger-scale producers. For example, he says that the expense of analysis for each product is 5 kuruş for Ülker, while it is 10 TL per product for him as a small producer.

Ali Kuşçu processes milk himself in a small family-type farm on 15 decares and produces cheese and ice cream. It is a small production model where he can check the entire process himself. His goats are grazing every day in the forest for at least 5 hours. He also feeds them with corn, barley, and sunflower bagasse. These animal feeds are not genetically modified, as opposed to the imported fodders. However, he says that compared to milk companies that usually collect their raw material from different parts of Turkey, it is hard to sustain this small-scale yet more reliable integrated production model. Kuşçu explains that the businesses like his are about to give up because they are behaved unjustly and being increasingly limited about the usage of forests and forages. Kuşçu says that in sixty-three villages of Geyve, where his farm is located, the forages have been given to the municipality when Sakarya has become a metropolitan municipality. He tells that Sakarya Metropolitan Municipality does not even permit a villager to raise three cows at the barn behind his house

after this code. Most of the villagers are told to move their barns at least 1 kilometer away from the house. Many people, he says, had to sell their animals, as they could not take care of them from a distance. Under these conditions that small businesses are not supported and that the recent legislations aggravate, Kuşçu tells that many small producers about to give up, including himself.

Ertürk also gives an example concerning this law that there was a common land at the entrance of Maksudiye Village that was inherited from the grandparents of villagers. She says that 75 out of 100 decares of this common land was put up for sale after the Metropolitan Law. To remind briefly, in 2012, the Metropolitan Municipality Law (No. 6360) terminated the legal personality status of more than 16 thousand villages that are located in the boundaries of the metropolitan municipalities, and transferred their immovable properties to the municipality they joined in. Thus, the villagers who were sharing the income of that land lost this land. Ertürk tells that they had to pay the municipality over the odds to take this common land back.

In this conjuncture, the expansion of urban consumer food cooperatives become urgent and essential. No matter how hard the newly expanding consumer-led ecological cooperatives try to support the individual producers, they are not strong enough to buy from them in significant amounts yet. I will discuss in the following chapter the Tire Milk Cooperative as a good example of producer organization ensuring fair income for breeders under these conditions that make the livestock raising harder and harder. Although consumer food cooperatives can only order limited amounts from him at that time, I would like to address that Kuşçu still emphasizes his very positive experience with consumer food cooperatives he works with, comparing them with other sales channels. He considers these initiatives very important for enabling face to face contact between producers and consumers and building mutual trust. He underlines that making fair and timely payments to producers and supporting them under these hard conditions are priceless for producers. He says that his cheese is sold for 65 TL in

the organic shops, but 45 TL in cooperatives, and that consumers will eventually question the causes of this price difference. He puts that the increase in the number of these cooperatives will certainly motivate producers to keep up their ethical and quality production, as these consumers care about these principles:

I would overcome my financial difficulties if I could sell ice-cream to 10 more cooperatives like BÜKÖOP. This system will make all the producers, especially the producer cooperatives, stronger. Imagine that these cooperatives are 10, 20 or 100 in number now. Maybe even a confederation of consumption cooperatives can be founded...I can even diversify my products for these cooperatives upon their demand. Knowing that there is a trustable and honest place that we can sell my products and that we will get what we deserve for our labor will make us handle all the difficulties in solidarity with each other.

As I discussed above the experience of a dairy producer, I now would like to elaborate briefly on another producer in this network of many urban ecological food initiatives, of which the experience differentiates from Ali Kuşçu's for many reasons. The production of Koçulu Dairy Farm takes place in Boğatepe (Zavot) Village, Kars, which is a village well known with animal-husbandry. The village takes its name after its patented Zavot cows. They get the milk as the raw material of this product from these Zavot cows grazing at village's meadows, welcoming 680 plant varieties, unlike the majority of animals fed by GMO fodder in Turkey.

Çağdaş Koçulu has studied dairy production at the university and takes care of the whole production process in Koçulu Dairy Farm with two employees in general. The fresh and daily milk is gathered every morning in the freezing cold weather of Kars, especially in winters. The farm offers wages to employees almost four times of minimum wage, yet not many people want to work starting the day early in the freezing morning and work until the night. Çağdaş and one employee collect the milk from each producer and start cooking them in 150 years-old traditional copper seethers. This farm is different from many dairy farms in Turkey not only because the whole production is based on traditional and ecological techniques but also it operates with a cooperative type of logic in some respects. For instance, 16 milk providers of this farm out of 38 are copartners. They can sell 30% of their milk after processed on the farm. The Koçulu Dairy Farm uses 70% of their milk for cheese and butter production. The farm

provides a guarantee of purchase for all its milk providers in the village, for prices considerably higher than in the market. Also, it offers prepayments to most of these milk providers, upon their request, to facilitate their subsistence from animal husbandry.

It is a middle-scale family farm with very few people in the production. The number of employees increases by a few persons in the spring when the labor-intensive traditional gruyere production starts. However, it is a relatively popular dairy farm, especially in İstanbul, because its founder, İlhan Koçulu, is the precursor of the promotion and the revival of local Kars cheese. İlhan Koçulu is an activist who has put intense efforts to develop Boğatepe village of Kars, especially in stockbreeding and cheese cultivation. He organized people for this purpose, led the foundation of the female organization in the Boğatepe Association as well as the establishment of a cheese museum, the second eco-museum in the world. In the following chapter, I will elaborate on the organization of women in Boğatepe Village and the role of their organization in the positive transformation of the Boğatepe Village in the last decade. Boğatepe village has come to symbolize traditional Kars cheese and has a geographical indication for gruyere cheese. The eco-museum plays a significant role in attracting tourists to the village and increases the popularity of and the demand for their cheese. Thus, the geographical and cultural advantages of the Koçulu case for the production differentiate the experience of this dairy farm production from that of Ali Kuşçu in Sakarya. Koçulu Dairy Farm, exceptionally, does not experience the same difficulties as the other producers I study in this research.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that this dairy farm provides cheese and butter also to mainstream channels like Metro Supermarkets and natural/organic stores like İpek Hanım's Farm as well as to consumer food cooperatives. However, it collaborates with urban ecological food cooperatives by selling the same ecological products at more accessible prices. For instance, the price of butter of Koçulu Farm in ecological food cooperatives was 60 TL per kg in 2020, while the same product was 80 TL at İpek Hanım's Farm two years ago. The reason

for this sharp difference in prices is not only the high profit of İpek Hanım's Farm. It is also because the Koçulu Farm provides the same butter to the cooperatives for a price 20 TL less than the price offered to private enterprises like İpek Hanım's Farm, as support for cooperative structures. This example is thus like a "hybrid alternative" (Watts et al., 2005) in terms of the distribution channels of the food while it is a very appreciated alternative by consumers in terms of its ecological and traditional cheese production and by the urban cooperative members for its support for this system.

The hybridity is inevitable, though, as it seems impossible today for small or middle-scale producers to provide all their products to urban ecological consumer food initiatives because of the increasing yet the insufficient number of these initiatives. However, it is also important to emphasize that hybrid alternatives growing in size may tend to turn into capitalist actors in time. They may focus more on maximizing their profit and increasing their share in the market through mainstream distribution and sales channels. They may risk becoming mainstream capitalist actors that offer unfair work conditions and/or wages and lose their previously more ethical, fair, and ecological/organic production forms and relations. Thus, hybrid alternatives carry both the potential to become strong alternatives to current agri-food relations as well as the risk to become another capitalist actor in the existing system.

Another producer in the network of Kadıköy Cooperative that I have visited is Serap Karakaş. She produces ecological pasta in a village of Manyas, Balıkesir. She started this small business drawing upon what her daughter has learned from her entrepreneurship lessons. She applies an ecological and innovative approach to traditional pasta production. She produces pasta with vegetables by mixing the ancient wheat flours, the egg of her cage-free chickens and ducks, and the mash of the vegetables that his husband, a retired teacher, produces in four decares of land without any chemical inputs. In this land, peppers, beets, spinaches, pumpkins, turmeric, and nettles are being grown in only a sufficient amount for pasta mash. Besides, she

purchases certified organic pulses for the pasta that she produces the flour she gets from chickpea or lentil. There is a system enough to support itself in her business model. She produces with a woman worker who helps her cutting the vegetables that her husband brings from the land. Besides that, she has one person working for accounting. She packs the products and sells them by social media, her website, through cooperatives and other alternative food networks as well as via e-commerce sites like *e-bebek* that she contacted and in her daughter's small shop in İstanbul. Karakaş says that they have been able to make a start with the help of KOSGEB for this entrepreneurship yet with difficulty. She tells that they bought a furnace of 70.000 TL to start this entrepreneurship. However, she says, they were about to go to a moneylender and had a hard time to pay the vat of this credit (25%) in cash and the installments. She also adds that she would have had a hard time, and it would have been impossible for her to start from scratch if she had to pay rent and paid employees in the agricultural land instead of her husband.

Karakaş produces pasta in an innovative and nutritious way, using her ecological vegetables and eggs without using chemicals or stabilizers. For consumers who search for the condition of organic certificate for the vegetable and eggs, she purchases vegetables and eggs from an organic producer. She has organic certification only for the production of plain pasta. She gave up paying for the organic certification for her vegetable production, as she thinks that it is pointless to contact a tertiary company and trust this certificate instead of developing a direct trust-based relationship with producers. Although her products are more of good quality and healthy than the industrially produced pasta, she says that she feels the competitive and harsh conditions of the market. Thus, she underlines that it is vital for producers that consumers value the labor and ethics behind healthy ecological production, saying, "There must also be meadows that producers like her shall live on."

She is so happy to meet consumers asking her to produce by different types of ancient wheat. She tells that Kadıköy Cooperative contacted her for asking whether she can produce pasta by the flour of the landrace wheat that one of the producers of Kadıköy Cooperative cultivates. She describes this offer as an example of great and honest communication that enriches mutual confidence, a way of getting closer producers and consumers. A producer friend of hers will give her an ancient seed that is proper for her local climate and land, and she aims to produce at least 20-50% of wheat flour in this way.

Serap Karakaş asks, “In pasta receipt, it is written flour, water, salt. But which flour? How was it processed? Which wheat?” She says that the villagers have been distancing from production; they do not produce and not even question the production form anymore. She says that the knowledge on and awareness about good production, the variety of products, and local seeds are about to fade away among peasants. She is yet happy to see that consumers have gradually started to understand the importance of family production that protects landrace seeds and ecology and proud of becoming a good model for producers around her.

Serap Karakaş thinks that going beyond the standard methods and mindset will enrich the production. While in conventional agriculture, farmers use herbicide to stop the spreading of nettle, she makes use of nettle for her pasta. As she implements ecological production, she considers nettle as a gift for her from nature. She makes flours even out of a berry leaf. Apart from her wheat-based pasta, she produces currently vegan pasta and pasta for babies. She also wants to diversify her ‘functional pasta’ types, designed especially for specific ages, the ones in remission, and the allergenic bodies. She tries to learn how to get R&D support to be able to do this herself. Many qualities differentiate her pasta production from industrial pasta production. Some of the reasons are that she produces at a location close to the land, produces the vegetables, the raw material of her pasta puree, and she uses the eggs of her free-range chickens and ducks. Thus, she has control over the whole production process herself.

Another critical point is that she has a holistic understanding of ecology, which cares about protecting landrace seeds, respecting biodiversity, and an approach that considers crucial the direct and transparent relationship between producers and consumers, as opposed to large companies with a focus on profit-maximization only. When she can grow the ancient wheat on her land, her production will be a perfect example of an ecological production model that is controlled by the producer from the beginning to the end. This example shows how small producers are essential for the struggle of people's food sovereignty. Serap Karakaş first met Yeryüzü Association in İstanbul and participated in the first Food Communities Workshop organized by Yeryüzü Association. Once she joined the network of alternative food initiatives and gained the trust of consumers, she started to work with many cooperatives like Kadıköy, Beşiktaş, Koşuyolu, and Ovacık Cooperatives.

To sum up, all individual small producers that I have visited following the network of ecological consumer food cooperatives have underlined the following problems: 1) The state does not support ecological agriculture, and the subsidy for organic certification cannot support small-scale producers as the subvention amount is calculated per decare. Therefore, small farmers, the consumer demand for certified organic products, still aggravates the existence of these farmers. 2) The limited marketing possibilities of small producers and their difficulty in reaching sales channels in big cities reproduce the order that small producers have to sell their products to intermediaries and merchants for unfairly low prices. 3) The corporate food sovereignty has been strengthened in a context where small producers become contracted farmers of corporations. Farmers are obliged to follow the corporate standards from the type of products they produce to the seeds they impose. This order leads to the loss of landrace seeds and biodiversity, increases the dependence on agricultural chemicals and industrial inputs that poison both the soil and humans and becomes a considerable financial burden on the shoulders of farmers. Thus, a) the farmers who cannot survive in this agricultural context give up on

agriculture, b) the number of farmers who forget about the practice and knowledge on ecological agriculture has considerably increased. 4) The producers face up with situations in which they cannot even get the payments for their products, let alone getting fair prices. 5) Depending on the type of their product, most small farmers no longer benefit from the state supports that they used to benefit from. 6) The common areas of villages have been zoned for housing, and the immovable properties of villages have been taken from villagers, with recent legislation that increases the vulnerabilities of peasants and farmers.

Nevertheless, all of them believe that these examples of building alternative consumption and production relations will spread, and they all brace up from the existence of urban consumer food initiatives. They take these initiatives as actors growing hope under these arduous agricultural conditions. Of course, these producers are the ones who somehow could get involved in these networks, thus have heightened awareness about the efforts for developing solidary and ecological food relations. However, I still consider it very important that they are significantly hopeful about the support that these initiatives will provide, especially as they mature and expand in time. Serap Karakaş also underlines that the existence of consumers who are in solidarity with small ecological producers and who care about the biodiversity and ecological agriculture empower her:

We have to change the mindset. So, we need organizations that will start the conversation between production and consumption. I feel so lucky to be able to meet and talk to you right now. It is so important to keep these conversations up to go on. I am hopeful because people have seen that something is wrong, and they have gathered together. More people will start getting involved in these initiatives. Otherwise, I can't go on. We don't have that much capital. We are small, and producers like us proceed by small steps. But here we are on this journey, and it is so vital for us that consumer groups are supporting us.

Lastly, I would like to note that most producers I address here so far experience the disadvantages of not being organized in a cooperative. Therefore, I argue that analyzing the ecological producer organizations in the network of urban ecological cooperatives is essential to discuss the limits and the openings that these initiatives would offer to producers. I examine their motivations of foundation, their structure, and functioning, and their differences from and

similarities with other cooperatives and other sale channels of food. I also address their strategies, practical and political responses to the context in which they are situated as well as the alternative coping mechanisms for their economic survival as small-scale producers. Doing so, I aim to discuss the advantages of producer cooperatives, difficulties they still face, the meaning of their existence concerning the current agri-food politics at national and local levels, evaluating the extent and the ways they can provide an alternative. I also discuss these producer organizations in terms of their relationships with the consumer-led urban ecological food initiatives they collaborate with.

I will first examine Sındı and Hopa ay cooperatives as mixed organizations where both men and women producers get organized. Then, in the following chapter, I will elaborate on five ecological female producer organizations, namely Nusratlı ( anakkale), Bo atepe (Kars), Yırca (Soma, Manisa), Devrek (Zonguldak) ve Girkad (Ardan , Artvin) associations, cooperatives and collectives affiliated to the solidarity network of urban alternative food initiatives. Ecological female producer cooperatives do not only try to open up collective production space and distribution channels for their products and make their living. They also build relations of alternative publicity to challenge patriarchal capitalism by transforming relations in their families and locality, and relatedly creating positive change for themselves. Therefore, focusing them separately from the mixed cooperatives, I also aim to analyze these organizations from the gender perspective.

5.2.2. Mixed Cooperative Organizations in the Network of Ecological Consumer Food Initiatives

I investigate in this section Hopa Tea Cooperative (*Hopa ay*) and Sındı Agricultural Development, based on fieldwork I conducted in 2018 and 2019. As part of my fieldwork in Ovacık and Seferihisar, I also investigated the mixed cooperative experiences. However, I do not address them here because I elaborate on them in detail in the next chapter as part of my

discussion on alternative local government projects concerning ecological agriculture. The cooperatives I examine in this section differentiate themselves from traditional agricultural development cooperatives in many respects, particularly for implementing ecological agriculture, as well as they face many similar problems with other producer cooperatives. Hopaçay, especially, is an excellent example of building a more horizontal organizational model than many other producer cooperatives and for growing collaboration with consumer food cooperatives and finding the direct ways of marketing their products based on their strong cooperation in their localities.

5.2.2.1. Hopa Tea Cooperative (Hopaçay Cooperative)

Hopa Tea Cooperative has been popular, especially for the previous 4-5 years, but its foundation dates back to 1959. Their organizational experience started when the poor forest villagers gathered together to buy materials like cement and iron to use in construction as well as to provide essential nourishment needs like flour and rice, for affordable prices. In time, the cooperative gets to a good point economically, and the organization evolved to Hopa Tea Cultivators Cooperative in 1959 with the rise of tea plantations in the region. The producers bought a factory that had gone bankrupt to process their tea at their factory, and then they aggrandized the cooperative by buying storages and buildings. They created a system in which they purchase the tea of its member producers to whom it provided fertilizers, run a consumer market to sell basic house needs and foodstuffs. Members were also allowed to pay back their expenses when they got their income from wet tea sales.

Nevertheless, in time, the factory and the machines got old. They became indebted by taking loans of 1.250.000 TL and 500.000 TL from the state, as they needed to renovate the factory and the equipment. The current management says that they do not understand where the credits were spent. They argue that the previous management was spending luxuriously, were not controlled well, and there was some corruption going on. They say that the tea was not well

promoted and that there were fake tea deliveries of which the costs are not transferred to the account of the cooperative. They also explain that there has been accrued liability because of unpaid social insurance charges and tax debts. Therefore, the total debt was nearly 6.000.000 TL when the new cooperative management took over in 2012. Today, the reappearance and the currently known public story of Hopa ay Cooperative is based on solidarity, in a context when the production at the factory was over. Led by socialist organizations, 3000 out of 4000 cooperative members brought in the congress with hard work, and the current management took over with a new list of the executive board. This story of Hopa Tea producers is worth analyzing more closely as they have reorganized from scratch with great efforts, despite a debt of 6.000.000 TL and the fact that the accounts of the cooperative were seized because of the previous misgovernment.

The support of people all around Turkey, especially of the leftist organizations in big cities, played a significant role in restarting this organization. This support provided the economic base for the cooperative to restart the organization. They bought ‘solidarity cards’ that the cooperative offered and thus prepaid some amount of tea even before the production started so that the cooperative could then buy the tea of the producers in cash. It helped the cooperative in taking the attention and gaining the trust of some tea producers at the first stage, as the cooperative had a bad reputation because of previous management, and most producers had lost their faith in the cooperative. Then, in time, the producers started to give their wet tea to the cooperative and act with solidarity as they saw gradually the determination and motivation of the current cooperative management and other producers spending considerable effort to develop their community economically.

Today, Hopa ay has a factory founded on five decares, a shop of 160 square meters in Hopa, a sales office, 240 square meters of a shop in Kemalpa a, and a teahouse inside Hopa Park. Hopa ay aims to save the local tea producers from these hard conditions that increasing

quotas of ÇAYKUR and the rising share of the private companies in the tea market put producers in. It tries to do so by providing a fair price to wet tea producers, processing them in its factory, and organizing the sales by their direct contact with consumer food cooperatives and through its distribution channels. The cooperative members revealed that the private companies sell the products that cost 12-13 TL for 30 TL in supermarkets, and that the price difference results in the company profit and the share of intermediaries. Thus, they say that they aim to create a model in which the member producers can get what they deserve for their labor, and thus solidarity wins. I want to explain again the importance of Hopa ay and its main objectives by discussing briefly how, over the years, the tea market transformed along with the changing tea politics of the state that I elaborated in Chapter 3.

Along with its neoliberal policies of privatizing and defunctionalizing its state economic enterprises, Turkey opened the tea sector to the private companies by removing the monopoly of ÇAYKUR (The General Directorate of Tea Enterprises) in 1984 and then gradually declined the support of ÇAYKUR to the tea producers. Today, in addition to the Turkish tea companies like Do uş  ay, transnational actors have also been operating in the tea sector. For example, Unilever entered the tea market with its Lipton brand in 1986 and today it has three production plants in the Black Sea region. Coca Cola Company and Jacobs also have a share in the Turkish tea market by purchasing respectively Do adan  ay in 2007 and Of ay in 2018. ÇAYKUR, as an existing authorized institution responsible for the distribution, sale, and marketing of tea, has a share of nearly 65% in the Turkish dry tea market and offers higher prices than the private companies. Nevertheless, it has a quota for the total volume of wet tea as well as a fluctuating daily quota per acre for each registered producer. The total and daily quota restrictions of ÇAYKUR pressured small-scale tea farmers to sell their wet tea to the private sector for prices quite lower than the minimum price determined by ÇAYKUR.

To make it clear, a person with a tea garden of four decares would only give to ÇAYKUR 400 kilograms of tea per decare. Thus, ÇAYKUR would take 1600 kilograms of wet tea from his/her four decares of tea garden because of this quota. 1700 kg tea of this producer who gets 3300 kg from his/her garden needs to be purchased by the private sector if there is no alternative, like a cooperative. Besides, Çaykur has a fluctuating daily quota because ÇAYKUR cannot meet the daily processing demand from producers each day. When ÇAYKUR announces that it has a quota of 20 kilos of tea per decare that day, the abovementioned producer can only give 80 kg tea to ÇAYKUR, which will be reduced from his/her total quota that day. This daily quota might also reduce to ten or even 5 kilos per decare. These undulating and uncertain quotas make the next quota of producers unpredictable and condemns them to the low prices of the private sector, as they have to move fast. It is because wet tea is a product that needs to be processed within three days. Otherwise, it withers and spreads a bad odor, because it is picked up in summer.

ÇAYKUR's recent transfer to the Turkish Wealth Fund and constant speculations about the privatization of ÇAYKUR also increase the ambiguity in the market and thus the anxiety of the tea producers about their future. Hopa ay Cooperative aims to become mainstay by for tea producers by stepping in for offering fair prices for their labor in this hard period faced with ÇAYKUR quotas or possible privatization of ÇAYKUR. They want to improve their technical conditions to go over its 50 tons of daily processing capacity and expand their organization in parallel because they are aware of the importance of being ready for their members in case of imminent privatization of ÇAYKUR. In addition, the cooperative members consider that the discourses about ÇAYKUR's economic deficit are used as a pretext for privatization. It is because, they say, the cost of the tea sold to the consumers for 25-30 TL is not higher than 15-16 TL in a well-kept factory, and ÇAYKUR would not have any deficit if governed successfully.

The factory keeps working 24 hours non-stop for 15 days if it does not break down. There are 16 villages in Hopa and 11 in Kemalpaşa, and 12 thousand tea producers in these villages. But only 1/3 of them are our members. Still, we can't meet the demands right now. We are giving a purchasing date for our members. For example, we promise to get their tea three days later. We plan, for instance, to buy 15 tons from Kemalpaşa and 10 tons from Hopa. We organize purchases village by village. We can process around 25 tons in a day for now but are planning to process daily 60-70 tons of tea for the next year. We need maintenance to develop our tea processing capacity and have more technical personnel. We will see better when we can develop our technical capacity.

The kilogram price of Hopaçay is around 32-40 TL as of August of 2019, depending on the quality of tea varieties. The wholesale price for teahouses and coffee shops is less than 30 TL per kg. Rusty and inefficient factory machines increase production costs, and the cooperative also adds 2-3 TL profit over these costs to pay the debts. However, the debt reduced by half between 2012-2019. The cooperative does not pay producers below the ÇAYKUR price and even aims to propose a higher price in the future. As the ÇAYKUR quotas increase and the trust in cooperative augments, the cooperative has also been strengthening.

In the last 2-3 years, the trust of the producers has increased because the cooperative makes payments regularly. More and more, producers say "these are socialist people, they will certainly pay our money." The cooperative does not reduce the price contrary to the private sector when the harvest is fertile. When the ÇAYKUR quota is very low and private companies pay very less, the cooperative becomes the only option, unless the producer is not in high debt and the private company offers earlier payment compared to us despite the lower price. We can only offer a 3-months deferred payment. When we can offer a shorter deferred payment plan, I am sure we need to work even harder to meet the demands.

The cooperative has around 4200 members now, including old members. 1/3 of them are in a close relationship with the cooperative and give their tea primarily to the cooperative. In Hopa, there are around 10.000 tea producers, and one-third of them are cooperative members. According to the cooperative code, only the producers who have a tea garden can become members by providing a tea producer certificate from ÇAYKUR and some other documents. The members' ages vary between 40 and 70. For the membership, they must pay 300 TL today. The cooperative update the amount previously paid by old members by cutting some amount from their tea payments so that all members can have an equal share, and there would be no difference among tea members. It is not a source of economic inequality right now as they do not pay a dividend, and they will later decide their policy on this matter. 40-50 members are more active in cooperative work than others. These members nearly make the cooperative the center of their lives, as volunteers.

A producer from the cooperative council says that each member has at least four decares of tea garden. Some families harvest up to 30-40 tons of tea in a year. He says that one can get around 20.000 TL per year, from tons of tea, with a harvest of 3 times in a year. However, there are not more than 100-150 families in Hopa who only live on tea. Most people also work in factories or as drivers, repairers, and shopkeepers. The title deeds are mostly registered under the name of women in Hopa. It is because women usually take care of tea gardens, and the families do not want to lose their gardens because of the debts of men. Therefore, most members of the cooperative are women. However, women have never taken a place in cooperative management so far.

The active members of the cooperative explain that they cannot spend much effort on increasing the active participation of female members at the management level because they prioritize the handling of problems like paying back the debts and the repair of machines. However, they say they will spend more effort to increase the number of female members both in the volunteer council and the executive board. The wives of the members in the volunteer council also gradually started to attend the cooperative meetings held at the other cities. The cooperative also prioritizes the employment of women in its operations in the factory, especially in their most hectic period when there is a need for recruiting 25-30 more workers inside the factory.

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of Hopa ay Cooperative that is missing in most producer cooperatives in Turkey is that the cooperative members try to create a participatory organizational model. The general assembly takes place every four years and selects the executive board. In addition to this board that gathers in weekly meetings, there is a volunteer council that I mentioned above, where any member can take an active part. There is now a team of 20 volunteers working actively in this council besides the executive board. They make decisions regarding the work of this group and their relationship with the other partners.

After all, there are also 40-50 people working voluntarily for the cooperative. The decisions of the executive board are made considering the works of this volunteer council and the interactions of this council with other members. The volunteer council manages many tasks like planning tea purchases, organizing factory operations, and handling the accounting. They are in regular contact with the other members by meeting village representatives and sharing the reports of these regular meetings transparently. They aim at a more participatory organization model by expanding the council of volunteers in a way that it comprises of representatives from each village to hear regularly the words and the decisions of a broader range of members, as they succeed in expanding and strengthening this organization. During the recruitment period of 40 people for minimum wage and overtime payment, the workers also attend the regular meetings. Thus, they also take place in this participatory mechanism. Neither Hopaçay Executive Board nor the volunteer council takes advantage of rights like an attendance fee. The volunteers say that one of the reasons that they put the cooperative in the center of their lives is that they are motivated to spread the best example of cooperation by creating an organization in which they can make the local producers of Hopa stand on their own feet.

The experience of Hopaçay organization is so valuable in today's context where the government leaves the producers in economic hardship by limiting its support, privatizing, or disabling the state economic enterprises that used to support producers in many areas of agriculture. It is also an example of producer organizations that go beyond unequal hierarchical cooperative relations and the relations in statist cooperativism where professional cadres are appointed from the center. Therefore, in addition to opening spaces for the local tea producers, this cooperative experience indicates the possibility of an alternative public sphere that the producers' cooperation can build via participatory organization models based on their self-power. In the following chapters, I will elaborate on the alternative public sphere that such local

cooperation can build, while examining Seferihisar, Ovacık, and Kadıköy Cooperatives in detail.

Of course, they are in a period when they have difficulties on the way to their targets, yet they face fewer difficulties compared to the beginning of the organization. The main reasons for these hardships are the previous debts of the cooperative: the shops and the factory are levied, and thus they cannot get any loan to improve the technical capacity of the factory. They say that some people offered them to diminish their member number and get membership fees of 10.000 TL or sell the Hopaçay brand name. They also add that some wholesalers offered to buy a high volume of products. They emphasize that despite their economic problems, they still care about organizing their sales for the benefit of producers with a solidaristic mentality and their self-power and give utmost attention not to lose money lying on markets, wholesalers, or any intermediaries. They prefer paying their debts slowly as they keep producing and expanding solidarity.

They send their products by cargo to the restaurants, coffee shops, and teahouses, or to individual consumers who order online and via phone calls. They also deliver their tea to some municipalities as part of their recent contracts, some consumer food cooperatives, and organizations like *Eğitim-Sen* (Union of Educators) and *Mülkiyeliler Birliği* (The Union of Political Science Graduates). The basis of these choices is, of course, their mentality that favors the benefits of producers. This mentality and relations of solidary are essential. However, I want to note here that it is not easy for the cooperative in debt to keep the cash flow because most of these organizations in solidarity cannot pay in cash. Besides, the agreements with municipalities mostly require extra time and work because of some bureaucratic processes.

For example, three months ago, we had a meeting with the municipality of İzmir. They required to analyze the tea and send it to some analysis institutions. They also want us to send tea packages with their logo on it. All these necessitate some extra time and work. They say that they will make payments in a month, but we do not know if they can. Kadıköy Municipality, for example, pays back in 50 days. It first could not pay for two months and then made the payment by checks of 4.000-5.000 liras each week. They still owe us 50.000-60.000 liras. Of course, some opponent municipalities also have economic problems. You know, some people in these municipalities are bribed by companies like Doğuş Çay for saying that our tea is bad quality. These companies don't want to lose them. We have tried hard to persuade the municipalities to buy from us.

The solidarity of consumer food cooperatives and local governments, by offering bulk purchase and cash payback in time, as well as demanding less bureaucratic procedures, would undoubtedly help the cooperative in terms of maintaining cash flow and covering the debts. In this way, Hopaçay Cooperative can purchase the tea of more producers in concise terms and increase the capacity of the factory. It thus becomes a more effective organization to encourage tea production with fair prices for their labor, and the value of the price that consumers pay goes to the producers. Briefly, the expansion and empowerment of consumer food cooperatives and the solidarity of local governments would be crucial developments to help democratic, participatory, and devoted cooperatives like Hopaçay Cooperative to get closer to their targets.

The contracts that Hopaçay signs with Kadıköy and İzmir Metropolitan municipalities and the sale of their products in nearly all consumer food cooperatives –thus their active presence in solidarity networks– enable them a considerable advantage in terms of overcoming their economic problems. Hopaçay Cooperative cares a lot about the current and potential openings that the solidarity of consumer and producer cooperatives bring.

As consumption and production are directly related, the way that the producer and consumer food cooperatives will open is so valuable. We have no other choice than this. We can create a severe obstacle for the monopolization by standing in solidarity. Our relations today are signs of this. For example, once we were experiencing a shortage of cash and Kadıköy Cooperative made us a prepayment to keep the solidarity up. Ovacık Cooperative always pays in advance, and we send the tea later. Some branches of Eğitim-Sen also pay 15 days in advance as they trust us. Prepayment is so vital for us as we are in debt but need to pay to producers without delay. This consumer-producer relation we have created is priceless. We care about it a lot to keep Hopaçay alive and realize what we are capable of doing in the future after covering our debts.

We cannot define the tea of Hopaçay Cooperative as ecological but most of the ecological consumer food initiatives sell directly the products of Hopaçay. For instance, Kadıköy Cooperative purchase the tea from Hopaçay and sell it on (non-ecological) its “solidarity shelves” to show support to this active organization that does not want to condemn the producer to the private sector and furthermore, challenges the private sector. Also, it is possible to argue that the tea of Hopaçay is still healthier compared to the tea of many tea companies that use additives like color agents in their processed tea.

The only reason for not classifying Hopa ay tea as ecological is that they use phosphatic fertilizers instead of animal manure. However, their tea cultivation and processing are based on the non-use of preservatives, colorants, and pesticides. The members of Hopa ay Cooperative say that fertility would decrease for a couple of years if they used animal fertilizers, but they add that they can change their production to ecological if the government encourages the transition process. It does not seem possible to grow up ecological or organic tea in a garden whose neighbor garden uses chemical fertilizers in the Black Sea Region where the tea gardens are so close to each other. This is why the producers think that this process can happen only if the government prohibits the use of synthetic fertilizers in the Blacks region, provide animal manures via cooperatives, and control it strictly. They underline that the private sector cannot lead this change because the private sector would not compensate for the loss of the producer in the transition period to organic or ecological tea production.

In 2017, the government had announced an imminent transition to organic tea production, following the transfer of  aykur to the Wealth Fund, and that they would support it. However, the issue of the transition to organic tea production, which coincides with the rumors of privatization, stayed only in words. There are now only discourses, but no concrete roadmap and no information shared with producers on how it would happen. Hence, producers adopt a skeptical stance and distrust in the government about this. The government has also not implemented related policies so far, but  AYKUR carries out an organic tea project only in Hem in, where it started operations, as a part of the pilot project before these speculations. The producers of Hopa ay think that the government regards organic agriculture only with a mentality that focuses on the use of certified organic fertilizers. They argue that this idea just emerged to feed organic agribusinesses. They do not believe that the state will support the producers during this process.

On the other hand, they underline that animal manure would be a better alternative than organic fertilizers of companies to synthetic fertilizers. Yet, it is even harder to find animal fertilizers now. They say that they used to ranch at the tablelands in villages at high altitudes; however, now even there, only 1-2 people have cows. It is because they had to sell their cows after their villages turned into neighborhood status, and thus the livestock raising there was banned. They explain that the stock farming was so popular in the Artvin uplands before, and they could easily get sheep manure. The peasants also got used to processed industrial products. Young people do not want to be occupied with raising livestock because of its worsening conditions and move to the city center to find other jobs because of financial difficulties. All the forests and pasture have been turned into tea gardens in Artvin except for some high villages. Besides, the families have moved to city centers so that their children can easily go to school after the primary schools in the villages were closed. These are all critical factors as to why livestock raising is not widespread, even in the uplands of Artvin, and why it is now hard to provide animal manure for ecological agriculture.

Another reality of tea production is that the process of collecting tea in the Black sea region is mostly handled by seasonal workers, specifically Georgian workers in Hopa, as it is located on the Turkey-Georgia border. Of course, not all producers can hire Georgian workers because the production costs, including fertilizer and cleaning expenses, are already a hard burden on their shoulders. It is now even harder to hire Georgian workers for cutting tea because the rising demand and decreasing value of TL increased their daily wages. Georgian workers are usually hired during the days when ÇAYKUR increases its daily quota, to sell more tea to ÇAYKUR that day. It is because the higher amount of tea sold to ÇAYKUR means less dependence on lower prices of the private companies and better income. On the days when the daily quota is low, it is mostly the women who collect the tea. The producers say that the working conditions are also hard for Georgian workers who start working at 5 a.m., sometimes

load tea from the purchasing points and do not sleep all night long. The reasons why Georgian workers and women are more active in tea collection are several. In the past, before the quota policy, producers in Hopa used to collect tea with a collective work, *imece*; help each other on hectic days. However, after the opening of border gates with Georgia, most men became unwilling to work in tea collection, mainly because Georgian workers' labor was cheaper at that time. Combined with the migration of young people to study outside of Hopa, these conditions led Georgian workers and women to work more actively in the tea collection.

Nevertheless, even when the women are the ones who collect the tea, usually their husbands get the tea money. I consider it essential for the cooperative to focus on this problem to change it, at least after solving the cash shortage and debt problems. Of course, the cooperative does not only have the potential for solving the unhealthy and insecure working conditions of the seasonal workers and the increasing dependence on the Georgian workers alone, because these working dynamics have become the norm in the Black Sea region. New-generation consumer food cooperatives, including Kadıköy Coop, that care a lot about production conditions, continue their solidarity with Hopaçay Cooperative. It is because these conditions are not specific to Hopaçay but are the reality of the tea production in the Black Sea region and that Hopaçay challenges many aspects of the current system in tea production and distribution with a strong ambition and concrete efforts.

At the end of 2018, when I first visited Hopaçay Coop, the cooperative had applied to the municipality for some space to open a teahouse and a sales center, but their application was rejected. The cooperative came to realize this project in 2019, after the common candidate of CHP, HDP, ÖDP, and *Halkevleri* became the mayor in Hopa in the recent local elections. In the future, they are planning to sell the products of the other cooperatives, too. A cooperative member says that some other cooperatives already offered them their olives and apricots in exchange for tea and that they want to develop this solidarity economy after covering their

debts. The cooperative members have lots of problems to deal with, but their first objective is to ameliorate the capacity of the factory, primarily.

The importance of the cooperative will be more evident in time. You know that Jacobs purchased Ofçay. ÇAYKUR was transferred to the Wealth Fund. We know that it is sold to Qataris. We will see this soon. The cooperative will have to be able to buy the ÇAYKUR tea factories in Kemalpaşa and Hopa when they decide to privatize them. We need considerable power to be able to do that. We have to enhance our capacity by working hard and make our plans to get ready. There are 17 villages in Hopa and Kemalpaşa. We can make 150 people go in front of these factories and demand as a cooperative that we want to buy them as peoples of this region. People of Hopa and Kemalpaşa are sensitive and political about these issues. However, we need money to do that. We can demand if we are strong enough. There are long-term plans, but first, we have to stand on our own two feet. So, we try to cut down our expenses, use electricity more wisely, and think in detail each step. We also sometimes organize “solidarity nights,” concerts of which the ticket income is donated to the cooperative.

There is also an important point that is necessary to discuss in the quote above. Although Hopa is one of the most politicized places in Turkey with left tendencies, the statement of the cooperative member “the cooperative will have to be able to buy the ÇAYKUR tea factories in Kemalpaşa and Hopa when they decide to privatize them” reveals a lot about the lack of power and political organization in contemporary Turkey to protest privatizations. Instead of holding anti-privatization protests, even the organized producers of an exemplary cooperative only hope to have enough power to mobilize and purchase the privatized factory. This quote thus reflects the despair that has been internalized by producers in the last decades in the face of the privatization of many state-owned institutions and their production plants, while it also reveals the endless hope and ambitions of organized producers who feel the power of solidarity despite everything.

The cooperative sells the tea for a slightly higher price than the market price to be able to cover its debts, but the demand of consumers is very high. The solidarity that they have been feeling behind and their accomplishments, so far are the sources of their confidence in their self-power and hope for the future, despite all difficulties. It has been a great motivation for them that Hopaçay has been considered by masses as a good example in Turkey. Thus, they work harder to grow this hope that has already risen against all odds. The members have lots of

dreams about the future of the cooperative and many plans to put into practice as soon as they cover the debts.

Even the consumers who want to buy 3-5 tea packages make an order by calling us. They prefer paying 30-35 liras per package because of the cargo expenses, just to show solidarity with us against the government policies. When hundreds of consumers, professional chambers, and other institutions call to support us, we, people who work a lot for this organization, this gives us strength and hope no matter how hard the conditions under which we work. People take us as a hopeful model. We need to grow this hope.

Of course, we have dreams and plans. We want to open a wedding saloon so that the members of the cooperative can use it, as the cooperatives in Rize and Pazar did. People pay 8,000-9,000 liras for a wedding, and it is expensive. However, we have another primordial objective; we want to give a scholarship to 5 students from each village of Hopa. If we continue not to provide dividends when our debts are finished —of course, we will decide on that together— we will bring into life such plans. We can create better days together.

Furthermore, Hopa ay Coop becomes an example for other producer cooperatives and a promising organizational model for several reasons: 1) Opening up space for tea producers where they can get the fair compensation of their labor in a tea market where the hegemony of the private tea companies gets more prominent than ever, Hopa ay Coop has been becoming a crucial source of reliance and hope for local producers. 2) Despite its financial problems, it proceeds well with concrete plans and strong motivation. 3) It does not walk alone towards its objectives but give particular importance to solidary relations: It has a direct and sincere relationship with many actors in solidarity, including consumer food cooperatives. 4) Although it has financial difficulties that pressure them, the cooperative prioritizes building an alternative organizational model that could be exemplary for producer cooperatives. Cooperative management is based on a non-hierarchal model; they have a volunteer council and village representatives to provide a participatory platform and aim to develop this participatory logic. They are motivated to increase the active participation of women in the executive board and the council, and the council is also open to factory workers as well as farmers.

Of course, the fact that Hopa has an influential organizational culture and leftist tradition impacts on people's more embracing attitude for cooperation and the existence of volunteers to work very actively for the cooperative. When I ask my interviewee if it is possible to expand

similar organizations in different parts of the Black Sea region, he gives the example of Özçay Cooperative, saying that it is possible to do so, even in conservative places like Of and Çayeli if there are some people there who will lead the organization. He argues it is because tea producers are in strong need for such initiatives to survive under these hard conditions of the market.

Here, I would like to address briefly the experience of Özçay Cooperative. Özçay Cooperative is one of the producers of consumer food cooperatives like Kadıköy cooperative. The cooperative sells its products without intermediaries in its own sales offices and on its website. It also has a contract with İzmir Metropolitan Municipality. Furthermore, it sells its products in some consumer food cooperatives and especially the agricultural credit cooperatives. The cooperative processes the wet tea of its 1271 members and pays the minimum price of ÇAYKUR or sometimes higher to its members. By 2018, the cooperative has processed 30 tons of dry tea from 150 tons of wet tea (Şahin, 2019, p. 99). Contrary to Hopaçay Cooperative, as they do not have a debt from the past, Özçay Cooperative focuses more on its R&D activities, giving place also to agricultural engineers during the production process. It also produces organic tea. I do not know how the organic tea is grown and processed separately from the conventional tea, as I have not conducted a field study in Özçay Cooperative. Yet, I can say that Özçay Cooperative is the only actor selling organic tea in the Black Sea region besides ÇAYKUR.

Nevertheless, unlike Hopaçay Coop, they do not have an organizational model that regards essential active participation and horizontal relations in the cooperative. Another problem in their organization is that the workers that used to be organized in Öz Gıda-İş Union before are no longer unionized (p. 99). This change might also be about the fact that the cooperative is politically closer to the AKP government. Having this position, it also has closer relations with Agricultural Credit Cooperatives and sells 70% of its products there (p. 100). It

might seem like an advantage today, but it could be better for them to have an alternative strategy to follow in case of a possible change in the government. One reliable option is to create solidaristic relations with civic consumer food initiatives, as Hopaçay Cooperative does.

5.2.2.2. Sındı Village Agricultural Development Cooperative

The cooperative was founded in Sındı village of Datça in 2006. It is one of the first cooperatives that started eco-agriculture in Turkey in a period when ecological agriculture was a recent practice even by individual farmers. The products of the cooperative are olive oil, honeydew and flower honey, locust bean, green olive, almond, almond toffee, and almond locust bean with honey. Member farmers of Sındı Village make olive oil, honey, and almond production on 5000 decares. The almond and olive trees are watered with rain. The farmers plant products like barley at the bottom of trees and then grub up the soil to make these products mix with it.

The herbs, if there are any, also get mixed with the soil while they make green manure. They also use animal manure. The member farmers care for the almond and olive gardens as a family. The packaging is also environmentally friendly; the cooperative sells the olive oil in chrome tin cans and honey in chrome tin cans or glass jars of 850 grams. There is also an insured employer in the cooperative shop beside the president of the cooperative. The cooperative president says that Datça has a capacity of 450 tons of dry almond and 1000-1500 tons of unripe almond under normal climate conditions. The region has a unique advantage for almond production. In the summer of 2018, when I visited the cooperative, they got 57 tons of unripe almond and 50-60 tons of dry almond in 15 days in Sındı village. The producers are well-informed and experienced in ecological agriculture for long years in the cooperative because their eco-agriculture practice started with a private company there in the early 2000s and evolved into cooperative work, in time.

The eco-agriculture project there started by coincidence when the president of the cooperative, Ömer Ohan, met Atilla Ertem, who is the agricultural engineer responsible today

for the agriculture of World Green Group. During his visit to Datça, Ohan shared his interest in eco-agriculture with him and invited him to Sındı village. He found out that the village was a perfect place for eco-agriculture as it is far from the car traffic. After that, Ertem's company in İzmir with German partners started an eco-agriculture project in Sındı village. The villagers had been working with the Rapunzel Company until 2002 and then with Işık Agriculture until 2006. Then the farmers decided to establish a cooperative after the end of the project. When they established the cooperative, the producers had already internalized both the practice and knowledge of ecological agriculture. At the end of the 4th year with Rapunzel Company, the soil was also used to clean production. Of course, the ecological mentality and practice are not easily adopted but require some time. As the cooperative president says:

We got informed about eco-agriculture during the process we experienced with Rapunzel Company. I was gathering farmer friends and telling them that the synthetic fertilizers were harmful to edaphon and worms in the soil and that they are what makes our soil fertile. They saw this in time, and later on, a market for organic products emerged. This is how the mentality has changed. The cooperatives of the other villages have always wanted to unite, but we implement entirely eco-agriculture here. Everything we sell at the cooperative is ecological. It is not the same as what they do. This is why we do not buy any products out of the village. We all know each other and see what we do. This village might not know what solidarity means very well, but here we make an honest and conscious production.

Ömer Ohan says that many producers elsewhere focus only on profit-making and do not develop a holistic perspective regarding production. They give sugar to feed them in winter, instead of sparing some of their honey to feed them with that in winter. They adopt this practice either because they are not conscious about how to produce healthy and quality honey, or they use the trick to get more profit. In Sındı Cooperative, the bees are fed with honey, not with sugar. This is why the cooperative acclaims that they produce healthy and natural honey.

Though the cooperative makes a sound and conscious ecological production, it is hard for the cooperative members to earn their living. Sındı Cooperative like many others experiences many problems in the market. There is a common demand I also heard repeatedly in this cooperative visit too is that the state shall incentivize ecological agriculture, support

ecological cooperatives or at least facilitate their operations by reducing bureaucratic procedures and taxes.

They tax everything. We have to pay annually 5.000 TL vat. The cooperative had to take eight certificates, different ones for each product. I had to get a patent for the name “Datça Sındı Cooperative” on each package. I had to take a production permission certificate and the Certificate of Convenience to the Turkish Food Codex for different products. I also took certificates for processing and packaging almond and filling olive oil from the special provincial administration. It is not easy to take them. You need the money and have to learn how to do it.

The cooperative president also complains that the ministry does not even control the private companies, whose sale is 3 tons on the invoice but 50 tons in reality, while demanding the cooperative report them twice in a year. He thus tells that the cooperative has to pay several taxes and survive in a market where many producers and merchants work informally. Alternatively, he says, they sell the white almond for higher prices by mixing it with a lower quality almond to get more profit. As a result, almonds are very expensive in big cities after the addition of high profits of many intermediaries, even though the producers earn less, and consumers have to pay unaffordable prices. Hence, Ömer Ohan says, the cooperative must keep on this struggle despite all difficulties so that producers can get fair compensation for their labor, and a more extensive range of consumers can access these healthy products.

It is also important to note here that the president of the cooperative has constantly been saying “I” and “me” while referring to how the routine duties of the cooperative are handled. He also says that the workload of the cooperative is not shared among members, thus, there is no participatory cooperation in the cooperative, despite sales are going well. He says that he does not have enough energy anymore. These words of the cooperative president show that a non-participatory organization model is not sustainable and that the cooperation is not defined in these terms, even for an organization like Sındı Coop, which is a well-known cooperative that started ecological agriculture many years ago. The local dynamics are also very important in the lack of cooperation and participation of other members because a lot of young people work also in other areas like tourism in this region, even though the region is home to many

quality products such as honey, almond, and olive. This brings a profile of members who usually regard cooperative as another means of existence.

I bring 300 kilos of almond from the member producers and unload them alone. They do not come from the coffee house to help (...) I offered cooperative members to take credit for the cooperative. As a cooperative, we can open a restaurant and create employment for our partners. We can open a market, and our partners can provide their needs from there. They take credits of 100.000 liras for themselves but are not willing to develop the cooperative. I wish some people were willing to grow solidarity. Most members mind only taking their money right away when they bring their almond here.

The cooperative members do not want to take managerial responsibilities and work actively for the organization that indeed provides them collective benefits, as opposed to what I observed in the Hopa ay case. Hopa ay Cooperative came to the forefront as a structure based on volunteer work, participation, cooperation, and solidarity. Thus, the local people and other citizens in Turkey supported it, and it succeeded a lot, despite its debts and the difficulties in the tea market. In this example, we see that the sustainability of the cooperative is under threat because of the lack of cooperation, despite having significant potential, because Dat a is home to many high-end market products like almond and honey, and it is an experienced cooperative in eco-agriculture in a context of rising interest in ecological products.

Despite all the internal organizational problems and difficulties in the market, the cooperative has become a popular place where many consumers, especially the tourists coming to Dat a from İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir, to visit and shop in summer. For example, during the day I was at the cooperative shop, there were 4500 TL credit card transactions and 10-15 cargo orders. They send their products by cargo all around Turkey. An employer and the cooperative president are always present at the cooperative store. Especially the cooperative president tells the story of the cooperative and presents all products to consumers with the information on how they are produced. The consumers thus do not only shop but also get to know the reason behind the cooperative's existence and its primary motivation and learn about the production conditions of the food they will consume. This interaction and guidance contribute to increasing trust in the cooperative. Some consumers who have heard about the cooperative go mistakenly to Dat a Village Products, which is a private company. The president

of the cooperative underlines that some private companies like this one misguide the consumers by presenting themselves as the cooperative. They have even detected a company that sells its products as Sındı Cooperative products in Adana with the cooperative's logo on the packages and that the cooperative has made a complaint about them.

Sındı Cooperative also works with consumer food cooperatives like Kadıköy Cooperative and BÜKOOP. The cooperative has serious distrust in intermediaries; thus, it does not send any products without receiving first the payment. However, Sındı Coop, like many other producer cooperatives in the network, does not doubt that the consumer food cooperatives give utmost attention to making payment within a month. They trust them as they know the objective of these cooperatives and are aware of the solidarity network they try to build. Ömer Ohan also thinks that the solidary and trust-based relationship established between producer and consumer cooperatives is vital and supportive. Therefore, he considers hopeful the expansion of such initiatives in the cities: "As long as these cooperatives spread in the cities, we will be able to sell our products without middlemen and work with people that we know we can get our money from. So we will be more motivated, and we will unite as producers then."

To sum up, Sındı Cooperative has a producer profile, who learned eco-agriculture and embraced it in a period where ecological agriculture was not much known. It is different from many agricultural development cooperatives in Turkey with its production mentality from the packaging of products to cultivation. Besides, the cooperative has innovative products like sugared almonds and almond paste that they sweeten with their honey. These products are in demand, especially in consumer food cooperatives in İstanbul. The cooperative has close ties with recently emerging urban consumer food cooperatives, which constitutes an advantage for it. On the other hand, it is a significant disadvantage that there is no participatory and solidaristic relationship among members, and only one person is responsible for nearly all cooperative activities. An imminent resignation of the current cooperative president might end up with the

closure of the cooperative. Besides, most members consider the cooperative as another sales channel and do not share the same motivation about developing the cooperative. Thus, they become more vulnerable in a market where merchants buy their product in more immense quantities but for significantly low prices. Unlike many agricultural development cooperatives in Turkey, this cooperative is not an organization in which the president silences the other members. However, there is a lack of members who want to become candidates for management and take responsibility. There are almost no members who want to learn about cooperative operations, although everything works transparently and systematically. These are considerable problems for the sustainability of the cooperative and limit the power of a well-known cooperative that makes high-quality ecological production. Many cooperatives in Turkey have closed because of such a lack of solidary relations.

5.3. Conclusion

This chapter investigated the individual small-scale ecological producers and mixed producer organizations in the network of ecological consumer food cooperatives, based on fieldwork. It demonstrated that they sustain ecological farming with an integrative approach to ecology that considers the preservation and sustainability of landraces and respects biodiversity, without using herbicides and pesticides. It found that these producers value their interactions with consumers a lot, as they learn from each other, consult, guide each other, and try to adapt production and consumption relations accordingly in these networks.

Nevertheless, this fieldwork demonstrated that both individual small farmers and cooperatives have many difficulties, such as the increasing expenses of inputs, high tax burdens, as well as difficulties to market their products without merchants and get fair compensation for their labor. It showed that current food policies in Turkey position small-scale producers on an equal footing with large industrial producers and expects the same conditions of production and processing capacity from them, threatening the survival of small farmers. They also experience

the challenging conditions that recent legislations aggravate, such as the loss of the legal entity of villages and common lands.

This chapter argued that the producer cooperatives in the network of the ecological consumer food cooperatives have a distinct production form and mentality from many other agricultural cooperatives in Turkey that implement conventional farming. It also suggested that producer cooperatives that have a structure based on volunteer work, participation, cooperation, and solidarity are quite rare in Turkey. The management of producer cooperatives by the same president for years and/or by professional cadres, without having a democratic, participatory organization model, carries the risk of turning these structures into capitalist cooperations and jeopardizes the sustainability of the cooperative. However, this fieldwork showed that those having an organizational model like Hopaçay Cooperative promise a lot to contribute to transforming the pressuring conditions in production and marketing of their foods into fairer relations of solidarity.

Based on the experience of Hopaçay Coop, this chapter suggested the following findings: 1) Participatory solidary structures have the potential to open up space for producers where they can get fair compensation for their labor. 2) Having direct and sincere relationships with many actors in solidarity, including consumer food cooperatives, helps to an extent in handling the financial problems and other difficulties, and more importantly motivating the organization to keep the collective work less reluctantly. 3) An alternative organizational model that could be exemplary for producer cooperatives can be established through a non-hierarchical model. This model includes volunteer councils, village representatives, which are open to the participation of all farmers and factory workers, and encourage more women to take an active role in the executive board and the councils.

Furthermore, this fieldwork showed that there is a common demand by the ecological producer cooperatives that the state shall incentivize ecological agriculture and support

ecological cooperatives, or at least facilitate their operations by easing bureaucratic procedures and cutting taxes. Also, they have a severe distrust in intermediaries, yet most of them cannot find direct marketing outlets, as the capacity of the ecological consumer food network is still limited. Nevertheless, it revealed that they consider the solidary and trust-based relationship between producer and consumer cooperatives vital and supportive. They believe that the expansion of such initiatives in the cities is a hopeful development that would encourage them to continue ecological farming, as organized producers to sell their products without intermediaries and get timely and fair compensation for their labor.



CHAPTER 6

Ecological Female Producer Organizations in the Network of Urban Consumer Food Initiatives²⁸

6.1. Gender Perspective on Agroecology, Food Sovereignty, and Small-Scale Female Producers

Women play a significant role in all phases of household labor from harvest to food processing, packaging, and storage. Female domestic labor, including feeding and cooking for the household, is taken for granted, while the female labor in agriculture is also rendered invisible in the countryside. Women are, on the other hand, subjected to discrimination not only based on their part in domestic labor but also in all spheres of agricultural production that rely on their labor. Although urbanization, agricultural crises and the decline in agricultural income all resulted in male migration to cities for employment purposes, giving more space to women in the stock breeding and agriculture traditionally deemed “male labor,” this situation did not lead to social relations bereft of patriarchal dynamics in which female labor is more valued than it was in the past. This was fundamentally the result of the hierarchy giving priority to capitalist production and capital accumulation over other aspects of social life, a hierarchy that has long been challenged by the feminist critiques. According to this hierarchy, patriarchal power relations define men as actors involved in the domain of “production,” while female labor in many spheres of life is devalued and reduced to a natural responsibility. Therefore, women, albeit their noteworthy labor in agricultural production, are not deemed -also by the state-actors whose domestic labor has an economic value. A significant factor contributing to this devaluation is the fact that the land is mostly registered on men, and the income is also received

²⁸ A version of this chapter will be published in Turkish in the book *Yaşamı Örgütleyen Deneyimler: Kadınlar Dayanışma Ekonomilerini ve Kooperatifleri Tartışıyor* in November 2020.

by them. In this conjuncture, women in the countryside cannot benefit from either a salary to compensate for their labor or social rights including insurance or retirement, among others. This situation renders peasant women even more precarious, as they do not have the advantage of getting other salaried jobs with social security since they were debarred from their right to education.

The dominant conception of economy considers paid labor and profit-based market activities as productive activities, while unpaid labor, relations, and activities through which the daily life is reproduced –albeit being thought to bear no exchange value– are not deemed “productive.” Feminist economists challenge this conception and consider all activities contributing to rendering life sustainable parts of the economy, to conceive an economy that is organized around practices aspiring to materialize equality, a fair division of labor and distribution of income, and solidarity principles (Jancz et al., 2018, p. 16-17). A debate on how to realize this potential, on the other hand, requires us to critically consider actors and relations in solidarity economies with a gender perspective based on empirical data. For instance, to what extent women can push the limits of existing patriarchal norms and roles in their attempts to get organized for a fair economic share from their labor, which practices do they try to develop to create solidarity that secures the equal voice, participation, and rights of other women? To what extent they can replace individual, material gains triggered by the capitalist production and the ambition to accumulate capital with social, collective, and ecological motivations? Women in rural parts of the country participating in agricultural production with very low prices or undertaking unpaid domestic labor in their households do not only lack a fair share for their labor but also are exposed to ever-increasing amounts of dangerous chemical materials in industrial agriculture that are seriously threatening their health (Wijeratna, 2018). The dependence on chemical input and industrial seeds augment within the context of the corporate hegemony and industrialization in agriculture. By extension, the ancient knowledge of farmers,

and especially women who have played a role in the storage and multiplication of seeds as part of a knowledge coming from hundreds of years of agricultural wisdom²⁹ are lost in the process. Therefore, women are among the actors the most exposed to the destructive impact of the capitalist emphasis on economic growth on health and nature, and the inequalities created by the hegemony of industrial capitalism in agriculture.

Agroecology and the food sovereignty movement have the potential to become significant grounds for solidarity with those subjected to unequal relations like women. There exist many studies from all around the world concerning the positive impact of agroecology on the lives of women in the countryside (Bezner Kerr, 2019; Hillenkamp and Nobre, 2016; Wijeretna, 2018). As these studies underline, agroecology creates new employment opportunities for women, empowers them to enter agriculture with less initial costs and without the use of chemicals, and rewards their traditional agricultural knowledge. A study conducted by La Via Campesina in Cuba (La Via Campesina, 2018), for example, points to the space opened by the diversification of production and production techniques with the shift from monoculture to agroecology (the use of worms and animal manure, applied techniques, making use of herbs etc.) for women and older people oppressed by patriarchal relations. It underlines the role of agroecology in the transformation of traditional gender roles and domestic power relations (CSM Working Group of Women, 2019, p. 11-12).

Within the context of the existing patriarchal capitalist agriculture, a study on urban ecological food initiatives and the rural producer organizations situated within their solidarity networks as emerging political actors in Turkey necessarily requires a food sovereignty approach and a gender perspective. Hence, in this chapter, I will examine the female producer

²⁹ Landrace seeds that farmers have transferred to the future generations for centuries are mostly called as “atalık tohum” in Turkey, referring to the role of men as transmitters, as if they were the only seed keepers. This naming of farro seeds as “atalık” is sexist. Yet, this sexist word is hardly remarked only by some ecologists in the recent years. They rather call these seeds as “yadigar” (heirloom) seeds in order to recognize the role of women as crucial actors in transferring these seeds to future generations.

organizations established around ecological production in the countryside by leaning on a feminist perspective that accounts for the aforementioned concerns. I conducted interviews with members of Nusratlı (Çanakkale), Boğatepe (Kars), Yırca (Soma, Manisa), Devrek (Zonguldak) ve Girkad (Ardanuç, Artvin) associations, cooperatives, and collectives, tracking down the solidarity network of urban ecological consumer initiatives. I search for answers to the following questions: Under what local circumstances these women organizations emerge, how do the unity among their members and collective practices develop? What type of transformation do they aspire to organize, what does this transformation mean for them? What do they try to achieve, what have they achieved, and what are the obstacles on their way to achieving these targets? How do collective learning, decision-making, and acting processes work in these experiences where labor is tried to be reorganized by women? What type of communication and cooperation these women organizations establish with other actors in the solidarity network, what is the role of this solidarity in the aspired transformation? Lastly, what type of transformations do the interactions that they have both within their organizations and with other actors in the solidarity network bring forward with regards to relations of women with the society and the state, themselves, their labor, and their subjectivity?

6.2. Transforming Ecological Experiences of Female Producer Organizations

The progress of the foundation phase of the female organizations in the ecological production sector mostly goes hand in hand with the expression of their disadvantageous position as both women and producers in the household subsistence farming sector in Turkey. Women, at first, come together with the motivation to have their income and a fair share for their labor. This encounter mostly starts when educated women with already existing ties with the city –some of which somehow having contact with urban food organizations– motivate a group of women to find common solutions to problems. Women start to come together at the point when they can flourish collective hopes towards the possibility of coming up with common solutions.

Upon sharing their common concerns, they start to draw the pathways during the process to see what can be transformed starting from where, also taking into consideration the local dynamics. Their need for someone more educated who can “guide them” towards the aim of raising hopes concerning cooperatives poses a significant obstacle for the propagation of such organizations. On the other hand, their need for a “leader” mitigates once they come together, determine common objectives, and proceed in their work; a collective identity is thus built step by step. Organizations that manage to have a common ideal, and unite their activities with a political motivation can more easily form a collective identity. When their collective labor is valued and appreciated, the “feeling of success” and the public recognition of their achievements make it easier for them to put their individual interests aside and form a common identity and ideal.

6.2.1. The Case of Boğatepe Environment and Life Association in Kars

There were 215 households in Boğatepe village in 1970. This number dropped to 63 in 1999, with the number of cattle reducing from 10 thousand to 850. At first, men came together under the leadership of İlhan Koçulu to create a program about what to do to reinvigorate the village and decided to start with multiplying inherited local farro seeds. Nevertheless, in three-four years, they got pessimistic in the meetings due to the “lack of a solid money flow.” In the meanwhile, İlhan Koçulu realized that some older women in the village started to bake traditional bread from local seeds inherited from the ancestors. With an awareness of the significance of women in sustainability, he conveyed that he decided to put more efforts especially for the organization of women. Women first started to come together to receive training on ethnobotany with the motivation to benefit from the UN Funding for women’s organization. Zümran, the co-president of the Boğatepe Association, tells this process as follows:

In our village of 56 thousand decares, we have at least 300 herbs; it’s like the pharmacy of nature. That’s why we started to organize a herbal plant workshop. We got in contact with an expert physician, we made announcements, he gave the training, people got more and more curious. We started to make use of the

plants. Now we can distinguish 35 types of plants. We learned how to distill the oil and make creams from the expert physicians. I wish our mothers established this association forty years ago, I wish we received this information directly from them. However, we learn anew all together, and we started to earn women from neighboring villages who are willing to learn. Once they started to join us, we saw how timid we were... We got a course on communication. We got a course on nutrition. We became partners with an association in France, they came to visit us. Then we wanted to learn a foreign language. A lecturer from Kafkas University arrived, we arranged our affairs and took French courses in the lunch break. Now we prepare local breakfast in turns to those who come to Kars to visit our cheese museum. On the other hand, we take care of our animals and produce cheese. We have some targets, we want to see women in the countryside not behind or above, but next to their husbands. We want to leave behind a healthy life for the next generation. Women need to have money to have a word in the family. Computer courses will start soon, we will learn to make online sales. We come closer to other women during training.

As seen in the above statements of Zümran, the unity among women and their collective practices develop in time when they receive pieces of training and learn new skills and turn these skills into practice. Another motivation for them to reclaim/regain the richness of their local surroundings and the entire traditional production techniques is to transfer this knowledge to the next generations. Although it is still İlhan Koçulu who leads them in matters as finding voluntary trainers for the workshops and receiving funding, women determine their requirements and projects. As stated above, they can now come together in solidarity and leave their individual selves behind. Although they have not managed to incorporate all the women in the village, and albeit obstacles created by patriarchal relations and legal issues, they try to find the means for solidarity and a common learning process during the process.

We conduct regular meetings in the neighborhood. Besides, each neighborhood has a spokesperson, and we have meetings with them once or twice a month. Then we come together with all the groups in the culture house. Women produce opinions on what to do in the association and which trainings to conduct. For instance, we hold a festival. In the previous year, the chefs had prepared dishes with our plants, this year women wanted to cook something local by themselves. 5-6 women took responsibility, they were there on the bench (...) Unfortunately, some of them have husbands who don't let them join us. When a woman misses a course, then the husband discourages her, saying that it is now useless to join the others. But we tell her that we would teach her anyhow. For instance, we have seven pilot villages. We go to these villages and share our knowledge of herbal plants with them, and they teach us something in return.

The bonds women have with the geographical and cultural dynamics of the countryside has a significant role in the sustainability of their organizations. Boğatepe Environment and Life Association turned an idle building in their village into the second eco-museum in the world with a UN Funding in 2010 and the efforts of the villagers. The museum aspiring to transfer information to the next generations on the region, local seeds, the history and culture of cheese

making have women volunteers to introduce the site to guests. With the popularization of Kars visits via the Orient Express, Boğatepe village that has come to symbolize traditional Kars cheese has turned into a charming touristic spot with its eco-museum playing a significant role in attracting tourists to the village. The increase in the number of tourists due to the abovementioned reasons resulted in rendering the labor of women organized in the association more visible, leading them to earn more income from their hand-made products. In return, they became more enthusiastic to develop collective skills to work together and learn from each other. Developing themselves in many different subjects with the training they receive, contributing to the development of the countryside with this newly acquired knowledge, and starting to earn their own money, all became significant sources for the women to boost their confidence in themselves.

Now, we have confidence in ourselves. We believe that now that we have achieved this, there is nothing we cannot do. Women in the village always follow their husbands. Now, they learned to say their opinions when they discuss with their husbands. Previously, when my husband asked me not to do so, I couldn't have insisted on attending to the computer course. I would have thought that I might not succeed in it, and I would have remained silent. Now, I let him know that I got registered to a course (...). For the last ten years, I have been making creams and essential oils. I used to call one 'the mint soap of Nigar' once, and embroidered it with a veil. When they came to the village to purchase the soap, they asked for me. It is really nice that the product is valued with the name of the laborer on it (...) We also broke free of our prejudices. When the first group came to the village from France, it was Ramadan, we weren't so eager to let them in. Now, we receive forty groups a year from all around the world. All we do nurtures one another. Those who come to see cheese production visit the museum and get to know about the association. They see Kadın Bakkal (Female Grocery Shop). They see the soaps and essential oils when they do come to have breakfast.

Not all female organizations are born under the same conditions. It is much more difficult to come together, expand the organization, and build a collective identity in cases that do not have the geographical, touristic, and cultural advantages of Boğatepe. At this point, I would like to present very briefly the case of *GİRKAD- Girişimci Kadınlar Derneği* (Entrepreneur Women Association) to underline the difficulties that hinder the emergence and expansion of successful female organizations in general.

6.2.2. *The Case of GİRKAD in Artvin*

GİRKAD was established in 2017 by the efforts of Leman Albayrak, in Ardanuç, Artvin. The founder of the Entrepreneur Women Association, Leman, has been trying to expand the organization of women in Ardanuç for a few years. In our interview, she mostly addressed that there are many obstacles for getting organized in their region. To summarize, the reasons behind the difficulty she experiences are as follows: a small youth population, challenges of transportation among dispersed villages, villagers' waiting for a "leader" who can dedicate a serious amount of time to the matter in question so as to get organized, and lack of active efforts from various local actors including the municipality and women organizations.

As opposed to the Boğatepe case, the geographical and social disadvantages of Ardanuç, and their lack of access to people or institutions to actively support them in matters as education makes it difficult for the growth and strengthening of the organization. Moreover, the competitive nature of the profit-oriented capitalist market economy and individualism stand out among serious threats to the foundation of collective structures.

I really want to get traditional modes of production registered, to turn Aliç, with the local name of Girkad, into a brand in Ardanuç. It's endemic here, we might get a geographical marker. We have already registered the plant inventory of the region. We need to receive education, and debate on how to produce these plants and how to use them. We conducted a few meetings and trainings in the first year of our foundation, but everyone immediately focused on delivering products and receiving income. They want us to name them 3-5 items so that they earn money. They come a few times, if they don't get what they want, they stop coming to us.

On the other hand, direct communication between urban ecological food initiatives and producers can also create more possibilities for solidarity to solve some problems confronted by producer organizations.

We were in İstanbul, we went to Kadıköy Cooperative with the reference of a friend. They immediately proposed to send a producer form, so that they get informed about our work. We have been in production for a year. The propagation of these networks is very valuable for the producers (...) What's important is for producers to know that they can contact these initiatives. Being in these networks enhance solidarity. I talked to you here on how to solve organizational problems. However, it's not just that, you told me that you could put me in contact with the women organizations in your network to share experience and to find answers to the questions in my mind. For instance, I don't know what to do about the issue of compliance with the label regulations. I contacted Kadıköy Cooperative; they told me that brother Ali is

also dealing with the label stuff, that I could contact him. I did as recommended, he sent me a sample right away. I thought that it was very easy, that we could implement it right away.

6.2.3. The Case of Nusratlı Village Culture and Tourism Association in Çanakkale

The story of Nusratlı Village Culture and Tourism Association started in 2005. Similar to the Boğatepe case, this association was also kicked off when Süheyla Doğan, having been involved in organizational activities for a long time in the city before 2002, motivated the villagers to get organized upon settling in Nusratlı village. Süheyla Doğan decided to establish the association with the notable people of the village upon realizing that the town received a serious migration from the village for economic purposes and that they needed to take action to revitalize the village economy. The activities of Nusratlı Association thus started with the initiative of a person who knows how to write down a project and ask for funding from surrounding institutions based on past experiences. The activities that were kicked off under the guidance of a leader become more collective when women receive various trainings, start to practically sell their products, hold regular meetings, and start to express their dreams.

There were workshops on eco-tourism, hygiene, communication, services, guesthouse management for two months. We were hosted in Ayvalık to see how the stands and sales worked, how a guesthouse was to be operated. We saw the sales stands of Burhaniye municipality Women Assembly etc. we expanded our horizon. Then we said let's establish our own sales center. I made a call, at first it was just one woman who had the courage to respond to my call, then came another, and today we have 16 women. They started to produce more of what they normally produce, or develop new products according to the requirements. For instance, they learned herbal aromatic plants, and how to make a natural detergent with the help of Buğday Association.

The entire village is registered to the association, but it is women who are the active members through the sales center where olive oil, olives, medicinal aromatic herbs, ecological products as *tarhana*, and jam are sold. Women take shifts to open the shop every day. The products on sale are registered to the sales book by name, and the income of the day is also recorded. Some of them calculate the overall income at certain intervals, then distribute it to each producer. The village and the sales center located at the very center of it receive regular visits, as the region is famous for olive production. Apart from direct sales, they also deliver their products to some

food initiatives on cargo without any intermediary. The organization of the women of Nusratlı village also inspires surrounding villages.

The association has direct contact with Kazdağı Association to Protect Natural and Cultural Assets, leading to solidarity ties between the two entities with the help of which Nusratlı Association nurtures itself by conducting various activities, sharing knowledge and experience with the former. The women in the Nusratlı Association, for instance, participate in “natural products without intermediaries” workshops conducted by Kaz Dağları Association and open a stand in all their activities and fairs. Attending to these fairs, they get the chance to meet and be in cooperation with other related actors. Upon the visit of Yeryüzü Association that they met in “the ecological food without intermediaries” workshop, they started sending their products to Yeryüzü Association food communities by cargo. They then started to attend to food communities’ workshops conducted by Yeryüzü Association in İstanbul so as to expand their connections in this network. Women frequently talk about the fairs, the panels they took part in, and their partnerships in other organizations with pride.

Interacting and cooperating with many actors they would otherwise remain unaware of with the help of these joint work experience, the training they receive, and skills they develop as part of the network help women to have space in the public life. This stands out as the most significant gain of women organizations. On the other hand, women cannot often have a decent income due to bureaucratic and financial obstacles, i.e. getting labeling, production, and sales licenses complying with the regulations. Transfer by cargo remains a problem for the associations or cooperatives to deliver their products to urban consumers, as the cargo companies might ask for high delivery prices and they tend to damage hand-made products during the delivery. Organizations as Nusratlı that are relatively closer to big cities are more advantageous in terms of logistics when compared to many others in Turkey. The establishment

of regional unions and cooperations might be a viable option to the problem of logistics especially for organizations close to big cities.

As it is observed in the cases of Nusratlı and Boğatepe, the limited number of sales in the association and the need to return to structures similar to financial enterprises undermine the real potential of the organizations at the absence of state initiatives, because the required production licenses and the legal procedures require serious amount of labor and money. On the other hand, organizations can overcome these obstacles with the support of other actors in the solidarity network. The women of Nusratlı village recently established Kazdağları Women Cooperative Initiative to solve these problems to some extent under the support of the remarkable growth of the ecological food networks in the last 2-3 years. They plan to have easier and higher amounts of sales and sell Nusratlı products in the shops of urban cooperatives with labels complying with the legal regulations. They also benefit from the cooperation of various platforms and funds. For instance, Consumer Economy Association plans to establish an online platform as part of a project that aspires to strengthen the solidarity among various entities in the ecological production sector in Kazdağı and Edremit region, working with 30 producers/ producer organizations in direct communication. Therefore, they aspire to strengthen local ecological economies also including this new cooperation initiative. They will also support Kazdağı Women Cooperation Initiative for a year in this context.

Speaking of institutional support, I would like to mention the sometimes conflicting relationship between the autonomy of the actors in these solidarity networks and the support they receive from the civil society. Many rural organizations in both Turkey and the world start with the support of an institution, and their activities are left half-finished once the project is over. On the one hand, organizations have hard times to sustain themselves without state support or funding from an institution, while on the other hand, they face the risk of losing their autonomy and *raison d'être* due to the interventions of the supporting institutions. It is also

important for the female organizations to care about the balance between autonomy and support, and have a direct relationship with consumers without intermediaries based on trust and solidarity to manage themselves as democratic and self-sustaining entities.

Political-cultural ties with local dynamics also play a significant role in the sustainability of these organizations. Regarding this point, I now would like to address the organization of Yırca women that was initiated as a project of an institution but turned into a village solidarity movement thanks to the political-cultural ties with the local entities, after the project was left unfinished. Women created an experience around ecological soap production in which they remained in solidarity with each other and empowered themselves with the help of a horizontal and democratic organization.

6.2.4. Yırca Female Collective (Yırca Soap House)

Upon the Soma mining disaster, *Temel İhtiyaçlar Derneği* (Basic Needs Association) launched a project with local women that included training of two months on soap production. With the aspiration of the women to work together in the future, the project turned into a soap production initiative, but the association withdrew from the project due to bureaucratic and organizational issues, as the soap was produced in Yırca through the financial operations of the association. Kenan having started to work in the project with the women, then to settle down in Yırca explains the project phase, and the organization built by women thereafter as follows:

During the project, women had no knowledge about production. I did organize the entire process starting from the supply phase, and the orders, to the delivery of the raw materials. Upon the withdrawal of the association, people were all sad, it was like “damn, we are done.” I said that I was ready to keep going if they were in, and I taught them all I learned. Women wanted to cling to this work because they had had enough. It’s not just the mining disaster. They had established a power plant in 1950 and 1980 on 2000 decares of land; it’s mostly the land of Yırca villagers. Then, they built a hydroelectric power station on 2500 decares. Then they launched a highway project after the mining disaster, they cut down 6600 trees. There is this common feeling in the village, “There is no land and water left, soon there won’t be any village or villagers, we need to do something together.”

The women of Yırca village state that they turn the smut of coal into the musk of soap, and they use natural colors instead of chemical colorants to make colorful soaps apart from the olive oil

soaps that have in their inventory. They receive the pink color from beetroots, yellow and blue from flowers, red from pepper, green from spinach, and nettle. They thus produce ecological soaps, while at the same time using recycled paper in their packages, “they cut down our trees, too. We don’t want to spare our trees,” they say.

In the past, we used to deliver the soaps in garish packages. Now, the cost is a bit higher, but we use recycled paper. In the beginning, they asked for lamp wax, and we did a lot of it. Then we learned that it was harmful, and we stopped doing it. Later on, we found out, while talking to our grandmothers, that they used to use the wax in hives, just putting a wick on it. It’s easy to produce, it smells very healthy, and it doesn’t have colorants. It costs four times more, but we explain to people that we cannot produce it otherwise.

Yirca Soap House was established upon a gathering of 20-25 women. The Soap House does not have a president, it operates through a working model based on common decision-making mechanisms. The ongoing fair, egalitarian and participatory women organization provides them with an intimate and solidaristic tie with the soap houses.

We are divided into groups including those who track the orders, those who plan the production, those who contact the suppliers, those who deal with calculations. We also have certain groups and sub-groups in production: those who put the soap in the mold, those who cut it, those who package the soaps, those who make the quality checks. Those who put the soap in the mold, cut the soap the next time. We established this order of production among ourselves, and in times we updated the division of labor. We came up with the fairest division of labor in time during the process

Women in Yirca say that “once the project of the association used to focus merely on labor in production,” whereas nowadays they manage the whole process. They thus feel empowered when they talk about the Soap House on other occasions and organize the overall operation. They also take notes on this type of labor and fairly share the cost. Decisions in the Soap House are taken around discussions in monthly meetings. The interaction is not restricted to the monthly meetings, as they produce in the same workshop. That’s how they did develop an intimate relationship with each other and played a significant role in the building of a collective identity. They say that they have learned a lot and transformed themselves during the process by producing soaps together. They state that they came to feel the power of solidarity, and this became an extra motivation in this process, -apart from the financial motives-, thus strengthening their organization. The obstacles that they confronted together in the past urged

them to leave behind individual interests and embrace a common identity. This common experience organized solidarity that transformed them, their families, and relations in the village in a way to empower women in general.

The most explicit impacts of the organizational experience of Yırca women are visible from a gender perspective.. The biggest transformation brought forward by Yırca experience in the lives of women is the appreciation of women's labor both in their local surroundings and other places, as well as the recognition of its economic value, all amounting to a positive impact on their perception of themselves and their labor. This situation provides women with the tools to resituate their position in the family. The organization experience renders women more autonomous with respect to the ownership and control they have over their time and labor, leading them to have more word on other aspects of life, and putting them in a position to negotiate. An example on the impact of women's organization on the transformation of domestic patriarchal relations puts it forward as follows:

Each year, we borrow a container for our Gözleme House, this year we couldn't do it due to local elections. The governor of the village asked for it, but they said no. Two days later, we went to Balıkesir to negotiate with the authorities and got the container donated to us. In the past, some of our friends couldn't even get into the frame, when we took photos. Their husbands prevented them to appear in photos. Now, the same women go to other cities to deal with the affairs of the Soap House. Men also support our work now.

Women who have been empowered with the organization in Yırca have also started to be more active in politics. There are many examples, from expressing their opinions about the highway building between the village and Soma to having a space for themselves in the public sphere that was hitherto thought to be "allocated" to men, all demonstrating that they show themselves in the public life with more confidence.

The new highway cut the road between the village and Soma, and the distance got a lot longer. They could have built a bridge there instead. We talked to the governor, but it didn't work. We made an open call to protest it. Then, we went to the village coffee house, we called men, no one appeared. We said, "you have no courage, we will do it ourselves." Some men decided to join us. Then, the women of the village protested on the road, it was also covered by the media. The governor of Soma came 2-3 months later, and the bridge is built.

Another example on the positive impact of women's becoming active in the public life —by getting out of their confinement in the households— on their transformation into political subjects also having a word on politics is the nomination of women in the Soap House as a co-candidate in the elections to run for the village governorship. Her promises included discussing the problems of the village in monthly open meetings, joint decision-making mechanisms, building a village money bank, establishing cooperatives, all having the traces of the women organization. She was not elected as the village governor, yet the nomination of a woman co-candidate from the Soap House to run against the male governor who has been in power for the last couple of terms, and her promises based on the participatory model resembling that of the Soap House, all reveal the fact that the Soap House organization in Yırca has a significant impact on the transformation of both women themselves and the practices concerning their relations in the public life.

Many solidary actors in Turkey support the collective work [*imece*] of the peasant women who got organized after the mining disaster in Soma and the deforestation disaster in Yırca. Peasant women of Yırca who have, up until now, delivered their products to consumers via online platforms like Instagram and Good4trust, and distribution packages of food communities and cooperative initiatives, will now be able to sell their products everywhere upon their registry in the Ministry of Health inventory as of the end of 2019. Just as in many other organizations, women in Yırca village could also barely economically sustain themselves, while they were dealing with the application and permission processes. At this point, the existence of solidarity networks proves to be very important, but the state is also required to conduct studies on problems and solutions faced by the local ecological producers due to the production regulations, and promote especially women organizations. Higher structures to be established in case of the effectively increasing presence of solidaristic actors within the food sovereignty movement might raise the word of the citizens on this matter.

Urban consumer cooperatives have a significant potential to transform modes of production in women producer organizations into ecological methods, an area that is especially fertile for transformation. To elaborate this point on the power of cooperation, I now want to discuss the experience of Devrek Güneşi (Devrek Sun) Agricultural Development Cooperative, especially by addressing their interaction and cooperation with Kadıköy Cooperative interaction and cooperation.

6.2.5. Devrek Güneşi Cooperative (Devrek Sun Cooperative)

Devrek Güneşi Cooperative was founded in 2010 by 8 female farmers. It is now a cooperative with an average member profile of farmers, housewives, and retired women. Although it does not bear the name of a women's organization, all of its 53 partners —other than the drivers— are women. Ms. Saniye who had started to work as a farmer 15 years ago and her seven friends decided to organize a collective work to stand against the profit-based approach in the market with the help of their past experiences in civil society. In the first year, they started to sell vegetables and fruits of their farmer partners in the market place, then they added other varieties as *gözleme* and bakeries and local dishes prepared by their housewife partners in their product list to be able to pay the rent of their shop. Having dealt with product license, barcode, certification, and brand registry problems in time, the women of Devrek Güneşi, expanded their organization with a sales point and a bread oven, jam and *pekmez* workshop in Dedeoğlu village.

Nevertheless, what I would like to mainly underline in the story of Devrek Güneşi organization, apart from their financial growth story, is their initiatives leading to a transformation from a conventional mode of production to an ecological and energy-friendly production with the courage they felt as a result of their solidarity with the urban consumer cooperatives. While the women of the cooperative used to bake *erişte* with industrial flour, they

started to make production with the wheat of a local seed inherited from ancestors upon their interaction with Kadıköy Cooperative. This process to which I observed during my voluntary work in Kadıköy Cooperative started when the women in the cooperative made direct contact with a wheat producer in the network of Kadıköy Cooperative, saying that they did no longer want to “poison” people with this flour. The first step of the transformation was taken when they started to produce with the flour made out of this local wheat seed procured from the producer. The second step came with an idea that emerged after a joint visit of Kadıköy Cooperative and Beşiktaş Cooperative Initiative to Devrek Güneşi. Upon the visit, a stone mill project was launched, also incorporating the voluntary architects of this cooperative. The women who covered their need for electricity to run the stone mill, drying mechanisms, and other equipment via solar energy as part of *Buğday Daneleri* project presented to the Development Agency started to plant their local wheat seeds —coming from the ancestors— firstly in a land of 240 decares. They now adopt an energy-friendly mode of production to make healthy bulgur and *erişte* from their own ecological wheat. For this purpose, they also got in contact with farmers around Zonguldak and Devrek, and contributed to the propagation and cultivation of local wheat types. Furthermore, women are proud to say that this project motivated the villagers concerning the use of solar panels to cover the energy requirement of the village. While the relations of production change, we observe the soaring confidence and financial situation of women. This interaction of Devrek Güneşi with urban consumer cooperatives reveals the significant role of especially women organizations to transform the production, and relations surrounding it.

6.3. Conclusion

Agro-ecology diversifies agricultural activity and foregrounds the significance of knowledge, thus would augment the participation of women. However, women shall be not only a part of this organization but also the very organizers of this movement that would have great

contributions to them both materially and spiritually. Women's organizations, on the other hand, have a larger potential than in mixed ecological producer organizations in the food sovereignty movement, because they introduce a special space for women to get organized in the countryside with their creative self-power, autonomy, and get over their inhibitions to freely express themselves. They thus play a crucial role for women to challenge gendered inequalities generated by the food system. Although most of them promise equal word and share to the members of the cooperative charter, the organizational model in Turkey is mostly hierarchical with a president remaining in power for years, and members' being involved in the management only to cast a vote once a year. Nevertheless, the female organizations examined in these cases, progress through more solidarity-based relations than these mixed structures. It seems significant for the establishment of horizontal, democratic and participatory structures to share experiences, knowledge, personal opinions, the working agenda and the division of labor in daily/weekly/monthly gatherings alongside with regular official meetings, and discuss the agenda in regular meetings based on equal work and participation. Democratic women's organizations based on horizontal relations, as already discussed in detail in the solidarity of the women of Yırca village, endeavor to transform existing production relations, while transforming both the women themselves and the relations surrounding them.

Female organizations are deemed fragile and marginal in the dominant economy. However, those which reconnect with the land in their countryside with food sovereignty perspective and an ecological and participatory model have the potential to open a new political space in a domain that has already been prescribed to them. These female cooperatives shall reject the role attributed to them in patriarchal capitalist production relations and not disregard these issues in the hustle of daily life and momentary matters. Organizations that strengthen the sense of community and belonging and establish intimacy and solidarity in daily interactions build a space in which people do not abstain from expressing themselves. The cases that take

into consideration everyone's voice (not just a few women's) during cooperation (not only in official meetings) are crucial for solidarity economies to suggest a real alternative. Otherwise, these women gatherings bear the risk of being yet another sphere to reproduce unequal relations in which their labor is deemed "women's natural job" and rendered invisible.

I also need to underline the fact that not all women and organizations in the countryside have equal opportunities to get organized. As already discussed in the case of the Girkad organization in Ardanuç/Artvin, social and geographical obstacles like having an old population, dispersed settlements, and the distance to big cities might also be disadvantageous for the rural producers to come together. These obstacles might also put rural organizations in a disadvantageous position when it comes to getting in contact with consumer initiatives in big cities, and delivering their products, getting engaged in urban activities to gain recognition. Whether the region has a well-recognized local product or not, and the diverse reflection of patriarchal relations in different regions also have an impact on the organizational dynamics of women in the countryside around ecological agriculture and food. For instance, the abovementioned Nusratlı Association and Kazdağı Women Cooperative Initiative are organized in Çanakkale, a city ranking 18 in the list of *TEPAV (Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları Araştırma Vakfı)* (Turkish Association of Research on Economic Policies, 2018) among 81 cities in Turkey in the 2018 Gender Inequality Report. In that sense, women in Çanakkale are more advantageous than women in, for instance, Şanlıurfa that ranks 68th in the same report. It is also necessary here to emphasize the class dimension in female organizations. A peasant woman having a small olive grove, albeit being registered on her husband, is more advantageous than a woman who owns no land.

On the other hand, these disadvantageous factors are not determining factors to hinder the organization. Women who received training on reading-writing, organization, cooperative organization, drying food, and packaging, among others, in Urfa as part of a project launched

by Yaşam Evi Women Solidarity Association, established Urfa Mesopotamia Women Cooperative in 2011, the first women cooperative in the region. In the cooperative that continues its activities today, women dry ecologically produced tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers, prepare *isot*, sumac, tomato paste, and pomegranate syrup, market them and deliver their products without intermediaries to many ecological consumer cooperatives for the last few years. Women mostly prefer to have the harvest on the family land, as they mostly do not have the land registered on their names. This poses a good example of women solidarity against gender inequality in a region known to have strong patriarchal relations in which women, albeit difficult conditions surrounding their work, get socialized in the everyday life outside the household under participatory and solidaristic ties, be in solidarity with each other in all matters, and earn money out of their labor (KEIG, 2020).

There also exist reductionist critiques stating that the rural organization of women in Turkey mostly around food as *tarhana*, *erişte*, tomato paste that is traditionally made by women at home reproduces the existing practices –and the domain– that are deemed to be “peculiar to women,” or “segregated to women.” As stated in this chapter, I, on the other hand, believe that such organizations lay the ground for a potential solidarity network to ameliorate life conditions of women and give them a chance to transform themselves and challenge patriarchal capitalist relations from a place that they know the best, in a way to push its already established limits. This would certainly require them to go beyond merely focusing on production, and grow their organizations with a multi-faceted collective endeavor against patriarchal capitalism that seizes the water, the land, the seeds, and their labor via inclusive solidarity principles within the solidarity economy.

CHAPTER 7

Municipal Governments as Local Models for Building Alternative Agri-Food Policies and Constructing Alternative Public Space: Cases of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, Seferihisar Municipality, and Ovacık Municipality and Cooperatives

We have been witnessing a global food crisis today as a result of the withdrawal of states from their public responsibilities in agriculture and, thus, the increasing domination of the (trans)national capital. In Turkey, too, the state gave up its national developmental policies and adopted neoliberal agri-food policies, which have been threatening ecology and human health, as well as the survival of small-scale farmers. These aggravating conditions resulted in the rise of the struggle of local civic organizations and local governments in the last years in Turkey to open a public space for themselves to deal with these problems.

I would like to address again briefly the food and agricultural sphere and traditional cooperative structures in Turkey, to facilitate the understanding of the alternative public space and cooperative structures emerging today that I will elaborate on this and following chapters. The state was the building pillar of the public sphere during the national developmental period through its policies such as protective subventions and price supports. The state enterprises such as Meat and Fish Board (EBK), the Turkish Dairy Products Industry (TSEK), TMO (Soil Products Office), and the unions of agricultural sales cooperatives (UASC) were quite functional. They were producing inputs, procuring, storing, and marketing farmers' products, but these were not local, horizontal, and autonomous actors. Instead, they were top-down and hierarchal structures which were being managed by bureaucrats appointed by the state. Thus, they were also anti-democratic organizations in terms of decision-making processes, which do not include the voice of farmers' cooperatives, even in the unions of sales cooperatives. This

statist experimentation of public sphere indeed postponed the organization of democratic and independent cooperative structures in Turkey.

Like the UASCs, agricultural loan cooperatives, and other state-owned enterprises, village development cooperatives were also anti-democratic and hierarchal organizations. However, differently from them, village development cooperatives were established by the residents of villages, upon their own will, by considering the needs of their locality. Therefore, their central union, KÖY-KOOP, became an alternative form of organization during the 1970s. KÖY-KOOP was not state-mandated like agricultural sales cooperatives and agricultural loan cooperatives.

Before the coup, on 12 September 1980, there were 122 cooperatives, 28 olive oil plants, nine dairy farms associated with KÖY-KOOP (Ülgen, 2008, p. 35). However, after the coup, KÖY-KOOP central union was closed, and its members were put on trial. Furthermore, in the 1970s, for instance, in Fatsa, there were already some experimentations of democratic participatory local governments, solidarity groups, and neighborhood associations in Turkey (Bayraktar, 2014, p. 5-6, Yıldırım, 2019, p. 41-42). Some producer and consumer cooperatives were established in collaboration with municipalities. Some municipalities were incorporating certain services of the private sector and creating employment opportunities (Yıldırım, 2019, p. 42). For instance, Izmir Metropolitan Municipality opened its first Tanzim store in 1973 under the Directorship of Tanzim Sales, and TANSA had a considerable role in providing affordable food for citizens for thirteen years until 1986. Nevertheless, these policies of municipalities and the active political arena of civic participation and organization in the 1960s and 1970s faded after the coup. In this context, the farmers also lost their chance of defending their economic and political interests. In addition, rural to urban migration changed the rural dynamics, leading to the dissolution of traditional solidary relations and subsistence strategies. While statist cooperative structures are no longer functional, the memory of the socialist cooperative system

(*halk kooperatifçiliği*) and local projects of those days have also not been transmitted effectively to the following generations. Briefly, both the experimentations of local politics based on civic participation and organization and the state politics that protect and support farmers faded since 1980.

Especially in the 2000s, the state has embraced a neoliberal logic of public sphere, which resulted in the privatization, or defunctionalization of its state economic enterprises, UASCs and their production plants, through policies and laws that privilege market competition and liberalization. We have also been witnessing since the 1980s, particularly in the last decades, the privatization of public services by the municipalities and the enactment of laws that favor capital accumulation in the cities. For instance, the new Metropolitan Law (Number 6360) that were enacted in 2012 transformed 16,200 villages into neighborhoods (Aysu, 2014, p. 602) in the metropolitan area and thus expanded the scope of the control and accumulation of non-agricultural capital such as the real estate capital in these areas.

The corporate sovereignty in the food and agricultural context today favors the capitalist commodity relations to the detriment of human health and ecology while creating insecure conditions for the economically disadvantaged citizens. This very context leads to the possibility of the construction of alternative public space by the solidarity of many actors who get organized to object to and struggle against these adverse conditions, in alternative food initiatives, ecology organizations, etc. Nizam and Yenal (2020) define different forms of activism regarding seeds politics since the 2006 Seed Law as “quiet activism.” Referring to Pottinger, as they suggest, we can describe the food activism and the solidarity of many local actors, e.g., municipalities, producer and consumer cooperatives, as “embodied, practical, tactile and creative ways of acting, resisting, reworking” to protect landrace seeds and biodiversity in the face of the attacks of the corporate food regime (Pottinger, 2017, p. 217) and to struggle for food sovereignty. It is important to note here that the relative quietness of these

actors does not mean passivity but rather indicates the “active embodied stances, capable in their own right of preserving desired ways of living” (p. 220). These actors build dynamic interactions and awareness around a daily concern like food that they consider and promote as commons. In other words, “commoning” of food as an evolving activity (Montenegro de Wit, 2017) builds an alternative public discourse and effective collaboration, challenging the marketing of food as the commodity of private corporations. These actors demand in practice alternative public spaces where they establish new types of municipalism and state-civil society relations to build multiple sovereignties (Kay et al., 2018).

The rise of local and autonomous efforts of citizens and municipalities are indeed the result of their lack of hope from the central government. It is because the state continues its neoliberal policies that favor capital, instead of small farmers and consumers, under the pressure of the WTO, IMF, and agribusinesses. Despite the diminishing of its protective measures, the state still defines itself as the only responsible actor in agri-food policies and thus construct a neoliberal logic of public sphere by opening up a space for the capital. On the other hand, these recent local experiments lean on participatory and inclusive characteristics. They aim to expand the solidary network of small-scale farmers and consumers from below, as democratic and self-sustaining entities. Doing so, they signal the construction of an alternative logic of public space that goes beyond the previous statist and current neoliberal mentality of public sphere.

I will now elaborate different conceptualizations of public space from the existing literature and discuss my understanding of an alternative public space, before discussing the construction of alternative public space by local governments based on my fieldwork, which has the potential for creating alternative agri-food relations for small-scale farmers and consumers.

7.1. The Literature on Public Space and Alternative Public Space and the Role of Rural Localities

Since the conceptualization of public space by Habermas, the discussions of public space have largely expanded in the literature. I will start elaborating critically, yet briefly, this literature by referring first to Habermas, as the “public sphere” as an original concept emerged in his original work in “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere” in 1962. I then extend the discussion into how theoreticians develop a more comprehensive understanding of public space that considers public space as a democratic negotiation venue by the involvement of varying civic actors. This perspective goes beyond a statist understanding of public space and carries a potential for transforming dominant relations.

Habermas (1974) says that a new type of public sphere is necessary to institutionalize democracy instead of the unfeasible model of the bourgeois public sphere. He suggests considering the public sphere as an arena where “citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion—that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions— about matters of general interest.” He underlines the importance of the medium of interaction, which he considers to provide the proper institutionalized ground for the freedom of expression of citizens and the political participation, to guarantee a democratic space for the benefit of all as a “public body.” This space is conceptually distinct from the state and offers the possibility of relations critical of the state and the official economy. This original idea of the “public sphere” is thus crucial for the discussion of democratic political practices in critical social theory. Nevertheless, this civil republican view of the public sphere is insufficient and problematic. It is, first, because Habermas (1989) criticizes the bourgeois public sphere and discusses the possibility of the construction of the interests of all; however, he does not problematize the assumptions that are central to a specific-bourgeois conception of the public sphere. To be clear, he describes *the*

public sphere as an arena in which the discussion concerns the “common good” and “private interests,” as if social inequalities were neutralized (Fraser, 1990, p. 71). Hence, we need to analyze the fact that the official public space is often “the prime institutional site for the construction of the consent that defines the new, hegemonic mode of domination” (p. 62) and the state can transform into an actor, which is an obstacle for the expansion of the public space (Bora, 2017), threatening the possibility of counter-publics.

In the restricted dominant definition of the public space, there is also no room for competing publics, e.g., women’s alternative publics because “masculinist gender constructs were built into the very conception of the republican public sphere” (Fraser, 1990, p. 59). Many theoreticians after Habermas have been emphasizing the need for analyzing the relations of alternative counter publics. For instance, Geoff Eley considers the public sphere as “the structured setting where cultural and ideological contest or negotiation among a variety of publics takes place” (p. 68). These theoreticians thus emphasize the possibility and existence of multiple and subaltern counter-publics, which challenge dominant discourses and structural relations of dominance to claim for their identities, alternative lifestyles, and desires. I adopt these scholars’ perspective that considers the existence of multiple subaltern counter-publics because this perspective is vital for analyzing how varying publics challenge structural hegemonic relations for advocating their rights, economic justice, environmental protection, and food sovereignty.

Today, there is a heterogeneous opposition constituted of many counter-publics, composing of different collective frames through exchanges among each other via interactive media, direct interaction among activists, NGOs, and social movement organizations, etc. We have been witnessing the engagement with multiple causes such as economic justice, environmental protection, and issue-based politics, like the introduction of consumer practices to the political sphere through less traditional ways (Bennett, 2012, p. 26). I consider the Gezi

Resistance, as well as the expansion of many citizen-led initiatives, emerged afterward, such as alternative food initiatives, concrete examples of citizens' creative reaction and attempts at forming alternative public spaces, in an overwhelming political and socio-economic context where official public space becomes an arena to reproduce state authority and to silence the voice of citizens who wish to speak for themselves.

Negri (2004) posits that today, "public" paves the way for the reproduction of the capitalist system and capital accumulation. Therefore, we need to bring into the table the public character of production by creating alternative public spaces in this time of political, economic, and social crises (Kluge and Negt, 1993). From this perspective, I consider important to interrogate whether the solidary network of small-scale farmers and consumers and the agri-food projects of local governments aim at building alternative public space both against the state policies and capitalist domination in the agri-food sector shaped by a neoliberal logic. It is because the neoliberal public sphere today allows policies which "privilege established interests and raise obstacles for a vibrant critical publicity" by ignoring the impact of political and economic structures (Asen, 2017, p. 339).

These discussions underline the importance of analyzing "the contestatory interaction of different publics and identifying the mechanisms that render some of them subordinate to others" (Fraser, 1990, p. 70). Therefore, problematizing the dominant relations of production and social reproduction of life that serve capitalist interests, I discuss how municipalities and new-generation consumer food cooperatives challenge the neoliberal public space and its discourses of market freedom and consumer choice. I examine how they invite more citizens to take action in an alternative public space or a counter-public for transforming dominant relations of food production and consumption.

Castells (1983) considers collective consumption and local governments as being essential components of contemporary urban social movements to oppose the dominant

capitalist mentality and statism (p. 328). From this perspective, new-generation urban food cooperatives, the local agri-food projects in rural space, and the solidarity of these actors with various political and ecological struggles have a considerable potential to create alternative public spaces to the official public space shaped by the state and capital.

In the following chapter, I focus on the new-generation consumer food cooperatives' participatory, horizontal, and democratic organizational logic and commoning politics of food, through the case of Kadıköy Coop, while elaborating on how they endeavor to construct this alternative public space in favor of food sovereignty. In this chapter, I draw mainly from my fieldwork on the agri-food projects of Ovacık and Seferihisar municipalities to discuss the ways municipalities can build these alternative spaces for the benefit of small farmers, consumers, and ecology. I suggest that the search for bringing together varying actors in an alternative public space is more present among the opposition parties' municipalities than the central government gives only a limited budget. They need to open up an alternative space to empower the farmers in their locality, minimize their dependence on corporations and intermediaries, and challenge current food production and distribution relations. It is because the official public space favors the interests of corporations and capitalist agri-food relations with the help of the state. I discuss how their endeavors for facilitating producers' self-organization and collaboration with varying actors contribute to constructing an alternative public space concerning agri-food politics, which are essential for increasing their power in the emerging food sovereignty struggle in Turkey.

7.2. The Role of Local Governments in the Construction of Alternative Agri-Food Relations from within an Alternative Public Sphere

I will examine here mainly the cases of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality-Tire Cooperative collaboration and the local agricultural policies of Ovacık and Seferihisar Municipalities and Ovacık Cooperatives. These cases, especially the Ovacık and Seferihisar examples, illustrate

well a solid example of how local governments in collaboration with local organized producers and grassroots actors and with the support of urban collective food initiatives can build together policies from below in favor of food sovereignty. I do not examine these examples to only address the possibility of marketing and distribution of foods through cooperation bypassing market chains and intermediaries. I suggest that these examples of local agri-food projects comprising of many collaborating actors in the rural and urban spaces also open up alternative and more extensive public space for citizens. It is because these examples emerge not only to challenge the pressures of the market dynamics that are in detriment of small producers, consumers, and ecology but also, they rely on constant negotiations among these actors, rather than being realized top-down by the municipalities.

7.2.1. İzmir Metropolitan Municipality and Tire Milk Cooperative Case

İzmir Metropolitan Municipality defines its agricultural projects known as İzmir Model as “social municipal work” and “local development.” This model is based mainly on the creation of a project for the common usage of machines by small producers in agriculture and stock-raising sectors, helping to cover the inputs and other needs about production, and realizing collaborative works with institutions like agricultural development cooperatives and producer unions. Their primary objective is to encourage production that respects human health, to enable the delivery of the products of small producers to the consumers via cooperatives with fair and accessible prices, and to enrich their bonds with production. They adopt policies that will facilitate the self-organization of producers and increase their marketing opportunities instead of providing direct funds (Yıldırım, 2019, p. 45-46). For the first time in Turkey, a municipality establishes the Department of Agriculture, where they manage soil analysis, and support for education and substructure-related projects. They make contracts with many agricultural sales and development cooperatives in İzmir by offering a purchasing guarantee. They organize special education programs for female producers and support the development of women in the

cultivation of specific products (p. 47). For example, they have made agreements with a cooperative located in Bayındır, İzmir, for floriculture and with Bademli Cooperative for seedlings. The municipality settled a milk-buying center for Bergama Tulum cheese in Bergama. It also purchases milk regularly from Tire Milk Cooperative (Tiresüt Cooperative).

I focus here first on the Tire Cooperative case as a good example to address the relationship between the local governments and the cooperatives. I examine this example by referring to the existing literature, as I have not visited this cooperative in my fieldwork. I then discuss the agri-food projects of the Seferihisar Municipality in İzmir based on my fieldwork and elaborate on its relationship with cooperatives that have a central role in these projects. Finally, I will examine the agri-food projects of Ovacık Municipality and Ovacık producer and consumer food cooperatives, as examples that are highly appreciated and popular in public opinion. Differently from the Tire case, Ovacık and Seferihisar cases I examine in my fieldwork are focused on ecological agricultural production. In addition, especially the Ovacık case has a more participatory character and has a pillar on the consumption side in big cities.

The primary source of income in Tire Lowland used to be cotton production until 2001. However, the import quota was abolished along with the changing support policies after the ARIP. Thus, in Tire and adjacent regions, the interest in animal breeding increased, and corn production for silage as animal feed expanded widely on these lands where cotton production was considerably predominantly.

Tire Coop was founded in 1967 but broke through after 2001. Their net assets have grown 160 times in 17 years (Kocagöz, 2018). Indeed, milk companies dominate the dairy market in this region. There is an integrated facility of Süttaş in Tire. Süttaş and Pınar Süt make purchases in Küçük Menderes River basin. These companies and merchants are the dominant actors who decide the purchasing price. However, Tire Cooperative now has the power of regulating the market in favor of its member producers at the local scale (p. 51).

The cooperative established a pasteurized milk center with the support of İzmir Development Agency in 2007. The cash flow and marketing problems of the cooperative have largely been solved thanks to the contractual purchases and supports of the İzmir Metropolitan Municipality since 2008. İzmir Metropolitan Municipality started to deliver free milk to 220.000 students in İzmir with the “School Milk Project” starting from 2008 for five years. Then the municipality started in 2012 its “*Süt Kuzusu*” project and delivered every day 45 tons of milk to the families who have preschoolers (0-5 ages of kids) (pp. 52-55), through a direct distribution channel it established with Tire Cooperative.

The Halk Süt kiosks and the recently established two *Çiftçim Market* stores (Farmers' Shop) of the municipality become an alternative distribution channel for the cooperative. In Çiftçim Markets, only the products of the producer cooperatives, including Tiresüt products, are sold (p. 57). The cooperative has helped the development of Tire seriously. The cooperative produces 320 tons of milk per day while the production was 10 tons in 2009, and it employs 380 workers by the end of 2018 while it had only 11 workers in 2001. The cooperative has milk purchase centers in 62 villages of Tire. It helps to reduce the production expenses, increase the market value of products by improving the quality of its product, and processing the raw product (Kocagöz, 2018). It offers its members at low prices inputs like fuel oil, fodder, and fertilizers and has its production units for corn silage and animal fodder. The members can also use 16 tractors and nearly 50 earthmovers of the cooperative for planting, harvesting, packing, and silage of corn. Besides, they can borrow money from the cooperative when they need and pay it back in exchange for their milk (p. 53-54). These are all the opportunities Tiresüt Cooperative offers to its members and provides them a considerable advantage in the market.

The cooperative's president says that the cooperative offers these facilities for nearly half-price of the market; thus, producers sell their milk with lower production costs for more accessible prices. The cooperative also cares about food security and public health. It employs

some agricultural engineers who make analyses and guide producers. There are milk facilities with cold storage in each village. Besides, the cooperative analyzes the samples at the laboratories and does not purchase milk if they detect antibiotics or the addition of water in the sample milk (Kocagöz, 2018).

In terms of the internal organization of the cooperative and decision-making in the cooperative, low membership fees, and equal vote right of all members render the cooperative an inclusive structure (p. 53). However, the members' voice is only taken into consideration at the general assembly; there is no other daily mechanism that assures the active democratic participation of the members in the cooperative operations. In that sense, Tiresüt has a traditional cooperative structure. The cooperative holds general economic assembly each year and a general electoral assembly every four years. The president of the cooperative, Mahmut Eskiörük, is both the board chairperson and the general director. There are different managers responsible for varying units, who present reports to Eskiörük in monthly meetings. Eskiörük can make decisions alone as the general director without asking these managers. However, the executive board (Kocagöz, 2018) collectively takes all general assembly decisions.

Though Tire Cooperative became a success story after Eskiörük became president, I think that it is a problem that he has been the cooperative president since 2002. It is because a participatory democratic model is usually hard to maintain when the same people stay as the president for a long time. The possibility of having other candidates even decreases with the consolidation of his supporters and the current management. Eskiörük says that he wants to quit if a young leader like him emerges, but if not, he wants to continue as the president (Kocagöz, 2019). After all, “what describes a leader like him” remains a vague question.

On the other hand, it is possible to criticize some dynamics in the cooperative. The cooperative has been very rapidly growing. In 2017, for instance, it had a net profit of two million TL. Thirty percent of the cooperative members today have more than 200-300 cattle. It

might risk the primary motivation of the cooperative, as bigger-scale producers benefit for more cattle from the opportunities the cooperative provides and may end up with having a larger share in the cooperative sales. In other words, they may grow financially more easily than others and employ more wage labor, which might facilitate the capital accumulation of some members in the cooperative. These developments may endanger the cooperative's character as being the cooperative of small producers (p. 64). Besides, some accuse the cooperative of integrating with the capitalist system and corporations. They emphasize that the cooperative president was rewarded as the businessperson of the year by organizations like İzmir Industrialist and Businessmen Association. Similarly, the cooperative is criticized for being managed for professional managers instead of its members (p. 63).

Some also criticize the cooperative for being integrated with the current distribution and marketing channels of big companies. They address that Tiresüt products are now available on shelves of Migros shops in İstanbul paralleling its fast growth. Instead of Migros distribution channel, like in the case of Ovacık Cooperative, the cooperative can establish its consumer food cooperatives as well as contact other urban consumer food cooperatives and local governments in other cities. By establishing closer production-consumption relations, consumers can access their quality milk more easily in other big cities than İzmir and the cooperative may develop further its alternative model. It is also symbolically important for the cooperative to take a more distanced position against a system where actors like Migros put many producers in a vulnerable position in price determination and production conditions, especially under contract-farming. The cooperative buys corn from the producers located in Küçük Menderes lowland for its corn silage packaging facility (p. 53). It is a valuable practice, as it supports the corn producers in the region and enables healthy animal fodder, differently from the many actors in the dairy sector that uses genetically modified import corns as animal fodder. However, the cooperative does not search as the criterion for the corn or other fodders being grown ecologically from

local seeds. It is a problematic aspect in terms of the cooperative's claims of producing natural milk. The cooperative has yet certified organic milk that is sold in Migros, in addition to its conventional products. These points constitute points for improvement, yet still stronger aspects of the cooperative compared to dairy companies in the sector.

To sum up, despite having a product with a short shelf life in a competitive sector, Tire Cooperative becomes a crucial actor for small producers. It is a good example that shines out with its collaborations with the İzmir Metropolitan Municipality and the opportunities it provides for its members in the dairy sector dominated by private companies. It can even increase its alternative potential 1) If it integrates with a solidarity network in which it can deliver its products through its consumer food cooperatives in the cities and collaborate with other municipalities, too, 2) builds more democratic and participatory relations at the management level, 3) grows up more temperately being aware of the dynamics which would give way to the capital accumulation of some and thus inequality among members.

Now, I would like to investigate two other good examples where we see the collaboration of local governments with ecological producer cooperatives. I will focus on Ovacık and Seferihisar municipalities' projects that provide concrete alternative examples of how local governments and their collaboration with cooperatives can empower small producers based on social solidarity and direct relations of food production, distribution, and consumption. The fact that the mayors of Ovacık and Seferihisar Municipalities have now become respectively the mayors of Tunceli (Dersim) and İzmir Metropolitan Municipalities also point out the success of these projects and make more interesting to examine these cases.

7.2.2. The Case of Ovacık Municipality and Ovacık Cooperatives

The rural population and agricultural production in Dersim has decreased since 1990 because of forced migration and neoliberal policies. The population, which was 11669 in 1990, has become 3034 by 2019 (TÜİK, 2020). Many seed varieties also disappeared because of the

burning down of villages. On the other hand, Ovacık land does not provide a wide variety of products. The soil requires intensive labor, thus mostly pulses like beans and chickpeas are grown on these lands. The number of people in Dersim also decreased significantly in years, as the agricultural activities declined; thus, its impoverished population migrated from Dersim to find sources of living.

After the elections in 2014, the candidate of Dersim Democratic Solidarity of People, Fatih Maçoğlu, became the mayor of Ovacık. After a feasibility study they made, the idea of developing an agri-food project emerged, with a perspective that considers healthy food as a right and values agroecological peasant farming instead of industrial agriculture. With this project, the municipality also wanted to show that alternative local governments are capable of stopping out-migration by creating employment and increasing production. In 2014, the municipality made agreements with small producers and organized common production on uncultivated lands and public land, using ecological methods and local seeds. It started this project initially to meet the accommodation needs of the students in a local vocational high school and support their social life. The news about “the communist mayor” who finances scholarships with chickpea production drew the attention of many citizens. In this initial period, citizens ordered a high amount of chickpeas and beans from the internet via cargo to support the project. Dersim organizations in İstanbul also took an active role in the distribution of orders. Later, the need for having their own sales channel in İstanbul emerged, and a store was opened in Sultangazi.

The cultivation started with the help of the municipality in 2014, in an area of 600-650 acres, of which 400 decare was public land, and the rest was the land of volunteer comrades. The municipality reserved one-third of the income from the common production to the scholarship fund, and one-third for the fuel expenses of villagers. The rest was spared for creating a seed bank and providing seed support to the villagers. These practices do not continue

simply as part of the municipality project today but are managed by the collaboration of the municipality and Ovacık Cooperative. In 2017, Ovacık Agricultural Development Cooperative was founded by the Ovacık Municipality leadership to enable the more direct participation of producers in a producer organization and to build another legal entity other than municipality for production. The cooperative structure was also preferred to sustain these practices in case of appointment of a trustee and the change of local management cadres in the next elections.

When I went to the shop in Sultangazi, İstanbul, they told me that the sales office of the producer cooperative, opened in September 2017, had started to run as a consumer food cooperative a couple of weeks ago on 15 August 2018. There were insured and salaried employers in the cooperative store, who were unemployed because of decree-laws. This mentality of prioritizing the employment of disadvantaged people continues in its other consumer food cooperative stores. They first consulted the Kadıköy Coop for contacting some ecological producer cooperatives and producers. They brought the store some products like molasses from Devrek Cooperative, ecological vegetable pasta from Makarna Manyas, and tea from Hopaçay Coop. They then expanded their producer network in time. They have told me in September 2018 about their dreams of founding a cooperative store in each neighborhood even when their second store was not yet opened. Today, by March 2019, they have four consumer food cooperative stores in İstanbul and two in İzmir. They also have one cooperative store in Ankara, Adana, Eskişehir, Bursa, Mersin, and Antalya.

Now, I will elaborate on how the production takes place, and the production cooperative operates, what the main objective of this project is, and what kind of alternative the Ovacık Municipality and cooperatives try to provide to the current agri-food relations. I will answer these questions based on my interviews and interactions with Ovacık cooperative workers and volunteers in İstanbul since 2018, as well as referring to other interviews on the web.

First, I have to underline that all actors in the Ovacık cooperatives and the municipality care about nature and human health and criticize current industrial food production. They adopt a perspective that defends the control of small farmers over the whole production process and value the voice and the participation of farmers in their cooperative:

We defend collective production against industrial production and solidarity-based marketing against the industrial one. The current hygiene law and regulations about food aim to exclude the farmers from each link of the food chain except the production. This system of law, which is regulated based on the demands of the transnational supermarket chains, makes it impossible for the producers to process their products in practice. The supermarkets and transnational agribusinesses subdue them by threatening the existence of their delivery channels. Today, the consumers pay for the packages of food, not the food. In fancy packages, they buy food that threatens their health and has nearly no nutrition value (...) The industrial agriculture sustains this order with marketing and advertisement tricks under the name of food security (Ovacık Doğal Website, 2020).

They say that they bought 98% of the pulses produced in the region for fair prices and sold them. It is an experience that develops the region and the production in the region. One of the crucial characteristics of the Ovacık experience is that –to the contrary of many producer cooperatives in Turkey, including Tire Coop– they care about the production forms. They do not only aim to build a system that is only for the benefit of producers but also for the ecosystem. They have a holistic ecological approach that does not see agriculture as a practice only made up of seeding and cultivating, but also considering the edaphons in the soil. This comprehensive perspective, they say, requires thinking of agriculture and stock-raising together, as complementing each other and even caring about the packaging of the food:

The soil, the bacteria in the soil, the products you plant, and the other plants being covered with herbs around it; they all create an ecology that we need to protect. Agriculture is not only about the seed; all other elements of the agricultural production, breeding, irrigation need to be thought together and developed based on local dynamics. We try to act with this sensibility (Seferikeci, 2018).

The producers in Ovacık Cooperative use local seeds and no agricultural chemicals and synthetic fertilizer in their production. They do not name their products organic but ecological or natural organic. They are against the organic certification system that puts the small farmers in a difficult situation by giving the certification authority to the companies and sustaining corporate sovereignty through their certified organic inputs. The municipality and the cooperative work together on expanding production in the region with local seeds. For

example, they have worked together with the district directorate of agriculture for multiplying local bean seeds. They distribute to producers 500 kilos of landrace chickpea produced in Elazığ or Hozat — as there is no local chickpea seed in Ovacık, then the villagers give them back the seeds after production. The shell bean seeds that the producers get from their land will be cultivated in the common land next year (Atayurt and Kocagöz, 2019). The cooperative also collaborates with actors who adopt similar ecological seed and production policies. In May 2018, they organized a seed exchange festival with Seferihisar Municipality. They met ecological cooperatives like Vakıflı Village in Hatay and local governments such as Seferihisar Municipality in İzmir and Nilüfer Municipality in Bursa, and each shared their agri-food projects.

The cooperative and municipality also try to raise awareness of producers against the disadvantages of industrial production and the value of ecological agriculture. They purchase the products in their region by making an on-site inspection. For honey production, they undertake laboratory analyses and control their apiarists themselves, twice a season. They work together with the Beekeepers' Union and the Chamber of Agriculture, to benefit from their experience. They organize together training about the hazards of pesticide residues as well as the hazards of using sugar syrup and antibiotics. The cheese is produced only for four months in a dairy farm of Ovacık Cooperative, and its milk is obtained from the cattle that graze in uplands and meadows in the region. Thus, the animals are not fed industrial fodders.

The cooperative also has concerns regarding eco-friendly packaging, like selling its honey in glass jars and using cloth bags, although they sometimes use plastic bags. Since the cooperative does not aim at capital accumulation, the income is transferred only to the cooperative funds. The employers in the cooperative do not work more than 39 hours per week, and seasonal workers are also not deprived of social insurance. They give priority to employing

women, especially in harvesting, elimination, and packaging processes. For instance, the cloth bags are made by women in Pülümür and Ovacık.

The Ovacık experience started with 25 producers and 26 tons of legumes production. In 2018, 240 producers were involved in the cooperative work and produced 100 tons of product. In 2019, the cooperative collaborated with 365 producers (except the beekeepers), and the production in Ovacık Cooperative reached over 300 tons. The producers in Ovacık are only small and middle-scale farmers who produce mostly on 30-40 decares of land. The cooperative works with the producers based on a contract, but this contract is not made with a corporate mentality. It aims to frame how to implement ecological production, to know the approximate volume of product each producer can provide to plan the production for the cooperative in the region. The contract also says that there will be an on-site analysis to check the compliance with ecological criteria. There is no legal sanction that the contract defines. However, the contract helps to check the consistency between the cultivated area and the harvest, to understand whether the product sold to the cooperative is the harvest of that producer or s/he increased the volume by buying from somewhere else (Atayurt and Kocagöz, 2019).

The cooperative has been comprising the producers in the vicinity of Ovacık, too, starting from its third year. By 2019, the cooperative had only 25 members. No one has to be an official member to sell his/her products to the cooperative. Because many producers are already members of the three other (inactive) agricultural development cooperatives in the region, and according to the code of agricultural development cooperatives, the producers cannot become members of two different cooperatives at the same time. They have 400-500 producers from Ovacık, Mazgirt, and Pülümür, including the 100 beekeepers, and the number has been increasing day by day. The farmers are mostly men and have an average of 40-45 years old. There are around 50 women among 265 producers, but more women are employed than men in the cooperative (Atayurt and Kocagöz, 2019).

If the municipality had not started this project and created a positive public opinion, it would have been hard to reach this point alone for the cooperative. However, the cooperative has helped to make this project sustainable and more organized and developed it further. Reducing the necessary expenses from the total revenue, the cooperative transfers the rest of the money to its social fund for plans like a needlecraft workshop and providing free products to kindergartens, and investment-support fund for buying equipment. Today, the cooperative pays rent to the municipality for the cooperative store and has its own pieces of equipment (Atayurt and Kocagöz, 2019). The cooperative has now set its operations right, and the solidarity with the cooperative is high, both in the cities and among producers in Ovacık. Thus, it seems that the cooperative would continue to work as it does today, even if the local management was taken over by another political party.

In the Ovacık case, alternative agricultural production is considered inseparable from producers' organizations, like in the eyes of the Seferihisar Municipality and the new-generation ecological food cooperatives I studied. One of their primary motivations is to create democratic and participatory organizations with the occasion of creating alternative food and agricultural relations. The cooperative cares about creating a collective production logic among farmers by organizing production on common lands. For example, in 2018, 20 farmers cultivated dried bean collectively for the cooperative, on land of 500 decares in Kızık village. They also took turns in handling the irrigation and reaping, and shared all expenses. In addition, the purchase and sales prices of the products are decided together in cooperative meetings held with producers. We see in these examples the efforts of building collective action and solidarity. The producers in the cooperative may vote for different political parties. However, they stand together in this organization that prevents their labor from exploitation and meet on a common ground of healthy ecological production.

The cooperative aims to transform the current production relations that focus only on profit-making. It sees production not only as an economic matter, thus wants to make solidarity an essential part of production relations. It regards production as a way to act against the individualist logic and corporate agriculture that will gradually invade their lands:

The cooperative means more than merely earning money. It also means solving the problems of the producer, providing healthy products to the consumer, protecting the soil, and organizing the producer. The lands here have never been polluted. If the producers do not get organized here, the companies will come here soon, and start production with pesticides soon, as they do elsewhere (Atayurt and Kocagöz, 2019).

The cooperative management works voluntarily, and its decisions are shaped from below. Every person who makes an effort for the cooperative can join the cooperative meetings and influence the decisions. The official members take top decisions in the general assembly, and the executive board brings them into life. The executive board cannot be in the saddle for more than one period. Therefore, the cooperative tries to implement an equal and participatory model at the level of management and decision-making. It aims to create a system that invites everyone, but not only a group, to take responsibility:

The farmers and workers voice their demand in the meetings. They make recommendations about the future of the cooperative and the social rights of the workers, and then the management discusses them. For example, we asked in the meetings —of the dried bean and honey producers— their expenses for one ton of products and how much is the most reasonable final price for them to cover their expenses. The producers made a recommendation, and then we calculated what was an accessible price is for consumers. We decided collectively (Atayurt and Kocagöz, 2019).

Fatih Maçoğlu, the Ovacık Municipality mayor at the time of the interview, who is now the current mayor of Tunceli (Dersim), also explained that organizations like this that operate from below, are important to create a collaborative work culture and a collective life in the future in Turkey: “We dream of building a cooperative union that is based on the solidarity and cooperation of all of us (...) It might take three, five, or even ten years, but we have to show this courage to start now and transform it gradually into a more expanded and complex structure. We should not mind how many years it will take.” Maçoğlu explains that we have to build the union of cooperatives to show the self-organizational power of the people. Otherwise, he says, we will witness a capitalist future with peasants alienated from production and pauperized, and

where our children will have no other choice than to grow up unhealthy. He also underlines the value of cooperative examples like we see in Hopa and in the Aegean region (Medyascope Interview, 2017).

Maçoğlu also considers problematic, the cases where the municipalities ignore in their projects the local dynamics and the production in its geography, and/or does not hear the voice of the local people, nor include them in decision-making and control mechanisms. He says that the local management has to care about people's power first to be able to create effective local projects: "Of course it is hard for bourgeois municipalities to develop such projects that do not recognize the power of people. They may just give up when faced with the first obstacle" (Seferikeçi, 2018).

Ovacık Cooperative defends production and consumption relations without intermediaries and labor exploitation and considers essential the solidarity of producer and consumer cooperatives in a network. The cooperative members and workers emphasize that the way that works to the establishment of peoples' food, sovereignty passes through the direct transparent relationship between the producers and consumers. The fact that the Ovacık experience does not only focus on the producer cooperative but also the organization on the consumer side makes this experience even more valuable and unique. Its expanding network of consumer food cooperatives in different cities, as well as its good relationship and collaboration with other consumer cooperatives are thus distinguishing characteristics of the Ovacık case.

We do not draw from poorness in our politics. On the contrary, our concern is to have to avoid it. This is why production is our top priority. The importance of getting rid of tradesmen and moneylenders and establishing direct producer-consumer relationship lies here. We can achieve this by founding cooperatives. The tradesmen who exploit producer's labor and sell a product with maximum profit also exploit the consumers. If we can meet the consumer with the products of the farmer without these intermediaries, then we will succeed (...) In this case, consumers become prosumers and say to the farmers not to pollute their land and their products (...) The cooperatives that create conscious producers and consumers are the keystone here (Maçoğlu, Seferikeçi, 2018).

The number of Ovacık consumer food cooperative branches increased from one to twelve in one and a half years between August 2018 and March 2020. One point open to improvement on the side of the consumer food cooperative is that it does not have an alternative

organizational model that can open up alternative public space for urban citizens. Ovacık consumer cooperative seems to focus now only on selling their products in their cooperative stores without intermediaries. Its internal organization differs from many new-generation consumer food cooperatives like Kadıköy, Koşuyolu, and Beşiktaş cooperatives. As I will examine in detail in the next chapter based on my fieldwork in Kadıköy Coop, these consumer food cooperatives create the opportunity of alternative publicity by inviting citizens to participate voluntarily in the collective organization of all processes from food production to consumption. The citizens in these cooperatives impact equally on the decision-making and share all responsibilities in the cooperative. However, on the consumer side, Ovacık Coop does not have an inclusive model open to citizen participation in all operations and decision-making.

Also, as far as I observed in my regular visits to the cooperative store in İstanbul, there is usually no cooperative atmosphere that enables the interaction of consumers with cooperative employees. The employees mostly do not have the time or intention to share information with consumers about the products and production process. They do not have a monthly event to present themselves publicly as Kadıköy, Koşuyolu, and Beşiktaş cooperatives do. The website of the cooperative is named “Ovacık Doğal,” and “Natural Products Sales Office” is written on the signboard of most cooperative stores, instead of “Ovacık Consumer Food Cooperative.” These may complicate the cooperative's alternative position, and many consumers may not grasp its value as a cooperative, instead simply shop from there.

Nevertheless, the fact that they have a system that connects the production to consumption through its producer and consumer cooperatives makes the Ovacık experience quite valuable and alternative organization supported by the local government. Developing further a more participatory and inclusive organizational model on the consumer cooperative side and highlight its existence as a consumer food cooperative would increase the alternative power of this organization further.

The Ovacık experience has a considerable political position against the current agri-food context. The socialist Ovacık Municipality and cooperatives emphasize this organization clearly as an anti-capitalist organization. They suggest that this example shows the concrete possibility of agroecological peasant production and the consumption-production relations out of the relations that capitalism forces us into today. They frame this organization as anti-capitalist also because it opens space for producers to get the fair compensation of their labor, which they cannot get in capitalist agri-food relations. Besides, they place their struggle within the food sovereignty movement. One of the cooperative members describes food sovereignty as follows:

The big organic food companies have nothing to do with the production. They just package the product and sell it to the consumers. This is a disengagement from the perspective of food sovereignty. Is it organic? Yes, but we do not know where and how it was produced. Food sovereignty means we shall know all these things. Our main aim was to get rid of intermediaries, thus we have founded consumer food cooperatives. We did not grant somebody a franchise nor do we wholesale. Many shop chains in Dersim have demanded our products but we have not given them. We should not have anything but the cooperatives between the producers and the consumers. There are 5-star certified organic products in markets, but you still do not know where they come from. Our consumers know everything about the production and operations of the cooperative (Atayurt and Kocagöz, 2019).

7.2.3. Seferihisar Municipality's Alternative Agri-Food Project

I observed that Seferihisar Municipality's agri-food projects are a similar to the Ovacık case, in terms of the solidarity and collaboration among many actors. This collaboration is facilitated by the local government to provide alternative relations of production and distribution of food in a context marked by the ineffective role of the state in this area. The Seferihisar case thus illustrates well a concrete example of how local governments, in collaboration with local organized producers, grassroots actors, and urban collective food initiatives can build policies from below in favor of food sovereignty and rural resilience. As Nizam and Yenal (2020, p. 13) also suggest, these local projects and activities of the Seferihisar Municipality contribute to "rural resilience." It is because these agricultural activities are carried out by the local government and regional actors to bring together ecologically minded consumers and producers in a network, to challenge the pressures of corporate farming and agribusinesses (Friedmann

and McNair 2008). Can Yücel Seed Conservation and Distribution Center, Seferihisar Municipality, and producer cooperatives in Seferihisar are the crucial actors building the alternative agri-food projects of Seferihisar Municipality, since Tunç Soyer, the candidate of CHP, became the mayor of Seferihisar in 2009. The same year, Seferihisar joined the Citta Slow network and became the first Slow City of Turkey. Being elected as a slow city, Seferihisar started to organize local farmers' markets in 2009, which has become the starting point of Seferihisar Municipality's alternative agricultural project. I will elaborate in detail.

I interviewed the consultant who specialized in agricultural projects of Seferihisar Municipality, Şevket Meriç. He has been working in these projects since 2009, first as part of an agricultural desk service and later in the Directorate of Agricultural Services that the municipality established in 2014. The directorate now has 30 staff responsible for agri-food projects of Seferihisar. He is also a co-founder and vice-president of the Doğanbey Agricultural Development Cooperative that is established by the municipality.

While the Ovacık cooperatives and the Ovacık Municipality present their agri-food practices as a model against capitalist agri-food relations, Seferihisar Municipality describe their agricultural model with their motto "alternative agriculture is possible" (*başka bir tarım mümkün*). The Seferihisar Municipality offers direct support to small-scale ecological/organic producers in the locality by urging producers of olive oil and mandarin to get organized in cooperatives.

The municipality started a project for 25 producers to switch to organic agriculture in 2009, and this project continues with the organic production of hundreds of producers. The municipality has established an organic olive oil plant in collaboration with the Doğanbey Cooperative in Beyler village and included all olive producers in that village for organic certification. Similarly, it has founded the Tangerine Producers Union, purchased a packaging facility, and then transferred it to the union. Last year, the municipality conducted soil sample

analyzes of approximately 450 separate parcels of agricultural land. This year, it gives certificates of “good agricultural practices” of 250 or 300 producers. In addition, Seferihisar Municipality provides consultancy services to producers regarding their production and analyzes the final products. There is a control certification institution and some analysis laboratories with which the municipality works directly.

The AKP government provides municipalities, especially of the opposition parties, only a limited budget, to control their power (Savaşkan, 2017). Thus, one of the reasons alternative agri-food projects are implemented by local governments —like Seferihisar and Ovacık municipalities— is related to the fact that they have a limited budget offered by the government. They try to find alternative strategies, by bringing together varying actors, primarily cooperatives, to trigger agricultural change and increase welfare in their locality (Nizam and Yenil, 2020, p. 14).

There are some points where the municipality cannot get support from the state. We want to help producers by making better use of some projects to facilitate producers' organization. For example, we encouraged Hıdırlık Female Cooperative to benefit from this grant, thus the women built a slaughterhouse with a grant from the state. The Ministry of Agriculture would not support our application as a municipality.

The municipality's agri-food project has three main pillars: 1) protecting and expanding landraces by providing guarantee purchases; 2) encouraging cooperative organizations and facilitating the establishment of processing and storage plants to add value to local products, 3) organizing direct ecological producer markets.

The most important criteria for being a Slow City is to support local products and producers. By organizing the first farmers' market in July 2009, the concrete agricultural activities of this project have been started. The farmers' market that started with 13 people turned into a marketplace of over 150 people in time. The producers who live and cultivate in Seferihisar sell their products themselves in Seferihisar. On 27 December 2009, the second farmers' market was established in Kaleiçi, Sığacık. Women are predominant in this farmers' market where they sell home-made bread, food, desserts, and support the domestic economy.

They give importance to handmade products with traditional recipes and raw materials such as *karakılçık*, a landrace seed in this region. The number of stalls in these two farmers' markets reached 750 stalls, as of 2018. Today, there are also farmers' markets in Orhanlı and Ulamış in Seferihisar. The municipality does not charge fees or tax them for opening stands in the marketplace. In the summer, a lot of tourists shop from these marketplaces where they can find a large variety of products. The producers know that they can sell their products there without intermediaries and thus earn a fair price.

The protection and the expansion of landraces have a crucial role in the agricultural projects of the Seferihisar Municipality. Landraces endemic to Turkey, like many others in the Global South, are considered fertile and gene-rich (Zencirci et al. 2018). They are also regarded as our commons, as opposed to commercial hybrid and GMO seeds controlled by agribusinesses (Kloppenburg, 1988). Like the other small-scale producers researched in this study, the producers involved in the project of Seferihisar Municipality are also subsistence farmers who are encouraged to implement ecological agriculture. The cultivation of landraces is thus essential both for biodiversity and for the socio-economic interests of small-scale subsistence farmers.

Seferihisar Municipality considers seed sovereignty as one of the most critical steps to urge production without poisoning the soil and people and redeem producers from debt, in a context where they are dependent on agribusinesses for seeds. Therefore, on 5th February 2011, the municipality decided to hold a local seed exchange event. After this decision, the municipality visited the villages of Seferihisar and obtained local seeds of many plants like pink tomatoes, okra, and now-famous *karakılçık* wheat. Can Yücel Seed Center, which was established by the municipality in 2011, has been organizing seed exchange events since then. As of 2018, 280 different kinds of seed inventory are available in Can Yücel Seed Center, and the center has been carrying out reproduction work for 45 seeds.

The projects of the municipality on Karakılçık wheat are exemplary in supporting the small producers. The municipality distributes free of charge the Karakılçık seeds that the seed center procured from farmers in the past. The municipality started a project in 2017, which offers a purchasing guarantee to karakılçık wheat producers for a price above the market average. The price announced by the Turkish Dairy Products Office is 85 kurus, thus 850 TL/ton, the municipality pays the local producer 2000 TL for the ton. In other words, it does not only pay the producer more than twice the market rate but also guarantees that it will receive the product. In this way, it protects the farmers from uncertainty and motivates them to sustain the production of a landrace seed.

The municipality contributes to building alternative production, consumption, and distribution relations of food. This can be seen in every step in this particular story of *karakılçık* wheat, from the reproduction of seeds to making bread and the sale of these breads. This also shows how the municipality designs its agricultural policies from a holistic perspective. The first stage begins with the seed, which is the starting point of the agricultural production. The purchasing guarantee offered by the municipality for karakılçık seeds —that the seed center of the municipality reproduced and distributed to producers— represents the first leg of the municipality's agri-food projects I addressed above. Seferihisar Municipality purchases this wheat from producers through cooperatives, because of its financial and administrative constraints as its local government of an opposition party (Nizam and Yenil, 2020, p. 17). Besides, the municipality benefits from its collaboration with cooperatives, which may add value to the products by processing them in their facilities. Wheat producers give their harvest to Doğanbey Cooperative that is established by the municipality. The cooperative turns wheat into flour in traditional stone mills and offers it to bread makers at a very affordable price. This stage highlights the vital role of the cooperatives, which is the second leg of the agricultural projects of Seferihisar Municipality. In addition to cooperatives, the pieces of bread are also

sold in *Seferibakkals*, located in the Seferihisar center, in Sığacık and Ürkmez, and the farmers' markets. These sales channels, where producers sell their products directly, represent the third leg of the municipal agricultural projects. In this project, local producers, the local seed center, and the municipality build cooperation based on trust. The *imece* of Seferihisar residents is also crucial for bringing these projects into life:

In this project, the Seferihisar municipality created a concept of “Collectivity in Property” (*Mülkiyette İmecelik*). When someone has a field but somehow cannot cultivate it, and if s/he believes in this project, s/he hands on the deed to the municipality as a gift, for the field to be planted. If the municipality is capable, it cultivates the field; otherwise, it gets paid service from the villagers. Landowners allocate their land to the municipality without financial expectations. We carried out planting activities there and reproduced seeds. Women collect the wheat and make bread in village bakeries. The project no longer belongs to the municipality or the mayor Tunç Soyer. Everyone is doing this collectively; it is our project now. Therefore, this is a collective agricultural development movement in which some provide their property while some put their labor.

Before providing a producer purchasing guarantee, the municipality visits the producers' lands and ask the producers whether they have cultivated hybrid seeds and pesticides, and when they were last used. The municipality makes the soil analysis in case it hesitates, and delivers the seeds free of charge for the production on the lands it deems appropriate. Ecological production is the backbone of the municipality's project. Şevket Meriç, the municipality expert for these projects, explains that the municipality acts with a comprehensive awareness:

Some ask if we are financially damaging the municipality. They think the municipality lost 1000 lira per ton, comparing to the purchasing price of the state. But of course, ours is ecological and healthy, not the same. When designing a new project, it is easy to predict the financial profit and loss by calculating the inputs and labor. That is how profit and loss are usually calculated. However, people do not calculate the damage made to the environment (...) Therefore, the gain of our project is not measurable. This project does not only raise awareness for Seferihisar's *karakılçık* but also indicates the value of many products from several other cooperatives and producers in different cities and invites their local governments to bring into life such projects.

Briefly, the municipality pursues a versatile policy that considers the participation of many actors and nature, from a holistic perspective, in creating alternative production, consumption and distribution relations of food. It defines the public comprising all these actors, so they build alternative public space together, for public benefit, instead of the interests of agri-food companies. The cooperatives are the central actors in the agri-food projects of the Seferihisar Municipality.

Other than Doğanbey Agricultural Development Cooperative, established in 2014 by the municipality, there are many cooperatives in Seferihisar. For instance, Gödençe Agricultural Development Cooperative was established in 1972. It has an olive oil factory and a tangerine drying facility. There is also the Hıdırlık Agricultural Development Cooperative that was recently established by 85 women with a share of 100 TL. It has a molasses factory and an integrated meat facility. As opposed to many producer cooperatives in Turkey that cannot even organize their general assembly and have no communication with their members, almost all cooperatives in Seferihisar work actively with their members and each has facilities in their village. These cooperatives obtain creative and high value-added products by processing Seferihisar's ecological products with high potential.

For example, the tangerine is processed in the cooperative facilities to produce a wide range of products such as dry tangerine, fruit pulp, wine, liqueur, essential oil, and cologne, which provides a better income for the producers. Şevket Meriç, who is also the vice president of the Doğanbey Cooperative and agricultural projects expert in the municipality, says that there is a participatory cooperative model in Seferihisar. Since many cooperatives work on the same product, producers can compare their cooperative management with other cooperatives. If the members of one cooperative think that their management treats them unfairly, they criticize the cooperative management and may prefer other cooperatives, Meriç says. What Şevket Meriç points out by participation here, is not the organization of regular meetings held by volunteer assemblies or the division of labor among members, as in the Hopaçay Cooperative. Alternatively, contrary to the consumer food cooperatives, they do not hold weekly meetings with democratic decision-making mechanisms. However, as opposed to many traditional, hierarchical cooperatives in Turkey where the cooperative president does not leave the management seat for decades, as well as many cooperatives that do not even operate, there is a large number of active and productive cooperatives in Seferihisar.

Like many producer organizations or individual producers in this study, Meriç also thinks that the solidarity network of the producer-consumer food cooperatives will spread and have significant potential to change a lot about production and consumption:

I think that as more people become an actor in this network and more consumers purchase from cooperatives, this changes the world. As the perception of healthy food increases, people tend to comply with the proper production models, thus ecological production areas and trade increase. We can prevent rural poverty as production models transform and the production volume increase. The employment rate in rural spaces increases. Access to healthy food without intermediaries is the basis of the overall development model in Turkey. The support of local governments to this model is very important since the cooperation, both in production and consumption, is the only model that could save Turkey from the potential crisis in the future.

The cooperatives in Seferihisar collaborate with urban consumer food cooperatives. Thus, the agricultural activities in Seferihisar take place in a network of many collaborating actors: the municipality, producers in Seferihisar, Seed Center in the region, consumers in cities, and the Slow City organization as a global actor. Thus, both the politicization of ecological food and seeds and the citizens' demand both for eating healthy food and for having their words in this food system are the developments that support the alternative agri-food projects of local governments like of Seferihisar. The expansion of consumer cooperatives in cities like İstanbul motivates incrementally rural municipalities to engage in such projects, taking Seferihisar and Ovacık cases as models.

However, as a consultant in Seferihisar Municipality's Directorate of Agricultural Services, my interviewee suggests that urban consumer food cooperatives need to spend more effort to benefit from outside support in various administrative matters, for example, to cooperate with universities in product analysis.

Verbal trust is very important, what is told, what is seen is very valuable, but when I send the product to analysis, they "prove" how important social dialogue is. We had lavender analyses made according to fifty different parameters, for only 150 TL at Ege University. When you make such a project, the university may make the analysis free of charge because it also wants to have its name in this project. You may also find a fund. Increasing stakeholders is the key to governance. Public institutions, private sector, NGOs in the same region can come together to discuss this issue. Consumer food cooperatives also need to increase their stakeholders.

I consider this point important because it may be a supportive trust mechanism for the cooperatives to perform product analysis, even if they do not lose their mutual, transparent, and

trustworthy relationships. However, at the point where they cannot make enough on-site visits in the future, they may randomly send some products or those they suspect to the laboratory analysis. Analyses would be inevitable if the number of producers that the consumer food cooperative works with increases more rapidly than the number of volunteers in the cooperative. This does not necessitate giving up the contact and sincere relationship with the producers and rely on the whole system on analysis alone. Besides, most urban consumer food cooperatives are afraid to receive funds in order to protect their independence. However, as the network of consumer cooperatives has been expanding, there is now a tendency to make analysis together as cooperatives in İstanbul. Therefore, they discussed together this issue in their regular meetings with the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality, started recently.

After the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality transitioned from AKP (Justice and Development Party) to CHP (Republican Peoples' Party) as a result of the last local elections in June 2019, meetings of the consumer food cooperatives with the municipality officials started towards the end of 2019 and they decided to hold these meetings regularly. Cooperatives demand a facilitating role from the district municipalities and İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality for their cold storage and transportation needs. For now, municipalities have a supportive attitude and they seem to meet these demands over time. As of the beginning of 2020, it was decided that the municipality would give free pitches to the producer and consumer cooperatives in Kadıköy, then in Beşiktaş and Şişli in regular public markets. On the other hand, a consensus for the analysis support has not been achieved as Yer Deniz Cooperative and Göztepe Cooperative believe that the request for sample analysis of foods would damage the model based on the trust relationship of consumer food cooperatives with producers. They also suggest that this analysis system would render them dependent on the municipality. Despite its general supportive attitude, the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality is already not willing to

undertake this responsibility, thus this lack of consensus has also strengthened its hand to not support it. This issue seems to be rediscussed in future meetings.

Ovacık and Seferihisar Municipalities have become increasingly well-known to the public, as two important examples of the local administrations' contribution to the construction of alternative food production, consumption, and distribution relations as well as of alternative public sphere. As a result of this, many mayor candidates in the 2019 local elections included agriculture and food in their promises. For example, despite not being a rural mayor candidate, the candidate of İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İBB), Ekrem İmamoğlu, who is the mayor of İBB today, also made the following promises regarding agricultural production and consumption: 1) organizing joint projects with rural municipalities and cooperatives to provide consumers with affordable and healthy food without intermediaries by developing, and cooperating with sales cooperatives in the city, 2) establishing Organized Livestock Zones, ensuring the processing, inspection, and packaging of the animal products provided, 3) promoting milk production in İstanbul and its vicinity, providing this milk for accessible prices, and distributing, free of charge, healthy milk to students and primary school children, 4) organizing training and developing projects for organic farming, animal husbandry and forestry activities in the rural districts of İstanbul and regions nearby İstanbul, as well as encouraging citizen's participation in agricultural production in urban areas like urban gardens (bostan), 5) delivering an increasing volume of products produced in İstanbul and surrounding regions to consumers, without intermediaries, in public and neighborhood markets (Tarımdünyası, 2019). As of April, İmamoğlu started to work on the Halk Süt project, by initiating feasibility studies in rural neighborhoods. The municipality also distributed for free 3.6 million seedlings to the producers in rural neighborhoods of İstanbul such as Silivri, Çatalca, Arnavutköy, Şile, Beykoz, and Sarıyer. Besides, as I mentioned above, the municipality held meetings with consumer cooperatives, to develop cooperation, and decided to give free stalls to producer and consumer

food cooperatives as well as to the producers in İstanbul so that they can sell their products directly in public markets. The project started in Kadıköy in July 2020. Not all producers/producer cooperatives in this farmers' market implement ecological production, but the producer cooperatives are included in the project with their promise to transform their production from industrial production, following a timetable, in collaboration with the municipality. The municipality already started to prepare itself for the next year to distribute animal manure and local seeds of Marmara region for free, to encourage the producers in İstanbul towards ecological production. The municipality has developed this perspective during its interactions with consumer cooperatives and Çiftçi-Sen.

The Ankara Metropolitan Municipality also has a very comprehensive program on agriculture and food. As soon as he was in office, Mansur Yavaş, the current mayor of the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, attended the workshop of female cooperatives in August 2019. Reminding his earlier practices to support female labor as the former mayor of Beypazarı, Yavaş promised to work on a similar model to the İzmir model and said that the municipality already started to analyze the successful cooperatives in İzmir. He declared that the municipality would provide purchasing guarantee to female producers in Ankara for the production of plants, flowers, and trees from other places, instead of purchasing them from elsewhere, and organize the logistics to bring them directly from the local producers without intermediaries (Günboyu Gazetesi, 2019). The municipality later made an inventory of the land it owns. It planned the planting of the most suitable products for the local climate conditions on these lands, and provided a purchasing guarantee for “good agricultural practices” on the lands. Within the scope of this project, lavender was planted on 45 decares of an area of 2,700 decares in Gölbaşı. The municipality also decided to open an Agricultural Academy in the Spring of 2020. On the lands of the academy in Gölbaşı, farmers and students will be given agricultural training, and wheat

and fodder crops will be cultivated by using Kızılırmak water (Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, 2019).

Before this workshop with female cooperatives, Yavaş had already started to fulfill his promises. He met the members of the Ayaş Akkaya Agricultural Development Cooperative in Ankara in June when he came to management, gave the cooperative a guarantee of purchase for the production of quality Ayaş tomato paste. Established in 2007 with 11 women producers, the Ayaş Akkaya Agricultural Development Cooperative, has a tomato paste facility, and the municipality promised to buy its 6 tons of tomato paste and 500 liters of turnips at a fair price. Yavaş states repetitively that the municipality prioritizes supporting local production, especially the female producers, for rural development (Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, 2019). The municipality also started, on 30 April 2020, the project of “*Başkent Markets*” by opening the first market in Etimesgut. There are solely hand-made products of the local cooperatives in Ankara, such as honey, molasses, tarhana, vinegar, traditional noodles, and Halk Ekmek products are sold in these markets. Also, the municipality subsidiary won the tender of the 300-decare land of Atatürk Forest Farm. The agricultural products to be produced on this land will also be directly sold to Ankara residents in *Başkent Markets* (Hürriyet, 2019). In addition, products such as onions, chickpeas, lentils and rice that remain unsold by farmers in Ankara will be purchased through agricultural chambers, agricultural associations, and cooperatives, to be distributed free of charge to 30 thousand families receiving assistance from the municipality (Tarımdanhaber, 2019).

The projects aiming to build healthy, accessible, and direct production and consumption relations on agriculture and food are still few but increasingly visible. As a last example of these municipal projects, the “Small-Scale Urban *Bostans*” project of the Nilüfer Municipality in Bursa can be given. Nilüfer Municipality has designed an area for the production of – mainly – vegetables, but also local seeds and medical aromatic plants, in 67 parcels on 5 decares of urban

gardens. This project has been growing since 2016. The neighborhood committees, agricultural and environmental communities, primary schools, and the disabled community of the Nilüfer Municipality implement ecological agriculture in these urban gardens, without using agricultural chemicals or synthetic fertilizers. Every Saturday, they make direct sales in the Nilüfer Organic Product Market. Also, the municipality organizes seed exchange activities, along with its policy of expanding local seeds (Nilüfer Municipality, 2016).

7.3. Conclusion

The rise of the local agri-food projects of municipalities is related both to the rise of the alternative cooperative organizations and the lack of hope vested in the central government for adopting supportive agri-food policies for small (ecological) farmers. This chapter analyzed the alternative agri-food project of Seferihisar Municipality as an example of how local governments can build collaboration with local organized producers, grassroots actors, and urban collective food initiatives in favor of creating alternative agri-food relations. It suggested that the success of this project is the result of its comprehensive perspective on agri-food relations that builds the project on three crucial pillars: 1) protecting and expanding landraces by providing guarantee purchases; 2) encouraging cooperative organizations and facilitating the establishment of processing and storage plants to add value to local products, 3) organizing direct ecological producer markets.

It is an advantage that there are many active cooperatives in Seferihisar to benefit from the quality products of Seferihisar with high potential, and the municipality encourages the foundation of other cooperatives. The touristic advantage of Seferihisar as a Slow City in the Aegean region facilitates direct sales in cooperatives and farmers' markets. Also, the expanding cooperative stores of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, as well as the collaboration of Seferihisar producer cooperatives with urban ecological food cooperatives, help to find direct

sales outlets. However, the Seferihisar experience would still be more potent as it had its own consumer food cooperatives, as in the case of the Ovacık experience.

The thesis presented Ovacık Municipality and Ovacık cooperatives' agri-food project as a successful alternative project for the following reasons: 1) It has developed the economic conditions of producers in Dersim in a relatively short time by reaching 98% of the pulses produced in the region and selling them for fair prices without intermediaries. 2) To the contrary of many producer cooperatives in Turkey, Ovacık municipality and cooperatives have a holistic ecological approach to ecology, from the ecological production to eco-friendly packaging of their own products. 3) Contrary to many cooperatives in Turkey, Ovacık cooperatives provide the social insurance of all, including seasonal workers, and give priority to the employment of women. 4) Ovacık producer cooperative started with the help of Ovacık Municipality. However, the cooperative has made this project sustainable. It continues its operations without being dependent on the municipality but having its continuous support at some points such as for pesticide analysis, on-site inspections, training, and cultivation on common lands. 5) Unlike the majority of producer cooperatives in Turkey, Ovacık municipality and the producer cooperative try to implement an equal and participatory model at the level of management and decision-making. 6) Similar to the Seferihisar experience, the project involves many local actors; the municipality, the Ovacık producer cooperative, and the district directorate of agriculture for multiplying local bean seeds as well as Ovacık consumer food cooperatives in various cities.

The research argued that this collaboration among different actors and their participatory organizational structure are exemplary for future local agri-food projects. The fact that the Ovacık experience does not only focus on the producer cooperative but also the organization on the consumer side makes this experience even more valuable and unique. Its expanding network of consumer food cooperatives in different cities, as well as its good

relationship and collaboration with other consumer and producer cooperatives, are distinguishing characteristics of the Ovacık case. The increase in the number of Ovacık consumer food cooperative branches —from one to twelve in one and a half years— as direct distribution channels of Ovacık producer cooperative is the power behind the increasing production and support for producers in Dersim. It is one of the most powerful aspects of the Ovacık experience, as the producer cooperative does not have to sell any of its products to supermarkets or any other intermediaries as opposed to the majority of other producer cooperatives in Turkey.

Nevertheless, the consumer cooperative side of the Ovacık experience is not as participatory as its producer side and the new-generation consumer food cooperatives like Kadıköy Coop. These consumer cooperatives thus need to present the cooperative spirit of the producer side and its political position more clearly before the eyes of consumers. They also need to invite them to cooperate rather than act only as consumers, to open up an alternative public space on the consumer side, as many new-generation consumer food cooperatives do.

This chapter also suggested that exemplary local projects of the rural municipalities, Ovacık and Seferihisar, also inspired other local governments, including urban municipalities like Ankara and İstanbul Metropolitan. They started their alternative agri-food projects that they aim to develop further in the upcoming years. The examples analyzed in this chapter indicated the crucial role of local governments in the construction of alternative production-consumption-distribution relations in favor of small producers, consumers, and ecology. They also demonstrated that municipalities are important actors in building alternative public space and alternative logics of politics, where citizens become actors in food and agricultural policies.

Similarly, this thesis argues that new-generation consumer cooperatives play a considerable role in the construction of alternative public space and alternative political rationalities. Therefore, in the following chapter, I will interrogate in which aspects and how

Kadıköy Cooperative, as an example of a new-generation consumer food initiative, offers a democratic and participatory organizational model, and an alternative political perspective that considers food as commons. I will discuss to what extent this organizational model and political position in food politics provide an alternative public space for citizens to become actors in food and agricultural domains.



CHAPTER 8

New-Generation Urban Ecological Food Initiatives: The Construction of Alternative Public Space by Building Alternative Organizational Models & Framing Food and Seeds as Commons

Today, the march of the nascent solidary network of alternative food and ecology organizations can be thought of as a decentralized social movement that aims to act together to open up an alternative public space for small-scale producers and consumers, within and from their localities. Most of the urban consumer food initiatives nourished from the interactions and discussions in the forums and neighborhood solidary groups following the Gezi Resistance as well as the ecological and food-related activism that catalyzed with the anti-GMO coalition in Turkey in 2010. The organization of local, democratic, and participatory groups in different neighborhoods paved the way for building local solidarity around varying issues, including food that is usually considered as a private matter. The emergence of some consumer food cooperatives led to the organization of others, while the increasing popularity of food and cooperatives also motivated alternative agri-food projects of local governments.

Also, we can consider the solidary network of new-generation alternative food initiatives as “a plane of singularities, an open set of relations, which is not homogeneous or identical with itself and bears an indistinct, inclusive relation to those outside of it” (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 103). These agri-food solidarity networks of citizens do not reduce the power of singularities, giving voice to a multitude of opinions of different actors and each initiative considers and acts according to the particularities of their local initiative. I argue that while their singularities are not melted in their more or less common objectives, their differences do not prevent them from struggling for creating an alternative public space where they try to create alternative relations of food production, consumption, and distribution.

This chapter suggests that Kadıköy Cooperative aims to offer alternative political rationality of organization and vision, which I assert, is a significant factor that makes it a “new-generation” food cooperative; an empowering quality in their struggle for food sovereignty. It investigates the “commoning practices” of food by Kadıköy Cooperative activists. It thus elaborates on the self-organization and self-management endeavors of Kadıköy Coop and addresses how and to what extent its objectives of horizontal organizational model with consensus-based decision mechanisms and rotational units are implemented in practice. It discusses the subjectivity of Kadıköy Coop activists, their political vision, their relations and practices around this model as the possibility of alternative form of politics to catalyze the possibility of alternative agri-food relations in becoming. Doing so, it evaluates the potential of Kadıköy Coop and similar collective food-related experiences for claiming for food sovereignty in practice by constructing a political possibility of creating together an alternative participatory sociability at local levels as more active citizens in the politics of food.

It also elaborates how they try to realize their vision of considering food as a political matter and food and seeds as our commons. It addresses whether and how Kadıköy Coop members manage to create alternative social relations around food by going beyond the consideration of food and seeds as mere sources. It examines what kind of solidarity and participatory mechanisms they produce to create alternative public space for triggering transformative change of agri-food conditions. Before elaborating on the commoning practices of food by new-generation consumer food cooperatives, this chapter addresses first the literature on politics of commons. It addresses the commons literature, discussing the perspectives from individualistic ontology, Marx’s contribution to this literature drawing from some of its concepts, and Marx-inspired approaches to commons.

I argue that there is a significant relationship between the alternative politics of the organization, the politics of commons, and the alternative public spaces that citizens open up for themselves. I also put that the defense of commons like seeds and the commoning of the food itself are crucial in the struggle for food sovereignty. Thus, I investigate the following question based on my fieldwork on the experience of Kadıköy Cooperative: How and to what extent do the participatory and horizontal organizational models of new-generation consumer cooperatives and their alternative politics around commoning food contribute to the construction of an alternative public space in agri-food politics?

I have volunteered in Kadıköy Cooperative and participated actively in each weekly meeting for a year as well as all public events and workshops. I also worked in the Organization Unit of the cooperative for nine months. This unit is responsible for organizing internal workshops where volunteers discuss and try to solve the problems they consider essential to maintaining horizontal and participatory relations. The Organization Unit works on developing the existing model upon the decisions made in these workshops, to sustain these relations as the number of volunteers and other dynamics change in time. The Organization Unit also organizes activities to increase cooperative's recognition as well as the participation of other citizens in this and other cooperative initiatives. For instance, it invites once or twice every month the citizens to join the interactive presentation about the cooperative and ask about the cooperative's principles, objectives, and activities to increase the participation of citizens as volunteers and enlarge the alternative public space these new-generation cooperatives try to open. It also organizes meetings with other groups which plan to form a consumer food cooperative and learn about the experience of Kadıköy Cooperative; e.g., how to start and sustain such initiative, what kind of organizational model Kadıköy Cooperative has. Having participated in all these events as a volunteer working in this unit and an active member of Kadıköy Cooperative, I have an intense experience and knowledge on the alternative political

rationality and organization model that, I argue, makes Kadıköy Cooperative a new-generation consumer food cooperative. I also assert that such new-generation cooperatives have a high potential of contributing to the construction of alternative public space for citizens to demand food sovereignty by “doing” and having a voice in food politics, embracing food as commons.

I will first briefly elaborate on the traditional cooperative model and the rise of alternative models, to understand better why Kadıköy Cooperative can be considered as “new generation.” I will detailly examine the organization model of Kadıköy Cooperative, as I believe that only a horizontal and participatory cooperative structure and operations can build and expand alternative public space for alternative agri-food politics. I will discuss its operations and organizational model, by investigating the functioning of each unit and the interrelations between working units as well as the decision-making processes and other principles to maintain horizontal relations and participatory democracy. I will discuss how and to what extent these ideals come into reality, with which ambitions. I consider Kadıköy Cooperative as a “new-generation” cooperative, not only because of the alternative agri-food relations it aims to build as I examined in Chapter 5, but also because of its alternative organization and political rationality as a cooperative. It aims to offer a model of participatory, democratic, and horizontal relations in cooperatives, and expand such structures to the expense of existing hierarchal and unequal organization rationalities in Turkish cooperatives.

8.1. Traditional Cooperatives in Turkey and the Global Search of Alternative Cooperative Structures

Traditional cooperatives in Turkey have some considerable common problems that endanger the meaning of cooperation, equality, and democracy in cooperatives, as Çağatay Şahin (2019) addresses: 1) larger-scale farmers have greater voting power and visibility of in the management than others, democratic participatory mechanisms do not function properly, 2) the interests of factory workers and consumers are pushed aside by focusing only on farmers, 3) cooperatives

and their unions start investing in other areas than agriculture for larger profits, as they attain success, 4) although women are quite active in the workforce, management levels are dominated by men (p. 93-94).

Each cooperative's operations and priorities may change according to their local needs and product type it produces. However, to go beyond these abovementioned problems in traditional cooperatives, the cooperatives need to come to terms with some basic principles that would build an alternative model that they can adapt to their very conditions. Transforming hierarchal and unequal relations in producer cooperatives into equal and democratic relations and building dynamics that embodies all actors in production would create a ground to solve the existing problems collectively and ameliorate the current conditions for the benefit of all. Those cooperatives that succeed in establishing such solidarity and collaboration among the members would also tend to cooperate with local government and consumer food cooperatives and become part of solidarity networks. These networks would help producers to get fairer remuneration of their labor within more just food relations. Establishing logistics cooperatives for facilitating and reducing the costs for the distribution of food to consumer food cooperatives would enlarge the alternative space they open for themselves. On the other hand, the cooperation with local governments like in the example of Tire and Ovacık cooperatives would help to solve the problems regarding cash flow and processing food in their plants as well as increasing their visibility. I argue that alternative cooperative structures also necessitate an alternative production form that respects the ecosystem, biodiversity, human health, and value the labor of those who cultivate the land. To be able to build solidarity around these values and relations is what is essential for offering alternative cooperative experiences and differentiate the new cooperative experiments from mainstream traditional cooperative structures.

We see that neoliberal discourses and policies regarding cooperatives have been increasing, as the cooperatives are becoming prominent in the search for alternatives, especially

after the 2008 crisis in the world. One of the discourses of neoliberal globalization is the rhetoric that cooperatives need managers who succeed in being effective in the market (Satgar, 2007, p. 69). However, it should be noted that if the professional staff takes the management with the ambition of profit maximization and competitiveness, it will bring the cooperatives to a point that compromises the basic principles of cooperation. In this way, when cooperatives act like joint-stock companies, they risk turning into another capitalist market actor and become far from being an alternative.

Not all cooperatives, especially producer cooperatives, operate through a horizontal and participatory model as in the case of new-generation consumer food cooperatives like Kadıköy Cooperative. However, a critical aspect that distinguishes the productive cooperatives in this research from many mainstream cooperatives is that they are not incorporated like Torku and not controlled by the state as Fiskobirlik. I would like to address the Torku experience to explain this fundamental difference briefly. I think that this example can better put forth the importance of adopting a multi-faceted perspective in favor of the producers and struggling for the food sovereignty of peoples, suggesting that being a producer cooperative only is enough.

Torku is the shareholder of 16 sugar beet cooperatives and approximately 900 thousand joint ventures of Konya Sugar (*Konyaşeker*) beet producers in Pankobirlik. The only product, crystal sugar, produced in Konya Şeker and its subsidiaries until the 2000s, have started to be produced under the Torku brand since 2007. In 2008, Torku initiated a new management model and gathered its group companies and subsidiaries under Anadolu Birlik Holding. Today, its products are sold both in “Direct Market” retail stores and in chain stores such as Migros and Carrefour. Anadolu Birlik Holding explains the reason for this new modeling under holding structure as follows: “The management structure of the Holding offers a professional management model which avoids the vulnerability and instability risks of cooperatives that pose the biggest threat to the cooperative companies” (Konyaşeker, 2020).

However, this company model, as I will elaborate on, presents serious problems. There are 20 businesses within Anadolu Birlik Holding, along with newly established businesses. Within this structure, especially in the last decade, the crystalline sugar production, previously the only product of Konyaşeker, has been diversified. A wide range of products from confectionery, chocolate, snacks to meat and dairy products, and sunflower oil is now produced under the Torku brand, with an increasing production volume after 2008. The question of how the rapid growth of this corporate model has influenced the farmers and workers in Torku factories is vital while discussing the alternativeness of cooperatives.

In an article on Evrensel Newspaper (2019), Seyit Aslan, DİSK/Food-Trade president, explains that as production increases, the working conditions at Torku factories have become nearly the same as those in capitalist enterprises because of the labor exploitation and pressuring hard work conditions. He underlines that, behind the growth of Torku and the increase in profits, there is the exploitation of workers' labor, which is covered behind its slogan "domestic and national production." Based on the interviews he made, Aslan said that the previously earned rights of workers like regularly distributed product boxes for workers, are no longer given and that workers who work with minimum wages are expected maximum speed and productivity. As a result, workers' health problems such as neck and waist hernia increase, yet they are afraid of getting health reports. The workers say that the management covers workplace accidents and does not pay an overtime premium for long hours of working. They cannot even get permission for the funeral of close relatives because they are threatened to be fired, or the payments for the days they cannot work are deducted from their salary even when they are very sick. They are unable to unionize due to unemployment concerns, because, they say that even when the word for unionization is spoken, the layoffs begin.

Therefore, we can say that that Torku has a different logic from the organizations I have analyzed so far, which rely on solidarity, but not profit, accumulation, and exploitation. Behind

the marketing of foods promoted as national product and Torku as the brand of farmers' cooperatives, there is a capitalist business logic focused on profit-maximization and capital accumulation. It increases the labor exploitation of workers as the share of Torku also rises in the market. It is important to emphasize here that we cannot build alternative agri-food relations if the cooperative markets simply spread by imitating capitalist food system and production relations. To construct food sovereignty, we need to search for cooperation that considers essential the solidarity, fair compensation of labor, and humane working conditions both farmers, seasonal workers, and factory workers in the agri-food sector.

A similar discussion can be made regarding the rapid spread of the stores of Agricultural Credit Cooperatives starting from the end of 2019. Although this expansion of agricultural credit cooperative markets seems very positive as these cooperative markets offer products at affordable prices, at least for now, this issue requires more comprehensive analysis. The general directorate of the Central Union of Agricultural Credit Cooperatives announced in October 2019 that they were planning to open 500 stores. It is said that the products purchased from farmers would be processed in existing industrial facilities, rather than establishing a cooperative facility. I consider it quite problematic to establish cooperatives as a mechanism that will favor the industrialist instead of the producers. It is because the processing is the step where the added value comes and brings money to the producers. Already having a close relationship with the government, being managed from the top, and having no concerns such as the active participation of producers, this structure is hard to build a model that favors producers and values their words and interests. Thus, it rather seems like a project that prioritizes the benefits of some industrialists. Also, the fact that these cooperatives do not problematize the use of agricultural chemicals such as pesticides, herbicides, and industrial seeds of agribusinesses is another question mark regarding their concern on public health.

There are also transnational cooperatives, where cooperatives are merged with companies for capital and the market and external investors are shareholders. In these structures that Errasti calls “coopitalist enterprises” (Errasti, 2016), the international scale of the operations carries the risk of evolving into a structure that blocks democratic decision-making mechanisms. Cooperatives spreading around the globe have risky characteristics that would shake the cooperatives’ claim to be alternative. They have the risk of preventing members from choosing direct management and transferring all power to ruling elites to make faster decisions with the ambition of growth (Bretos and Marcuello, 2017, p. 60).

It seems like a massive challenge for cooperatives to maintain democratic and egalitarian values in this system while trying to be a strong market actor. Cooperatives need to pay attention to all these aspects in order to offer a versatile alternative model. While being influenced by neoliberal globalization, the cooperatives should not be complementary to the capitalist order or become “neoliberal cooperatives” (Ratner, 2015) that are instrumentalized by the system. It does not necessarily mean that the cooperatives are structures that will necessarily become instrumentalized in this system and cannot create an alternative. However, while claiming to offer an alternative, they should correctly define the alternative relations and principles that they try to establish. As researchers, we should be vigilant and examine the question of “what kind of alternative?” from varying aspects meticulously. The producer cooperatives in Turkey have organized around the traditional hierarchal relations, mostly around industrial production. However, consumer food cooperatives were also not bereft of anti-democratic dynamics and conventional production relations. From this perspective, the recently emerging civic ecological food cooperatives in cities differentiate themselves from traditional cooperative structures of both producer and consumer food cooperatives.

8.2. Kadıköy Cooperative as a New-Generation Cooperative Case: Alternative Organizational Model and the Construction of Alternative Public Space

8.2.1. Kadıköy Cooperative as a New-Generation Consumer Food Cooperative with an Alternative Organizational Model

In the previous chapters, I discussed why I consider Kadıköy Cooperative as a new-generation cooperative by addressing how it tries to offer alternative relations of production, consumption, and distribution of food. Now, I will elaborate on the second essential characteristic of Kadıköy Cooperative which, I argue, renders it a new-generation cooperative; the alternative organization model, and the alternative public space that the cooperatives try to build. In this sub-section, I will investigate its alternative organization model and later I will examine how and why it tries to construct an alternative public space.

First, I would like to indicate the meaning of the existence of Kadıköy Cooperative to its volunteers and of being a volunteer in this cooperative. It is because when I ask these questions to my interviewees, each time they refer to the alternative organization model, to explain what it means to them and how they relate to this cooperative:

It was important to me that this is a cooperative work based on alimentation. It is because food is a very concrete necessity in our daily lives. I really consider important that this cooperative work has a clearly defined working field and is locally based. It is not a temporary campaign but constant work that covers daily relations. Kadıköy Cooperative is a case that aims to organize collectively people having the same needs and concerns in its locality. I always advocate organizations that are designed in the framework of quotidian needs. So, in a neighborhood where I live and share life, such an organization is so valuable to me.

We are so much pressured in the current conjuncture of Turkey in terms of realizing ourselves and drawing from our capacities for collective benefits. So, this cooperative means a place, where I can do something for the matters I care, in a collective organizational form. Indeed, Kadıköy Coop is an actor that can be placed in new social movements when its existence is not only reduced into the field of food. Horizontal relations, collective organization, mutual responsibilities are not defined by a superior-subordinate relationship. This organization form offers something new in this new conjuncture. This type of organization can be academic cooperatives, theatre cooperatives, publication cooperatives, not only food cooperatives. They are all important to search for the ways to think and act together side by side.

The volunteers of Kadıköy Cooperative underline their feeling of the need for coming together and becoming actors as citizens about concrete daily matters like food that concerns everyone, because of the current oppressive atmosphere of Turkey that pressures and silences

the citizens. They consider the construction of non-hierarchical, democratic, and participatory relations as one of the main motivations of this organization and thus conceptualize the cooperative as a proper place to build these alternative democratic relations starting from their locality and focusing on a quotidian and common matter like food. To understand what they mean by the alternative organization model, I would like to address now how volunteers implement collectively the routine operations of the cooperative.

The members of the Kadıköy Cooperative share the cooperative tasks by participating rotationally in different working units. A volunteer can take a role in a unit between three and nine months because volunteers shall know the workings of each unit, and no one shall get specialized in one unit than the others to prevent a possible dominance of this volunteer with over-specialization. The responsibilities of each unit are defined dynamically along with the changing rhythms of their operations and workforce. These units have also emerged upon the necessity as the cooperative operations enlarged.

These units aim mainly at continuous co-learning about the current agri-food system and agricultural policies in Turkey (Education Unit); managing relations and orders with producers and searching of new products (Unit of Product-Producer Relations); handling book-keeping, payments, price setting, and cash audit (Financial Unit); managing all communication activities on social media (Communication and Social Media Unit); organizing activities to increase cooperative's recognition and the participation of other citizens in this and other cooperative initiatives (Organization Unit), and coordinating meetings and cooperative activities including the needs of the cooperative store (Coordination Unit). The duties of each unit are precisely determined to be able to manage the routine cooperative operations without conflict.

More specifically, the Coordination Unit prepares the monthly cooperative calendar and follows up the activities and "watch bill." The watch bill is the list of volunteers who register

online for each two hours-long working hours of the store for the month. The Unit also prepares to-do lists concerning the cooperative store such as the cleaning of the store and repairment of shelves. It coordinates the discussion of all the meeting agenda and the preparation of weekly meeting notes shared online. The Coordination Unit is also responsible for the planning of tasks in case of urgent and unexpected circumstances.

The Unit of Communication and Social Media mainly aims at increasing the visibility and the recognition of the cooperative by informing citizens about the operations and the principles/objectives of the cooperative on social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Every three months, the unit coordinates the publication of “Cooperative News,” keeps updates the cooperative website, and shares any demand of interviews and news from the press and social media, with the members. The members decide together how the cooperative would respond to this demand.

The Organization Unit aims to grow communication and solidarity with similar alternative food initiatives in İstanbul and Turkey. It also develops new ideas and invites members to bring solutions together to the issues that appear as constant problems in the cooperative. It sometimes supports the Education Unit in preparation for pieces of training for new members to facilitate their integration. The volunteers of Kadıköy Cooperative prioritize the expansion of urban consumer food cooperatives. Therefore, they give utmost importance to share their experiences — their faults, inadequacies, and learnings, as well as motivations, dreams, and plans of collaborations with similar initiatives. In this way, the cooperative inspires and guides other groups in different localities to form their own collective and participatory food cooperatives compatible with the dynamics of their neighborhoods. In this regard, the Organization Unit is responsible for responding to the meeting demands and inquiries of such groups that have plans of forming a consumer food cooperative. It organizes meetings with groups that plan to establish a consumer food cooperative, to share experiences, and try to

respond to their questions. It also arranges once or twice in a monthly meetings where the organization unit members and other cooperative members meet with citizens to inform them about cooperative activities and invite citizens to become volunteers in this cooperative work. These organizational activities are essential because it makes the cooperative a more participatory and public place than many other consumer cooperatives in İstanbul. The establishment of this first neighborhood-scale ecological, consumer-led food cooperative in İstanbul has motivated, inspired, and guided many citizens who wish to build similar initiatives in their neighborhoods. Thirteen consumer food cooperatives and initiatives have been founded in only three years (January 2017-January 2020), with more or less similar motivations and principles. Formerly Kadıköy Coop volunteers also initiated two consumer cooperatives (Göztepe Coop and Yerdeniz Coop in Yeldeğirmeni) in April and December 2019 and very recently a cooperative initiative in Maltepe. They have similar motivations and working models, already having a similar cultural capital (all theoretical knowledge on the Turkish agri-food system and food sovereignty movement) and social capital (a similar network of producers and consumers). The increasing popularity and support to Kadıköy Cooperative by the Kadıköy residents and the intense efforts of Kadıköy Cooperative to inform, guide, and motivate other groups are also crucial factors in the expansion of similar cooperatives. The enlargement of this network and the efforts for a collective and participatory food politics are hopeful. It might increase the collaboration of these cooperatives hopefully to plan and manage together their orders through joint logistics and common storage facilities. These common plans are now discussed together as strategies for decreasing the product prices by reducing transportation costs and increasing the support to producers by procuring a higher volume of products.

The Unit of Education and Research aims at the excellent transfer of knowledge concerning the cooperative operations and principles to the newcomers, by organizing training and tracking the learning process with mentors volunteered for each new volunteer. These are

not top-down training where the Education Unit “teaches” these principles and workings, but they are more like interactive discussions. Participating in these pieces of training, however, is the prerequisite of being a volunteer in Kadıköy Cooperative. This training program helps new volunteers to embrace the cooperative’s non-hierarchical, democratic values and to understand its main objectives and principles from the beginning of its participation. It facilitates the transfer of existing knowledge as soon as possible in a way that the new member does not feel herself/himself unequal or insufficient compared to others. Hence, training is vital to sustain equal and horizontal relations and avoid the domination of some over the newcomers. This unit also organizes training programs for the self-development of volunteers. In these activities, volunteers read and discuss some materials like articles and movies concerning the agri-food system, discuss and write collectively what they understand, for example, from the “food sovereignty” as a concept. The Education Unit prepares a report from these collective discussions. The fact that there are among the cooperative volunteers some masters and Ph.D. students, academics, and researchers from different areas, including food and agricultural-related fields, facilitates the merging of the practical discussions with the theory on food and agriculture. The internal pieces of training and workshops strengthen the theoretical knowledge of cooperative volunteers. The volunteers also use this knowledge in their interactions with other groups. The “food sovereignty” concept is started to be used in the public space by the members of Kadıköy Cooperative and Çiftçi-Sen and then embraced now by every consumer food cooperative. The Education Unit also organized many public workshops such as “Food Sovereignty and the Privatization of Sugar-Beet Factories,” “Food Sovereignty and the New Regulation on Local Landrace seeds,” to expand the discussions of food sovereignty around practical developments on agriculture and food in Turkey.

The Unit of Food Products and Producer Relations search for new ecological producers, primarily cooperatives, which conform to the cooperative’s product and production criteria.

This research is based on own web searches, the references of Çiftçi-Sen and other consumer food cooperatives, as well as of the existing producers and producer cooperatives. The producers and producer cooperative can also contact the cooperative, and their products can be added to the cooperative's product portfolio if the product and production relations are considered appropriate. This unit sends the producers a form to fill in detail to examine the production conditions, what type of seeds and fertilizers are used, the persons working in the whole production process, etc. Afterward, a member of this unit makes a phone call, and reference checks if possible; whether there are consumer food cooperatives, producers, or producer organizations that can confirm this information, if necessary. Sometimes, if a volunteer is visiting somewhere near the production area, s/he visits that producer. Usually, it is the Unit of Product-Producer Relations that decides whether to work with that producer. However, the unit shares all information in the weekly meeting and the reports on the common archive on Google Drive. There are some cases where the unit consults the opinions of other members for the decision. For instance, the cooperative was not used to sell fresh fruit and vegetables, being afraid of food spoilage and rottenness. Nonetheless, there was a considerable demand by consumers, and the cooperative members decided collectively to give a try for a while. The first fresh fruits and vegetables to order were determined together, not by the Food Products Unit, as this was an unusual order. It is also this unit that plans and proposes visits to producers and organizes this collective activity, in coordination with related units, and sometimes with other cooperatives and organizations. The Unit of Product-Producer Relations does not take responsibility for the relations with each producer. However, each volunteer is responsible for managing all relations and food order process with one producer. So, a volunteer becomes in close contact with a producer. S/he checks the stocks regarding her/his products and keeps available these products based on the average consumption of that food. The one to one communication helps developing cordial relations between the volunteer and the producer,

where the producer can share the problems and difficulties s/he faces regarding the production, and each part asks a question or asks for support without any hesitation.

There is also a working unit for non-alimentary products such as ecological balms, soaps, and candles. The Non-Alimentary Unit is responsible for the research of new products conforming to the collectively defined criteria, ordering of testers, and managing the whole information exchange with the producer, especially utilizing “product information forms.” This unit is formed later because the cooperative was not able to sell these products officially. It is because there were almost no small-scale ecological products in this category that have production permits and correct etiquettes conforming to the current regulations. However, as the demand for these eco-friendly products increased, these producers, for instance, the Soap House of Yirca Female Organization in Soma, also completed legal requirements to sell them in these solidary platforms. Conforming to such legal procedures is yet another costly and challenging process for these small organizations that also do not know how to proceed in this complicated bureaucracy. They demand the facilitation of such procedures for small-scale ecological production, especially for female organizations

The Financial Unit manages book-keeping, payments, price setting, and cash audits and works in cooperation with an independent accountant and a lawyer to conform to the legal requirements. It complies with all legal procedures beginning from the foundation of the cooperative, including the formation and update of the cooperative legal code. It follows up statutory record-keeping, checks, and prepares legally required monthly, periodically, and annual transactions and reports. It prepares profit and loss account statement plans and makes budget planning as well as implements all processes regarding the General Assembly. It is the Financial Unit which arranges all payments to the producers based on the cash flow and the order flow. The payments to producers are made no longer than a month after the order is given, and all producers make sure that they get the fair compensation of their labor given this time

interval. Also, the Financial Unit sets the final sales prices of products. The costs of the cooperative such as cargo expenses, the expenses of the cooperative store (electricity and water bills, rent, condominium fee), and the solidarity fund are added on the products by distributing these amounts to the price of each product offered by the producers. These add to the products are not evenly distributed. For instance, considering that basic alimentary needs like bulghur and lentils shall be more accessible to a larger population, the expenses are added to a lesser degree compared to more luxury products such as gruyere cheese and honey.

The Technical Coordination Unit handles all technical and technological matters concerning the needs of the cooperative, such as keeping the computer system secure and updated, developing, and updating the stock tracking and pre-accountancy programs. Finally, the Archive Unit archives and arranges all documents on Google Drive commonly used by all units, so that existing members and even future members could follow all processes and documents transparently and adequately.

Now, I would like to move on to how the routine decision-making process works. The cooperative volunteers meet every Thursday evening for 3 hours. Each week, until two days before the meeting, all discussion topic suggestions are e-mailed by the members who wish to make a suggestion or have a question. The Coordination Unit categorizes these questions under some topics, and one member of the Coordination Unit gives voice to the person who asks the question/makes the suggestion. At the beginning of each meeting, working units report their work and recent developments regarding preannounced issues. Then each cooperative member who wants to contribute to the discussion on predetermined agenda comments on the topics one by one. The moderator of that week's meeting recognizes equally the voice of all and avoids the dominance of some over others. The decisions are made based on consensus, the common decision of all members in the meetings. It means that even if only one person is not convinced by the arguments of the other members, the suggestion will not be implemented. Alternatively,

the moderator needs to postpone the decision until further discussion, if it is a complicated issue. It is because the cooperative denies the majoritarian democracy and values that each members' ideas are equally important. Thus, decisions are not made, ignoring any member. They are implemented by relevant working units and/or additional working groups if needed, for instance, to join the co-organization of the Workshop of Food Communities and Cooperatives in İstanbul or a cooperative workshop in Karaburun Science Congress. This working group is formed by volunteering people for this task and some members of the Organization Unit. Similarly, a working group may be formed to make a forecast about the volume of fresh food that can be ordered for the first time, as the cooperative members decided to start selling fresh fruits. This group would be consisting of other volunteers for this task in addition to some members of the Unit for Products-Producer Relations if this unit is already busy with some other tasks and the unit members ask for help. Cooperative volunteers gather at weekly meetings where they discuss together the agenda they shape.

There is officially a cooperative president and an executive board. However, a new volunteer cannot even realize who is the president, if s/he does not ask. It is because these titles do not mean anything in the cooperative and bring no privileges but only some official responsibilities. The official general assembly is organized each year, but the decisions are already made in a prior meeting altogether, so that each volunteer –even s/he is not an official member of the cooperative– can say her/his words and participate in the decision-making process. It is not the cooperative president or executive board members who join public events and panels as a speaker. To the contrary, one new volunteer is encouraged to join such events and speak in this public event with a more experienced member if s/he wishes, so that new members do not feel less capable or less informed but get more motivated to take part in the organization. I became speaker in a large public panel on cooperatives “*Halk için Kooperatifler Çalıştayı*” in Hopa, as a member for only three months, representing the Kadıköy Cooperative

with another member. It was the most encouraging moment for me during my volunteering experience because I met so many people from the network of both producer and consumer cooperatives. This strategy of the cooperative is crucial not only to encourage new members to take more roles in the cooperative but also to avoid the prominence of only a group of people as the ones who have certain information and acquaintance of some people from this network. These strategies are, of course, developed based on previous experiences. All information and contact numbers, all reports of each working unit and weekly meetings, all notes from producer visits, and more are shared openly with all members on Google Drive. A mentor volunteers for transmitting all knowledge about the cooperative, such as working units, the operations in the cooperative store, producers, and introduces the new-comer the documents shared transparently on Google Drive. They also open the cooperative store together for the sales until the new member feels ready to open the store by herself/himself, being capable of managing the sale on the sale system and using cash register as well as of giving information about the products and answering the questions of consumers who shop from there about the cooperative. It is important to note here that the cooperative store does not belong to anybody but it is commonly used and produced a place where alternative social relations are tried to be generated. Or in Stavrides's words, it is a space that includes new-comers and is organized by the participation of equal members of a community which recreates it constantly. This quality "reconfigures it incessantly as a network of contested, reinterpreted and re-evaluated spatial relations" (2016, p. 262). The cooperative does not sell the foods online because the members consider the very interaction with consumers essential for introducing why citizens join this cooperative as volunteers and what the cooperative does currently along with those objectives. Kadıköy Cooperative volunteers always emphasize the importance of attracting and interacting with all consumers to widen the cooperation and its impact by expressing the *raison d'être* of the cooperative to as many citizens as possible. These kinds of interactions with consumers also

prevent the conceptualization of the cooperative just another food channel like organic stores and also creates opportunities for getting more volunteers.

The organizational rationale of the cooperative is different. The primary concern of the cooperative is not to feed consumers who have food consciousness; it aims at everyone. For example, shopping from a food community requires an awareness; you have to be aware of this social network somehow, you need to attend this network. These are filters... The cooperatives do not necessitate this theoretically. It is because we have a legal status and a cooperative store – a physical place to enter. The cooperatives offer the chance to reach a wider population as their doors are open. The existence of this physical space also enables face to face relations, a traditional social relationship form that creates a ground for doing something together. Of course, to activate these practical opportunities, cooperatives need to expand and create mechanisms to absorb populations that are different from the existing consumers. This requires putting lots of efforts, touching, and transforming each other.

The cooperative embraces building social solidarity as a crucial principle of the cooperative.

The cooperative does not only show solidarity with small-scale ecological farmers but also supports many disadvantaged communities, such as Migrant Women and Kadın Kadına Migrant Kitchen, by selling their prepaid products in their “solidarity shelf” that is separate from ecological food shelves. There are also products of Ali İsmail Korkmaz Foundation and Kazova workers on these shelves to show solidarity. The members sometimes share food boxes with unfairly dismissed workers to show their support by using the relatively small amount of money in their “solidarity fund.” Sometimes, some money in the solidarity fund is utilized to buy cat and dog foods and shelters. These foods are distributed with the help of neighborhood residents. The cooperative also invites consumers to buy some food and leave them in a solidarity box so that those in need could take some. These activities reflect the cooperative’s holistic understanding of solidarity and the will of building more strongly the communication and collaboration with other initiatives. Like Kadıköy Cooperative, almost all consumer food cooperatives in İstanbul adopt this holistic solidarity perspective. Dayanışma Coop and Salkım Coop, for instance, shared solidarity boxes with workers in times of crisis and unemployment, such as during the Covid-19 pandemic. Yeryüzü Coop started delivering food orders for people older than 64 years-old who are not able to go shopping during the curfew because of the Covid-19. These ecological consumer food cooperatives all aim to expand the accessibility of these healthy and ethical foods to a larger society by developing strategies to reduce the logistics,

storage, rent costs through collaborations. However, it is not yet possible that a blue-collar worker with a minimum wage can access all the products sold there, despite some the prices of staple food are intentionally lower than the actual expenses. I had elaborated, for instance, that Kadıköy Coop does not negotiate the prices with producers to offer fair prices but the Financial Unit adds more on the prices of luxury products to lower the prices of staple food. Or, Dayanışma Coop requests a little reduction in prices of some products from the prices so that economically disadvantaged people can also access more easily these foods. These calculations, common strategies and collaborations, and solidary acts in times of crisis are essential to broaden the scope of solidarity comprising wider populations. Besides, Kadıköy Coop also expects the citizens to show solidarity with the cooperative, inviting them openly to become “coop friends” if they do not have time to be “coop volunteer.” For instance, while moving to another store, the coop asked for the help of neighbors and the volunteers of other cooperatives to carry the equipment, shelves, and foods to the next store. The initial food shelves of the cooperative store were built by a coop friend. An extra fridge is offered by a coop friend when more dairy started to be sold. This help of coop friends can be anything from the making of a professional anniversary video for the coop to performing a small music concert on that special day to attract more people to the event. All these requests for help from the coop friends are usually announced on social media. However, Kadıköy Coop accepts no help or funding from organizations and companies that the cooperative considers as being disrespectful to ecology, human rights, and unfair to farmers and workers in general. It also does not join ecological events that are sponsored by companies that contradict the values of Kadıköy Coop.

However, as Foucault (1998) says, the relationships of power are everywhere, and a cooperative which strongly aims at horizontal relations is also not bereft of power relations. Foucault argues that “micro-power” is seen in places that are away from the central locations of macro-power such as the state power (p. 26). This operation of micro-power needs to be

analyzed for understanding the confrontations and problems that might be faced in newly emerging horizontal organizations. I observed a few members' attempts of dominating others by referring to their previous experiences in other organizations and more effort spent in the cooperative. There were also times when these members were being criticized for making hierarchies overemphasizing the time and effort they put in the cooperative work by excluding those who still made a great effort for the cooperative operations but could only spend less time than them. Such attempts were considered as creating "labor hierarchies" or "experience hierarchies" and a few people who attempted to do so were always remarked and refused because Kadıköy Cooperative volunteers consider the horizontal and equal relations among members as important as establishing alternative agri-food relations. A solidary resistance emerged among the volunteers "in the strategic field of power relations" to refuse the overvaluation of their words and actions compared to those of others and underestimation of the efforts of those who are "inexperienced" in such organizations (p. 96). This turned into a kind of silent competition that slowed down the efficient operations in the cooperative, yet then created the ground for fertile discussion to solve some structural problems to prevent such further pressure by some over the others.

One of the reasons why these tensions were experienced was the fact that the ages and political backgrounds of the members in Kadıköy Cooperative are varying. The younger generation (25-40 ages) were mostly consisting of those who are politicized starting from the Gezi Resistance and prioritize the equal participation and horizontal relations in the initiatives they form collectively in their locality. They give the utmost importance to differentiate these initiatives as "new-generation" referring to the participatory, equal, and horizontal relations that are tried to be established in their organizations. The members from the older generation (41-55 ages) had experiences in some leftist organizations before, where members were not usually bothered by the hierarchies in the organization. This heterogeneity creates an opportunity to

generate very creative ideas and works in the cooperative from various perspectives. However, this very opportunity sometimes becomes a source of conflicts between those who want to get more credit for their labor and ideas for being more experienced and those who prioritize the sustainability of the cooperative as a “new-generation” cooperative, with the spirit of Gezi. They mostly emphasize that the Gezi spirit enabled their participation in such initiatives that would be otherwise excluding many potential members as politically homogenous and mostly close communities. The other main reason was that the cooperative dynamics change as the number of volunteers and the volume of products increase and the cooperative becomes well-known compared to the past. The responsibilities increase as the cooperative works enlarge, despite the number of volunteers also increased from five to forty in three years. For instance, Kadıköy Cooperative prioritizes the expansion of new-generation consumer food cooperatives in İstanbul. Therefore, the Organization Unit was constantly organizing meetings with groups who wish to form similar organizations to guide and encourage them. After a while, the member of the Organization Unit becomes not being able to attend all these meeting demands and handle all other responsibilities with only 4-5 members. This increases the need for other members’ help to this unit and thus the criticisms of those who say “they are not doing their work.” The structural inadequacies resulted from changing dynamics, along with the more idealistic and sometimes patronizing attitude of a few volunteers, increases the burden on each volunteer. This even started to intimidate the potential volunteers, as they feel the pressure of intense cooperative work there, in the monthly meetings organized to describe detailly the works and the responsibilities in this cooperative and invite other citizens to join the cooperative. The volunteers also analyzed this structural problem after several internal workshops regarding the recent problems and decided to revise the organization model in a way to disburden the responsibilities and encourage the participation of citizens who wish to contribute to this cooperative work as much as they can. This decision was hardly made after months-long

meetings because it was a complicated structural issue and 2-3 members were not convinced to consider this as a structural problem related to the need for a revised working model, but not the irresponsibility and unwillingness of certain members.

During this period, for instance, I, as a volunteer, had to join each weekly meeting and inform the others about my excuse on the WhatsApp group if I cannot attend the meeting successively for the second time. I was spending nearly 3-4 hours in a week for my responsibilities in the Organization Unit, and open the cooperative store for 4 hours in a month. There were also many e-mails, learning/discussion material to read, publicly open activities to organize and attend, such as the workshops on the landraces and the new regulation, the privatization of sugar-beet factories, etc. This was an idealistic and huge responsibility for a volunteer, which certainly increased the solidarity of Kadıköy Cooperative with a larger number of producers that they choose meticulously, with other existing and potential consumer-led initiatives, and the public visibility of Kadıköy Cooperative in this area. However, the tiring responsibilities were reasons for losing 3 to 5 members in every 6 months. These members are usually replaced by 4-5 new members in the same months but the number of volunteers stayed fixed in 2018. The good point in this circulation is that there is a very efficient transmission of knowledge to new-comers and the new-comers are strongly encouraged to take responsibility and say their opinions without hesitation. The bad point is that despite new-comers, the number of volunteers does not increase much and thus the intensity of work in the cooperative does not decrease considerably.

The period when I was a volunteer in Kadıköy Cooperative, the conflicts got bigger because of the reasons I explained above and five volunteers who accuse others of being irresponsible and unwilling to accept the ideals of the cooperative terminated their legal membership and quitted the cooperative. It was for the first time that the cooperative experienced such a conflict and lost five members at a time, thus it was hard times for the

cooperative. Afterward, the cooperative members decided collectively to revise their working model. Each working unit worked on revising their operations, to categorize each point in their widening operation, design all the processes in handling an issue and making a decision among the unit members as well as all interactions and possible collaborations in their working processes. These revisions are summarized and included in the Model Revision Draft prepared by the Organization Unit and the related working group. In additional monthly meetings, for months, the members discussed categorically this revised model draft. The revised model aimed at making clearer the job descriptions of each unit, so that there would be less confusion about at which point and how the other units would offer their collaboration and take their responsibility and make easier following the work processes.

For example, it is now clearly defined based on experience that matters and when the Coordination Unit is responsible for reminding the Organization Unit of this and that responsibility. Framing these generally was important because this prevented the intervention and sometimes disturbing warnings of random volunteers such as “the Education Unit does not work at all.” Such gaps in the working plan was resulting in intimidation and the decrease in the motivation of some volunteers while increasing the domination of others.

Also, being a volunteer in the cooperative used to require strict responsibilities. This new working model has brought some flexibility to the duties of each volunteer. For instance, the cooperative volunteers do not have to attend anymore every weekly meeting, if/when they do not want to contribute to the general discussion, despite they are encouraged to participate in these gatherings. However, they need to attend a working unit and implement their duties there. Each week, only the participation of one unit member is required to report their operations. The cooperative store is still opened by the volunteers, yet the volunteers do not have to attend any more every weekly meeting and public organization, they can more easily open the store.

As the cooperative becomes more popular in the Caferağa neighborhood in Kadıköy, the cooperative moved to a bigger store in the same street and started to open on the weekdays between 10 a.m to 9 p.m. The store was used to open only between 7 and 9 p.m. because the workforce was not sufficient and the cooperative was not ready to open the store in working hours in order not to be charged by the authorities. It is because all the product etiquettes of the small independent farmers needed to comply with the food codex and it took some time to adjust to these legal requirements because of the bureaucratic and financial difficulties. In the end, the cooperative decided to get the labeling and packaging permission to be able to sell some non-packaged foods like fresh fruits and vegetables, hazelnuts, etc. Despite the wider range of working hours of the cooperative store, there is no difficulty to open the store now. There is no officially employed person in the cooperative store but there are unemployed volunteers in the cooperative and they are encouraged to open the store on payment in turn. The participatory character of the cooperative is now stronger and horizontal and equal relations are still sustained among the volunteers, as a key principle.

Thus, the conflictual period has given birth to an environment that welcomes more new volunteers and does not exhaust them too quickly. Each organization aiming to establish horizontal relations can experience difficulties in power relations. For this reason, the ambitions of building and sustaining equal, non-hierarchical, democratic organizations require eliminating the potential problems in such organizations and their negative impacts by being in close communication with and learning from those in similar organizations.

Fikret Adaman (2018) states that in a context in which private property is idealized, and market mechanisms direct most of the economic relations, cooperative structures that are not included in commodity relations and built around mutual production, reciprocity, and self-management constitute our commonwealth. (p. 120-121). He underlines the need for analyzing the common problems experienced in self-managing horizontal structures. Adaman states that

there are two main reasons for experiencing asymmetric power relations in self-managerial structures. The first of these asymmetries is the labor-division asymmetries (p. 121), which can lead some members to dominate others. Kadıköy Cooperative pursues strategies such as defining precisely the responsibilities of each working unit as well as identifying the small gaps of definition regarding how each unit takes a step in realizing interrelated tasks. These gaps that may occur over time create problems like the blaming of some groups the others for not doing their job and considering their labor as the only reason for the sustainability of the organization. Another important mechanism to prevent this asymmetry is that the duration of being in a unit is limited to 3 to 9 months, so that everyone knows and experiences jobs and processes in different units, and that nobody is over-specialized in any field.

Adaman states that the second main reason for asymmetrical power relations is discrimination towards some identities. As Fikret Adaman puts it, discriminatory expressions and attitudes are rejected in the vast majority of self-managerial structures, but it is not always easy to implement in practice. Kadıköy Cooperative does not allow discrimination in principle. However, including the period as the Kadıköy Coop Enterprise, for six years, two or three volunteers have been warned for having a disturbing masculine language and attitude. It is important to create mechanisms to address such disturbances to start a constructive discussion for the healthy continuity of the self-managing structures. Hence, a Women's Unit was born in the cooperative over time, to create a ground to problematize these issues and bring into the table in common meetings.

Of course, we cannot say that Women's Unit will be free from power relations. For instance, in the period when the power relations escalated in the cooperative, I also witnessed that a woman member in the Kadıköy Cooperative tried to leave some women in a difficult situation by sharing the WhatsApp group texts with all cooperative members without the consent of other women. According to the principle of equality in the cooperative, there is no

mechanism to 'disband' a group or anybody. When such situations arise, these issues are collectively discussed, and the members share their feelings and thoughts, reminding that no one in the cooperative shall be discriminatory or aggressive.

Indeed, people with these attitudes choose to leave the cooperative after a while. It is because there are no discriminatory criteria such as adopting a leftist ideology or being a member of a political party to join the Kadıköy Cooperative, but its egalitarian, non-discriminatory values are clear. After a few incidents that jeopardize equal and horizontal relations in the cooperative, the members considered defining these values in their revised model script. Here, even more important than the writing of these values is that the existence of the ground in which these discussions and negotiations can be held respectfully in the cooperative. Like the participatory and inclusive environment, the possibility of such debate is itself quite lacking in Turkey. The construction of solidarity-based and egalitarian cultures as we see in organizations like Kadıköy Coop is vital for the existence of such constructive discussions, and vice versa.

I mentioned above the consensus mechanism in decision making in Kadıköy Cooperative. The consensus principle is sometimes the reason for not progressing quickly in the cooperative, as it requires the full consent of everyone. However, this principle is very critical for the participatory democracy, which is rarely seen in Turkey, to establish an alternative understanding of democracy in the public space. Of course, there are criticisms of this mechanism brought especially by those who do not apply consensus, including production organizations. They consider that it is a waste of time to postpone many important issues despite the majority is achieved. Those who bring this criticism point out the necessity to establish a kind of “governance framework” in Adaman’s words (p. 122) by establishing facilitating structures. Although I do not doubt that such structures would speed up the operation, I think that the important thing is not to ignore participatory democracy to proceed fast.

For example, in Kadıköy Coop, all critical decisions are taken in the common meetings called “kitchen meetings,” while decisions about routine operations are decided by the members of a relevant working unit, according to their job description. Only more complicated decisions, decisions regarding the situations that have not been encountered before, are carried to kitchen meetings. Indeed, these working units are also facilitating structures. However, this criticism suggests the establishment of some commissions to make decisions in different areas, which, as Adaman puts it, poses a serious risk in creating hierarchical relations in the organization. The emergence of hierarchal relationships would jeopardize the claims of new-generation consumer cooperatives for building alternative organizational models. The consensus mechanism is an effective practice for participatory democracy in the new-generation consumer food cooperatives as the number of members is proper for bringing it into life. As each cooperative is established on a neighborhood scale, when the number of members increases, it can spread to different neighborhoods as it has happened in Kadıköy, and continue these decision-making mechanisms. It is hard to implement in producer cooperatives because of their scale, yet they can also establish non-hierarchical models with a system that is appropriate for their dynamics, through units/commissions such as voluntary working councils and village representatives as it is in Hopa ay Cooperative. Of course, they need to operate such commissions and councils in producer cooperatives, too, without risking transparency and participation.

Now, I would like to discuss further the consensus mechanism with its advantages and disadvantages by addressing the Kadıköy Cooperative experience. For instance, various discussions have been held for a long time in Kadıköy Coop on how to establish relations with municipalities without risking self-organization and self-management ideals. Some volunteers rejected any interaction with and support from the Kadıköy Municipality, arguing that collaboration with the municipality would threaten their autonomy. No support is demanded from the municipality at the expense of these few members, but the members of the cooperative

continued these discussions. Meanwhile, the dynamics of cooperatives in the city have changed and similar types of urban consumption cooperatives have increased. The cooperative members also impacted each other throughout these discussions.

Today, these cooperatives in İstanbul design collaborations with the municipalities in internal meetings and meetings with other cooperatives, as well as by coming together with the district municipalities and the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality. If Kadıköy Cooperative used to take a majoritarian decision, someone would feel their words worthless and might leave the cooperative. Now, the increasing solidarity environment, the positive position of the recent metropolitan municipality administration regarding cooperatives, and the exemplary cooperation of the Seferihisar and Ovacık municipalities with producer cooperatives have made each actor lean towards the idea of collaboration. Kadıköy Cooperative still refuses to accept funds from any institution including municipalities and does not stand together with any corporation, but considers that it is now time to bring our common demands and practices into the table. Thus, their consensus-based decision today is to give importance to the governance by drawing the borders of the collaboration themselves. The municipalities decided to provide free of charge stalls for the consumer and producer cooperatives in public markets, in Kadıköy, Beşiktaş, and Şişli.

Furthermore, Adaman (2018) suggests that the removal of power asymmetries does not always guarantee the self-management of an organization free of problems, and elaborates on three problematic matters. The first matter he draws attention is related to the problem of whether it is better to proceed via facilitating commissions or by building consensus in decision-making, which I discussed above. Second is the matter of how these organizations keep their relations with stakeholders and manage governance (p. 122). Regarding this issue, the stakeholders of a new-generation consumer food cooperatives are primarily consumers and producers, as well as the municipalities, syndicates, and universities that can support the sample

analyses of products, and various unions can be defined as stakeholders. I believe that having relations with potential stakeholders by making no concessions to their autonomy but not denying governance-based cooperation is important for these new-generation consumer food cooperatives. It is also crucial that each cooperative decides itself on how to establish these relations with stakeholders and balance delicately between their autonomy and cooperation.

The third problem that Adaman puts forward is how the value created in self-managerial structures is shared (p. 123). I argue that the most plausible option is to decide this collectively in each self-managing consumer food cooperative but also consider the equality principle in this regard, too. The income generated in the Kadıköy Cooperative is not shared because the cooperative spends this money on the payments to producers as well as regular costs such as cargo expenses and rent, and solidarity funds. Besides, this value share does not necessarily have to be monetary only. Members can obtain basic food needs free of charge from the cooperative while working in the shop. The detailed planning of the works done by the members in different units in a way that requires more or less equal labor power and having rotation between working units are some strategies to avoid labor hierarchy, which are critical for ensuring fair distribution.

Evaluation

The new generation consumer cooperative structures may face many problems I discussed above, on maintaining horizontality, democratic participation, and self-management. It is impossible to predict and list all these. It is each urban consumer food cooperative I examine here has its own model according to its local dynamic needs and member profile even though most share similar principles. Also, the relations are dynamic, thus the organizations face new problems as they move on. Therefore, what is more important is to have fertile ground for discussions in its unique model. Those who have this open and equal discussion environment that I argue Kadıköy Cooperative has can overcome these problems more successfully.

All ecological consumer food cooperatives in İstanbul and Turkey do not have the same organizational model with Kadıköy Cooperative. However, it is possible to argue that they share the main goals of building solidarity in favor of the small ecological producers and consumers, by inviting citizens to be part of these emerging organizations, where they can voice their word for more participatory food and agricultural politics. Thus, as one of the Kadıköy Cooperative volunteers also suggests below, the expansion of such initiatives through common strategies and the solidarity that they will enlarge at the local and national levels seem vital.

We establish a link between our interest and the benefit of society in general because we know that unless the vast majority wants this system to change, this system will not change. How is it going to be? We will widen our network by including those outside our network and expanding our coverage area. We will activate the relationships on different networks so that they can interact with each other. I think these relationships will accumulate and trigger many other things. Kadıköy Cooperative will not do this alone. What I dream of is the cooperation of many initiatives. This is how we will get empowered (Kadıköy Cooperative Volunteer).

8.2.2. Kadıköy Cooperative as a New-Generation Consumer Food Cooperative with Alternative Political Rationality and the Construction of Alternative Public Space

So far, I have discussed the alternative organizational model of the Kadıköy Cooperative. Now, I will discuss what kind of alternative political rationality it offers and how it contributes to the building of an alternative public space, with this alternative organizational model. It is necessary to discuss how organizations such as the Kadıköy Cooperative will contribute to the creation of an alternative public space by redefining the political and the political subject in food and agricultural politics. This discussion will also help to understand why these emerging initiatives can be defined as “new-generation” cooperatives.

Akçay and Kocagöz (2018) ask a crucial question: “can we reconsider an alternative political topography departing from our experiences in the grey zone that exists at the intersection of the current and the emerging possibilities?” (p. 35). I consider this question very important because despite having dark days today, some recent organizations and perspectives have emerged as new possibilities after the Gezi Resistance and try to offer some alternatives from within a grey zone. It is thus essential to analyze the possibility of alternative participatory

politics, despite the scope of the network of local, horizontal, and participatory organizations that emerged after the Gezi Resistance still being limited. I want to emphasize that the new-generation consumer food cooperatives studied in this research have concrete efforts as well as significant motivation, and hope to build an alternative participatory politics of citizens in food and agriculture, even though these initiatives are not mature yet. The actors who believe in their transformative power as citizens take action in network-type small-scale organizations. I argue that Kadıköy Cooperative contributes to the construction of an alternative political subject in this grey zone, by making the matter of organization as its one of main concerns, in this solidarity network of food initiatives. In the construction of alternative political rationality, it considers food as commons. I will elaborate later in detail what I mean by commoning of food by referring to the literature and the position of Kadıköy Cooperative in relation to this. However, briefly, the food as commons movement considers food as a “social construct” with open frontiers to challenge the notions of food merely as a commodity (Vivero-Pol, 2017) and thus the hegemony of neoliberal market relations, where citizens described as consumers constitute the backbone (Ferrando and Vivero-Pol, 2017). I will discuss how Kadıköy Cooperative and other new-generation consumer food cooperatives regard food and seeds as our commons, how they relate their activism with commons movements and the importance of considering food as commons in the food sovereignty movement. However, before this, I want to address the politics that Kadıköy Cooperative pursues in this alternative public space, which is quite related to its alternative organizational form that I examined above.

Various detailed analyses can be made from different perspectives regarding the Gezi Resistance, but as I mentioned above, the participatory experience in Gezi Park and afterward is worth analyzing to understand the recently emerging horizontal organizations based on self-management. During the Gezi resistance, citizens experienced self-organization in the park in many areas such as cleaning, security, shelter, environment, and collective decision-making.

The excitement and synergy of this experience continued in neighborhood forums and solidarity groups with polyphony, democratic participation, and labor divisions. Akçay and Kocagöz (2018, p. 36) explain that the forums and neighborhood solidarity groups created 1) an environment where everyone can speak up and hear the opinions of each other about everything, even of those that they have not met before, 2) a place where citizens address a large range of topics in the forum area and then discuss what they can do collectively to solve these problems at their neighborhood scale. Thus, they emerged 3) as the possibility of establishing concrete participatory politics at the local level by taking responsibility in their locality.

We live in a political atmosphere where politics is conceived of as an area where only political parties (or the economic social organizations that are the extensions of these parties) can act, because of the state's "enclosure" of the political sphere (Akçay and Kocagöz, 2018, p. 32-33). Therefore, it is possible to interpret the forum and neighborhood solidarities that emerged after Gezi and the increasing presence and visibility of participatory, democratic, horizontal organizations like Kadıköy Cooperative as citizens' efforts to establish alternative publicity and alternative political rationality. In other words, even though the state has managed to repress mass protests after the Gezi resistance, the organizations that have emerged from the Gezi spirit have not stopped the struggle. These issues did not disappear suddenly after the Gezi resistance, There are political actors who do not want to let the state colonize political space and aim to expand their influence by establishing networks in this grey zone. Kadıköy Cooperative presents itself as a community whose intellectual foundations are formed in Gezi solidarity groups and forums and relate its emergence directly to Gezi. The idea of getting organized around food at the neighborhood level emerged in discussions held during the forums and solidarity groups. With the participation and organization of solidarity groups in Kadıköy, a workshop was organized on February 1st, 2014. The Farmers' Union, Boğaziçi Members Consumer Food Cooperative (BÜKOOP), Tohum İzi Association, and the Anadolu'da Yaşam

Cooperative attended this workshop as experienced actors, and all these actors reflected upon an organizational model suitable for a consumer food cooperative that is to be established in Kadıköy.

Figure 5. The Facebook Post of Kadıköy Coop: Gezi Spirit Remains.



After various breaks, as Kadıköy Coop Enterprise, the volunteers created a set of common principles and an organizational model, drawing upon the discussions made in the workshop in 2015. During this period until the cooperative was officially established, in March 2015 volunteers sold the first 50 food boxes that consisted of a few products. Then this number reached 350 packages in the summer of 2016, by the fifth food boxes event. In this process, volunteers strengthened their contacts in Kadıköy, and prepared themselves intellectually and practically to establish a formal cooperative. Since November 2016, Kadıköy Cooperative has been operating as an official cooperative with a cooperative store in Caferağa neighborhood.

Kadıköy Cooperative volunteers have thus determined the neighborhood area as the location of their political work and created a local struggle against state-capital cooperation in the area of food politics. It adopts some core values and principles that would sustain its alternative stance in food politics, that I described in the previous chapter, and defines food as commons and a political matter. In this way, Kadıköy Cooperative frames food as a matter that concerns everyone. It encourages citizens to become actors, and contribute from their locality and spatiality. It opens alternative spaces, especially to small farmers, with their self-management and cooperative principles, in a context where existing food policies pressurize and render small producers and consumers vulnerable. The volunteers thus contribute to making politics as dissenting subjects, rather than leaving the field of food and agriculture to the domination of capital and/or the state. Therefore, I describe this as a politics of citizens as actors who want to reclaim the enclosed political field that indeed belongs to them, by suggesting that we cannot separate the economic and the social from the politics and, furthermore, that food is a political matter. This alternative organizational model and political rationality are critical, because, as Fırat and Genç (2014) suggest, “the construction of the political subjects require the building, the strengthening, and the expansion of solidarity places and practices of those who are dominated.”

The fact that the Kadıköy Cooperative gives central importance to the construction of an alternative organizational model that always opens the cooperative out, calls out and invites citizens to get involved in Kadıköy Cooperative or another cooperative. This position is a crucial characteristic of Kadıköy Coop and similar new-generation consumer food cooperatives from food communities that are relatively more closed groups. It carries the Kadıköy Cooperative beyond pursuing a policy “for itself.” It invites consumers to be actors in food politics: politics that do not reduce consumers into the consumer choices on the market shelf.

It tries to open up inclusive alternative publicity. Cooperative volunteers express this well, as follows:

The cooperative system is the way of consumers being an actor in the food system. It is because we do not exist solely with the choice we make on the market shelves. Therefore, we try to build an alternative collective practice to the existing agricultural system and the restricted understanding of citizenship, by deciding which product to buy, which farmer to support, what kind of model to build, and how to do it in the form of democratic participation. We do this as a civic initiative. We are different to a corporate and profit-oriented food supplier. We are concerned with the intermediaries and privatizations, or the industrial fodders. We certainly not only procure food or ensure food safety, but our aims and practical impacts are much broader.

We must have a problem with the public, to reconstruct it and build a new organizational form in public space. I think that being a community is not enough. We should be concerned with the public. While we are creating an alternative ontology through the cooperative, we also try to build a discursive field where we talk about and invite the public. For example, there is no clear invitation in food communities; they say come and find us. The ontological ground on which we act is the public ground, and the public space is unlimited. We do not believe that this can happen without getting organized and being inclusive while opening together an alternative public. Otherwise, we cannot change anything.

Since Kadıköy Cooperative is a legal body as a cooperative, it cannot move entirely away from the state and legal requirements, as I already addressed. Thus, it tries to reroute around the obstacles and some formal necessities while trying to offer alternatives under hard conditions. For example, as small producers have difficulty in the labeling and packaging of goods following the food codex, the cooperative tries to guide those who can obtain their label permit about the right procedures, or acquire the labeling permit as Kadıköy Cooperative, to label these products before selling in the cooperative store. The cooperatives also use the luxury products to subsidize the staple foods, so that the staple foods remains more accessible. Food communities do not have to pay VAT on their sales and have no costs like rent and bills; thus, they have an advantage over cooperatives. However, the absence of visible physical space for the sale prevents potential consumers who are not their members from being an actor in the network. For this reason, the Yeryüzü Association decided to transform some of its food communities into a cooperative structure and continue as the Yeryüzü Cooperative. In short, the new-generation consumer food cooperatives do not act entirely autonomously from the market and the state. However, as I have discussed in previous chapters, they offer alternative

production-consumption-distribution relations, in practice, and have a political stance. They try to strengthen their collaboration with each other in a solidary network to increase their impact, thus creating significant ground for expanding the alternative space they try to build in food politics. Moreover, in a country like Turkey where democracy is reduced to elections, elected local governments are transferred to the trustees, and mass street protests are avoided, the existence of such initiatives led by citizens becomes even more precious. It is because they try to create an opportunity for citizens to express themselves in the public sphere and act to impact food and agricultural policies and practices. These initiatives have increased with serious momentum, but of course, it is not possible to see their potential from the outside as their number is still marginal. Yet, their potential can come true, as their network expands to include more the cooperation of various actors such as unions, mass organizations, and other consumer cooperatives. In this way, their voice can be heard more efficiently, and they can exert more pressure on the state in various matters concerning food and agriculture.



The construction of the public is vital in the present context in Turkey. We try to create another alternative, albeit very ambitious, to the existing political system. As citizens, we decide on an issue about ourselves, and we try to implement it. To bring our decisions into life, we establish a division of labor. We build our internal organizational relations bypassing the state's legal framework of the cooperative code. These organizations offer alternatives to problems such as the anti-democratic and unfair distribution in the economy. Of course, these ambitions and practices are not easy to realize right now. The current conjuncture is our most significant disadvantage in this sense. It is very challenging to be able to offer people an alternative in this despair. Our potential is considerable, but not yet fully realized.

Kadıköy Cooperative does not have a statist perspective, in which the state, as we see in traditional statist cooperative mentality, claims to represent the public. However, it is also not a closed community and does not adopt a neoliberal perspective that focuses merely on the organization of the own food needs of volunteers. A volunteer of Kadıköy Cooperative expresses this as follows:

In community-supported agriculture, for example, a group of consumers makes a deal with some farmers and systematically supports them. Of course, there is precious mutual solidarity in this, too, but I feel that it also makes these producers dependent on themselves. The logic, for me, carries the characteristics of the neoliberal period. Although “coop” evokes a corporatist structure to many, in this new cooperative model, we build a new type of cooperation. The engagement of more citizens as actors in such

organizations has central importance here. In other words, we want to return neither to the corporatist nor to the individualistic mentality; we are trying to do something in-between.

Kadıköy Cooperative and similar new-generation cooperatives attach great importance to the collective and fair organization of agricultural production processes. They encourage the organization of producers by directly communicating with them and as their numbers increase. Likewise, the importance Kadıköy Coop gives to the organization of consumers is considerable. It consistently shares experiences with other volunteer groups to motivate and guide them for getting organized by sharing experience. Thus, new-generation consumer food cooperatives try to render both producers and consumers as actors in food politics. Thanks to the trust-based direct relationship and mutual initiatives taken by the organized producers with the organized consumers (consumer cooperatives), new-generation consumer food cooperatives try to bring an “ideal” into life, which imagines a system where producers have control over their production processes and get fair compensation of their labor, and the consumers can access healthy ecological food.

Evaluation

Kadıköy Cooperative has developed into participatory, democratic self-organization through collaboration and acquaintance with groups such as Anadolu’da Yaşam Coop and BÜKOOP, from the neighborhood solidarity groups after Gezi. We can consider these new-generation urban consumer food cooperatives as networks that have evolved into the collaboration of individual social subjects from the social interactions that emerged after the Gezi Resistance based on cooperation, solidarity, and self-organization.

Kadıköy Cooperative builds itself on the solidarity of subjects, small producers and consumers, which are not homogenous but leave aside their individuality in favor of cooperation by engaging in alternative organizations and politics that consider food as our commons. Kadıköy Coop and similar new-generation organizations try to communize a matter like food, which was, to some extent, public and now attempted to be confined to private.

Kadıköy Cooperative does not have a language that calls the state publicity, or identity politics, and operates through self-organization, participatory democracy and self-government, and in a network that has been established a few years ago. The fact that the actors in these food initiatives have a wide variety of background causes makes them heterogeneous structures both within and among themselves, and sometimes leads to internal conflicts in the organization.

Nevertheless, as in the case of the Kadıköy Cooperative, new-generation consumer food cooperatives would be important actors to build alternative political rationality and the alternative public space they try to open, as long as 1) they can clearly define the underlying values and principles that provide an alternative food politics as well as its democratic and participatory organization model, 2) they sustain their democratic and equal discussion-ground when they need to re-discuss their organization in dynamism. In this regard, the strongest features of Kadıköy Cooperative and similar new-generation organizations are their collective consideration on the materiality of social reproduction, the horizontality of social relations among the members, and the importance attached to participatory democracy that involves everyone in the decision-making processes. The structures that are open to the public and have non-discriminatory and equal decisions are also essential to enable collective subjects to express themselves in an alternative public space, for the struggle for food sovereignty.

I argue that a critical aspect of the food sovereignty struggle is the necessity of transforming the “sovereignty” itself, by taking food as a point of departure. Therefore, it is possible to say that these organizations also problematize the sovereignty itself – the corporate sovereignty and state sovereignty. The question of building a new, alternative space is directly related to the struggle for food sovereignty. The construction of peoples’ food sovereignty would not be possible without the coming together of the producer and consumer organizations to create this ground, namely an alternative public space. I will elaborate on how the new-generation consumer cooperatives consider seeds and food as commons, how they relate to

other struggles for commons, and the place of the commons, in the construction of alternative public space and the struggle for food sovereignty. However, I will first make a critical discussion on the commons literature in the following section.

8.3. Commons Literature and the Framing of Food and Seeds as Commons by New-Generation Urban Food Consumers and Local Governments

8.3.1. Critical Review of the Literature on Commons

Garrett Hardin's famous paper "The Tragedy of the Commons" (1968) has opened a significant discussion on commons and is a highly referenced paper in the related literature. He invites us to imagine a pasture he frames as commons. He argues that the open and unlimited access to this shared, exhaustible, resource by each herdsman would lead to overgrazing. He says that this would inevitably result in its destruction, because each "rational herdsman will select to increase the number of his animals" to maximize his gain and that "maximizing the population does not maximize the goods" (p. 1244). He suggests that such communal use of sources thus leads inevitably to "the tragedy of commons" and the self-destruction of humanity. Then he proposes that to prevent this tragedy, there needs to be either a central authority to determine and employ the rules on the use of each source, or a well-established private property regime (p. 1247).

This scenario derives from an individualistic ontology which takes for granted an isolated utilitarian individual, a "self-interested" singular being (Hardin, 1968). This individual is supposedly separated from all other relations and practices in the society, and his/her acts are to be driven only by economic interests with an endless capacity for competition. In this assumption, the rationality of individuals is reduced to that of *homo economicus*, which is uniquely the type of subject depicted by capital in today's neoliberal world (De Angelis and Harvie, 2013, p. 284). In this picture of pasture as commons, commons are depicted only as a commodity.

Elinor Ostrom's studies on commons are significantly crucial in post-Hardian tradition (Berkes, 2009, p. 263). She problematizes Hardin's conceptualization of actors as "caught in an inexorable process of destroying their own resources" (Ostrom, 1990, p. 8) and "motivated not to contribute to the joint effort, but to free-ride on the efforts of others" (Ostrom, 1990, p. 6). She also challenges Hardin's depiction of pasture as commons arguing that this example is instead a case of open-access sources like oceans and atmosphere. Then she argues that communities would set specific rules about access and management for the sustainability of pasture if it were commons and that would avoid the "tragedy" of resource depletion (Ostrom, 2000, p. 335-336). Ostrom (2010, p. 422) conceptualizes commons as a social system that is based on a communal government that frames mechanisms of monitoring and principles. These mechanisms are, for instance, user and resource boundaries and their inspections, harmony with local realities, collective decision-making, conflict resolution arrangements, and inspection of users and resources. She considers commons as "common-pool resources" such as "groundwater basis, grazing areas, irrigation canals, bridges, parking garages, mainframe computers, and streams, lakes, oceans" (Ostrom, 1990, p. 30).

Ostrom and her colleagues in the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASC) also make a distinction between common-pool resources and resource units (e.g., fish removed from a fishery). The latter are individually owned in the community and are "not subject to joint use or appropriation" (Ostrom, 1990, p. 31). They consider commons as a social sphere that is not governed by commodity relations but participatory systems. This conceptualization of commons is a significant contribution to going beyond Hardin's individualistic, utilitarian, and commodity-based understanding of the use of commons. However, the conceptualization of commons by Ostrom and IASC ignores some crucial facts.

As De Angelis and Harvie (2013) suggest, there are many examples of resource units and common property regimes (e.g., community gardens, community kitchens) that are

“pooled together by a community of users, who then establish the governance rule of the common pool” (p. 287) like in the Occupy Movement. These perspectives challenge the conceptualization of self-interested individuals who act with mere economic motivations by replacing this individual with one who has varied motivations and recognizes certain social norms.

Like Ostrom, many other researchers such as Fikret Berkes (2009) and Arun Agrawal (2014) also address that there are many cases of commoning where individuals manage the sustainability of commons by determining specific rules and norms and assuring their employment in their local community. However, they mostly do not criticize some significant components of Hardin’s conceptualization, such as his limited understanding of social relations. Berkes, for instance, puts that there are distinct property regimes, namely the “open access” regime, “private property” regime, “state property” regime, and “common-property” regime “in which the resource was held by an identifiable community of users” (p. 263). These property regimes, he suggests, are design principles to frame an individual’s actions. However, as Kocagöz (2015) puts, this perspective does not give any room to the possibility of individuals capable of acting rationally without the existence of definitive property-rights regime (p. 28) and does not think of commons without a specific property regime over the commons.

On the other hand, some studies in Social-Ecological Systems Framework are quite crucial for opening the possibility of discussing commons considering individuals as capable of acting together around certain principles and values such as mutual trust, justice, solidarity. Nevertheless, they also do not offer an understanding of social relations, which goes beyond considering commons only in terms of specific rules and designs for *benefiting from commons as a resource*. They do not address the political economy in which commons needed to be investigated. They adopt an isolated perspective that does not take into account capital and

power relations that impinge on commons and any relation around them (Adaman et al., 2016, p. 16-17). Marxist theoreticians, however, discusses commons by considering these relations and offers a perspective considering commons a space of struggle against capitalist relations.

Before elaborating on the literature of commons developed by Marxist theoreticians, I would like to discuss Marx's key concepts, "enclosures" and "primitive accumulation," that inspire them. In the 24th chapter in the first volume of *Capital*, Marx elaborates on the very conditions, other than capitalist production, that enabled capitalist accumulation (2011, pp. 686-731). He addresses that Enclosure Laws enclosed pastures, agricultural fields, and forests that were open to common use in Scotland and England during the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. This process resulted in the possession of these lands and transformed them into capital. It thus separated small-scale agricultural producers from the means of production and proletarianized them. He depicts this historical movement as the process of "primitive accumulation" (2011, p. 687), the prerequisite of capital accumulation. This led to the formation of the proletariat that has nothing but its labor force to survive in the capitalist mode of production. The crucial difference that Marx's analysis offers is that, differently from all the discussions above, he considers the enclosure of commons is a historical process of capitalist social formation. He elaborates it in terms of class relations in a historical context, rather than reading commons as the story of rational individuals with unlimited and free access to land. He also does not see commons as a given resource or a tool to be used for production but also as the main constituent and product of historical relations and conditions.

Traditional Marxist literature has used these concepts to explain the role of enclosures and primitive accumulation in the transition from the pre-capitalist period. They adopt a logic of linear development model that suggests that they have occurred once in the past. Therefore, these useful concepts to understand the transition to capitalism are considered unfunctional anymore to analyze the realities of the contemporary capitalist world (De Angelis and Harvie,

2013, p. 282). However, this traditional framework is problematic in many aspects and criticized by many Marxist theoreticians who provide valuable perspectives that help to understand and empowering politics of commons and many other struggles today against new enclosures.

The study of Midnight Notes Collective, “New Enclosures” (1990), makes a significant contribution to the reconsideration of these notions as influential and valid concepts in theory and politics. They frame the historical enclosures as “old enclosures” (2001, p. 1). They argue that “new enclosures” continue as neo-liberalization processes since the 70s. David Harvey offers a mind-opening concept, “accumulation by dispossession,” to refer to these processes. These processes are the commoditization and privatization of land and nature, patenting of genetic resources, forced expulsion of peasants from their lands, privatization of state or collective institutions, strategies for avoiding all kinds of alternative forms of production and consumption, and the demolition of commons and the rights to the commons (Harvey, 2004, p. 74).

De Angelis and Harvie (2013) also criticize the theoretical, temporal, or spatial distinction that is made by the traditional Marxist perspective, between “primitive accumulation” and “capital logic,” arguing that this avoids scholars to understand continuing enclosures (p. 282). They consider enclosures as an ongoing character of “capital logic.” They address two contrasting drives: “one drive is capital’s, to make and remake the world through commodification and enclosures; another drive is that of “commoners” or “humanity” to make and remake the world through counter-enclosures and commons” (p. 282). This perspective also helps in understanding the struggles of counter-enclosures that are tried to be implemented by the politics of commons and opens a political possibility of alternative political movements inspired by Marxism. As De Angelis and Harvie put, we need to go beyond the classical Marxian inspired perspective. It is because this perspective “frequently cannot connect the

intellectual and political endeavors to shape alternatives in the here and now because its framework is for another ‘ism’ projected into an unqualified future” instead of fighting for alternatives now, from below (p. 283).

The autonomist Marxist line (e.g., Caffentzis, Federici, Massimo de Angelis, Midnight Notes Collective) thus considers commons, not as stabile shared resources to benefit from, but as social processes and relations that are driven by values and motivations, such as self-government, collectivity, participatory democracy, and solidarity. Commons aims to produce alternative social and economic relations in varied aspects of social life which challenge the processes and relations that market and capital impose. This perspective gives room to the possibility of construction and reconstruction of alternative sociability by commoning practices around alternative participatory and democratic organizations and models for the politics of commons.

The rise of such perspective to commons is directly related to the current context of capitalism that brings crises in many aspects of life, from economic and social to environmental. These crises seem impossible to be remedied by solutions offered by the market, which are seen as the reasons behind these crises by many (De Angelis and Harvie, 2013, p. 280). The social movements around commons have been rising as reactions to this very context. The commoning politics of food and the defense of seeds and meadows as commons are indeed closely related to the causes of the food sovereignty struggle that new-generation food initiatives in Turkey also advocate. As Caffentzis and Federici (2014) argue, the commoning practices that rise from communal gardens, community-supported agriculture, food cooperatives have been creating alternative spaces and critical strategies for alternative production forms and social relations.

Nevertheless, we also face “the danger of the co-optation” of commons (p. 97), including the co-optation of scientific knowledge for the benefit of commercial interests.

Besides, the language of “commons” is adopted by many, including institutions like the World Bank and the United Nations. The World Bank, for instance, presents itself as the protector of commons but “expels from woods and forests people who lived in them for generations, while giving access to them, once turned into game parks or other commercial ventures, to those who can pay” (p. 97). There are also commons formed by the homogeneity of its members, close to other (p. 100) or “commodity-producing commons” like Alpine Meadows, which become the grazing fields for giant Swiss dairy industry (p. 98). These examples warn us to be vigilant about the actors who claim to be the protector of commons, with whom to collaborate in our politics of commons. This discussion of Caffentzis and Federici (2014) underlines the need for a careful redefinition of what is commons. These delicate warnings and redefinition of commons suggested by the Marxist autonomist line are very important for understanding my case-study.

The visibility of the politics of commons owes to the struggles regarding social rights and collective production in the Global South, especially in Latin America. A prominent example is the Zapatistas who have built their autonomous governance on the defense of commons. The movement emerged in 1994 as an opposition to the removal of the communal land use in the Mexican Constitution as well as to the pressures and difficulties that the NAFTA Agreement brought in agricultural production. An international network of activists, People’s Global Action (PGA), also emerged from the meetings organized by the Zapatistas in 1996 and 1997, aiming to piece together the struggles in the Global North and resistance in the Global South like Landless Peasants Movements in Brazil (Firat, 2018, p. 69). To give other examples, in Argentina, the production cooperatives arose in the occupied factories as a reaction to the financial crises, while thousands of community areas and female cooperatives emerged in Venezuela and Peru. The rise of these solidaristic organizations suggests the need of building collectivism, reciprocity, and decommodification today (p. 70). These movements

“emerged against neoliberalism united under the name of common constitute a new moment in the history of social struggles given against capitalism” (Dardot and Laval, 2018).

The strategy to “scale jumping” between the local and global evolved into national-scale politics first in the “2011-2013 movement cycle” (e.g. uprisings in Tunisia and Tahrir, and square movements such as in Turkey, then into local-scale politics. Having their own political and historical contexts, the national-scale movements were all reacting against the authoritarian regimes and the neoliberal financial order (Firat, 2018, p. 72). A common characteristic in these movements was that the citizens occupied the city centers and built collective horizontal organizational forms. Afterward, depending on the political oppression in each country, most of these experimentations, like in the case of Gezi Resistance in Turkey or Syntagma Square Occupation in Greece, have given path mostly to neighborhood-scale and community-based solidarity groups, such as consumer food cooperatives, producer-consumer networks, community kitchens, and city gardens in urban spaces. Commoning practices have a central role in these emergent communities and suggest an efficient departure for mobilization and opposition in this period where the organization of masses and more organized leftist politics are less likely to happen.

8.3.2. Framing of Commons and Commoning of Food in New-Generation Urban Food Cooperatives

While the commons is conventionally used as a concept to qualify land-based resources, rights, and rules around them, emerging commons also refer to local organizations around communal sharing and environmental commons (Holt-Giménez and Lammeren, 2018, p. 314; Holder and Flessas, 2008). Today, there is a call for considering food itself as commons. This call takes food as a whole category to offer a conceptual space “to which human entitlement can appeal” instead of grounding it in a particular place (Holt-Giménez and Lammeren, 2018, p. 315). It is a moral and political proposal to conceptualize it as common goods like air and water, rather

than merely a commodity and a consumption object (p. 315-316). These commonality claims are not meant to hinder the differences and asymmetries between varying actors in agri-food processes. It instead suggests considering commons as a moral and political counter-force to global markets to transform the understanding of sharing and access in the liberal economy (Caffentzis, 2010; Holt-Giménez and Lammeren, 2018; Holder and Flessas, 2008). Adopting this commons perspective, I argue, the commoning politics of food needs to be aligned with food sovereignty advocacy, because food sovereignty, as a concept and movement, also problematizes the inequalities in labor and production relations in the capitalist agri-food system.

The politics of food commons suggests a political framework over the system through 1) the food for-all claim, and 2) the relations of the commoning practices of food (defense, reclaiming, and reinvention of commons) by means of agency (Kocagöz, 2018, p. 133). This perspective on commoning politics of food fits perfectly to understand the political proposal of the new-generation food initiatives in Turkey, for defining healthy food as everybody's need. Thus, this thesis suggests that such a consideration of commons helps them in their food sovereignty advocacy, especially for extending citizen participation in the alternative public space they endeavor to build. This commons perspective and the commoning politics of food, it argues, are necessary to build alternative agri-food relations, collectively and inclusively, and bridge between consumers and producers around the same causes and ambitions of food sovereignty. It also suggests that their consideration of food as commons, and the defense of seeds and meadows, can be a strategical political means of relating urban and rural struggles to strengthen the emerging food sovereignty struggle in Turkey.

It is important to note again that the emerging commons and politics of commons rise in a context where commons are increasingly enclosed, state economic enterprises and facilities are privatized and defunctionalized, the food supply is commoditized, and consumers

are segregated. Besides, the severe impacts of the ecological crisis on food and climate (which is lived even more strongly in cities because of the concretization), the rupture from rural space, nature, and agricultural production, as well as the democratic crisis, render vital for urbanites the commoning of food by solidarity and self-governance. The role of the democratic crisis in stimulating food politics, including the commoning of food, is also very important because the call for food as commons does not emerge only as a reaction to neoliberal capitalism.

It also rises with the claim that neoliberal capitalism restricts the democratic capacity of states because the state-market duopoly does not meet public demands (Ferrando and Vivero-Pol, 2017; Holt-Giménez and Lammeren, 2018). Hence, by reclaiming food commons, citizens demand “discursive democracy” (Holt-Giménez and Lammeren, 2018, p. 320) by affecting decision-making actors, and assuming agency as “food citizens” (Vivero-Pol, 2017). Regarding the multiple aspects of foods and realizing the relationality of food, citizens try collectively to create a space of resistance by using their agency to protect themselves from the destructive effects of the neoliberalism, by reappropriating the public space from the state and the market (p. 320).

Although the commoning practices of food may not change the current food system, they, like other commoning practices, can contribute to lessening the disruptive repercussions and the potential crises of increasingly aggressive capitalism, by pushing for more democratic and egalitarian relations of food. The impact of the commoning politics of food on food sovereignty will be seen in the long term, yet these efforts and the call for considering food from this perspective is already precious at both the practical and the conceptual levels. It is necessary to merge food sovereignty and commons as struggles in practice and theory, to open up a more comprehensive and strong ground for transformation. The commoning of food may be a means for struggling against the inequalities of gender, class, and race, which are situated at the center of the food sovereignty movement (p. 326).

Kadıköy Cooperative volunteers suggest that the cooperative develops strategies against the destructive neoliberal impacts on agriculture today, by transforming the production, consumption, and distribution relations of food. They emphasize that it gives utmost importance to the transformation of production conditions and forms and highlight the solidarity relations with producers that the cooperative tries to establish. The cooperative does not openly define itself as an anti-capitalist initiative, nor is it completely independent from the state and the market. Kadıköy Cooperative and similar consumer food cooperatives have a participatory heterogeneous structure open to people from all ideological perspectives. However, most of the volunteers of these cooperatives are not economically privileged and aim to defend working class's rights both as producers and consumers, especially in accessing healthy food and getting fair compensation for their labor. Also, these cooperatives have some core principles and a solidary network, which enlarge the concrete ground for social and economic relations alternative to the capital, as I analyzed in previous chapters.

De Angelis and Harvie (2013), argue that what constructs commons is the very negotiation of social relations and production forms by commoning practices. Kadıköy Cooperative negotiates these relations and dominant production relations of food by adopting the values and principles such as self-government, collectivity, and participatory democracy. Thus, from the perspective of the autonomist Marxist line, Kadıköy Cooperative can be thought of as an actor in the commoning of food that considers food as social processes and relations.

Furthermore, it is possible to suggest that Kadıköy Cooperative does not consider enclosures as specific to the transition period to capitalism. It is because it positions itself right against the ongoing processes –new enclosures– that commoditize lands and seeds, expels farmers from their lands, destroy commons like meadows and rivers, and threatens accessible healthy food production and consumption. Today, not only city-dweller but also many peasants buy food as a commodity from the market. It increases our dependence on purchasing power

and capital. The enclosures in urban space mean the destruction of nonmarket wealth and social relations that sustain the lives of city-dwellers (Akbulut, 2016, p. 286-287). Hence, the defense of commons is crucial for constructing social relations that are not dependent on capital. For instance, the defense of landrace seeds as our commons (the multiplication, use, and sustainability of landrace seeds) is crucial to control our resources, agricultural inputs, and production processes, to resist the pressures of global agribusiness that impose the use of their industrial hybrid seeds and other inputs.

New-generation consumer food cooperatives have been emerging in this very context, bringing together local people to build solidary relations. Kadıköy Cooperative is one example of these initiatives trying to build relations that go beyond the market logic. It does not reduce food to a commodity solely with an exchange value, but a means to construct new social relations. It also does not only stand in solidarity with small-scale ecological producers but also with urban consumers who wish to access ecological, healthy food. Like other urban food initiatives such as DÜRTÜK that aim to sustain traditional *bostans* of İstanbul, these actors of new-generation food cooperatives can also be considered as strategies for preventing the commoditization of urban lives. They can also find new quotidian strategies for producing fairer relations in urban space. Some Kadıköy cooperative volunteers also argue that the cooperative tries to communize the politics itself by aiming to make it accessible to all citizens by participatory democratic relations. In that regard, they consider the cooperative as an urban common and its practices as the commoning practices of politics. Whether or not we define the cooperative as an urban common or a solidary initiative that builds alternative social, ecological, and economical relations, the language and the practices of the cooperative carry the potential that Chatterton (2016, p. 207) addresses as the potential of urban commons. It is the potential of challenging old-school and stereotypical political tools and manners of supporting or developing new political language and imaginaries.

For instance, Kadıköy Cooperative expands the daily practices of food sovereignty and utilizes this concept in every public event and interview. It has visibly inspired many other consumer food cooperatives to embrace the practical and theoretical perspective of food sovereignty, with the support of the Farmers' Union that is also a leading actor in that sense. Today, almost all consumer food cooperatives organize events and panels where they present how they position themselves in the food sovereignty struggle in Turkey. Kadıköy Cooperative also describes one of its main objectives as to change the bad connotations of cooperative structures in Turkey because of the existence of many corrupted and failed experimentations of traditional cooperatives, by highlighting its alternative political rationality and organizational model.

The role of urban food initiatives in defense of commons is primarily based on the defense of landrace seeds against the commoditization of seeds, the domination of hybrid industrial seeds of agribusinesses, and laws and regulations that restrict the trade of landraces by peasants. To understand how these food initiatives and varying actors position themselves in defense of seeds as commons, I would like to address, now, the transformation of seed politics in the world and Turkey.

8.3.3. Seed Politics and the Role of Varying Ecological Actors in Commoning Seeds

For centuries, the multiplication of landraces, as well as the transmission of local agroecological techniques and knowledge, have been crucial for the food sovereignty of peoples. As the seeds are the starting point of agriculture, the seeds —the commonwealth and heritage of farmers and nature— are the keys to food sovereignty. The focus on seeds is also the best way to understand the relationship between the defense of commons and food sovereignty. As Hardt and Negri (2004) suggest, what renders seeds valuable is their reproducible quality because this very quality becomes an obstacle for the private possession of seeds as commodities (p. 196-197). However, the genetic codes, indigenous knowledge, ideas, and even affects are privatized today

as properties and are seen as reproducible. They are controlled, utilizing patenting or copyrights, to assure profits and rents (Hardt, 2010). Hence, the contemporary problem concerning commons in Turkey and abroad can be analyzed neither referring to Hardin's explanation by "tragedy of commons," nor to the lack of community-based governance mechanisms that Ostrom points out. It is apparent that the most considerable obstacle for the sustainability of commons is the enclosure of commons by the state and capital (Akbulut, 2017, p. 288).

The agribusinesses in collaboration with states have also increasingly been attacking the commons character of seeds, the essence that adds it incommensurable worth, by taking possession of the seeds and reducing it into a commodity and means for accumulation. They have been limiting the access to local landrace seeds and the knowledge on cultivating these seeds for the last decades. Possessing the rights on seeds, agribusinesses impose the use of these seeds on farmers as well as the use of a certain amount of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides for getting the maximum efficiency from those seeds. Hybrid and genetically modified seeds are claimed to be the property of companies as human products, suggesting that its source is nature but the company artificially produced the content. In this way, the Global North has been patenting today the genetic rights of the plants in the Global South and makes a profit on the seeds that are patented as private property.

An example of the patenting and marketing of traditionally used commons is that the patenting of the seeds of neem trees in India in 1985 as pesticides by a transnational company. The diversity of plants in the Global South, which were used to be seen as the commons of humanity are becoming the means for profit and accumulation (Hardt and Negri, 2004, p. 199). Bio-property is based on the production of codes that shape our life forms, thus possessing these codes offers private actors the privilege of the control of our lives (p. 201). Hence, the food sovereignty movement is the struggle of those who want to resist the reproduction of these codes that enable the control of the agricultural production and the lives of producers and

consumers through corporate sovereignty in the agri-food sector. I argue that it is the struggle of those who wish to build the codes of their own lives by reclaiming for transforming current forms of production and consumption in expanding local and global networks. Therefore, to understand the rise of actors in food sovereignty movement and the meaning of the defense of seeds as commons to varying communities and in Turkey, I will now analyze the laws and regulations on GMOs and the patenting of landraces.

Since the first commercialization and planting of GM crops in 1996 on 1.7 million hectares, the hectares on GM crops are cultivated reached at 191.7 million hectares by 2018. Maize, soybean, cotton, and canola are respectively the most planted GM crops and GM crops have a market value of US\$17.2 billion in the world. The USA is the top producer covering 39% of total GM crops and followed by Brazil and Argentina. In the last 7 years, GM crops have been planted more in developing countries and this trend is estimated to continue in the Global South with the commercialization of other GM foods grown in these countries, such as rice (ISAAA, 2018). The expansion of GM crops is a serious threat against the rich genetic resources and endemic and local varieties in the Global South. In addition to this threat to biodiversity, as Miguel Altieri (1998) predicted in very early stages of biotechnological/GM crops, the capital-intensive biotechnology has been leading to the process of concentration of these lands and industrial agricultural production in the hands of transnational corporations, dispossessing/proletarianizing small-scale farmers. It also renders small-scale farmers more dependent on the agricultural inputs of these corporations despite their increasing prices. Some researches indicate that the use of transgenic crops has increased the use of pesticide. For instance, the research of Benbrook (2004) on the use of pesticides between 1995 and 2004 in the USA suggests that genetically modified products required an additional fifty-five thousand tons of pesticides compared to conventional crops. It reports that the more use of pesticides in

transgenic crops is mostly related to the higher use of herbicides in glyphosate-resistant crops than in conventional crops per acre.

A transport ship that carries soy from Argentina to Turkey was stopped by Greenpeace and the soy was analyzed as genetically modified. This incident brought together several chambers, associations, and activists to found the platform “No to GMO.” The coalition was consisting of actors such as Ecology Collective having lawyers specialized in environmental cases and carrying out legal struggle, Greenpeace organizing social media campaigns and bringing forward international regulations and related protests against GMO, the Union of Farmers informing small farmers about the risks of GMO and organizing them to save their own seed.³⁰ The coming into the fore of the discussions on the Biosafety Law Draft in 2005 heated the debates over GMOs and catalyzed the opposing actions of this platform to GMOs, including the 100,000 signatures the platform presented in 2005 to the Parliamentary Petition Committee.

Nevertheless, the state passed the regulations on GMO without conferring with any actors in this platform. According to the regulation (Regulation on the Import, Processing, Export, Control and Inspection of Genetically Modified Organisms and Products for Food and Feed Purpose, No. 27388), the products containing more than 0.9% GMOs would be considered genetically modified and not allowed to be imported. The regulation did not allow labeling “GMO-free” a product that does not contain GMOs, in favor of biotech companies and agribusinesses.

The latest amendments before the law were partly responding to the public reactions, allowing, for instance, the “GMO-free” label for the products that do not contain genetically

³⁰ A year before the establishment of this platform in Turkey, there was a strong GMO opposition in the world. An environmental organization, Friends of the Earth International, started the campaign “WTO - Hands Off Our Food” representing 35 million people and 350 organizations. In 2003 and 2004, a giant tomato-shaped balloon traveled Europe, collected signs from many countries, and delivered them to national parliaments and WTO. See “No to GMO” Platform Website: <http://www.gdoyahayir.net/category/makale/>

modified seeds. However, these amendments also removed the requirement that companies need to label their products as genetically modified if containing more than 0.9% GMO. It also freed the import of GMOs used in the pharmaceuticals for humans and animals, with an amendment in April 2010 (No to GMO Platform, 2012). The AKP government legislated the National Biosafety Law on 26 March 2010. Biosafety Law prohibited the production of genetically modified fodders and food. However, the import of genetically modified fodders was authorized.

The opposition to GMO in Turkey had mainly the following arguments: (1) The solution to hunger is not GMO because the major reason is not the lack of food but the unequal distribution of already sufficient food. (2) GMO is a threat to national genetic resources and biodiversity. (3) GMO would increase the dependence on the seeds and the price impositions of seed businesses. (4) Apart from the health risks GMO carries into our body, GMO also increases our dependency to the pesticide and herbicides that have already been threatening our health. It was led by the coalition consisting of activists, consumers, scientists and had a considerable role in the process of the development of national legislation on GMOs and the evaluation of the applications for import of GMO foods, after the Biosafety Law.

Furthermore, the acquaintances in anti-GMO campaigns have opened a path to new coalitions and collaborations. Today, some volunteers in consumer food cooperatives know each other from Gezi solidarity groups in their neighborhood or these campaigns. Most members of these cooperatives reveal that their initial interest in food matters started with these earlier campaigns. Some political platforms like *Karasaban* (Primitive Plough), *Yaşasın Tohumlar* (Long Live Seeds) and some landrace projects, for instance by Buğday Association and Gök Anadolu, emerged after this “No to GMO” campaign banding together many local activists in workshops and meetings. These platforms were also supported by producer unions, environmental initiatives, and professional chambers like ZMO (Chamber of Agricultural

Engineers) (Nizam and Yenal, 2020, p. 9). Hence, the networks that emerged in anti-GMO campaigns built new alliances of varying actors, especially urban middle-classes, including academics, researchers, environmental associations, and consumer cooperatives, around the defense of local seeds today (p. 8). The rise of interest in local seeds today is related to the healthy eating concerns of middle-classes but not limited to these concerns. These new actors, especially after the emergence of new-generation consumer food cooperatives, blended the healthy eating concerns of urban middle classes with ecological and political concerns.

Therefore, today the popularity of landraces and the reactions to the recent regulations on local seeds are related to many issues comprising of healthy-eating concerns, ecological concerns like respect to biodiversity, economical concerns regarding the survival of small-ecological farmers, and political reactions to the patenting of our commons. Indeed, these cooperatives and the alternative local agri-food projects of rural municipalities are crucial actors that produce a political language and discourse around the importance of landraces and political awareness around the recent regulation on local seeds that they consider as a neoliberal attack to farmers' rights and consumers' right to access healthy ecological food from landraces. These actors highlight the importance of sustainability and the greater production of small-scale farmers from landraces as the basis of food sovereignty.

The voice of these actors —the counterhegemonic movement of the networks of producers and urban activists— concerning seed politics has risen especially after the enactment of the 2006 Seed Law, as Nizam and Yenal put (2020, p. 10). I will elaborate here this seed law focusing on its more detailed and solidified update by September 2018, with a new decree (No. 30570), namely the Regulation on the Registration, Production, and Marketing of Local Varieties, in 2018. This decree mainly suggests that the trade and the reproduction of local seed varieties are allowed on the condition that they are registered in the Registration List of Local Varieties. It is important to discuss here that the requirement of certification of landrace seeds

in the national official seed system and the complicated content of the ways and costs of this certification have given birth to two distinct positions towards this decree among the local seed activists in Turkey. Anderson (2006) suggests that regarding the seed matters, there is, on the one hand, a “stewardship approach” that opposes any property rights on traditional varieties, and on the other hand, “ownership approach” that support the “granting of breeders’ right to producers” (Peschard, 2017). In Turkey too, the Farmers’ Union (*Çiftçiler Sendikası*), consumer food cooperatives, professional chambers of agricultural and food engineers adopt stewardship approach, while the Buğday Association, for instance, only softly criticizes some aspects of this decree from the ownership approach (Nizam and Yenal, 2020, p. 19-20).

Article 4(1) in the recent decree indicates the possibility of the local trade of landraces that farmers reproduce themselves, after registering them in the list. Then the Article 5(1) suggests: “Professional organizations, NGOs, public research institutions, and local governments and universities can apply for the registration if they are concerned.” In its declaration regarding this decree, Buğday Association considers these articles as positive saying that these articles define public institutions and not-for-profit initiatives that advocate for local seeds as authorized actors for application, thus encourages organized advocacy for local seeds. The association only adds that these authorized initiatives shall be collaborating actors with farmers who wish to reproduce landrace seeds (Buğday Association, 2018). Also, Buğday Association interprets the following article as an article that prevents the monopolization of landraces by persons or institutions: “The necessary precautions are taken by the applicant for registration for the protection and maintenance of that landrace in its region of origin.” The article that says “the producer having landrace certification can market the landrace seed s/he produces in its region of origin” completes the previous one, giving back in a controlled manner the trade of landraces prohibited in 2006 Seed Law, in the eyes of the Buğday Association.

As opposed to these interpretations, the actors from the stewardship approach considers this decree as another attack to favor transnational corporations that aim to commercialize and enclose our commons. For instance, Farmers' Union criticizes the Article 4(1) for not allowing farmers, who have used and reproduced seeds for centuries, to apply for registration, and underlines that small farmers cannot afford the registration expenses and have the knowledge and time to handle the long bureaucratic process, in its press release (Karasaban, 2018). The Union draws attention to the Article 9 which indicates that there are several expenses of registration from the fee for the examination of the application, enrolment fee to the fee for certification services and the fee for field and laboratory inspections. Indeed, Buğday Association also addresses these fees, yet only asks mildly "in this case, don't the small producers find themselves in a disadvantaged position face to big producers?"

Twenty-three initiatives comprising of varying actors such as the Union of Farmers, chambers of Food Engineers and Agricultural Engineers, and consumer food cooperatives filed an appeal for preventing the execution of this decree (ZMO, 2018c). They state that seed politics, including the protection of plant varieties and other intellectual property rights, seed marketing legislation, certification, and documentation programs, shall respect peasant rights, especially the right to seeds, considering peasants' actual needs.

According to this decree and the Seeds Law, farmers cannot market their uncertified seeds but save and cultivate them for their products, for now, in the designated areas for these seeds. The use of our own local seeds is permitted only in the amount and place today, but what would happen tomorrow, if it was not allowed anymore, considering that the decision-makers and powerful actors in the sector are indeed the agribusiness companies? Given that the farmers are not financially capable and knowledgeable enough to apply for registration and certification, will the private companies only be the "owners" of the seeds, which are indeed our commons? Or, what if the private seed companies did not allow farmers later even to save and use these

seeds after being patented as their companies' own property? What will be the prices of products after this amount of money spent on the certification of seeds? These are yet unanswered questions in the minds of both farmers and consumers.

These questions also discussed in 2018 both in the public workshop organized by Kadıköy Cooperative, "No to the Patenting of Landrace Seeds," as well as in the annual workshop of ecological food communities and consumer food cooperatives in İstanbul. Many citizens, consumers and some producers in the network of these initiatives and the Farmers' Union came together to discuss their concerns regarding this decree on the registration of landraces. There is mainly an opposition in these public workshops against the reduction of landraces into market values, ignoring the non-market sociabilities around landraces. To say more clearly, they emphasize that landrace seeds accommodate the history and common culture of peoples, especially peasants and farmers in their regions, who have reproduced these seeds so far. However, they argue, these laws and decrees focus on their exchange value and treat them only as commodities to be patented by companies. Of course, the only agricultural problem in the rural space is not the patenting of local seeds; however, ecological food cooperatives attach importance to the discussion on this issue and the reclamation of the farmers' rights on the unconditional use, exchange, and trade of landrace seeds. For this reason, new-generation ecological food cooperatives of consumers like Kadıköy Cooperative only work with producers who use local or certified organic seeds. They do not produce from industrial hybrid seeds of agribusinesses because these producers also consider the imposition of industrial seeds as an attack to commons and a key strategy to render farmers more dependent on corporations. That is why the empowerment of the alternative organization of consumer-led ecological food cooperatives is essential for supporting the existence of small-scale ecological farmers producing from local and landrace seeds.

As the seed activism becomes more visible, the AKP government has also started to produce discourses on seeds yet with a nationalist emphasis. These discourses have a populist character and are very different from the discourses of seed activists, mainly because the government points out “*yerli tohum*” (seeds produced in Turkey) instead of “*yerel tohum*” (local seeds) in these discourses. This emphasis is quite irrelevant from what seed activists advocate for a decade because seeds produced in Turkey may very well be industrial hybrid seeds. Thus, they do not necessarily carry the ecological qualities of local landrace seeds grown on these lands for decades, which have adapted to the local climate and soil and thus carry the unique characteristics of those lands and cultures. This nationalist discourse on “*yerli tohum*” is also a menace for the struggle of seed activists in Turkey whose critique is directed towards corporate sovereignty on seeds and neoliberal attacks on commons.³¹ The emphasis on local seeds in Turkey by activists is for seed sovereignty, which they consider as key to food sovereignty. The reappropriation of the activists’ discourse by the state and corporate actors from a nationalist perspective also warns us about the danger of cooptation of the discourse on food sovereignty by the corporations and the state in a fiercely contradictory manner.

Evaluation

Despite not being at first sight as resistance to reclaim commons, new-generation consumer food cooperatives like Kadıköy Coop adopt politics that do not see food and seeds as commodities but commons. This thesis regards the framing of food as commons and the commoning politics of food by the new-generation food initiatives as a unifying political understanding that reclaims healthy food as everybody’s need. This political framing invites a broader population of citizens and stakeholders to a more inclusive alternative public space for

³¹ The Union of Seed Businesses (Türkiye Tohumcular Birliği) also adopts this nationalist discourse on “*yerli tohum*.” The president of the union recently stated, “to enable national food sovereignty, our farmers need to use national seed varieties and turn the crisis into our advantage” in the period of coronavirus pandemic by exporting food to Europe. This nationalist discourse on seed is far from the global struggle on food sovereignty for all farmers. The president of the union probably meant food security in this context but used food sovereignty as the concept. This is an example of how powerful concepts may be reappropriated as they become more visible, even by the actors who are criticized by this very concept itself. See <https://www.tarimdanhaber.com/tarim/turkiye-tohumcular-birligi-nden-ciftciye-cagri-tohumda-yerli-h14386.html>

strengthening the power of these actors in the food sovereignty struggle. This perspective of new-generation food initiatives, “food as commons,” challenges the capitalist approach to food merely as a consumption object. It considers foods and seeds comprising social, economic, ecological, and political relations, thus power relations and inequalities, and a set of processes involving varying actors from the beginning of the production until the consumption. Along with this perspective, these initiatives give importance to how the seeds used in production are provided from where and which labor forms exist in the production processes by searching for the use of local and landrace seeds instead of hybrid industrial seeds and regarding the non-exploitation of labor as their crucial principles. Doing so, the new-generation consumer food cooperatives want to protect the seeds transmitted by generations as well as social relations that have been shaped around local knowledge and practices. To enlarge the solidarity with producers that care about these relations and ecological production from these seeds, they choose their producers delicately. They also organize public workshops and panels by inviting their producers to inform larger publics to increase the consumers’ awareness about the importance of agroecology and the defense of seeds as our commons for food sovereignty.

These new-generation urban cooperatives seem to have a marginal impact now when focused only on their current scale. However, they have significant potential to succeed in a wider network of solidarity of varying actors, as long as they keep their ambition to suggest alternative forms of production, consumption, and distribution relations of food, where they focus on social and economic justice and prioritize the empowerment of small-scale ecological farmers instead of profit-making. As long as they continue to offer relations and motivations that consider commons more than mere sources and keep this motivation as self-managing horizontal communities, they will become actors to contribute to the construction of alternative sociability as a political opportunity.

8.3.4. Alternative Food Initiatives and Local Governments as Crucial Actors to Defend Urban and Rural commons

Urban ecological food initiatives shall also be concerned with the defense of commons, especially the urban commons in their city, in addition to food and seeds as commons. While the cities are seized by the expansion of shopping malls, plazas, and outdoor spaces that are no longer open to the public, the urban gardens (*bostans*), public gardens, local farmers' markets, and even squares and streets where people gather for protests are in danger of being appropriated. Even neighborhood solidarity culture can be considered as urban commons, and the loss of this culture brings the loss of the economic and cultural contributions of the participants who live there. The survival of urban commons is thus essential for the continuity of the bonds that hold the society together as well as to “learn” democracy by practices of creating, managing, and defending collective resources (Gidwani and Baviskar, 2016, p. 200-201). In that sense, it is even possible to consider the consumer food cooperatives I study here as the neighborhood commons, and their existence as crucial, from this perspective, too.

Many different actors in the last two decades in Turkey have been emerging to defend life and ecology against the attacks of capital, by defending commons like urban gardens, rivers, and meadows, opposing the improper constructions of hydroelectrical power plants, steam and wind power plants and mining projects that violate environmental impact assessment reports. For example, in August 2019, thousands of citizens gathered to protest the mining project of Alamos Gold, a Canadian mining company, in the Ida Mountains, Turkey, known as a wonder of nature. In this protest, people were protesting not only the attack on the trees and the ecosystem, but also banners carried alerted us to the food-related risks this project will bring, in a region popular for its varying fruits such as peaches, tomatoes, and cherries. Many activists from food communities and cooperatives in cities also participated in these protests. Indeed, many members of urban food initiatives have joined the defense of commons,

especially urban commons. They attended the relatively large protest recently risen to defend the Ida Mountains against the attacks of capital, and these initiatives shared many social media posts during that time, emphasizing that the cyanide poisons our food. Similarly, there are also people in the Roma Bostan Community who volunteer in consumer food cooperatives, which is a good example of the defense of a limited number of urban gardens as in İstanbul that is threatened every day by new construction projects. The attacks to commons for hydroelectric power plants (HES), geothermal power plants (JES), wind power plants (RES), and mining projects have also been more frequent nowadays. To give another example, a few months after the protests against the mining project in the Ida Mountains, the villagers in Salihli, Manisa were attacked by the gendarmerie. They were protesting against JES construction in Hacıbektaşlı Village by Sanko, as JES construction works had previously resulted in detrimental agricultural consequences in a nearby village, Yılmaz. They were pointing out the flawed reinjection operations and the discharge of geothermal waste fluid to their water supply network, thus shouting that they will not again let capital ruin their grapes, their land, and water.

Figure 6: Photo Taken During the Kaz Dağları (Ida Mountains) Resistance



These movements indeed complete the struggle of those in ecological urban food cooperatives in food sovereignty. It is because it becomes impossible to grow grapes in the

lands that steam power plants dried in Salihli, Manisa, or to cultivate ecological hazelnuts in Fatsa, Ordu where there is a gold mining area next to hazelnut gardens. The cyanurate used in processing gold leaks into soil threatening the health of consumers and decreases severely the efficiency of hazelnut production. Similarly, in Karaburun, İzmir, wind energy plants built at the feet of olive trees caused bats to flee, and thus increase olive fruit flies, making the ecological cultivation of olives almost impossible.

Therefore, the commons struggle in all areas is crucial and completes each other. The coming together of varying actors in these struggles in Turkey is essential also for food sovereignty. It is also important that local governments also stand together with the ecologists for the defense of commons, despite today we cannot see a visible togetherness. To explain better the support of the local governments for the defense of commons, I want to address very briefly the following example. This example also illustrates the intensity of neoliberal attacks to commons, indicating that they even continued during the crisis period of the Covid-19 pandemic, benefiting from the distraction of the public attention at that time. The Federation of the Dersim Associations announced on May 2020 that a company called Koçmercan rented the public lands and meadows in Ovacık that have been commonly used by the peasants: “Without getting any permission from the local governments as well as the approval of local people and NGOs, the state hands these lands to companies on a silver platter, with considerable investment incentives” (Bianet, 2020). Ovacık Cooperative, in collaboration with the Ovacık Municipality, as I explained in detail in the previous chapter, has been organizing collective cultivation on the public land, to encourage collective production and share and provide income for the producers, especially the landless farmers. These products are also sold in the Ovacık cooperatives. Ovacık Municipality is the initiator and the supporter of this valuable project. However, these lands on which ecological agriculture have been practiced by small farmers and the meadows where people graze their animals are rented to make benefits available to a

company rather than the local people. It is inevitable for the Dersim (Tunceli) and Ovacık municipalities to raise their voice and show a visible reaction in collaboration with the NGOs, cooperatives, and local people in Ovacık, against the usurpation of their commons like this, as well as others before them, with the excuses of HES, barrage, stone quarry, and mining projects.

Evaluation

The neoliberal attacks organized by the collaboration of the state and companies indicate the vital urgency of stronger solidarity of local governments, ecologists, food initiatives, and other actors in defense of commons, in a more organized way, because the attacks to commons are organized and powerful. Hence, in the success of the solidarity network of the new-generation consumer food cooperatives I examine in this dissertation, or from a broader perspective, in the defense of commons and the struggle for food sovereignty, the ways these alternative food initiatives will relate to other activist groups and movements, will be quite critical. The defense of commons, the struggle for the fair compensation of small producers, including women, the defense of the biodiversity and ecosystem, all require a more organized and closer solidarity of many actors especially in the area of ecology, agriculture, and food. This is, in fact, what the food sovereignty movement needs to be successful in the long-term.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion

9.1. Dissertation Summary and Findings

The corporate food regime aggravated the survival conditions of small-scale farmers. It led to the dispossession and marginalization of many agrarian communities. It rendered producers more dependent on corporations, obstructed many consumers' access to healthy foods, and degraded the ecology. This dissertation discussed the main reasons for these conditions and the repercussions of the existing food regime on the lives of consumers, producers, and ecology. It then elaborated on the rise of peasant and consumer movements such as food sovereignty, the slow food movement, organic and post-organic movements, and alternative food initiatives worldwide. It emphasized primarily the role and the potential of emerging alternatives that associate themselves with agro-ecology and the food sovereignty movement. It suggested that the alternatives with such a political stance offer more effective and meaningful paths forward in favor of producers, consumers, and ecology, than many other alternative food channels.

In the previous three years, citizens established nearly 15 ecological consumer food cooperatives and cooperative initiatives in İstanbul alone. This thesis suggested that, in this expansion, their close contact with emerging groups and their sharing of experience and producer database played an important role initially. Similarly, as a member of La Via Campesina and a significant advocate of food sovereignty in Turkey, the Farmers' Union's efforts —in introducing the ecological producers in its network to new initiatives, and expanding the food sovereignty discourse— were crucial. The close interactions and collaborations among these actors enable new-generation cooperatives to have more or less similar motivations and values around food sovereignty and catalyze the expansion of new-generation consumer food networks.

This research focused primarily on new-generation consumer food cooperatives and alternative agri-food projects of municipalities in Turkey that relate to the food sovereignty movement. It advocated that such actors consider food sovereignty as farmers' autonomy over the production and distribution processes of their foods that are grown ecologically, regarding human health and biodiversity, the fair compensation of farmers' labor, and the access of all consumers to these healthy and ecological foods.

By examining the exemplary projects of Ovacık and Seferihisar Municipalities, it demonstrated that these alternative municipal projects are designed with this food sovereignty vision that 1) considers ecology, the multiplication and procurement of landrace seeds to producers, and 2) brings together diverse actors in solidarity, to offer alternative agri-food relations. The practices such as organizing cultivation on common lands, maintaining direct sales channels, paying fair prices to producers, and considering fair labor relations are the strategies they adopt in line with their alternative position.

Several examples are discussed in the dissertation to demonstrate how Seferihisar Municipality acts with this food sovereignty perspective. The story of *karakılçık* wheat summarizes well the municipality's multifaceted vision in building alternative production, consumption, and distribution relations of food through the organization of varying actors: the establishment of Can Yücel Seed Center by the municipality to multiply landrace seeds, the municipality's free procurement of *karakılçık* seeds and fair purchasing guarantee to the producers, the foundation of Doğanbey Coop by the municipality to process the wheat to produce flour, and the organization of Seferibakkal stores and farmers' markets as direct sales channels for the bread. Thus, the dissertation suggests that the alternative character of this project lies in the municipality's holistic food sovereignty perspective, consisting of three main pillars:

1. Protecting and expanding landrace seeds by providing guaranteed purchases

2. Encouraging cooperative organizations and facilitating the establishment of processing and storage plants to add value to local products
3. Organizing direct ecological producer markets

The alternativeness of the Ovacık case also lies in the municipality's comprehensive project that covers various essential aspects in the food sovereignty struggle. It supports small-scale farmers by facilitating their ecological production and procuring them local seeds. It invites them to get organized around fair, equal, and participatory relations in Ovacık Cooperative, offering them guaranteed purchases and organizing direct sales for their ecological products, from Ovacık producer cooperative to Ovacık consumer food cooperatives, in different cities. This project developed the economic conditions of producers in Tunceli (Dersim) in a relatively short time because producers have the opportunity to sell their products for fair prices without intermediaries. Unlike many cooperatives in Turkey, Ovacık cooperatives provide the social insurance of all their workers, including seasonal workers, and prioritize the employment of women. The establishment of the Ovacık producer cooperative has made this project sustainable. It continues its operations without being dependent on the municipality but having its support for on-site inspections, pesticide analyses, training, and cultivation on common lands. The cooperative's efforts to establish equal and participatory relations in decision-making processes and management are also exemplary for other producer cooperatives in Turkey.

Briefly, this thesis considered these municipalities' alternative agri-food projects to be quite valuable for the emerging food sovereignty struggle in Turkey. However, it argued, the alternativeness and contribution of these municipalities to the food sovereignty struggle would be stronger if they could invite urban citizens to engage in these projects. This is demonstrated in the case of new-generation ecological consumer cooperatives, achieved through participatory and democratic relations.

Most of the urban collective ecological cooperatives in this thesis are named “new-generation” cooperatives. This is, first, because they attempt to build alternative food production, consumption, and distribution relations in favor of ecology, small farmers, and consumers. Secondly, because, in order to construct these alternative agri-food relations for food sovereignty, they invite citizens to become agents in these initiatives, to raise their voices, by “doing” this from within an alternative public space. They endeavor to grow this alternative public space through a democratic and participatory organizational model and expanding their commoning politics regarding food and seeds.

The new-generation consumer cooperatives’ food sovereignty perspective reveals itself in their various practices and principles. Their transparent and direct relationship with small producers/producer organizations that respect human health, ecology, and landrace seeds is an example. The fair prices they offer to producers and their efforts in rendering healthy foods accessible to a larger population are all directly related to their food sovereignty perspective that considers consumers, small producers, and ecology. They prioritize the expansion and collaboration of consumer initiatives, adopting this perspective to support these producers in a more effective way. Therefore, they spend considerable efforts to increase the visibility of new-generation consumer food cooperatives and their food sovereignty perspective in public events. They believe that as they grow solidarity with this perspective, they will have more chances to help small industrial producers produce ecologically without being dependent on corporations’ industrial inputs and get fair prices for their products, without intermediaries. They have also been recently increasing their collaborations with other actors like municipalities to widen their impact and scope. They imagine becoming influential actors in the future to influence the state’s agri-food policies.

This thesis thus considered all these plans and current practices of new-generation consumer food cooperatives rooted in their ambitions for food sovereignty. It argued that the

alternative agri-food relations they offer are not powerful enough to transform the current agri-food context that suffocates small-scale producers and consumers. However, their concrete practices for transforming some production and consumption relations, and their organization with good momentum in the last years, indicate the power of cooperation and solidarity that did not exist until very recently in Turkey. These are the hopeful traces of the nascent evolution of the consumer-producer collaboration in the emerging struggle for food sovereignty in Turkey.

This dissertation demonstrated several examples of how these cooperatives' direct relations with each producer have the power and potential to transform producers and production-consumption relations. They have been changing consumption relations by habituating consumers to eat seasonal fresh food and informing people that all foods are not available anytime, contrary to what industrial production inculcates. Regular consumers and others in public events become more aware of producers' problems and learn to shape their demands accordingly, in time. Engaged consumers in these cooperatives interact with producers to encourage them towards more ecological production. For instance, they help a producer cooperative meet another producer who makes flour from landrace wheat, to make their pasta healthier and more ecological, or assist them in applying for funds for their windmill and solar energy projects.

As the new-generation consumer cooperatives increase in number, their shared producers and visits to these producers also augment. They, increasingly, have the opportunity to demand some producers to cultivate ecological products because the volume they can purchase enlarges. In this way, they would have more chance to transform their production from industrial production, if they could visibly grow their network and develop the collaborative spirit in this network. Also, as the network extends, practices such as the early and collective planning of the volume of orders, and their joint logistics from common producers, started to

increase. This concertedness enables them to save both their, and producers', labor and gradually plan some crucial issues like joint orders, logistics, and storage facilities. The growing collaboration among these emerging actors is framed in this study as a hopeful sign of the potentially more visible positive impacts of these alternative networks on producers and production conditions.

The following objectives would increase the efficiency of the alternative agri-food practices of these cooperatives and facilitate the survival of small ecological farmers facing considerable difficulties in the corporate food regime:

- 1) Propagating and systematizing the planning of the purchasing amount for the entire year and making pre-payments to producers when necessary,
- 2) Expanding the network without losing direct and confidence-based relations between the producers and consumers,
- 3) Supporting producers with more substantial amounts of purchases,
- 4) Promoting more producers to get organized,
- 5) Organizing shared storage and logistic strategies, as the cooperatives in the same city, to decrease the expenses and, thus, the products' prices.

This dissertation suggested that the actors in these new-generation consumer food cooperative networks are influenced by the spirit of Gezi and post-Gezi neighborhood solidarity groups. They have strong motivation and hope to build local, horizontal, participatory relations to build an alternative organization by commoning food and engaging consumers and small producers in collaboration. It demonstrated that, in contrast to traditional cooperatives, these cooperatives are not founded as part of a state-controlled public space, nor have they been envisioned as neoliberal closed communities that only get organized around their own needs. They try to build an alternative public space by commoning food that used to be, at least partially, a public matter, but is now, in today's neoliberal society, mostly a

privatized issue. This dissertation suggested that food sovereignty would only be possible via the democratic concertedness of consumer and producer organizations with an alternative political rationality. It is because food sovereignty is not only about direct sales and greater autonomy of small farmers in the face of corporations, but is also about eliminating unequal relations and oppressive structures in the agri-food system, considering gender, race, class, and age. From this perspective, it considered valuable the expansion of an alternative public space, through these local experiences of participatory democracy and the commoning practices of food to grow the emerging struggle for food sovereignty in Turkey.

This thesis approached, critically, some conceptualizations of “public space” that provide an uncritical and limited perspective regarding official public space. It argued that the official public space reproduces the hegemony of the state and the market, instead of providing democratic negotiation for “the interests of all.” From this perspective, this dissertation regarded the construction of multiple counter-publics vital for challenging hegemonic relations, following causes like economic justice, environmental protection, and the food sovereignty of peoples, especially in Turkey’s repressive political atmosphere that excludes citizens from active politics. It suggested that the new-generation consumer food cooperatives’ participatory, horizontal, and democratic organizational logic invites citizens to speak for themselves and take action in collaboration with different stakeholders from within this alternative space, to contribute to the construction of agri-food relations.

It also put forward some developments, regarding the extension of this alternative public space, which are essential for increasing these initiatives’ impact with a broader and more inclusive network. New-generation consumer food cooperatives were hesitating to collaborate with municipalities and to demand their support concerning some issues. However, as they have been growing their network in close interaction, they convinced each other to have some meetings and collaborate with the municipalities, on the condition that they make

no compromises regarding their autonomy. Although the meetings with İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality and district municipalities have recently started, municipalities' openness to collaborations, such as providing a storage area for consumer food cooperatives and stalls to producer cooperatives for direct markets in İstanbul, is a good start. The meetings of consumer food cooperatives in İstanbul with each other and municipalities have been increasing the interaction among these actors. These interactions help these actors to learn from each other, redeliberating some of their decisions, and meeting on the common ground concerning many issues in their common struggle for food sovereignty.

Furthermore, this research suggested that, as the new-generation consumer food cooperatives are becoming more visible in public, they discuss, more actively, food as a political matter. They express themselves aloud, and more confidently, as political actors in public space regarding food and agricultural matters. As some of them give considerable importance to discussions of "food sovereignty" among themselves and in public events, the others have been learning from these discussions and increasingly embracing the food sovereignty discourse, by relating themselves to the movement. Thus, emerging consumer food cooperatives start their operations by adopting similar values and working principles with others, with a food sovereignty perspective. They also do not merely aim at direct sales from producers. They have a comprehensive perspective that covers the consideration of producers' autonomy and control over their production, preservation of landrace seeds and biodiversity, and fair production conditions and compensation. As most of them share this perspective, they co-organize public events and workshops where they discuss current agri-food problems like the privatization of sugar beet factories and the recent regulations on local seeds in the framework of food sovereignty.

New-generation consumer food cooperatives have increasingly been raising their voice regarding agricultural and food-related matters. For instance, many of their members attended

the climate strikes together in İstanbul, and the cooperatives frequently shared posts reacting against the gold mining projects in the Ida Mountains. Besides, for a while, these cooperatives have also been raising their voice in public about other aspects of social life. To give examples, they shared lots of social media posts supporting İstanbul Contract, by criticizing the violence against women, with mentions to other cooperatives to join this awareness campaign on social media. For the last two years, many of these cooperatives also formed a cooperative cortege on May 1st.

The alternative public space they have been extending also helps to build a political ground for increasing solidarity with varying economically unprivileged actors, by means of food. They prioritize the employment of those who lost their job suddenly with a decree-law. They also recruit their unemployed volunteers and consider providing the opportunity to their members to take some products freely from the cooperative store in exchange for the hours they spend voluntarily for the sales in the cooperative. In this way, they want to include more consumers and volunteers from a broader population in this network. They prepare solidarity boxes of food to share with unfairly dismissed workers and those suspended from their duty with a decree-law. They also distributed food boxes to the unemployed and dismissed workers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some other examples of this solidarity include the home deliveries that some cooperatives started during the Covid-19 lockdown for older people above 65 years and the regular sale of non-ecological products of some associations and foundations like Migrant Women and the Ali İsmail Korkmaz Foundation on their “solidarity shelves.”

The consumers of these new-generation consumer food cooperatives also contribute directly to solidary practices by paying for food boxes for economically disadvantaged people to collect, or ordering food boxes for them from these cooperatives. In this way, they show their solidarity with some groups during challenging times, like in the case of Bilgi University academicians in solidarity with the university’s dismissed contract workers during the Covid-

19 pandemic. This politicization of cooperatives and their growing solidarity with other groups through food are small yet essential acts of citizen participation in the political sphere in the Turkish political context.

Finally, their understanding of food as commons and their politics of commoning food build crucial political rationality and strategy for bringing together varying segments of society and stakeholders in this alternative public space, around the call for “healthy food for all,” a primary ambition of food sovereignty. By commoning food, they invite citizens to become actors to transform these relations for food sovereignty. Their alternative political reframing — of food as commons— that challenges the capitalist understanding of food merely as a commodity and a consumption object, is compatible with the autonomous Marxists’ conceptualization of commons. From this perspective, their politics of commoning of food becomes a means for challenging current economic relations and corporate industrial food relations imposed by the market. Their conception of food and seeds as comprising of social, economic, ecological, and political relations, from this commons perspective, helps them embracing food as a means of building alternative agri-food relations in favor of ecology, small farmers, and consumers. They give importance to what kind of seeds their producers utilize in production and which labor relations are seen in their production processes. By working with these producers and supporting the multiplication, use, and sustainability of landrace seeds and considering seeds key to controlling our agricultural inputs and production processes, they also contribute to the defense of landrace seeds as our commons. Their political framing of food as commons, with a call for making these healthy foods accessible for all, also carries significant potential for building a more inclusive alternative public sphere to strengthen their struggle for food sovereignty. In addition, the commoning of food may help in relating rural and urban struggles and reinforce the struggle against the inequalities of gender, class, and race, which are highly crucial for the food sovereignty movement. Thus, this thesis suggested that unifying

the struggles of commons and food sovereignty, both in theory and practice, is vital for preparing a more substantial ground for the transformation of present agri-food relations.

9.2. Concluding Remarks on the Limitations, Risks, and the Potentiality of the Recent Wave of Cooperatives and Municipal Agri-Food Projects in Turkey

In addition to the potentiality of recently emerging alternative food initiatives and projects, this dissertation also addressed the potential risks that they may face and the points they have to pay attention to now, and in the future. In this section, I would like to make some concluding remarks on these points and speculate about how the alternative initiatives researched in this thesis could have a more transformative power in the future.

As the interest in cooperatives has been increasing globally since the 2008 crisis, neoliberal discourses and practices about cooperatives have also been increasingly present. The neoliberal discourses such as the need for having professional managers to become successful in the market, jeopardize the alternative character of these cooperatives with ambitions such as competitiveness and profit maximization. Cooperatives thus face considerable risks, including the risk of cooption by regime-driven actors, becoming no different to discount markets, or being seen merely as another food channel in the market for economically privileged consumers. From this perspective, the increase of cooperatives that do not challenge the dependence on industrial inputs and the unfair production conditions of farmers and factory workers, seem like the biggest enemy for the alternative logic adopted by the emerging new-generation food cooperatives. Hence, the new-generation cooperatives need to be aware of this risk: that the existing order can popularize “cooperatives” in a way that contradicts their alternative position, in the same way as it transformed many initially alternative concepts like “organic” and “sustainable.”

Today, almost all new-generation consumer food cooperatives adopt the discourses of food sovereignty and contribute to the visibility of this struggle in Turkey. However, another

challenge for the alternative actors and advocates of food sovereignty, is that the mainstream actors already started to refer to “food sovereignty,” despite meaning and advocating entirely different things. The Union of Seed Businesses recently argued for the necessity of using domestically produced certified seeds (*yerli tohum*) for the benefit of national seed companies by referring to its importance for “food sovereignty.” The government also repeatedly emphasize the importance of *yerli tohum*, with a nationalist underpinning, without having any concern about them being locally produced and landrace, and complicating the alternative position of the advocates of landrace seeds (*yerel tohum*). Thus, these recently emerging alternative food initiatives and local governments need to be vigilant about the actors that would subvert the meaning of this concept for their benefit and use this jargon to maximize their commercial interests. They need to present well to the public what they mean by the food sovereignty of peoples and what exactly their struggle is, to distinguish themselves, and the concepts they use, from those with subverted meanings.

Also, many rural cooperatives do not practice alternative production and alternative relations, neither among their members, nor with consumers and the market. In this context, a crucial question appears for consumer food cooperatives about whether to prioritize the impetuous inclusion of more producer cooperatives in their network or to take careful collective decisions while selecting producers that conform to their alternative production criteria. The choice of each consumer food cooperative would probably vary in the face of these questions, given the cultural and economic capital of the members of these cooperatives. However, today, most of them prioritize the conformity of the production conditions of their producers with their ethical and ecological criteria. I consider this perspective very valuable so as not to take the wrong actions due to the pressures of the market dynamics, and so as not to reproduce conventional agri-food relations.

The new-generation consumer food cooperatives may also face some problems that would threaten the horizontal and participatory structure of their organization. They need to be prepared for such threats by solidifying the mechanisms and logic that enable the existing structure and by learning from the experiences of other organizations with a similar model to make some revisions if necessary. For instance, they may have to decide on whether to increase the number of members to a hundred or more. The scaling-up decision needs to be carefully taken among the members of each cooperative, as it may threaten their democratic, participatory, and horizontal structure. My fieldwork suggests that a more appropriate option to scale up is to set up consumer food cooperatives in other neighborhoods, if there is a growing citizen demand for participation. It may also increase the participation of more consumers to get involved in such structures in their neighborhoods.

Similarly, the projects of rural municipalities shall not lose their focus on the construction of alternative agri-food relations, as they get more popularized, and not turn into another market actor that contributes to the expansion of conventional agriculture and the empowerment of industrial corporations. However, there is a risk that local governments increasingly come up with some populist projects and cooperatives that are superficial and temporary. They may not offer any alternative production and distribution relations of food. Therefore, the existing and upcoming alternative agri-food projects of municipalities and consumer food cooperatives need to discuss among themselves this danger and their potential strategies to deal with these risks.

Furthermore, both municipalities and consumer food cooperatives shall give importance to collaborating with more stakeholders to grow their impact and somewhat speed up some processes in their operations. However, it is very crucial to have the right balance of autonomy and collaboration while working with stakeholders, to prevent their intervention into internal

workings and decision-making processes. Otherwise, the risk of being subsumed into some institutions' project is imminent, especially for cooperatives.

These discussions do not automatically suggest that emerging collective ecological initiatives and alternative municipal projects would necessarily be instrumentalized in this system, become neoliberal initiatives complementing the capitalist order. However, while claiming to offer an alternative, they should define properly the alternative relations and principles that they try to establish, be careful about the risk of cooptation by mainstream actors, and always reflect upon what kind of alternative relations they try to offer. They need to highlight their alternative aspects in public and distinguish themselves from traditional industrial food cooperatives and mainstream actors.

It is also challenging for the ethically and ecologically grown products to compete with the industrial products that have no concern regarding production conditions. Although the ecological consumer food cooperatives try to decrease the prices of the products through some strategies, the prices cannot compete with their conventional counterparts, for various reasons, including the fair compensation of the labor of producers. In the long-term, their objective is to increase the accessibility of healthy foods to all; however, their consumer profile does not yet comprise of lower classes, limiting their inclusivity. Of course, the most fertile conditions for these initiatives to become non-marginal and more inclusive organizations can be granted by a socialist struggle and the construction of a post-capitalist society. Under today's conditions, they use some strategies and have plans to decrease their expenses and the prices of the products they sell. In the long-term, they aim to enhance their inclusivity by becoming a wider network of actors who can pressure the state to enact policies in favor of ecological production and the ecological producer/consumer organizations, in addition to relying on their increased support for producers and strengthened solidarity.

Despite the promising developments addressed above, these new-generation urban cooperatives and the alternative agri-food projects of municipalities seem to have a limited impact when we evaluate their current scale in the robust corporate food regime. In their long and difficult path towards food sovereignty, and to have a more visible impact, the network of urban ecological food initiatives needs to keep diversifying such examples as in the last three years with their ambitions of offering alternative agri-food relations. Their direct, trust-based and mutual relations with small farmers and producer organizations have the potential to bring positive outcomes in terms of fair production relations and incomes for producers, if they continue to prioritize the solidarity, cooperation and democratic organization, as they grow. They need to keep their focus on socio-economic justice and the empowerment of small-scale ecological farmers, instead of competition and profit-making. Their widening impact can also encourage more producers to organize around a production that cares for humans, equality, nature, and labor. The propagation of such organizations and agro-ecology in the countryside also needs to be accompanied by an alternative mentality against patriarchy, for the benefit of women's labor that is ignored and seen as part of women's daily routines.

While recognizing the significant potential of these organizations, it is also important to emphasize that they cannot actualize, alone, their potential for transforming current agri-food relations. This is because the problems of the current agri-food system and the vulnerabilities that small producers experience today are tremendous. There is a need for the state's consistent and supportive policies in favor of small producers, consumers, and ecological agriculture, to bring into life more substantial transformation. In order to fulfil their potential and make their voice stronger, these initiatives need to expand their scope effectively as a network through the cooperation of various actors like mass organizations, syndicates, unions, municipalities, as well as a larger scale of consumers and actors in related social movements. In the long-term, it

is necessary to apply more pressure to the central government to carry into effect and sustain steadily the necessary policies they demand together.

Investigating these recent experimentations —of new-generation cooperatives and the alternative agri-food projects of municipalities— does not enable us to make a final judgment about how their alternativeness would evolve in the long-term. However, it says a lot about the alternative spaces that they are opening and would potentially open for food sovereignty, on which conditions and through which practices. Although these organizations are still marginal actors in the market, recent developments that are analyzed in this thesis are worthy of scholarly attention. This study demonstrates that these emerging alternatives shall not be considered as simple organic/ecological food outlets from a reductionist perspective. Therefore, this dissertation invites more researchers to study these alternatives, empirically, in the coming years, to discuss the evolution of these initiatives and evaluate their impact, as well as to analyze their dynamic position in the possibly more complex and diverse alternative food market in Turkey.

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