

Post-1980 Restructuring of the Agri-Food System in Turkey

Turkey has been one of the exceptional cases in Eastern Mediterranean region in terms of food self-sufficiency and state subsidized strong agricultural economy until late 1970s. Since 1980s, a series of neo-liberal economic reforms resulted in rapid global integration paralleled with declining role of agriculture in the economy. The neo-liberal policies brought in deregulation, privatization of state economic enterprises, removal of tariff barriers, and dismantling of support programs for agricultural producers. Since early 2000s, further changes transformed the agri-food system in Turkey creating new patterns of specialization and concentration and significant changes in rural restructuring. This session explores the shifting relations of food provisioning in Turkey from a comparative global political economy perspective. Specific issues examined include: the commodification of land, food and labour; the expansion and deepening of industrial standardization; the expansion of a supermarket model; and concomitant changes in traditional methods of production and marketing. financialization,

Organizers:

Yildiz Atasoy, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, Canada

Zulkuf Aydin, Political Science and International Relation, Middle East Technical University, Northern Cyprus Campus.

Mustafa Koc, Department of Sociology, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada

Session A: Transformation of the Agri-Food System in Turkey

1. The Post-Developmentalist Turn in the Agrarian/Peasant Question Debate: Reflections on the Contemporary Problematizations of Small Peasantry in Turkey in the Context of the Neoliberal Food Regime

Atakan Buke [atakanbuke@gmail.com]

PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey
Research Assistant, Department of Sociology, Yuzuncu Yil University, Van, Turkey

In parallel to the shifts and the new developments in capitalist relations both at the global and the national level, the agri-food system in Turkey has started to face radical changes since the early 1980s. The central idea for this restructuring process has been the unquestioned superiority of capitalist market relations in terms of organizing social relations at large. It is possible to argue that there is an apparent consensus among the critical scholars on the general characteristics of the neoliberal restructuring of agri-food system in Turkey, which is understood in this study as the formation of and articulation to the neoliberal food regime. The claim of this paper is that, it is not possible to argue for a similar consensus in terms of the consequences of this process for the agrarian classes, majority of which, arguably, is constituted by petty commodity producers (i.e. small peasantry). In addition to the neglect of agrifood relations as a serious subject matter in the agenda of social sciences in Turkey since the late 1980s, this paper argues that the lack of a comprehensive theoretical discussion on the contemporary form of the agrarian/peasant question has led to a gap between the related literature in Turkey and the international literature, which, according to this study, is characterized by the rise of critical agrifood studies. This paper, through a critical evaluation of the contemporary problematizations of small peasantry in Turkey in the neoliberal context, aims to situate the related literature in Turkey within the ongoing debates at the international level on the agrifood question, which, arguably, has been characterized by a post-developmental turn with the turn of the twenty-first century, when compared to the peasant studies of the 1970s and 1980s. It is the claim of this paper that strengthening the links between these, arguably, disconnected two bodies of literature has the potentiality of enriching both the debates in Turkey and the debates on agrifood question at the international level.

Key Words: neoliberal food regime, agrarian/peasant question, critical agrifood studies, post-developmentalism, Turkey

Production Zones, Neo-liberal Agriculture, Agri-business Interests in Turkey

2. Zülküf Aydın [zulkuf@metu.edu.tr]

New forms of agricultural support policies, the new land inheritance law and farmers' reactions in Mediterranean Turkey

Political Science and International Relations, METU Northern Cyprus Campus

Since the abandonment of the developmentalist project in the 1980s Turkish agriculture has become increasingly internationalised under the hegemony of transnational corporations. Neo-liberal policies implemented since 1980 have consolidated the stronghold of transnational agribusiness companies in Turkish Agriculture. In cooperation with the World Bank, the EU and the WTO, the Turkish state has been preparing the necessary conditions for transnational agribusiness firms to control Turkish agriculture. Since 1999, the Turkish state has introduced fundamental institutional changes to ensure the smooth internationalization of Turkish agriculture, which has inevitably led to the impoverishment of the rural masses and to the abandonment of agriculture by small- and medium-sized households. Based on a recent fieldwork in the Mediterranean region this paper attempts to analyse the reactions of farmers to the recently introduced limits to use traditional seeds in production. In doing so the paper critically evaluates the new forms of agricultural support policies, the new land inheritance law which aims to ensure land consolidation and the linking of support system to the newly introduced 'production zones'. It concludes that the regulatory changes introduced in agriculture in Turkey conjunction with the post Washington consensus since the late 1990s have nothing to do with food security but is a mechanism of further subordination of Turkish agriculture to agri-business interests.

Keywords: agricultural support policies; land inheritance law; production zones, farmer resistance

3. A Neoliberal Success Story in Food Security: A Critical Re-assessment

Mustafa Koc, Department of Sociology, Ryerson University, Canada [mkoc@ryerson.ca]

Metin Ozugurlu, Ankara University, Faculty of Political Sciences, Turkey

[Metin.Ozugurlu@politics.ankara.edu]

Turkey is considered as one of the success stories in terms of meeting the World Food Summit (WFS) objectives in halving the number of undernourished people in its population. Reviewing the consequences of a series of neo-liberal economic reforms adopted during these two decades that transformed the agri-food system in Turkey, this paper questions the methodology of measuring household food security at the national level.

Despite significant economic growth during parts of this period, the benefits of this boom were not shared equitably and a significant portion of the population continued to live below the poverty line. Demographic pressures also made the situation worse. The Turkish population continued to rise from an estimated 61,539,000 (1996) to 79,251,000 in 2015. An addition of close to 3 million Syrian refugees created even wider concerns about food insecurity. While living expenses, such as, housing increased, employment opportunities were limited to minimum wage, part time or precarious jobs. Structural changes in agri-food policy, rural resource policy, agricultural support programs, changes in foreign trade patterns and regional political conflicts resulted in significant population movements towards the cities.

We claim that the national level generalizations do not pay enough attention to social and regional inequalities and the narrow definition of food security in terms access to food and general nutritional status ignores ecological and macro economic dimensions of sustainability. The paper examines the multi-prong approach to improve accessibility and affordability of food, through market mechanisms and charities, such as imports, discount retailers, public markets and food banks. Finally, the paper will look at the consequences of over reliance on highly processed and carbohydrate rich *diets of poverty*, in the case of rapid rise in diabetes rates in the country.

Keywords: food security, agri-food policy, food imports, charities, diets of poverty

4. Changing Food Systems in Turkey? Towards An Alternative

Emel Karakaya emellkarakaya@gmail.com

Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of City and Regional Planning.

Ekrem Ayalp ekremayalp@gmail.com

PhD Candidate, Middle East Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of City and Regional Planning.

Especially since the 1980s, agriculture and food sector has been undergoing an irreversible process of restructuring and it is asserted that a transition is inevitable from a figure of peasant under the aegis of the state to a farmer producing under the ambivalent market condition. The rationale behind this coercive transformation stems from the original neoliberal critique of state-led interventionist policies in the agricultural sector which lead to lack of innovation, efficiency problems, over-bureaucratization, and the existence of corruption. During the transformation period in agriculture and food sector, unlike the homogeneous structure of national developmentalism which was the general economic and political paradigm before the 1980s in agriculture, more heterogeneous and even polarized/stratified structure of production, distribution and consumption have arisen.

This transformation signals a state of integration of the rural and the urban in economic manner. Especially in the years of new century after 2000s both de-peasantization and re-peasantization tendencies in different parts of the world have been argued. As well, while 'food empires' dominates agricultural markets that are sustained by huge investments in advertising and lobbying to legitimate their position and the standards of quality, safety and sustainability to which they adhere, an opposition germinates among consumers. In order to form an organization of alternative production and distribution, urban middle and upper classes has grown their demand, and attempted to construct a regenerative relation between the rural and the urban.

In this article, we are presenting the newly emerging alternative agro food initiatives in Turkey. The political and economic paths emerged through and by multi-level and multi-actor struggles especially after 1980s pave way for the rise of Alternative Agro Food Systems in 2000s. In this respect, this article examines the newly emerging alternative agro food initiatives in relation to a troubling contemporary agenda for agriculture and food sectors in Turkey. The article is composed of three parts. The first part discusses the agricultural restructuring in Turkey in relation to global outlook of incumbent food regime. The second part draws upon the conditions and necessities that have given way to the emergence of alternative initiatives. The last part displays the character, organization, history and properties of alternative agro food initiatives in Turkey.

Keywords: Alternative Agro Food Initiatives in Turkey, Rural Restructuring, Urban-Rural linkages in Agriculture and Food Production, Challenges to Incumbent Food Regime

Session B: Agri-Food Governance in Turkey

5. Sercan Taş [srcn.tas@gmail.com]

Bogazici University, Department of Sociology

Supermarket-driven Private Agri-food Governance and Its Effects on Agricultural Producers in Turkey

This study examines the rise of supermarket-driven private agri-food governance and its effects on agricultural producers in Turkey. The neoliberal restructuring of Turkish agriculture operates through private food standards and third-party certification schemes driven by supermarkets. In this respect, supermarketization and third-party GlobalGAP (ITU) certification are two parallel processes transforming the agricultural production and rural livelihoods in Turkey. This study examines these processes through an analysis of supermarket expansion, facilitative legal regulations, government subsidy policies and their overall effects on fresh fruit and vegetable (FFV) producers in Antalya. The main argument is that supermarket-driven third-party certification has differentiating impacts of different scales on agricultural producers. It also argues that the social differentiating mechanisms of third-party ITU certification work through and as the result of changing agricultural policies in Turkey. This study is based on field research and in-depth interviews with agricultural producers, agri-food companies, government officials, Migros's Mediterranean region procurement center officers and engineers, agricultural cooperatives and third-party certification body auditors and certifiers in the Serik, Muratpaşa, Finike and Demre districts of Antalya. Apart from that, government statistics, agricultural law and regulation texts have been sources for this study.

Keywords: Supermarkets; private agri-food governance; third part certification; agricultural policy

6. Labor and Value Creation Processes in the Sector of “Natural” Food Production in Contemporary Turkey

Bermal Küçük [berri1986@hotmail.com]

Bogazici University, Sociology Department

Demand for healthy and natural food has been increasing significantly, particularly among some segments of the middle and upper classes in metropolitan areas over the last decade in Turkey. This trend also has repercussions in the world of agriculture. We observe that an increasing number of farms have been established to meet this demand through organizing and coordinating agricultural production, especially in the southwestern cities of Turkey. This research examines the labor and value creation processes in the natural food production sector in Turkey. To that end, I scrutinize İpek Hanım Çiftliği, a farm located in the Nazilli district of Aydın. The main argument is that value creation and capital accumulation are realized through the appropriation of women’s domestic labor and knowledge. Women’s labor and knowledge appear as a natural resource available for use as capital in this sector. This study also argues that the romanticization of past history and of nature are two other important strategies for capital accumulation in this sector. This study is based on field research and interviews conducted with the women working on the farm and the owner of the farm. It is also based on discourse analysis. I analyze the texts which have been created for the promotion of food products and which are sent to customers via e-mail, and I highlight the important themes of the discourse employed in them.

Keywords: natural food production; women’s domestic labour; discourse

7. In the Absence of a Welfare State: The Regulation of Agricultural Production Credits in Turkey since the Great Recession

Yetkin Borlu [yborlu@richmond.edu]

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Richmond, USA

Following the Great Recession of 2008, studies on the socioeconomic implications of financialization in agriculture focused on its impacts on land ownership and agri-food firms. They have not however prompted a change in how the social sciences conceptualize credit use and its consequences for small and medium-scale farmers. I investigate the immediate implications of credit use and debt for small and medium farmers based on how government policies influence the credit use of small and medium-scale farms. Government policies surrounding agricultural credit in Turkey represent such a policy area where the agricultural sector still constitutes one-quarter of total employment. In this analysis, I use a strategic-relational approach that addresses the strategic use of policy tools by state institutions to accommodate economic interests of different social groups during economic restructuring. I conduct an online archival search, using official and news sources (e.g. parliamentary debate minutes, laws and government decrees, institutional and industry reports), and gather descriptive statistics on credit use. The documents from the Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Credit Cooperatives are the focus of this search since these institutions have been the main sources of credit. Public data on agricultural production and credit use at the national level are made available online by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) and the Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency (BDDK). The expected conclusion of this analysis is that the government policies bolstered the expansion of agricultural credit market to direct farmers from state-supported commodity markets to corporate markets where commodity prices fluctuate. I investigate whether agricultural credits are providing the necessary financial incentive for farmers to participate in commodity markets with higher production costs.

Keywords: financialization, farm credits, debt, corporate markets, Turkey

8. Exception to the Rule: Baklava Producers and Agri-food Restructuring

Esin Gozukara [egozucar@sfu.ca]

Ph.D. Candidate

Department of Sociology & Anthropology

Simon Fraser University

Food regime theory, even though it has great explanatory power on the macrostructure of the food system, does not fully recognize the unique patterns exhibited across countries in the Global South. Within the food regime framework, Turkey is a country that remains largely understudied. The Turkish political economy and the organization of Turkish agriculture does not completely follow the model laid out in this theory. Further, the theory does not provide us with enough tools to analyze the current complexities of the “third food regime” that materialized in Turkey after the 1980s. The third (corporate) food regime—whose existence is a point of contention among scholars—is characterized by free trade and market supremacy and, since capitalism in twenty-first century has gained a fluid form, it has vaguely defined borders compared to the previous regimes. Philip McMichael argues that the privately regulated food quality standards used by TNCs to organize agri-food supply chains are major markers of the corporate food regime. This paper, relying on participant observation, in-depth interviews and incorporated comparison, presents an alternative perspective to the third food regime by devoting specific attention to small-scale baklava producers located in the Turkish cities of Gaziantep, Ankara and Istanbul.

Baklava, a dessert with contentious origins, is very popular in Turkish cuisine. It is culturally significant since it is common to eat baklava when celebrating festive events such as weddings and religious holidays, in addition to its centrality at family gatherings and neighbourly visits. My research demonstrates that baklava producers that are more traditional in their ways of procuring the ingredients and producing this dessert in an authentic way by using centuries old methods, consciously prefer not to be a part of the global supply chains that dominate the corporate food regime. In addition to that, the producers of this historic, traditional and artisanal product claim the central space when determining the quality of their product as well as the quality of ingredients that they procure for their product. Baklava has recently obtained PGI designation and I argue that PGI is another tool of resistance considering that it aims to preserve the traditional methods of production, the baklava producers and the baklava itself. These producers are challenging the rules of the corporate food regime by choosing the ingredients that have been used for baklava for centuries and adhering to the traditional production methods; this silent resistance needs to be recognized.

Keywords: food regime theory, baklava, quality standards, traditional methods of production, geographical indications

Session C: Transforming Nature and neo-liberal policies of Environment

9. Ataman Avdan aavdan@sfu.ca

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Canada

Vegetables out Flamingos in: Neoliberal Conservation and the Decline of Agricultural Production in The Gediz Delta, Turkey

By exploring the commodification, devaluation, and revaluation of farming and grazing lands in the urban-rural interface of Izmir, Turkey, this paper discusses the role of neoliberal conservation in the decline of agricultural production and the shifting relations of local food provisioning. It specifically focuses on the developments in the Gediz Delta, an extensive, coastal wetland, only 25 kilometres away from the downtown core. Historically, the villages in the delta have been providing local markets with a diversity of fresh products; however the delta has been losing its agricultural character since the early 1990s as it was rediscovered as a “natural treasure.” The Gediz Delta has been designated as a “Wetland of International Importance” in 1998 and tied to the international neoliberal conservation framework through the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. This rediscovery coincided with the new direction of urban expansion towards previously neglected northern parts of Izmir, where the delta is located. Based on interviews with local policy actors, members of non-governmental organizations, environmental activists, scientists, farmers, fishers, real estate developers, and amenity migrants/exurbanites who recently moved to the gated communities in the delta, as well as contextual analysis of official documents and various publications, this paper suggests that the current conservation policy and practices contribute to the restructuring of local agri-food system and the gentrification of agricultural and natural areas. I argue that the mobilization of neoliberal conservation discourse and practices strategically aestheticizes the delta as a “flamingo heaven” and also facilitates the marketization of the region as an amenity migration destination. While the selective, and often contradictory, engagement of local policy actors with neoliberal conservation produces conservation spaces, natural parks and sanctuaries, it also encourages, if not forces, small-scale farmers to sell their lands to developers. As a result, the significance of the small-scale agricultural production for local consumption is decreasing and the delta is being transformed into a landscape for tourist consumption and upper-middle class housing developments. This paper highlights the politics of landscape transformation by putting a specific emphasis on social actors’ uneven capacities to negotiate conservation policy and practices.

Keywords: *Neoliberal conservation, land commodification, rural gentrification, amenity migration, landscape transformation.*

10. Restructuring of the Olive Sector in Turkey within the Neoliberal Transformation of Agriculture

Orkun Doğan orkun.dogan@bilgi.edu.tr

Ph.D. Candidate in Economics, İstanbul Bilgi University and Member of the Rural Research Network

Abstract: Olive has recently been attached importance in Turkish agriculture within a paradoxical framework. Olive, olive oil, olive trees and olive orchards have recently brought at the heart of various discussions through which we can trace a face of agricultural transformation. Contrary to the cases of many other traditional products in Turkish agriculture such as cotton or tobacco, where the production areas have dramatically decreased, the number of olive trees and the total area of olive groves in Turkey have increased radically since the first half of the 2000s. Thanks to the subsidy policies implemented in those years, while olive has been preferred as an alternative crop for many farmers to carry on agricultural production, various new actors from different background have entered into olive and olive oil production with having different aims and intentions. In accordance with the restructuring process implemented with the ARIP (Agricultural Reform Implementation Project), Tariş and Marmarabirlik (the two Agricultural Sales Cooperatives for Olive Producers) was (de)regulated and transformed to autonomous entities. Beside the remarkable change in the role of Tariş which has historically regulated the relation between olive and olive oil producers and state, there were many mergers and acquisitions in the olive oil market. In other respect, olive trees have become the subject of different political and ecological disputes via some mining projects and energy investments on the olive groves, and farther some uproots and destructions of olive trees in some regions. There is a harsh discussion undergoing through the legal attempts that suggest some changes in the current law regulating the legal framework of the preservation of olive groves. Hence, we can mention a dual process in the olive sector seems as a paradox in the perspective of the policy makers: the government, on the one hand sets the targets of improvement in olive sector and to increase the number of olive trees via some campaigns that attempt to compile the priorities and goals of the different stakeholders whose positions to each other are ever changing with intra-sectoral power struggles. And on the other hand, there have been the efforts to abandonment of preservation legislations on olive trees and olive orchards in the need of the developmental goals of energy and mining sector that is related to the inter-sectoral power struggles. All in all, since the early 2000s, there have been vast changes in olive and olive oil sector, parallel to neoliberal transformation in agriculture in Turkey. Based on recent debates on olive sector and contestations, this paper focuses on the olive and olive oil sector and opens a discussion on changes in traditional methods of production and marketing in the sector and aims to explore the shifting relations between producers, companies and the state from a political economy perspective. The discussion presented here will be elaborated through the opinions from different stakeholders of olive sector by using the interviews which were as a part of a field study in the primary olive producing region, Ayvalik.

Keywords: commodification, neoliberal transformation of agriculture, agricultural subsidy regime, Turkish Development Strategies for 2023, developmentalism.

11. End of Technocratic Knowledge in Contemporary Turkey? Hydro-Electrical Power Plants as an Instance of Land Commodification

Sanem Güven.-Salgırlı PhD sanemguvenc@gmail.com

Emily Carr University of Arts and Design (Non-Regular Faculty Member)

Fernand Braudel Center (Research Associate)

What are the knowledge regimes that define Turkey's neoliberal era? Or, more specifically, on what kinds of knowledge do the current neoliberal regime, its governmental rationalities, and policy decisions are built upon? From Michel Foucault to Bruno Latour, Timothy Mitchell to Michel Callon, scholars have long since associated liberal and neoliberal forms of governance with technocratic knowledge; i.e. expert knowledge that pertains to various forms of risk assessment, reached through cost-benefit analysis that grounds itself on the calculative reasoning of scientific empiricism.

These studies focused more on decision-making policies of the welfare states, and placed little emphasis on processes of commodification, affecting the dynamics through which they disintegrate. Yet, especially since 'the return of primitive accumulation' in the shape of enclosures and appropriation of the commons, technocratic knowledge seems to be on its downfall. I argue that cases of land commodification could be problematized as part of a different governance mentality that bases itself on a form of knowledge different from technocratic or expert knowledge. It operates on an altogether different terrain with different principles. Instead of relying on decisions reached through scientific methods, it relies on a highly specialized and technical order of knowledge, which is produced by technocrats but neither technocratic nor scientific in character.

The cases upon which I base my arguments are the environmental assessment reports prepared by private companies seeking to build hydroelectric power plants (HEPPs) in Turkey. As instances of enclosure and land commodification, HEPPs have been mushrooming all over the country for the past few decades. Most of these projects have been taken to court by members of the local communities with the claim that they lack proper risk-assessment measures to avoid probable harms to both natural and built environments. Close examination of these court cases prove not only the factual ground of these claims, but also incite us to further dwell on the knowledge regime upon which this specific case of land commodification is built.

Keywords: neoliberal governance, primitive accumulation, techno-science, environmental activism, commons

12. GlobalGAP and Agro-Biotechnology: Syngenta and Rijk Zwaan in Turkish Villages **By Yıldız Atasoy [yatasoy@sfu.ca]**

Efficiency and rationality have become key value considerations in Turkey's state-policy program of expanding land-based spaces for wealth concentration in agriculture. The fundamental criticism of small-scale subsistence-oriented family farming is its lack of competitiveness in a market economy and unsuitability for integration into the modern system of food provisioning.

Because agricultural activity is no longer seen as integral to the livelihood of producers and their families but as a private enterprise subject to the entrepreneurial rules of a competitive market economy, it is expected to become integrated into an input-intensive agricultural production system fully coordinated with 'upstream' and 'downstream' supply chains. The various methods utilized by the AKP government in Turkey to reorganize landscapes constitute a refiguring of the 'upstream' of farming so as to be congruent with the 'rationality' and 'efficiency' requirements of a competitive economy. The growing expectation on the part of government that farmers conform to or adopt agroindustry-led biotechnology innovations and associated information systems constitutes another dimension of refiguring the upstream of farming. Again, this is justified on the grounds of increasing the competitiveness of agriculture within the global market economy; which is also the rationale for ensuring the market-integration of farmers through compliance with supermarket-led food standards. This paper focuses on the biotechnology-led reorganization of the upstream of farming in Turkey. Key factors to be examined include: the good-agricultural practices (GAP) project of 2004 and development of contract farming, the Agriculture Law (No. 5488) of 2006, and the Seeds Law (No. 5553), also of 2006. Other measures involved in intensifying an agro-industrial input-intensive agriculture in Turkey include the expansion of 'intellectual property rights' and the 'Convention on Biological Diversity' regimes, national biosafety measures, as well as the 2004 International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) by the FAO. In addition to a contextual analysis of the various policy tools adopted by the government, this paper draws data from my interviews conducted with the managers and officials of two global biotechnology companies, Syngenta and Rijk Zwaan. I met and interviewed company managers and officials of Syngenta and Rijk Zwaan in Kayabükü, a village within Beypazarı, at an experimental farming day organized by Syngenta. Also interviewed were foreign guest farmers invited by Syngenta to introduce their newly developed biotech seeds for vegetables and salad varieties.

Key words: GlobalGap, product standardization, biotechnology companies, biodiversity, patents and trade in biotech seeds