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DIFFERENT FORMS OF EMBEDDEDNESS AT ISTANBUL'S BAZAAR AND FARMERS MARKET

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Abstract

This paper assesses what social, ecological, and spatial embeddedness of food entails in different food exchange sites in Istanbul. The paper argues that discussions around embeddedness have focused primarily on cases from the Global North and have ignored sites from the Global South where different food actors (wholesalers, vendors, farmers, farmer-vendors) and production practices (local vs. alternative (certified organic vs. PGS vs. not-certified organic or 'natural') vs. conventional) can and do coexist in the same food exchange site. Then, using participant observation and interview data from Istanbul's bazaars (periodic markets) and farmers markets associated with the locavore movement (FMs), the paper shows that food is re-socialized and re-spatialized in both sites; however, what that socialization and spatialization entails (in each site) is constitutively different: The FMs aim to generate a community of eco-conscious food citizens even as there may be significant socio-economic differences between consumers and producers who participate at the FMs; whereas bazaars emphasize the maintenance of neighborhood communities. Yet, who constitutes those communities is neighborhood- and bazaar- specific. At the city's outskirts, such communities may include vendors, farmer-vendors, and consumers; whereas at bazaars more centrally located, the neighborhood community generated and maintained outside the bazaars tends to be reproduced at the bazaars, thus usually excluding the vendors. In short, not only are there differences between these two different types of sites in terms of the social, spatial, and ecological embeddedness of food, but there may also be differences within the types depending on where each site is located. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of these differences for the food movement in Turkey in general, and for the locavore movement in particular.

Keywords: Farmers Markets, bazaars, the local food movement, Istanbul.

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İSTANBUL'DAKİ PAZARLARDA VE ÜRETİCİ PAZARLARINDA FARKLI TOPLUMSAL GÖMÜLÜLÜK FORMLARI

ÖZ

Bu makale, İstanbul'daki haftalık pazarları ve üretici pazarlarını, gıdanın sosyal, mekânsal ve ekolojik gömülülüğü bağlamında değerlendirmektedir. Makale, öncelikle, gömülülük yazınının ağırlıklı olarak Küresel Kuzey'deki vakalara odaklandığını ve farklı gıda aktörlerinin (toptancılar, satıcılar, çiftçiler, çiftçi-satıcılar) ve üretim uygulamalarının (yerel vs. alternatif (sertifikalı organik vs. sertifikasız organik vs. topluluk destekli sertifikalı vs. 'doğal') vs. konvansiyonel) sıklıkla bir arada bulunabileceği Küresel Güney örneklerini nispeten görmezden geldiğini savunmaktadır. Ardından, İstanbul'un pazarlarında ve yerellik hareketiyle ilişkili üretici pazarlarında yapılan katılımcı gözlem ve görüşme verilerini kullanarak, her iki alanda da gıdanın yeniden sosyalleştirildiğini ve yeniden mekânsallaştırıldığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bununla birlikte, iki alandaki sosyalleştirme ve mekânsallaştırma arasında yapısal olarak farklılıklar vardır: Üretici pazarlarında tüketiciler ve üreticiler arasında önemli sosyo-ekonomik farklılıklar olsa bile, üretici pazarları, ekoloji bilinci yüksek gıda vatandaşlarından oluşan bir topluluk oluşturmayı amaçlarken, pazarlarda mahalle cemaatinin korunması vurgulanmaktadır. Ancak kimlerin bu mahalle cemaatine dahil olduğu mahalleye ve pazara özgüdür. Mesela, şehrin çeperlerindeki pazarlarda satıcılar, çiftçi-satıcılar ve tüketiciler bu cemaatin bir parçası olabilirken; merkezi konumdaki pazarlarda, pazarcılar dışlanır ve pazar dışında var olan mahalle cemaati yeniden üretilir. Kısacası, pazarlar ve üretici pazarları arasında gıdanın sosyal, mekânsal ve ekolojik gömülülüğü açısından farklılıklar olduğu gibi, pazarların ve üretici pazarlarının içinde de bulundukları yerlerden mütevellit farklılıklar mevcuttur. Makale, bu farklılıkların özellikle yerellik odaklı gıda hareketi için ne gibi fırsatlar ve sıkıntılar doğurabileceği tartışılarak sonuçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Üretici pazarları, pazarlar, yerel gıda hareketi, İstanbul.

INTRODUCTION

Scholars, activists, and policymakers alike have pointed out that in the contemporary global food system, which prioritizes low prices and high profits, food is transported immense distances to bring it to its locations of consumption from its locations of production. As a result, not only do the carbon and water footprints of most foods tend to be unnecessarily high, but also, the opportunities and spaces that would allow producers (farmers) and consumers to come together and enable them to get to know each other are almost nonexistent. Moving off of these critiques and criticisms, the local food movement has attempted to "re-socialize [and] re-spatialize" (Moragues-Faus, 2017, p. 456) food by both limiting the distance food has to travel between locations of production and consumption, and establishing and maintaining spaces and networks, such as farmers markets (FMs), community shared agriculture schemes (CSAs), and farm-to-table networks (F2TNs), that would enable producers and consumers to interact with each other in various ways. It is hoped that consequently, new relationships based on trust can sprout between producers and consumers, value can be redistributed along the food system and different kinds of political associations and identifications can be formed (Moragues-Faus, 2017, p. 456).

Although the local food movement has gained quite a bit of traction all around the world, the spaces and networks it has inspired in different localities, as well as the relationships, political associations, and identifications they generate, are highly context-specific. They are, in other words, largely dependent on the particular politico-economic structures and social dynamics of each locality. As such, what the local food movement entails, which discourses and practices might be prevalent, for example, or what spatialization and socialization – in short, embeddedness (Morris & Kirwan, 2011; Winter, 2003) – of food might look like, can vary significantly across localities.

One of the factors contributing to this variation is the presence of traditional spaces and networks, like periodic markets, bazaars, wet markets, for example, where producers and consumers have traditionally come together, established, and maintained relationships, interacted with each other at different capacities, and formed a community. In localities where these traditional spaces and networks continue to be predominant sites of exchange, they might also be the sites of socializing and spatializing for food that the literature attributes to the FMs, CSAs and F2TNs (Türkkan, 2021). In yet others where traditional spaces and networks coexist with the ones the local food movement inspires, different forms of embeddedness might overlap, converge, and/or diverge in the same space or network. And, of course, such coexistences are usually pregnant with all sorts of frictions - "the awkward, unequal, unstable and creative qualities of interconnection across difference" (Tsing, 2005, p. 4). Unfortunately, these frictions or for that matter, convergences, divergences, and overlaps are not very visible in the literature as the studies have primarily focused on those localities (USA, UK, Canada, Australia, for example) where such traditional spaces and networks are no longer present.

In what follows, I will clarify some of these convergences, divergences, and overlaps through a comparative discussion of the FMs and periodic markets (bazaars) in Istanbul. First, I will argue that the FMs are not the only spaces through which food is re-socialized and re-spatialized; bazaars can also serve the same purpose. That said, secondly, the socialization and spatialization of food at the bazaars is constitutively different than at the FMs: The FMs aim to bring likeminded producers and consumers together and generate a community that cares about eco-conscious food production and consumption practices. Bazaars, in comparison, are spaces where neighborhood residents are assembled together, interact with each other, and generate a sense of neighborhood community. As such, although food gets embedded into the local context in both spaces, what that embedding entails is radically different.

The paper proceeds as follows: The next section lays out the method of data gathering and analysis. The following section does a quick review of the local food ('locavore') movement with an emphasis on embeddedness in the context of the FMs. The section after, focuses on the contemporary

food system in Turkey, highlighting how it has changed over the years and the remaining intermediate forms, most notably the bazaars, that are crucial for embedding food socially, spatially, and ecologically. The final section offers a comparison of these intermediate forms, specifically the bazaars and the FMs in Istanbul, underlining the differences again in terms of embeddedness. The conclusion summarizes the main points and discusses what these differences entail for the locavore movement in Turkey and beyond. Overall, the paper makes two significant contributions to the literature: One, it expands the literature on the local food movement, by exploring the topography of local foodscapes in Istanbul where traditional spaces and networks are still prevalent. And two, it explores on-the-ground forms of embeddedness that differ from the forms the literature has already discussed. Here, in particular, the identification of context-specific dynamics of social and spatial embeddedness are crucial as they pertain to the community-making and community-maintaining aspects of the FMs and the bazaars – both of which have been underlined as critical for the locavore movement in particular.

METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

The data for this paper comes from three phases of fieldwork spanning over 4 years that aimed to identify discourses of social, ecological, and spatial forms of embeddedness, and in particular the practices of community-generation in the context of social embeddedness, in different sites of food exchange (bazaars, supermarkets, FMs, consumer cooperatives, neighborhood grocery stores). The first phase entailed participant observation at 17 neighborhood bazaars (Besiktaş – Dikilitaş, Beşiktaş - Ulus, Şişli – Beşiktaş Cumartesi Pazarı, Beşiktaş – Konaklar Mahallezi Salı Pazarı, Şişli – Feriköy Cinderesi Pazarı, Şişli – Fulya Çarşamba Pazarı, Fatih – Fatih Çarşamba Pazarı, Kadıköy – Kozyatağı Pazarı, Kağıthane – Sultan Selim Mahallesi Perşembe Pazarı, Sarıyer – Sarıyer Merkez Pazarı, Sarıyer – Reşitpaşa Pazarı, Sarıyer – Çayırbaşı Pazarı, Sarıyer – Bahçeköy Pazarı, Sarıyer – İstinye Dereiçi Pazarı, Sarıyer – Yeniköy Pazarı, Şile – Cuma Pazarı, Üsküdar – Ünalan Pazarı (Salı Pazarı)) and 4 FMs (Şişli/Feriköy, Kartal, Bakırköy, Şile) from June 2015 to October 2016. The second phase entailed semistructured interviews with the vendors' associations, Slow Food convivia, consumer cooperatives, civic initiatives focusing on agri-business and hospitality, and intermediaries at the wholesale markets and vendors at the FMs and the bazaars. A total of 23 interviews were conducted between June 2015 and October 2016, each lasting between half an hour to two hours. A third phase involving semi-structured interviews with urban and peripheral farmers and repeat interviews with previous informants was started in October 2019. However, it had to be concluded prematurely, due to COVID19 restrictions. As such, the discussion below will primarily focus on the fieldwork conducted in 2015 and 2016, though with occasional references to the seven interviews conducted in late 2019.

SITUATING EMBEDDEDNESS: CONVENTIONAL VS. ALTERNATIVE VS. LOCAL

Pinpointing an exact date for the birth of the local food movement is difficult; its rise, however, is much easier to trace as it followed the trajectory of the conventional global food system. As international trade agreements (Patel, 2007; Wise, 2019), imperialist wars (Brown, 2015, pp. 142-150), or for that matter, international humanitarian aid (Clapp, 2013; Gerlach, 2008) enabled the conventional global food system to access different localities across the world, the local food movement, that aimed to slow down and stop that access, followed. Underlining how the globalized food system contributes to climate change, externalizes environmental costs to already vulnerable producers and disrupts fragile rural communities in the locations of consumption as well as production, proponents of the local food movement ('locavores') suggested that "food systems that are environmentally sustainable, economically viable and socially just" (Allen et. al., 2003, p. 61) needed to be created instead. Rather than a food system that is dominated by a few multinational corporations strategically located at the bottlenecks of the system (Patel, 2007), the locavores thus argued for the "develop[ment of] community-based food systems grounded in regional agriculture and local decision-making" (Allen et. al., 2003, p. 61).

Yet, as Allen et. al. also point out, "the local is not everywhere the same" (2003, p. 63). 'The global' penetrates into 'the local' in specific and varied ways, and 'the local' responds to such penetrations in heterogeneous and multifarious ways. More importantly, neither 'the global' nor 'the local' are uniform and static. They are shaped by politico-economic forces that are themselves historical and context-specific. As such, while certain problems might indeed be – and are – common across the world, their effects manifest differently in different localities (climate change, for example). In this sense, it is difficult to even talk about 'a' (let alone 'the') local food movement. Given the variety – even if certain problems, tensions, dynamics, and forces are common - it would be more accurate to talk about local food movements.

Paying attention to these differences, the literature has zeroed in on local FMs, CSAs, F2TNs and moved away from generalizations. Studies have emphasized regional specificities and parsed out the advantages and disadvantages of certain spaces, practices, or forms of producer-consumer engagement over others, limitations for farmers and barriers for consumers in continuous and active participation in these spaces and networks. With respect to the FMs in the US for example, scholars have identified race and class to constitute major barriers to, (Alkon & McCullen, 2011; Guthman, 2008; Slocum, 2007; Slocum, 2008; Alkon, 2008; Colasanti, Conner, & Smalley, 2010; Hamilton et. al., 2020; Hulbrock et. al., 2017; Markowitz, 2010; Pilgeram, 2012; Schupp, 2016) and building community and ecological concerns to be major motivations for (Pascucci, 2016; Lombardi, 2015; Aucoin & Fry, 2015; Carson, 2016; Leiper & Clarke-Sather, 2017) consumers' and producers' participation. Alternatively, in Europe, FMs have been celebrated as rural development and regeneration initiatives, though local politics and institutions may not always favor such grassroots activity (Orlando, 2011; Barbera & Dagnes, 2016; Filipini, et. al., 2016; Moragues-Faus, 2017; Renting, Marsden, & Banks, 2003; DuPuis & Goodman, 2005). Additionally, in both the US and Europe, the quality and authenticity of produce has come up as a secondary set of motivations for consumers' to participate in the FMs, hinting at a significant link between the local food movements and gastronomy (Berham, 2003; de Roest & Menghi, 2000; Gilg & Battershill, 1998; Libery & Kneafsey, 1998).

That said, the geographic focus of the literature on the local food movements, particularly the FMs, have largely been those localities where the FMs, CSAs, F2TNs are indeed the sole alternatives to the conventional global food system. As such, if the consumers do not participate in the various networks and spaces associated with the local food movement, they tend to go to a conventional retailer – a supermarket, for example - for their provisioning needs.² Farmers, similarly, can sell their produce to the intermediaries and/or retailers of the conventional food system. While such a switch from 'the local' to 'the global' may not be preferable for either the consumers or the producers for different reasons, it is still an option - and an important one at that, as it constitutes another significant opposition ('conventional' vs. 'alternative') that runs parallel to 'the local' vs. 'the global'. In other words, when the conventional is also the global, the local ends up being conflated with the alternative.

There is a catch here, though: Conventional usually also refers to an agricultural production method (that is, the type of agricultural production that is predominantly monoculture, heavily mechanized and is reliant upon agro-chemicals, like pesticides, herbicides, and artificial fertilizers among others). As such, its opposite, 'alternative', also implies a different, that is, 'non-conventional', production method. This could be organic, agro-ecological, permaculture, or good/clean agricultural practices (in which relatively less agro-chemicals are used), etc. Local, however, need not always be 'alternative'. In other words, farmers participating in the local food movement – that is, selling their produce through locavore spaces and networks – may well be producing conventionally. Conflating the 'alternative' and 'local', especially where locavore spaces and networks (FMs, CSAs, F2TNs) are the

² In fact, the presence of "strong ideologies of localism and concern for local farming economies" (Winter, 2003, p. 31) is no indicator for 'local-only' consumer behavior.

only alternatives to the conventional food system, can imply that the farmers participating in these spaces and networks are also non-conventional (that is, organic, agro-ecological, permaculture, etc.) producers. It is important to remember that this is not always the case. To put it differently, local food movements aim to counter the "systemic 'placelessness'" that the conventional global food system has created (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005, p. 360); and at least in this respect, the method of agricultural production farmers (choose to) use can remain secondary.

What is critical vis-à-vis 'the local' then, is embeddedness: That is, "'modes of connectivity' between the production and consumption of food, generally through reconnecting food to (the) social, cultural, and environmental context of its production" (Kirwan, 2004, p. 395). Overall, two such modes of connectivity can be identified: product-based embeddedness, which implies "embed[ding] food products with a sense of place or of geographical provenance" (Harris, 2009, p. 56); and, process-based embeddedness, which "attempts to embed food production and consumption processes in place" (Harris, 2009, p. 56). In both cases, embeddedness connotes not only "how consumers and producers are physically close to one another, but also (..) [the] attention given to the economic support of local community and the development of fair and trusting relationships between actors" (Barbera & Dagnes, 2016, p. 325). In other words, while the conventional global food system disconnects people from each other, from the food they are consuming and from the place(s) where that food is produced, the local food movements aims to "[re]connect(..) [them] to one another and to the markets and environments in which they are immersed and depend on" (Bos & Owen, 2016, p. 3).

As Feagan & Morris (2009) point out, embeddedness can take different forms: Social embeddedness, for example, refers to "a package of values, associated with 'economies of regard', trust, social interaction and responsibility generally" (p. 236). Morris & Kirwan (2011), situate this definition in the political economy literature (pp. 323-324), and following Hinrichs (2000), they argue that it includes all the "social ties [that are] assumed to modify and enhance human economic interactions" (p.296). Natural or ecological embeddedness, in turn, implies "more ecologically embedded values like organic production, and sustainable farming methods, usually contrasted with conventional food production practices held as environmentally degrading" (Feagan & Morris, 2009, pp. 236-237). As such, natural or ecological embeddedness "enables recognition of how, through its communication to the consumer, the underlying ecology of production can facilitate the realization of added value for the producer, satisfy the demands of certain consumers and contribute to on-farm environmental management" (Morris & Kirwan, 2011, p. 326). Moreover, natural embeddedness can embody new articulations of human and non-human relationships and offer "new ways of thinking and being which move beyond an exercise of care for a passive other, human or non-human" (Turner & Hope, 2014, p. 186), though how much a space, practice or a network is ecologically embedded is not always clear and often needs careful assessment (Morris & Kirwan, 2011; Turner & Hope, 2014). Finally, spatial embeddedness refers to more direct links between producers and consumers, where consumers depend on producers to deliver foods that are grown in close proximity and harvested recently, and producers depend on consumers for economic benefits and community support (Feagan & Morris, 2009, p. 237). As Hinrichs warns, however, social and spatial relations should not be conflated (2000, p. 301): Spatial embeddedness implies producers and consumers being in close proximity with one another, even as their relationship is mediated through the commodity form (Kirwan, 2004, p. 399). Social embeddedness, in contrast, focuses on the interpersonal aspects of the producer-consumer relationships and aims to reveal the social relations obscured by the market (including the commodity form).

As I pointed out above, the literature that I have just cited focuses primarily on those places where the options for provisioning are either the conventional, global food system or the local, alternative food systems. Consequently, actors of the conventional, global food system, like the supermarkets, for example, come to represent everything that is wrong with the whole food system:

the lack of seasonality, the pesticide- and artificial fertilizer-laden monoculture agriculture, extreme reliance on fossil fuels, deforestation and environmental destruction, the system being rigged against smallholders, impersonal, purely instrumental market transactions, etc. In contrast, actors of the local, alternative food systems, like the FMs, are portrayed as solutions that may right these wrongs: Ecoconscious (that is, caring for the environment and the environmental effects of agriculture) producers and consumers sharing costs and risks as well as benefits; high quality, seasonal and fresh produce; market transactions that are personal, established and maintained on trust; etc. In short, a socially, spatially, and ecologically embedded local, alternative food system as opposed to a disembedded conventional, global one.

What about intermediate forms? Can there not be cases where there is social and spatial embeddedness, for example, but no ecological embeddedness? Alternatively, does spatial embeddedness necessarily suggest social and ecological embeddedness? In the next section, through a comparison of FMs and the bazaars in Istanbul, I will show that the binary opposition between embedded and disembedded spaces, networks, practices, and actors of the global, conventional food system and the local, alternative food systems portrayed in the literature is a bit too neat, and that intermediate forms where different forms of embeddedness might — and do - overlap, converge, and/or diverge, also exist.

THE INTERMEDIATE FORMS

Turkey's integration into the conventional, global food system happened roughly in three stages. The first stage was during the late Ottoman era, when as a result of the 1838 Trade Agreement with Great Britain, customs tariffs and taxes were reduced, and agricultural production, particularly at the hinterlands of major port cities like Izmir and Adana, largely turned to production for export (Keyder, 1985; Toprak, 1985). The second stage was at the aftermath of World War II, when the introduction of food aid (grain) and machinery in tandem with the Marshall Fund upset the delicate relations of production in the countryside, and triggered waves of rural-to-urban migrations for landless laborers, smallholders, and sharecroppers (Baydar, 1999). This was also the time when the country quite quickly switched from traditional agricultural methods to 'modern' or 'scientific' agriculture reliant on pesticides, artificial fertilizers, and machinery, thus increasing production and ecological degradation at the same time. The third stage came in with the structural adjustments in the 1980s, when most subsidies and other protective measures for farmers were removed; prices for agricultural products as well as inputs were left to the market; and customs tariffs, quotas and taxes were readjusted to stimulate imports and exports (Kazgan, 1999). As a result, the numbers of smallholders decreased substantially; a significant number of farmers quit farming altogether; and those remaining either went into debt or scaled up to produce for export (Keyder, 2014). Today, large farmers (those who farm above 100 decars) usually produce for export; whereas mid-size farmers (those who farm between 10 to 100 decars, including the area they are sharecropping) usually produce for the domestic market (Keyder, 2014). Smallholders, in turn, are engaged in subsistence agriculture while supplementing their income from non-agriculture work (Keyder, 2014).

Production, however, is not the only node through which the country was integrated into the global, conventional food system. Following the structural adjustments and liberalization of trade, global grocery retailers entered and gained a strong foothold in the country in the 1990s (Atasoy, 2013; Yenal, 2014). Unlike their predecessors (*manav*) that had traditionally sold locally grown³ fresh fruits and vegetables⁴, these global grocery retailers brought in produce from all around the world. Tapping into their global connections and comprehensive supply chains, they were able to offer a variety of

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³ Local here implies in the neighborhood or in and around the city, or in the peripheries of the city.

⁴ Grains, legumes, and other 'dry' goods were sold in different shops. For example, grains and legumes were sold in *bakkals* whereas sugar and other spices were sold in *aktars*.

foods, not all of them previously available in the country, at competitive prices (Türkkan, 2020; Atasoy, 2013). Plus, offering a range of goods, from fresh to dry, packaged to frozen, processed to raw, they were convenient one-stop shops for all sorts of food (and other) needs consumers may have. Thus, competing with them was almost impossible for many local, traditional, neighborhood mom-and-pop stores. By late 2000s, they had enough local connections to supply some of the foodstuffs already available in the country from the local producers (Keyder & Yenal, 2011; Yenal, 2014). In most cases, however, unlike the domestic retailers who simply bought from the farmers and then sold at their stores, global retailers opted for what is called contract farming (Yenal, 2014). Contract farming refers to a production-and-sales deal, where the farmer grows the agreed upon amount of produce at the quality the retailer wants, and the retailer buys the agreed upon quantity at the pre-determined price. This way the farmer is not stuck with left-over produce, and the retailer guarantees quality and steady supply. The catch, of course, is the price: If it is over the market rate, it is a great win for the farmer; but as can be expected, most of the time, it is under the market rate – which is to the benefit of the retailer. In Turkey, the global retailers' penchant for contract farming worked at a significant disadvantage to the country's farmers (Keyder & Yenal, 2011). Unable to earn sufficiently due to low prices and rising input costs (due to rising forex rates), large farmers moved out of the domestic markets and switched to producing for export; whereas mid-size farmers became even more cash strapped and in debt. Ironically, it is these mid-size farmers that continue to prefer contract farming since for many of them, the sale guarantee it provides is too important to give up. Plus, the cash advance they receive at the time of contract is their only alternative – and most of the time the only cash addition - to the bank loans.

Local food movements gained traction in this context, particularly in the 2000s as a response to the global retailers' increasing dominance of the food system (Kadirbeyoğlu & Konya, 2017; Karakaya Ayalp, 2021; Türkkan, 2021). Overall, the movement has progressed on four fronts: The first front consisted of a call for more public subsidies and protections for struggling local smallholders and midsize farmers. Proponents, like Çiftçi-Sen for example, have argued that the currently available subsidies and protections benefit large farmers that produce for export.⁵ It is thus necessary to figure out what specifically smallholders and midsize farmers need and develop measures to help them. That is the only way, or so goes the argument, that farmers can stay in rural communities and continue farming. The second front involved intervening into production methods and practices and encouraging farmers to move out of conventional, monoculture agriculture and into more environment-friendly production methods like organic. Proponents, like organic farmers associations and cooperatives, again called for public subsidies and protections especially for the first few years when, following the switch from conventional, yields might go down and costs might go up⁶. They have also called for more public-funded education and certification on organic farming directed particularly to commercial farmers. The third front targeted grocery retailers, global and domestic alike, that take up the supermarket model where producers and consumers are completely disconnected from each other. Proponents like consumer cooperatives, for example, instead called for spaces and/or networks where the two can meet, like farmers' markets, F2TNs and/or periodic markets⁷. Through these spaces and networks, they argued, farmers can take advantage of direct marketing, inform consumers about risks, difficulties, quirks of agricultural production, and better follow changing consumer demographics and demand, whereas consumers can get to know where their food comes from and under what conditions it is produced and share risks with the farmers. The fourth front called for public-funded consumer education on the ecological, economic, and social problems the global, conventional food system has triggered. Proponents regularly underlined the significance of more and direct consumer

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⁵ Field notes from IBB Üretici Pazarları Çalıştayları, 2020

⁶ Interview with Buğday Derneği, 2015. Interview with Yeryüzü Derneği, 2015. Interview with Seferi Kadin Kooperatifi member, 2021.

⁷ Interview with Boğaziçi Mensupları Tüketim Kooperatifi, 2015. Interview with a farmer at Şile Yeryüzü Pazarı, 2019.

participation in spaces and networks where they can support local farmers. They suggested that it was critical for consumers to know about ecological production methods and to demand higher quality foods from the farmers— whether that be region specific *terroir* goods or simply fresh, organic produce.

Local food movements' call for FMs and bazaars, however, came in with a set of complications. Traditionally, bazaars, like the neighborhood manavs, used to be spaces where consumers met with farmers operating in and around the city, and fresh produce, in addition to other foods like meat, fish, eggs, dairy and dairy products, pickles, sauces, and spices, were sold. As such, they used to be quite socially, spatially and (until the Green Revolution at least) ecologically embedded as locavores believed them to be, and today, at the outskirts of most metropolitan cities as well as smaller cities and towns, they continue to be so (Tunçel, 2003; Güher Tan, 2020; Aliağaoğlu, 2013; Akbaş, 2019). In metropolitan centers, however, most vendors in the bazaars are no longer farmers (Dökmeci, Yazgı, & Özüş, 2006; Öz & Eder, 2012). They are intermediaries who buy the produce from the city's registered wholesalers, located at the authorized distribution centers (Hal), and then sell at the bazaars. This is mostly because vending in the bazaars is an incredibly labor-intensive and time-sensitive job9. In Istanbul, bazaars are set up weekly at specific neighborhoods and at designated streets (closed to traffic and parking) for a certain length of time (09.00 AM to 06.00 PM)¹⁰. As such, vendors have to set up shop every day at a different part of the city and then close up and move. 11 They have to arrange for transportation of the fresh produce from the Hal to the bazaar location every day and figure out storage if there are any leftovers. 12 They also have to do a bit of clean up and processing for a pleasing display of the produce they are selling to the consumers.¹³ Given this 24/7 nature of the bazaar work, most vendors work in family groups, each member taking shifts or location-specific tasks. 14 Farmers, in comparison, simply cannot set aside this much time or the labor just to vend at the bazaars. 15 They would rather sell their produce to the intermediaries who, in turn, sell it to the vendors through the Hal. As such, for the bazaars operating at the metropolitan centers, it is difficult to make a claim for social, spatial, or ecological embeddedness.

Locavore-associated FMs, on the other hand, have an entirely different history, supply chain and vendor- and consumer- demographic (Demir, 2013; Arıcı, 2019; Ünal & Can, 2019; Başarangil & Tokatlı, 2018). Whereas neighborhood bazaars are frequented by the neighborhood residents, Istanbul's FMs draw consumers from all over the city and farmers from all over the country. Established in the early 2000s by the Buğday Derneği, a civic organization that aims to support ecological living, FMs feature exclusively certified-organic producers (Buğday Derneği, 2021). Others, established later by municipalities, similar civic organizations and/or consumer cooperatives, usually include certified and not-certified organic producers and low-input participatory guarantee system (PGS)¹⁷ certified producers. Still others may be associated with the Slow Food's Terra Madre movement (Şile Belediyesi, 2021) and feature exclusively farmers who farm within a 40 km radius using low-input, eco-conscious agricultural practices (may or may not be certified organic) and heirloom seeds¹⁸.

⁸ Interview with Fikir Sahibi Damaklar Slow Food Istanbul Convivium, 2015. Interview with Yağmur Böreği Slow Food Convivium, 2015.

⁹ For a detailed discussion on how Istanbul's neighborhood periodic markets (bazaars) operate, see: (Türkkan, 2021b, pp. 126-186, Öz & Eder, 2012).

 $^{^{\}rm 10}$ For a map of bazaar locations, see: (IBB Coğrafi Bilgi Sistemi Müdürlüğü, 2021)

¹¹ Interview with Bazaar Vendors Association, 2015 and Bazaar Vendors and Mobile Vendors Association, 2015.

¹² Interview with Bazaar Vendors Association, 2015

¹³ Interview with Bazaar Vendors Association, 2015

¹⁴ Interview with Bazaar Vendors Association, 2015

¹⁵ Field notes from IBB Üretici Pazarları Çalıştayları, 2020

¹⁶ Interview with Buğday Derneği, 2015

¹⁷ On PGS, please see: (Buğday Derneği; IFOAM, 2007; FAO, 2018)

¹⁸ Interview with a member of Ovacıkta Birgün, 2019. Interview with a farmer at Şile Yeryüzü Pazarı, 2019.

Regardless of the FMs' affiliation, however, the demographics of consumers who participate in the FMs is quite specific. Unlike the significant variations in bazaars, dependent on the neighborhood they are set up in, consumers at the FMs - regardless of whether the FM is established and run by the Buğday Derneği, local municipalities or other civic organizations - are almost exclusively affluent: upper middle and/or upper class, educated (at least a 4-year undergraduate degree) with a white-collar job (Türkkan, 2019; Başarangil & Tokatlı, 2018; Güher Tan, 2020). As a result, they are able to afford the prices which are significantly higher than the bazaars¹⁹. In addition, consumers at the FMs are "reflexive" (Goodman, DuPuis, & Goodman, 2012) consumers or "citizen consumers" (Turner & Hope, 2014). That is, they "shop[..] for commodities from more humane, just, and environmentally friendly origins [to] create progressive social change and bring humans to a more sustainable relationship with the rest of the biosphere" (Gunderson, 2014, p. 110). As such, they are quite knowledgeable of the problems of the global conventional food system and conventional monoculture farming (even if they are not always accurate and do not always agree on the solutions), and they use this knowledge when making food purchasing decisions. In other words, the consumers at the FMs are there as ecoconscious 'food citizens' (Lockie, 2009) who are concerned about their social, economic, and ecological wellbeing, as also those of the producers and of the environment. That is why they are willing to pay more for the produce and come to the FMs even if the distance and schedule may be inconvenient (Türkkan, 2019). An added bonus is, of course, they get to meet other likeminded consumers and producers, and thus become part of a larger locavore community.

EMBEDDING FOOD: FARMERS MARKETS VS. BAZAARS IN ISTANBUL

To reiterate, in the literature, natural or ecological embeddedness has been defined as the communication of "the underlying ecology of production [which] can facilitate the realization of added value for the producer, satisfy the demands of certain consumers and contribute to on-farm environmental management" (Morris & Kirwan, 2011, p. 326). Spatial embeddedness, in turn, refers to producers and consumers being in close proximity with one another, even as their relationship is mediated through the commodity form (Kirwan, 2004, p. 399). Lastly, social embeddedness focuses on the interpersonal aspects of the producer-consumer relationships and aims to reveal the social relations obscured by the capitalist market relations.

Based on these definitions, then, bazaars operating at Istanbul's outskirts foster 'modes of connectivity' (Kirwan, 2004, p. 395) between food producers and consumers, bringing them together, enabling them to get to know another, and establishing relations of trust – all of which help "reconnect food to (the) social, cultural and environmental context of its production" (Kirwan, 2004, p. 395). In other words, they, to some extent, socially and spatially embed food in the locality they operate in (Güher Tan, 2020). At the same time, not all of the vendors at the bazaars are farmers. There could be quite a few vendors who simply trade in food (buy wholesale and sell retail at the bazaar) without engaging in production at any capacity. Consequently, at least some of the produce sold at the bazaars is being grown elsewhere in the country and is retailed without the farmers that produced it being present. Most importantly, whether sold directly by the farmers or indirectly by the vendors, none of the produce retailed at the bazaars need be non-conventionally produced. Though the farmers (and less so vendors) may use 'natural' and 'traditionally grown' to suggest that they are engaged in environmentally sound agricultural practices, none of the produce retailed carries any organic or PGS labeling. In this sense, vendors and the farmers at the bazaars seem to be aware of "the 'value' of natural, social and local embeddedness of production [which] can enable [them to generate] comparative commercial advantage in the market exchange process" (2004, p. 398) while their agricultural production practices may not necessarily reflect that 'value'.

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¹⁹ Pre-pandemic (2019), prices were as much as %40 higher in some places (Türkkan, 2021).

In Sariyer Merkez Pazari and Şile Cuma Pazari, for example, most of the vendors I talked to were not farmers. Like other vendors in other bazaars in Istanbul, they were professional vendors who buy fresh produce from the Hal and sell at Sariyer Merkez and Şile. They would vend at different bazaars at different days around the city. If they engaged with agriculture at any capacity, it was in their ancestral villages on the plots of land (small or big) farmed by members of their extended families. The vendors I talked to in these two bazaars were from different parts of the country, and although they did talk about going back to the villages particularly at times of harvest, no region or no specific produce stood out more than others. Some mentioned helping during the hazelnut harvests, others tea, yet others fruits (apples, apricots, cherries and peaches, for example). Almost all of them mentioned small gardens that the extended family used to grow food in, to be consumed only by the (extended) family. Most interestingly perhaps, they often talked about the pleasure of going back to the village for the harvest, and their hopes and dreams of retiring there one day. There were a few vendors in Sariyer Merkez and Sile, however, who were farmers. Of the eight such vendors in Sariyer Merkez, five claimed that they were exclusively selling produce from their farms; the other three had a mix: some were from their farms, others from the Hal – though all were produced conventionally. In comparison, in Sile, only three vendors claimed they were farmers. Like the farmer-vendors in Sariyer Merkez, they were primarily conventional producers and as such, they had opted to vend at the regular bazaar rather than the local organic bazaar (i.e., Şile Yeryüzü Pazarı). For the customers, whether the vendors were farmers or not seemed to make no difference. The farmer-vendors at Sariyer Merkez had a string of regulars who they claimed to (and indeed, did seem to) have known for years. Chitchat among the farmer-vendors and the regulars was common, and as I found out, some even lived in the same neighborhood. The regulars seemed to do a significant portion of their bazaar shopping from the farmer-vendors, and usually preferred the produce they knew were grown in these farms at the outskirts of the city.²⁰ As one farmer-vendor and their customer-neighbor put it, though the produce was neither certified, nor was it, by the farmer-vendor's own admission, organic, consumers preferred these traditionally grown produce from these farms because they knew and trusted the farmers.

The bazaars in metropolitan centers like Istanbul, in comparison, do even less to 'reconnect' (Kneafsey, et al., 2008) producers and consumers and to "embed food products with a sense of place or of geographical provenance" (Harris, 2009, p. 56). Not only is all of the produce sold in these bazaars conventionally produced, but it is also bought wholesale from the *Hal*. Farmers as such are completely absent, as they would be in a supermarket. At the same time, bazaars are community-generating sites particularly for the residents of the neighborhoods they operate in (Uzgören, 2021; Özgüç & Mitchell, 2000). They provide unique opportunities for the residents to meet up every week on the bazaar day and in the bazaar space to exchange personal news, gossip, share recipes, talk politics, even to help each other make decisions vis-à-vis everyday matters (Uzgören, 2021; Tunçel, 2003; Özüdoğru & Ar, 2016; Özgüç & Mitchell, 2000). These opportunities are particularly significant for women whose access to public spaces is already limited (Kandiyoti, 1988; Mills, 2007; Özbay, 1999).

In contrast to the Sariyer Merkez Pazari and Şile Cuma Pazari, at the Sultan Selim (Sanayii) Mahallesi Perşembe Pazari and the Feriköy Cinderesi Pazari, there were no farmer-vendors. All the produce was bought from the *Hal* by the vendors to be sold at the bazaar. The produce had no identifying information that revealed its location of production or for that matter, who produced it. More importantly, unlike in Sariyer Merkez Pazari where the presence of the farmer-vendor women broke the monopoly of men over vending, at the Sultan Selim Mahallesi Perşembe Pazari, there were no women-vendors selling fresh produce. In contrast, most of the customers were women — more

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²⁰ Most interestingly perhaps, unlike the vendors who were (almost exclusively) men, farmer-vendors were usually couples (husband and wife) when they were operating their stalls. Though women continued to engage with some of the stereotypically women-associated tasks (like prepping the lunch, for example), they also stepped out of the same stereotypes to handle money, haggle with customers and at times, argue with the municipal police (*zabita*) – thus, occupying a much more egalitarian position in the public space of the bazaars.

specifically, young mothers usually with babies or toddlers in tow. Moreover, throughout my fieldwork at Sultan Selim Mahallesi Perşembe Pazarı, I did not see any of the friendly chitchats I had observed at the Sarıyer Merkez Pazarı or the Şile Cuma Pazarı. Conversations between the vendors and the customers were succinct, and the interactions brisk and transaction-oriented. Conversations between the customers, in contrast, were frequent. People often stopped to say hi to each other, comment on the kids, talk about the prices. Though both bazaars were located in working class neighborhoods, perhaps the most significant difference that set the Feriköy Cinderesi Pazarı and the Sultan Selim (Sanayii) Mahallesi Perşembe Pazarı apart was the diversity of the customer base. At Feriköy Cinderesi Pazarı, it was not uncommon to see black and Arab immigrants from Africa and the Middle East, alongside Kurds and Romanis. A few vendors sold fruits and vegetables, cheeses and grains specifically consumed by these communities. The conversations between these vendors and their customers seemed longer and friendlier. A sense of community – albeit of different kinds – was thus strong in both bazaars.

The significance of this community-generating and -maintaining aspect of the bazaars has become particularly noteworthy when other instances of socializing have been suddenly and severely limited during the COVID-19 lockdowns. At a time when every day in-person social interactions in private and public spaces were curtailed, bazaars in Istanbul offered opportunities to see neighbors, friends, relatives outdoors and in public, exchange information, follow up on the latest curfew regulations, celebrate good news, talk politics and/or grieve together while maintaining social distance. Although at times the government did prohibit the setting up of bazaars citing a risk of contagion, such prohibitions often received major public backlash. The relative safety of open-air public bazaars in comparison to the closed and not always well-ventilated stores of chain supermarkets as well as the unfair economic advantage such closures brought to the supermarkets over bazaars and neighborhood shops was pointed out both on mass media and social media²¹. Thus, after each closure attempt, the government backtracked and declared the bazaars open²². This citizen activism further contributed to the community-generating and -maintaining character of the bazaars.

The FMs, in turn, foster all three forms of embeddedness. By bringing together producers and consumers and enabling them to connect with one another, exchange news and information, build new relationships on trust and shared values, the FMs re-introduce producer-consumer relations to food provisioning (albeit while maintaining food's commodity form) (Güher Tan, 2020). In addition, they enable the consumers to learn about where their food comes from and meet some of those who participated in its production. For the producers, in turn, the FMs provide direct marketing opportunities, help recover more of their costs, enable them to inform consumers about their production practices, seasonality, quality and freshness of their produce, and join a community of likeminded producers and consumers, who they can turn to for advice, know-how and, when need be, support. Most critically, by limiting the producers only to those who engage in certified organic and/or certified- PGS low-input, eco-conscious agricultural practices, the FMs reconnect food, food production (agriculture and processing) as well as food purchasing with ecology and care for the environment (Turner & Hope, 2014). Though this linking can - and to a certain extent, indeed does reduce caring for the environment to simply participating at the FMs, commodifies it so that it is part of the process of exchange (Turner & Hope, 2014), and fetishizes it in the form of the organic label and/or organic food (Pilgeram, 2012), the reconnection the FMs generate is still important for emphasizing that food production is an ecological process, and for alerting consumers and producers to its significance.

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²¹ See, for example, (Cumhuriyet, 2021; Sözcü, 2021)

²² Though during lockdowns, only food (mostly fresh fruits and vegetable) vendors were allowed to operate. See the latest regulations, here (TC Sağlık Bakanlığı, 2020; TC İçişleri Bakanlığı, 2020)

The reconnections the FMs generated was observable in the four FMs I did fieldwork in. In Şişli/Feriköy Organik Pazarı, for example, all the vendors were farmers who actively worked in the production of the fresh fruits and vegetables they were selling, and as such, they could readily answer various production-related questions their customers asked. Customers, in turn, were interested in the quality of the produce and the production processes, and they frequently conversed with the vendorfarmers about food and agriculture. Almost every stall had their string of regulars, and it seemed like customers and vendors knew each other pretty well. Customers, too, often talked to one another, stopping by to say hi, talking about their kids and lives. The price of the produce was notably higher (than the bazaars), though I caught few conversations between vendors and customers, or between customers, that draw attention to it. Rather, most conversations about the produce sold in the FMs focused on its quality, its production practices and most notably, its ecological footprint. For many, it seemed that participating at the FMs was the bare minimum that they could do to reduce the environmental harm they were causing. Similarly, in Şile Yeryüzü Pazarı, customers and vendors alike commented on the significance of buying local. Unlike Şişli/Feriköy Organik Pazarı where vendors engaging in certified organic agriculture showed up, in Şile Yeryüzü Pazarı, vendors were very much local, and they sold herbs, mushrooms and wild fruits they gathered from the woods. These specialty products drew their own customers and generated quite a few, long-lasting customer-vendor relations. Thus, in both cases, FMs played a significant role connecting local foods, farmer-vendors and customers.

Through the FMs, then, food is re-socialized and re-spatialized. Rather than a mere end-product making its way from farmers to consumers in a disconnected global food system, it becomes a socially, spatially, and ecologically embedded item that sustains and nourishes life, reveals relations of production that are obscured by the market, and re-connects people who were alienated from each other and from the environment. In doing so, however, food at the FMs also becomes a locus of tensions, contradictions, and oppositions through which socio-economic differences are reproduced and maintained. That is to say, in socially, spatially, ecologically embedding food into the local context, the FMs also embed food in the power relations of that locality.

Class differences between producers and consumers is one of the dynamics that fuels these unequal power relations. As I mentioned before, the consumers at the FMs are "citizen consumers" (Turner & Hope, 2014), that is, they "shop[..] for commodities from more humane, just, and environmentally friendly origins [to] create progressive social change and bring humans to a more sustainable relationship with the rest of the biosphere" (Gunderson, 2014, p. 110). They are also more affluent: They are able to afford the relatively higher prices of the FMs, set time aside to go to the FMs and make the effort to educate themselves on the problems of the conventional global food system. Not all the farmers vending at the FMs are as affluent as their consumers, however. Some of them could be barely making ends meet after switching to organic; they might be in debt; or they might need to supplemental their income to keep the farm afloat. Indeed, the FMs were established with the explicit recognition that the farmers - particularly those engaging in alternative farming practices may be struggling and that they may need help. In other words, it was assumed that producers and consumers would be of different socio-economic status, have different amounts of disposable income, etc. and that direct marketing coupled with higher prices would help farmers (particularly those who have switched from conventional to eco-conscious and/or organic agriculture) recover more of their now higher production costs.

These class differences were quite explicit in different FMs. Although all the farmer-vendors I have talked to in Şişli/Feriköy Organik Pazarı and Şile Yeryüzü Pazarı owned their lands and farms, the scales of operation were radically different. At Şile, all farmer-vendors were smallholders: they had a few chickens or beehives; their land was usually less than 10 decars; and farm work was usually handled by the family with additional hands employed very sparsely, and only when the workload



made it unavoidable. When asked about whether they would want to expand their business and if so, how, most responded in the affirmative, though they mentioned high labor costs and absence of machinery that would help them process their produce into other products (drying ovens for dehydrating, for example, commercial food processors, cutters, shredders, and mixers, etc.) as significant factors. In Şişli/Feriköy Organik Pazarı, in contrast, farmer-vendors tended to be mid to large landowners (10 to 100 decars and sometimes more) with farm labor regularly employed in addition to seasonal workers. While the 300 to 600 Euros-fee for testing and certification for organic was considered too high by almost all, they could – unlike the farmer-vendors in Şile - afford it. Moreover, when similarly asked about expanding their businesses, almost all mentioned needing more sales channels: some brought up opening up retail stores, others complained about the cuts major online marketplaces make, and yet others called on the state to spearhead platforms that would help them export their produce. Whereas the farmer-vendors in Şile were still struggling to keep their farms afloat, those in Şişli/Feriköy had already broken even and were thinking about expanding their businesses.

By embedding food socially, spatially, and ecologically in a specific locality, then, the FMs, also embed it in the power relations of that locality. In some ways, this re-socialization and re-spatialization may work to the benefit of the producers - by providing them access to more affluent consumers, for example. At the same time, it may also lead the producers (and perhaps less so, the consumers) to deal with dispositions, attitudes, or for that matter, norms, and representations that they do not necessarily subscribe to. While this is not in itself problematic, it is significant in that it can easily prevent the formation of a more socially cohesive community of likeminded producers and consumers at the FMs.²³ Though more research on the subject is necessary, as a preliminary finding it can be said that, rather than property relations (ownership of means of production), perhaps socio-economic differences due to habitus might be the primary inhibitor in the formation of such producer-consumer community.

CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to assess what the social, ecological, and spatial embeddedness of food entails in different food exchange sites in Istanbul. The reason for choosing Istanbul is the city's rich diversity of food exchange sites that assembles a constellation of produce, cultivated with different priorities and production practices (local vs. alternative (certified organic vs. PGS vs. not-certified organic or 'natural') vs. conventional) and a variety of vendors who might be just retailers (buying and selling) or who might also be farmers (that is farmer-vendors). Using participant observation and interview data from bazaars and the FMs located at central locations as well as the outskirts of the city, then, the paper shows that the FMs emphasize generating a community of likeminded producers and consumers, reducing the distance between locations of production and consumption, and bringing the ecological costs of agriculture to the forefront to influence production and consumption decisions. Bazaars, in contrast, emphasize the maintenance of neighborhood communities. Who constitutes those communities, however, is neighborhood- and bazaar- specific: At the outskirts, such communities include farmer-vendors and consumers, with friendship and trust formed over the years between the two; whereas at the metropolitan centers, the neighborhood communities generated and maintained outside the bazaars are yet again reproduced at the bazaars. Given that the FMs and the bazaars (periodic markets) are usually conflated in the literature, this is a significant finding: Not only are there differences between these two different types of sites in terms of social, spatial, and ecological embeddedness, but there are differences within the types depending on where each site is located.

²³ This is the case with gender for example. Due to space constraints, however, this discussion is outside the scope of this paper.

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For the locavore movement, these differences offer opportunities as well as constraints: On the one hand, bazaars can be spaces through which locavore-concerns (whether that be consuming and producing food locally, economically sustaining farmers so that they continue farming, or calling for organic and/or agro-ecological food production methods) are circulated more widely and easily. Through the bazaars, such concerns can even become foundational to the neighborhood community. On the other hand, as noted in the literature, the locavore movement already has a significant class problem, where lower-class people, in tandem with their race and/or ethnicity, are excluded from the movement (Alkon & McCullen, 2011). No doubt, the FMs, as the movement's flagship organizations, reproduce and reinforce these dynamics (Alkon & McCullen, 2011; Colasanti, Conner, & Smalley, 2010; Guthman, 2008; Slocum, 2007). As such, to expect that the movement will in fact be able to articulate its major concerns to speak to a wider public through the bazaars is somewhat unrealistic. Plus, the current supply chain of the bazaars is highly reliant on the vendors and the intermediaries – who not only bring food from further distances but also are not producers themselves. At least in the near future then, the locavore movement would have to come to terms and work with these actors, which does not seem likely.

The findings presented in this paper also suggest some questions for further research: Given the expansive tendencies of metropolitan cities like Istanbul, what advantages (and disadvantages) do food exchange sites that embed food socially, spatially, and ecologically, like the FMs discussed in this paper for example, offer to residents, over supermarkets where more integrated supply chains may provide lower prices as well as product diversity (even if the products may be highly disembedded)? Alternatively, is the reproduction and maintenance of neighborhood communities by default an advantage? What are various gender and class dynamics that are maintained and reproduced through the reproduction and maintenance of neighborhood communities, and what implications do these have for women in general, and working-class women in particular? Finally, does ecologically embedded food offer a realistic possibility for reducing the effects of conventional agriculture on climate change? Though the above discussions may offer some hints to answers of these questions, more research is necessary to provide a comprehensive analysis.

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