‘YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT’:

Consuming Health-Foods As a Self-Forming Practice in the Context of Istanbul

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ABSTRACT

Organic food consumption and interest in other health-foods have been growing worldwide since late 90s. Contemporary consumerism in Turkey is not exempt from this global trend towards health-foods. Based on qualitative research in Istanbul, this thesis argues that consuming organic and local food is an ethical choice and also a class-specific practice. More clearly, this study's main objective is to understand how consumers construct their ethical self-identity through health-conscious eating. It seeks to explore how this self-forming process is affected and mediated by the rhetoric of 'natural-ness' and 'health' within the market and by how consumers react to it discursively. Building on intensive fieldwork at a local food cooperative and in-depth semi-structured interviews with organic and local food consumers and sellers, this research aims to approach food consumption as a practice beyond survival, arguing that consumers form their selves through eating-healthy and this is deeply affected and meditated through the socialized dimensions of becoming a healthier person.

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CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

It is still not uncommon to hear the renown phrase ‘’You are what you eat’’. This would prove more insightful than it sounds if one mobilized a discussion on health-conscious eating into it. The advent of organic and local food against the ills of ‘too much modernity’ has transformed the course of food industry as well as people’s perception over what makes a quality food and how to achieve healthier diet. Many studies focus on the quantitative aspects of organic/local food consumption mainly in post-industrial parts of the world, mostly as surveys or highly contextual picture of food consumption and consumptive behaviors. Departing from a fieldwork at a local food cooperative in Istanbul and 11 in-depth semi-structured[1] interviews with ‘health-conscious’ eaters, this research rather aims to go beyond the commonsensical understanding that health-foods are mere preferences over taste and quality, and to suggest that consuming local/organic food can rather signify a way of life, an attempt to transform oneself to become a healthier human being. In so doing, it is vital to acknowledge that consuming food is a very social process; intersecting class, eating culture and ethical self-formation as Levi-Straus, Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard in a way hinted in their different approaches to food. Taking into account more contemporary discussions, this paper aims to show that health-conscious eating is a field where the self and the social come together as conflictual yet coexisting notions. That is to say, the forming of a self-identity is relational to how the totality of consumers and market imagine ‘healthiness’ to be and this research is to highlight how self-

[1] Interviewees are asked 6 questions which were to open up their thoughts and attitudes toward health-conscious eating, quality food, quality of life and socioeconomic workings behind these.

induced operations towards becoming a healthier human being are embedded in socially constructed perceptions of 'being' and 'becoming' healthy through changing dietary habits. In this endeavor, Foucault's concept of technologies of the self (1997) will be instrumental for discussing the self-forming aspect of eating-healthy, Bourdieu's work (1986) on embodied cultural capital will also open up discussion for class-related facet of health-conscious eating. Arguing that consuming food is contingent to various social/economic/individual processes, this paper also aims to show how seemingly conflicting features such as *global* and *local* or *healthy* and *expensive* coexist in the discourses of health-conscious eating. Within this first chapter, I will give my reflective account of how I conducted my fieldwork and interviews through providing insights into my methodology, positionality and limitations. Second chapter will present a context on organic food market in Turkey and Turkish consumers' perception over organic/local food given the relevant literature I managed to reach. The third chapter presents a theoretical framework binding ethical self-formation, health-conscious eating and class-related aspects together. In the fourth chapter, I delve into the self-forming voluntary work at Bogazici University's local food cooperative (BÜKOOP) in dialogue with the interviews. In the fifth chapter, I aim explore how ethical self-identity, health-conscious eating and class intersect, putting my fieldwork and 11 in-depth semi-structured interviews in dialogue. This chapter also seeks to scrutinize the coexistence of conflictual rhetoric both on the side of the market and consumers, and to problematize the so-called binaries of 'global' and 'local' in the framework of organic/local food consumption and its marketing. And lastly, the sixth chapter will be of concluding remarks partitioned into two as implications and suggestions for further research.

1.2 Key Terms Explained

Throughout this paper, I will be using the terms organic food/local food, health-foods and healthy-eating interchangeably to refer to the larger practice of 'eating healthier than used to'.

To begin with, organic and local food are two different things. A food item produced in a certain locality or region is a local food and it needs to be marketed within a certain distance limit from the origin of its production. In that case, it does not necessarily have to be organic, as it may contain certain pesticides and may not meet many other legal and agricultural standards to be labeled as 'organic'. Health-food, however, is an umbrella term referring to organic and local food along with whole foods and vegetarian food and these are usually sold under health-food stores. Similarly, eating-healthy or health-conscious eating are two other general terms that entail a dietary choice towards healthier foodstuff. Recognizing the nuances and differences among all these terms, my main objective will be to understand the self-(trans)forming practice of eating-healthy rather than delving into the differences between local and organic food, or singular specificities of them.

1.3 Methodology

As I will mention in my positionality, I reached my informants through snowball sampling, getting in contact with people with my friends' help. My main concern was to reach people who would consume organic/local food items on a regular basis and to reach a few who do not for specific reasons. In the end, I managed to have in-depth semi structured interviews with 11 people, 5 of them students around mid-twenties and the rest range from 30s to early 50s either former white-collar workers and retired. Gender-wise, 5 of these informants are men and 6 are women. Apart from these, it is essential to note that majority of my respondents are above a certain level of education, which was not a deliberate choice as my main concern was to find health-conscious eaters, as I mentioned above. For instance, 3 of them hold an M.A. level degree and 6 of them hold a college degree and the remaining 2 are high-school graduates. For ethical/confidentiality purposes, I am going to be using certain pseudo names in Turkish while mentioning my informants. When I first started looking for possible interviewees in the middle of the summer of 2017, I had difficulty finding male informants who consume organic/local

food on a regular basis as most of my acquaintances mainly named ‘health-conscious eaters’ who were females. This, then, encouraged me to question whether eating-healthy could be a gendered practice, which I will formulate as a future research question within concluding remarks in Chapter 6. As shall be seen, my sample is relatively small and not diverse enough to attain or claim a general numeric/quantitative picture; my main objective was rather to open up spaces for discussion on how healthy-eating, ethics and class intersect through the lens of in-depth semi-structured interviews and a 4-week fieldwork at BUKOOP, a local food cooperative at Bogazici University. I chose to do a fieldwork at a local food cooperative in addition to interviewing organic food consumers primarily because I wanted to have a practical knowledge and to do a parcitipant observation on health-conscious eating as a self-forming process, cooperative being a space where the voluntary work is constantly justified, explained and promoted by its members. In this regard, interviews and fieldwork were always in a continuous and complimentary relationship with one another, enabling me to connect health-conscious eating, ethical self-identity and class-related aspects of becoming a healthier human being. Hypothesizing health-food consumption as strongly an urban trend, choosing Istanbul as a site of research was both convenient and very relevant for the content of my research. Not surprisingly, most of my informants engaged the discussion of being an urban dweller and trying to lead a healthy life as inhabitants of one of the most crowded and swiftly urbanizing cities of the world.

1.3 Positionality

During the years when I was doing my Bachelor of Arts, BUKOOP was just a foodshed that I would walk pass when I had a class in that part of the school. Having done my BA at Boğaziçi University between the years 2010-2016, I had an ease introducing myself as a former ‘Bogazici

Student' to the president[2] at the cooperative in the North Campus of the university. Being a young researcher and a former student at Boğaziçi, I did not take me too long to notice that members of the cooperative were in an attempt to give a very righteous impression of what they do at the cooperative and why do it. Trying to promote traditional local food production methods and making healthier local food items available for everyone, I felt like I was seen as an agent that could also academically spread the 'merry' effort they are putting as volunteers. I should also make it clear that I did not perceive myself as a researcher doing participant observation since I felt no hierarchical position between me and other volunteers or the president. This was mainly because I was involuntarily feeling grateful to them for letting me volunteer at the cooperative with no pre-interviewing and therefore I was the one trying to be nice and adaptive. Besides this, I was already very self-conscious and careful about my attitude and tone so that they would not see me as someone trying to interrogate them in a formal, academic fashion. In addition to my fieldwork experience at the cooperative, many of the interviewees were my friends and their acquaintances. I was feeling a bit doubtful whether this would undermine or ease the interviewing process. During and after the interviews, however, I managed to keep the interviews conversational and comfortable; for my part, at least.

1.4 Limitations

As every other research in the field, there have been certain limits to the entire research and its capacity to analyze. I did my fieldwork volunteering at a local food cooperative at my former university's (Bogazici University) campus during the summer of 2017. This no doubt allowed me to gain a hands-on experience on the run of things at the coop and a chance for participant observation throughout four weeks. However, I was intending to collect a larger body of data

[2] He was very unwilling to call himself a 'president' but for organizatory and legal purposes in BUKOOP, according to him, he acts as the president but the issuses related to food supply and sales are discusses democratically.

for another level of comparison if I had managed to interview members of a few other food cooperatives in Istanbul. Due to time restrictions and unwillingness on some of the cooperative members' part, I could not manage to incorporate the same set of interviews with them. If things went otherwise, I would have been able to make a comparison on how differently people justify their dietary habits with regards to where they make their food purchase. This comparison would additionally allow this research to see certain discursive differences between more those consuming from commercial food stores and those opting for local food cooperatives who rather aim at non-profit local food provision and a solidarity with local food producers.

Given the number of interviewees (11) and diversity of age-income-class profile of them, I must admit that the qualitative data I have do not represent or portray the totality of health-conscious eaters in Istanbul and/or Turkey. This research rather aims to analyze the way these cooperative members and/or health-food consumers justify their consumptive behavior and how they engage with the prevalent market-oriented discourses on health, healthiness and natural-ness of food products. Therefore, the implications of this research are not to arrive at generalizable implications on ethical eating or health-conscious consumerism in Istanbul, but rather to draw attention to how consuming health-food would be a self-forming practice within the framework of socioeconomic aspects of it.

As for the interviews, it is fair to admit that not all interviews went very smooth and in accordance with how I envisaged them to be in the beginning. Having been asked 6 interrelated questions on food, healthiness and socioeconomic dimension of these; some of the interviewees got very passionate and reactionary about the class aspect, especially, and they ended up getting off-topic. Doing a proper, more structured qualitative research for the first time, I too had difficulty getting my informants back on focus, and receive more to-the-point answer for the questions I have. In the end, I could only partially use the data coming from these informants.

CHAPTER 2- CONTEXTUALIZING ORGANIC FOOD MARKET IN TURKEY

It is essential to note that both qualitative and quantitative data on Turkey's organic food market and organic food consumption are very scarce. It is even more limited in the case of local food consumption. Amidst these scholarly limitations, this chapter is to historicize and contextualize organic food and how it is perceived and purchased by food consumers in Turkey.

2.1 History of Organic Food Agriculture and Market in Turkey

The organic agriculture in Turkey have grown in extreme terms since 1990s. Nevertheless, organic food market is still relatively small but expanding. It is important to note that most of the organic food produce in the country is directed towards exports for the members of European Union and this production was initially limited to raisins and dried figs. Historically speaking, organic food production in Turkey started in 1980s mainly in the Aegean region for the demand in European markets along with United States and Australia to a lesser extent. One might comfortably argue that the increase and demand in organic food markets in Europe have so far paved the way for its demand and popularity in Turkey. Unlike its counterparts in Europe and United States, however, organic agriculture was commenced by the initiatives of Europe-based organic agriculture companies and their representatives. The organic agriculture model in Turkey depends on a contractual relationship between organic food producers and the aforementioned organic food firms. According to these contracts, producers confirm not to use chemical fertilizers and pesticides in accordance with project managers' directives. Control and certification of organic food items are carried out by institutions accredited by the Ministry of Agriculture and European Union, which happens independently of marketing firms. (Gunay 2007; Demiryurek and Ceyhan 2008; Demiryurek et al. 2008). These contracts make producers bear strict responsibilities on certain issues. First, they are expected to produce an already designated amount of organic food meeting the quality standards on the contract. Second, they

are expected to sell these food products to marketing firms at designated prices on these contracts. (Demiryurek 2000; 2004). However, some of the local producers have begun to unionize on their own due to certain disagreements with the marketing firms they used to work with. In this case, they seek to have their food produce certified by accredited certification institutions through their organized effort (Gunay 2007; Demiryurek and Ceyhan 2008; Demiryurek et al. 2008).

2.2 Consuming Organic: Consumer Tendencies and Perceptions

When it comes to the consumption of organic food items, consumer awareness is on the rise but still limited. (Surrett 2016). Most consumers in Turkey see organic products as luxury items due to the huge price compared to the food items produced through conventional means. Limited research and survey carried out in this field demonstrate that consumers of organic food products in Turkey have higher monthly income, live mainly in urban areas and also are found more conscious of their health and choice of nutrition. In comparison to US and EU countries in in Western Europe, organic food consumption is limited in Turkey. What lies behind this are mainly insufficient knowledge on organic/local food and the blatant price difference compared to more conventional food items. In both EU countries and Turkey, however, women and families with children tend to prefer organic food and agriculture (Eryilmaz et al. 2015). In major urban areas such Istanbul and Izmir, people with relatively higher income tend to prefer organic food mainly for the reasons for food safety and higher nutrition. Most organic food items are available in organic bazaars, urban supermarkets and specialty shops (Akgungor et al. 2010). In addition, there have proliferated many 'ecologic bazaars' in cities like Istanbul, Bursa, Ankara, Izmir, Samsun and Antalya thanks to certain NGOs' collective efforts. Ergin and Ozsacmaci (2011) point out that in Istanbul and Ankara, consumers prefer organic food products mainly because they find these products healthier, tastier, fresher and environmentally-friendly in comparison to its conventionally produced

alternatives. On the other hand, lower and middle-class consumers are found to prefer food stores that do not specifically sell health-foods (organic, local and specialty foods) due to the price difference and their purchasing power (Stange 2010).

Apart from the history and the presence of organic food market in Turkey, we should also take into account the rising concern and awareness of health and environment issues that started to be discussed more frequently than ever since 2000s, not only in Turkey but all around globe. Organic food market and rising awareness of health-foods in Turkey are part of the global trend towards health-conscious eating. There have been considerable media coverage[3] over the supposed adverse effects of GMOs, pesticides and synthetic fertilizers used in agriculture. Accordingly, Yilmaz and Ilter (2017, 333-334) argue that increasing concerns for environment and health and growing media coverage of these steadily and positively impacted the demand for organic food products in Turkey along with major egoistic health concerns.

CHAPTER 3- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is to present theoretical tools in discussing how food is a complex, intermingled practice dwelling on health-conscious eating in the context of Istanbul, Turkey. Anthropologists like Levi Strauss (Culinary Triangle in 1966)[4] and Evans-Pritchard (Neur in 1940)[5] attempted to show how food can be treated as a melting pot of culture, sociality and nature. (Siewicz 2011). I find it crucial to acknowledge the importance of their pioneering contribution to food studies and/or sociology of food before unfolding major theories and literature in this research.

[3] These media coverages vary from print press to main news bulletins including social media awareness.
[4] In Culinary Triangle (1966, 930-940), Levi Strauss argues that food stands out as a medium where nature and culture contest and even transform each other as cooking is a process of civilizing the 'raw', the 'nature'.
[5] In his research among the Neur, Evans-Pritchard points out that food production is central to make sense of the way of living/life of society in a Neur Tribe (1940).

3.1 Health Consciousness and Health-Conscious Eating

Concerning this research,' health-conscious' eating practice will largely cover the consumption of organic and local food as a deliberate 'ethical' choice towards eating healthier foodstuff. Health-consciousness (Becker et.al, 1977) can basically be described as one's readiness to take health-related actions on their body and mind. Health-conscious consumers, accordingly, are thought to be aware of biological and environmental hazards to their well-being and health. Kraft and Goodell (1993) argue that such individuals are keen on nutrition and physical fitness. In this research, health conscious eating will specifically refer to consumers making healthier dietary choices in the context organic/local food consumption in Istanbul. Health-conscious eating surely has ethical attributes in itself. Being ecologically conscious and buying products that are environmentally friendly and not harmful to animals welfare and to the society goes into the practice of health-conscious eating as entangled ethical concerns (Laroche et al.2001; Harper and Makatouni 2002). However, this research does not specifically focus on ethics pertaining to animal welfare, environmental friendliness or food safety. It rather seeks to frame organic/local food consumption as a health-conscious eating practice and how it becomes a tool for consumers to construct or reconfigure their ethical self-identity. As I will explain this in detail in Chapter 2.2, the process of ethical self-formation will largely refer to one's quest for creating – and/or maintaining a better version of oneself through making healthier dietary choices.

3.2 'Ethics' in Self Formation

For the purposes of this research, it is reasonable to depart from Foucault's (1997) take on ethical self-formation[6] which refers to one's self-cultivating process to become a better version

[6] Laidlaw(2002) suggests that Foucault's take on ethics allows us to treat ethics as an act of 'freedom' to become a better 'kind' of ourselves that we aspire to be. And this act of freedom is bound to socially/culturally predetermined options one might have

of oneself through implementing certain discipline and techniques on his/her body and soul. Put differently by Townley (1995) self-formation, in a similar vein, is how one experiences oneself and presupposes an active participation, engagement and construction. Judith Butler, providing a slightly different account than Foucault, sees identity a as process rather something with an end point. (McKinlay 2010, 235). Accordingly, self-forming subjects are also ethical agents as they morally construct themselves towards a certain end for wisdom, purity and happiness. I should also make it clear that I will be using the word 'ethical' in one larger and one specific context. First, it will mainly address one's larger self-formation process through certain 'ethical practices' in his/her view. Second, it will refer to more specific concerns over animal welfare, environmental friendliness and fair trade affecting consumers' food purchase. The process of 'self-formation' can be subsumed under two main processes of subjectivation and objectivation. In Foucauldian framework[7], subjectivation is a process where individuals aspire to become a certain type of subject in their own perspective (Mc Nay 1994). And this process involves a constant mode of decision-making upon oneself (Skinner 2013). In a similar vein, objectivation is when certain ideals, values are made concrete and permanent. 'Being healthy', 'creating a better version of the self' or 'resisting to the system' can be objectified values, as these are already extant in the social imagination of being or becoming a 'healthy person'. The process of objectivation happens through externalizing as opposed to subjectivation where internal decision-making process is primary. These two processes of subjectivation and objectivation are central to my focus on ethical self-formation mainly because health-conscious eating involves subjective construction and transformation of the self in the light of certain objectified ideals which may be politically, economically and/or morally induced. Many of the informants stated that a healthier life is close associated with life quality in general, which appears to be the 'greater end' in health-conscious eating. To decide whether

[7] *See* Michel Foucault, Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Volume 2

to consume organic/local food can be seen as part of subjectivation as this decision-making usually involves personal takes on what constitutes a healthier diet and what does not. However, this self-induced decision-making is also deeply affected by objectivation which rather entails socialized connotations of health-conscious eating. In other words, it is more reasonable to treat health-conscious eating as an interplay of the processes of subjectivation and objectivation. Taking into account data I have, it is also essential to argue that this dual process – of *subjectivation and objectivation* should be nuanced and marked by 'degree'. It is primarily because of the fact that one's choice for 'healthier food' in their perspective cannot be precisely explained by a sole process of agent-oriented subjectivation or structure-based objectivation. In short, what makes health-conscious eating a very loaded, complex practice is mainly the fact that individual, cultural, social and economic reasons all go into the very practice of it and the reasons behind the final consumptive behavior of buying a health-food can only be explained by degree rather than singling out one aspect of it.

3.3 Symbolic Attributes in Consuming Organic/Local Food and Technologies of the Self

For the purposes of this research, seeing class and quest for a health-conscious lifestyle together will be of significance. To analyze and incorporate the symbolic aspects of healthy-eating, I will glean from Atkinson (1980) and Bourdieu's(1986)[8] literature to support and give more insight to this analysis. In so doing, it is wiser to treat organic food consumption not merely as a quest for tastiness and healthiness but also as something that has attributions to one's image in the realm of the 'social'. First of all, Atkinson (1980) suggests that the rhetoric of 'healthiness' and 'nature' often go hand in hand with the advertisement of organic food and

[8] *See* Bourdieu, P. (1986) The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.) Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education (New York, Greenwood), 241-258

these keywords are frequently utilized to promote organic/local food mainly for consumers living in the urban areas. He further points out that natural and healthy food have in a way become 'pastoral dreams' for urban dwellers. Bourdieu's (1986) analysis of cultural capital also helps us better understand how the symbolic attributes of organic food consumption can help one buy, perceive, practice and become part of an aspired lifestyle. In his writings on embodied cultural capital, he suggests that acquisition of cultural capital happens through the process of internalizing and turning this self-improvement process into an integral part of the 'self'. As he argues more clearly:

'' *The accumulation of cultural capital in the embodied state, ie., in the form of what is called culture, cultivation, Bildung, presupposes a process of embodiment, incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a labor of inculcation and assimilation costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor. Like the acquisition of a muscular physique or a suntan, it cannot be done at a second hand…The work of acquisition is work on oneself(self-improvement), an effort that presupposes a personal cost, an investment, above all of time, but also of that socially constituted form of libido, with all the privation, renunciation, and sacrifice it may entail.* '' (47-48).

In this sense, working on the self to become a healthier human being (Foucault 1997) can also be seen as a process in which a cultural capital of eating healthy/being self-responsible is embodied as a desired way of leading life. Health-foods, therefore, become the symbol and signifier of a way of life that is idealized and appreciated in the eyes of urbane consumers. And borrowing the renowned term from Veblen (1899), purchase and consumption of relatively overpriced organic/local food products can be seen as a 'conspicuous' one, at least for the more commercial side of this consumption. The established symbolic meanings of eating healthy, GMO-free food can be observed in specific social settings and people's tendency to make such

purchases may very well be in line with these positive connotations of health foods and health-conscious eating. Within this vein, food is not only consumed for its mere taste and nutritional value but its place in the market, what it means to be healthy and how it is supposed to make food consumers feel about their state of healthiness also go into the practice of consumption. Giddens' (2013) concept of structuration also proves explanatory for the relational and intermingled nature of agency and structure; which could be that of self-forming process and social imagination of 'health-conscious' eating. To be more clear, structuration is the process wherein social actors possess the knowledge and consciousness to take their pertinent actions in their particular social context and this influences the making of the structure; thus, this process is rather two-fold and dynamic. The process in which individuals influence the running of broader structures do not really fit into the conventional understanding of structure in social sciences literature which is more about endurance and persistence of systems of thought, action and beliefs (23-24). It is equally important to acknowledge the fact that there exists a very complex social process in which quests for taste, price, meaning and value are intermingled and thus the quality of food has a multidimensional symbolic, social and economic workings behind it (Warde et al. 2004). As we can see, many of the symbolic attributes of consuming organic food or even health foods in broader sense are also tightly connected to how it is marketed and appropriated within a capitalist endeavor.

In line with the cultural and symbolic attributes of organic/local food consumption and health-conscious eating, Foucault's concept of 'technologies of the self' (1988b) will also be complimentary to unfold the discussion of organic food consumers' pertinent self-identity through their purchase of healthier foodstuff. Technologies of the self refers (1988a, 18-19) to a set of self-operations to become a better human being in one's own perspective given the existing and culturally bound freedom(s) and options he or she is bound to (as cited in Skinner 2013). Mcintosh et al. (1996) suggest that ''…*Not all consumers are passive receptacles. They*

make food choice changes in response to new information regarding the linkage between food and health and boycott products they believe unsafe or the result of labor exploitation. Despite the content of adds and programming, they resist. It is also worth noting that contemporary technologies of the self are closely tied to power of modern day technologies of governmentality ‘’ (as cited in Skinner, 2013). Put more clearly, as Lemke (2010, 37) argues, it is exactly the interplay between these technologies, between the guidance of others and the forms of self-guidance that is at the heart of an analytics of government (as cited in Skinner 2013). Therefore, one's set of decisions and actions towards becoming a 'better' being is an ethical practice on the self, which is subject to external processes of government. Put differently, to formulate it better and open up technologies of the self: *‘’The word subject implies not only 'subject to someone else by control and dependence' through subjugation but also 'tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge'* (Focuault 2002). *Accordingly, whilst technologies of power embody 'an objectivizing of the subject'* (1998,18), *it is through technologies of the self that the subject thinks and acts upon and makes decisions about what sort of subject to be, how to fit the self around the objectifications that are confronted by the self. Technologies of the self provide an intervention mechanism on the part of active subjects, injecting an element of contingency to everyday encounters and alleviating the determinist effect that technologies of power would have otherwise ‘’* (Skinner 2013, 918). Accordingly, organic food consumption and health-conscious eating can be an example of sharpening, maintaining and improving one's self identity and image to achieve a better way of living and existing. These workings on the self are closely tied with the complex symbolic attributions of organic food consumption as the construction of a self-identity is no doubt embedded in and mediated by symbolic meanings of healthiness and health foods, which can be identified as a practice pertaining to 'guidance of others'. At this point, a 'technology of the self' permits individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls,

thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (1988, 18-19). These set of self-operations are carried out in the light of more objectified values and symbolic workings of healthiness and wellbeing. Therefore, the practice of attaining a better version of one 'self' is altered and molded by the more persistent and objectified symbols of health-conscious eating.

3.4 Global and Local Food Systems

When discussing organic and local food consumption from an 'ethical' standpoint, it is necessary to dwell on how local food systems and alternative food movements are positioned with regards to the globalizing food systems. Feagan (2007) suggests that contemporary local food systems bear certain concerns on food quality, environment, the value of the place of production and the values pertaining to the community. In this framework, prioritizing the locality of production is an action by local producers against globalizing food systems which seek to augment the market value of food and to alienate production from consumption. Local labelling of products is thus believed to draw more attention and recognition into the place of production and raise awareness on its environmental problems, for instance.

'' *A key component of these newer definitions of food sheds is attention to building a local capacity to produce and distribute food and control food supplies…[and] to keep the decision-making within the community rather than losing it through dependence and external sources of food… localized food production can meet many of the diverse community needs more effectively than globalizing food systems because it can give priority to the community and environmental integrity before corporate profit-making. . .while reinforcing social identity and cohesion* '' (Feagan 2007; Anderson and Cook, 2000:237) In close relation to the fieldwork I did at BUKOOP, it is necessary to examine the concept of 'foodshed' to have a better grasp of the importance of 'space' in contemporary local food systems. Kloppenburg et al. describes 'food-shed' as a sociogeographic space: human activity embedded in the natural integument of

a particular place'. Foodsheds in a way reconfigures foods systems through highlighting social and political decisions to be embedded within specific designated spaces. More clearly: '' *Local Food Systems must bear in mind with respect to spatially bound concepts like foodsheds, that the types of food grown, by whom and according to what sorts of cultural, social, and economic needs are tied, in complex and somewhat indiscernible ways, to sociocultural factors at the macro economic and political levels''* (33). In this sense, the great emphasis on the place of production/origin is largely tied to the *glocal* marketing strategies which I will talk more extensively about in Chapter 3.6 .

Framing local food systems and the quest for socio-economically fair and ecologically friendly production as an alternative movement against profit-seeking globalizing food systems, Feagan argues that Local Food System (LFS) efforts develop and proliferate against globally prevailing food regimes and thus it is more reasonable to see it as an oscilliation between global and local processes. The endeavors for re-valorizing the 'place' in LFS are therefore contingent to social, economic and ecological circumstances which, in return, reflect on it (38-39). The interplay between local food movements and globalizing food systems, at this point, can be better understood in the framework of technologies of the self (see Chapter 3.3). Active participation of consumers to form a food cooperative and/or buying specific local/organic/health-foods is part of the external governing effects of globalizing food systems that the process of active decision-making and structural cannot be reduced to an upper hand of one over the other.

3.5 Food Quality

As I will discuss more in detail in Chapter 4 and 5, organic/local food consumption can be treated as an operation or technique to become a better and purer version of oneself as it entails subjective and objectified values of being healthy. Taking into the account my fieldwork at the cooperative and interviews I made, I was able to notice that health-conscious eating is often

associated with concerns over class, capitalism and food quality and more importantly, these concerns are often articulated in close relation to one another. The process of ethical self-formation is thus exemplified in the practice of organic/local food consumption as it extends to multiple aspects of leading a life with 'quality'. Discussions over the quality of food have been more upfront since 1990s (Warde 2004). The changing reflexive food paradigm over what makes food 'quality' and its nutrition can be attributed to certain developments in nutrition, life sciences and biotechnology. These developments eventually resulted in enhanced media coverage on food quality, growing consumer attention on health-foods and on food safety. Warde suggests that these new developments dramatically reconfigured business strategies of global food markets and led to greater differentiation in food products. He further points to two complimentary processes that have been emerging from 1990s:

'' *There have been an increase in public concern regarding health and environment, including animal welfare and the questioning of the legitimacy of the 'institutions' which provide knowledge about food: mothers as the experts, public agencies and even 'science' , which together functioned in a way that that guaranteed the productivist model of industrialization and the safety of food during the so-called modern period* '' As Goodman (2002) demonsrates, quality turn in food production and consumption is mainly characterized by the immaterializing of food and institutionalization of food qualities as can be observed in organic food production, alternative agri-food networks, quality assurance schemes and regional strategies to valorize local food produce. Given the more reflexive, postmodern concerns for food safety, animal welfare, environment and nutrition, the perception of 'quality' and its application are extended into alternative food networks too. Undoubtedly, global food markets are inclined towards bringing certain standard of qualification for food. Allaire and Sylvander (1995) discusses that quality is now being associated with foods produced in certain places that eventually make it authentic and unique as a niche consumption to establish a distinction and even 'perfection' for

that specific food. product. This basically translates that markets have been recently assigning food quality to authenticity, place of origin and 'naturalness' of a food item. However, quality turn is not all about how the food businesses reconfigure their market strategies towards recent paradigm shift on food quality but also how consumers a quality food to be amid growing concerns over the use of pesticides and GMOS. Vary of the effect of locally organized food movements and proliferation alternative modes of food consumption, Warde suggests that 'food quality' is fluid and contingent (197). For the purposes of this research too, it is reasonable to approach 'quality food' as a subjective ascription as consumers relation to 'quality food' differs in terms of culture of eating, purchasing power, access and ever-changing perceptions over what makes a quality food.

3.6 Glocal Marketing

In the discussion of cultural, discursive and class dimensions of health-conscious eating practice, it is vital to dwell on glocal marketing. For analytical purposes, global and glocal processes cannot be taught separately. Glocal marketing roughly refers to the marketing of local food to global markets maintaining its cultural/authentic elements. In this case, *glocalization* emerges as a process that enables production and marketing of local products in accordance with the local culture they originally belong to (Arslan 2016). Global brands, accordingly, specifically look to frame certain local products as authentic and unique to the country of origin or the products' more specific locality. In so doing, the main strategy is to closely follow local and regional consumption patterns so that the final product passes as 'local' enough within the global market (Robertson 1995). It is essential to note that glocal marketing is not an antidote or alternative against global marketing, it should rather be understood as a strategy to compete better in the market and adapt to changing consumption patterns. At this point, one may comfortably argue that glocal marketing is part of globalizing food systems. The emphasis on 'place of origin' for local food items is to brand the product through its 'unique' and 'authentic'

features. Within this framework, organic and local foods' market capacity lies in glocal marketing strategies. The delicate line between local produce and global mass production and distribution is kept intact through global markets' crafty adaptation into the dynamics of local food culture. Rising concerns and awareness for chemical-free agriculture, human health and ecology can also be seen as appropriated within this marketing framework and alternative food networks' effort to stay outside of profit-based market mechanism is a by-product of this process.

3.7 Alternative Food Networks and Reflexive Localism

Alternative Food Networks or AFNs can best be defined by the deliberate proximity between farmers and consumers. Recent and ongoing proliferation of farmers markets, specialty shops, premium foods and community-supported, and sustainable agriculture are all important parts of AFNs' advent which is positioned against global food systems, as suggested by Jarosz (2008). She argues that these food networks should be approached in two main dimensions. First, AFNs owe their development to urbanization and rural restructuring. Second, these food networks are not something to be defined and described, they rather have come into being through historical, political and cultural processes. In recent discussions over the adaptive capacity of AFNs, Food quality (see Chapter 3.5) stands out as a new basis for market competition compelling producers to keep up with cost-price disciplines. ''*…The differentiated products supplied by AFNs and their spectacular growth has reinforced perceptions that 'quality', in its various socially constructed and material dimensions, rather than price, is becoming the new basis of competition and in food provisioning. The 'turn' to quality, and the scope of it provides for further product differentiation, neatly complements the competitive strategies of firms in the highly oligopolistic sector of food retailing* '' (2). Therefore, perceptions and practice over the quality of food are quite instrumental in the marketing of

health-foods through AFNs. On the other hand, Goodman (2009) suggests that '' *in these networks, it is claimed that the production and consumption of food are more closely tied together spatially, economically, and socially; however, the politics and practices of alternative food networks have more recently come under critical scrutiny from geographers and others as a narrow and weakly politicized expression of middle-and-upper-class angst* ''. The symbolic and class-related attributes of consuming health foods, therefore, main source of critiques towards AFNs' are their capability to become a less market-dependent alternative and accessibility to lower income groups. Reflexive localism, for instance, criticizes the conservative and normative nature of 'localism', for its negligence and even erasure of potential politics of the local. More clearly, *in their critique,* established notion of localism fails to recognize that '' *contested issues of distributive justice, human rights and identity can arise in these idealized, insulated spaces*.''(7) In this case, 'reflexive localism' aims to focus more on the power relations and social-ness embedded in the rhetoric of 'local control' and 'sustainable local development'. Reflexive localism is cognizant of '' *the differential incorporation of social classes into market economy, civil society and the state* ''. With these in mind, it needs to be emphasized that both conventional and reflexive localism cannot be thought separately from symbolic aspects of health-conscious eating which have a lot to do with class, purchasing power and access. The emergence and growing popularity of alternative food networks will no doubt be complimentary for discussing contingency of the rhetoric of food quality, being and eating health and so forth. The relationality of different facets of organic/local food consumption can be best understood when framed within more concrete processes that changed the consumption patterns of food items along with the perceptions of achieving a healthier diet.

CHAPTER 4- ETHICAL BUSINESS: 'Bukoop' Store

This chapter aims to frame organic/local food consumption as an ethical practice of activism focusing on an analysis of my four-week participant observation at Bogazici University's local food cooperative and interviews. Dwelling on cooperative members' search for an alternative food network and their way of justifying this discourse, this chapter will be a point of departure to scrutinize organic food consumption as an organizing and self-forming practice.

4.1 Politics of the Setting

The local food cooperative is called BÜKOOP, which stands for 'Boğaziçi University Members' Consumer Cooperative'. It was founded in 2009 through a collective effort first initiated within the main union of education, namely 'Egitim-Sen'[9]. Hakan, the current president and founder of the cooperative explains to me that the cooperative was mainly to put forward an alternative to provide consumers with local food with no profit-seeking intermediaries. The main concerns for this collective endeavor are fair trade, fair food and becoming an inspiration for spreading this cooperative model of food consumption in neighborhoods and work places. And on the class level, it aims to make it possible for consumers of all social classes to access healthy, locally produced foods at reasonable prices as opposed to local/organic food being a luxury item for most people. The cooperative can be seen as a great example for a local food system effort (see Chapter 3.4). As other local food advocates globally, BUKOOP seeks to criticize and take action against adverse sociocultural, economic and ecological aspects of globalizing food systems and try to shift the focus back into local production, which the dominant food systems try to alienate from consumption. (O'Hara and Stagl 2001, 535). Hakan emphasizes:

[9] Education and Science Workers' Union, founded in 1995.

'' At our food cooperative here, we promote and internalize traditional food production rather than organic because organic is a label of the capital, I mean the market regime we all are bound to. The whole mechanism and auditing and certifying caters to this big capitalist endeavor. However, this is not the case for traditional food items. In traditional growing, farmers get their seeds and plant them in the field...People are inclined to assume that food is healthy and harmless if it has an organic label on it, which is so wrong ''.

Echoing his words, the distinction between organic and traditional is mainly to have a stance against profit-oriented food market and to support local producers. And in the context of my fieldwork at cooperative, this prevailing statement is very strong among other volunteers or members as well. The mistrust in commercialized, profit-seeking market's intervention into health-foods surfaces deeper implications on how the fetish of nature is utilized by the market to promote and picture a certain state of healthiness and even lifestyle (see Chapter 3.3).

The cooperative is also called a 'shed' (see Chapter 3.4) among its volunteers and is usually open during the week between 13:00-13:30 and 17:00-17:30. The local food inventory of BÜKOOP is very diverse. First of all, there is a great variety of local food from dried figs, almonds, eggplant jams, honey, canned pickles to ice cream made of goat milk and organic tomato sauce for breakfasts. Food supply happens directly through negotiating with producers from all around Turkey including women's producer associations in small towns, for instance. The fact that the cooperative was only open for half an hour, twice a week got me worried about one thing; not having enough time for a 'quality' interaction with my other volunteering partners. However, there were usually a few 'customers' during the limited working hours and this allowed me to have conversations with my volunteer partners while working. On my first day at the cooperative, I was welcomed very warmly by Hakan and to break the ice quickly we started talking about what I am doing with my project and why I chose to volunteer at the cooperative. As I walked in the cooperative for the first time, I first noticed that most everything seemed very modest and simply organized, which was not surprising for me at all given that

most food cooperatives are far from 'fancy' in my mind. Having a look at the shelves, I saw items tagged with prices and stickers reading where they originally come from. I saw a jar of lamb's ear pickle, for instance, and it read the it was produced by a women producers' cooperative located in *Balikesir*, a city in the Marmara region of Turkey. Not long after I noticed that almost all rare food items like this are tagged and placed the same way. There are also many other women's associations, farmer unions and small-scale organizations sending their diverse food produce to BÜKOOP. The blatant support and solidarity with local producers are to practice resistance against globalizing food systems that are harmful to local communities' subsistence economy (Feagan, 2017). Besides that, I saw a paper sticker right by eggs' section on the middle shelves that read ''*These eggs came out of chickens that had run freely in grasslands* ''. This was basically to criticize industrialized dairy production where animals are often physically restricted and forced to mate. Besides that, to my take, this is yet another example of cooperative's sensibility on being transparent of where the food products come from and who produce them. This concern already exists in most of the local food systems efforts (see Chapter 3.7). BÜKOOP's critical stance and resistance against the 'market-ness' of food is to minimize the physical and psychological displacement of production from consumption (Feagan 2007).

I always had a partner with me during the sales and I was supposed to help them receive payments through cash registers and make note of every sale on the computer and on a notebook for security/inventory purposes, which had been a bit confusing for me at first, but I gradually managed to get a hang of it.

Apart from sharing the responsibility for sales, I was also intending to draw a profile of regular consumers at the cooperative. To my observation, almost 80 percent of consumers coming in are women and most of them are related to the university as students, academics or officers. Eren is a 22 -year-old engineering student who volunteers regularly every other week and I was

paired with him twice throughout my voluntary experience at the cooperatrive. He also agreed that almost 90 percent of consumers are women, which also make up the large body of volunteers. Also, almost every day I was volunteered I quickly noticed that many of the consumers were regulars that they usually had orders from previous week such as goat milk, weekly milk and locally produced jams. It seemed to me that many of the academics were seemingly very conscious and selective of the food items they were purchasing. For instance, one customer, my partner of the day greeted her 'Hello Professor', asked carefully about the organic tomato sauce she was about to buy, including the ingredients of it. Eren, my volunteer partner at the day, explained to her that it had been brought in a few days ago and made of tomato and pepper paste with some Mediterranean spices. Given the fact that the curious questions over the ingredients of food items kept coming repeatedly by different people, I got convinced that regular 'buyers' of the cooperative were health-conscious food consumers.

4.2 Volunteering as Technologies of the Self

It is essential to note that both Hakan and other volunteers were eager to emphasize that they strictly avoid calling them customers, as they do not want any commercial connotations with what they are doing at the cooperative. For them, those who buy local food items from the cooperative are also 'volunteering' by supporting the presence and continuity of this alternative space for traditional local food produce. Volunteers were telling me in their different ways that this cooperative model is to stay outside of capital's regulation of food production and enable producers to directly interact and negotiate with consumers. And as they say, this is only possible through ' a relationship between producers and consumers that is firmly based on trust'. Members of the cooperative have regular fieldtrips to get to know and negotiate with farmers, women producers' associations and other small scale local producers all across Anatolia. On consumers' side, however, food access is yet another concern as Hakan further suggests:

'' We even come across people who have not even heard the word 'organic'. For these people accessing the food is a priority than consuming organic ''.

Getting back to the run of things within the cooperative, Hakan thinks that the non-hierarchical, volunteer-based structure of the cooperative allows for a transparent and participatory setting for the division of labor. He also claims that the relationship between members are far from impersonal and built on such trust that it is almost impossible to take advantage of this sincerity and meddle with finances before, during or after sales. Before my first day, Cinar 27, another volunteer at the cooperative included me in the e-mail list. Since then, I have still been receiving 3-5 e-mails regarding the weekly running of errands at the coop and ideas they come up with as to new food items supply. This e-mail group is a very informal online communication where members discuss the issues of food supply, meeting with producers, deciding for the opening and closing hours and classifying food items at the cooperative. Following my first week of volunteer experience at the cooperative, I became less self-conscious about credit card/cash transactions during sale and keeping record of the food inventory. My progress, although slow and precautious, quickly allowed me to feel more comfortable for having more extensive conversations about the cooperative and local food stuff with my other volunteer partner of the day. In my second week, I was paired with Eren. Explaining to him where I study and why I am working on my current thesis project, I noticed that this made him very willing to talk about how cooperative adds to volunteers' lives and how important it is for them to be part of an alternative consumption model. He explained to me extensively:

''First of all, you are becoming part of a solution and this gives you hope. Rather than being all pessimistic and a complainer, you take an action towards an alternative and act with solidarity. And you see that there are many people like you which gives you excitement. However you define it, it gives you a joy of life. This

is because other volunteers do not seek for any interest or benefit either. This cooperative is a space where there is no hierarchy but people who act with solidarity within a collective effort ‘’

Volunteers’ involvement in the cooperative can thus be understood as a processes of subjectivation and objectivation as the volunteer work involves both internal decision-making process in the light of an objectified positive value, which is creating an alternative for commercialized health-foods (see Chapter 3.2). Advocating fair, safe and local food and aspiring to spread local, small-scale endeavors go hand in hand as mutually inclusive principles for the members of BÜKOOP. As Eren further elaborates[10]:

‘’ .. The cooperative is horizontally organized with no hierarchies at all. Founded in 2009, this cooperative has been running itself unaided, including rent and utilities. Believe me, this has been negating all the taboos, cynicism and inhibitions in people’s minds which gives further hope for an alternative. And I can see this in practice too. What we can do right now is spread the word, show more people that there is an alternative to the way things are. We should show them we are not prisoners to the current status-quo. It is important to show them that they can make big changes in their lives and that they are actually powerful themselves. Food is one edge of this. Departing from food, we can also start talking about health system, education and etc. In the same way, we can demand equality and fairness for more general concerns like these and alternative models for food production and consumption are only one part of all these things ‘’

This critical tone allowed me to see the volunteer work at the cooperative as a larger effort to create a more ‘ideal’ version of themselves rather than being solely concerned about food quality or safety (See Chapter 3.2). Just like Hakan did, he also emphasized the main principles of their cooperative model consumption. First, being as independent as possible from ‘the capital’ is the pillar of their consumer manifesto. Having intermediaries from established chain markets to local gourmet shops is a process of alienation between the producer at the field and

[10] I interviewed him (Eren) following the last day of voluntary work at the cooperative. I was paired with him twice as volunteers and the shifts are scheduled for every week after members communicate via e-mail or on phone.

consumers, which should be minimized and avoided if possible. Second, eliminating this 'commercial' alienation allows producers to bargain or negotiate at more reasonable prices without being regulated by the market. And more importantly, this cooperative model acts as a gateway for creating alternative ways of food consumption outside the realm of capital and commercialized food shops. To his opinion:

''what really matters is growing and producing on the soil rather than leaving it to industries, so that it contributes to human life ''.

Just like Hakan did, Eren also approached their membership and voluntary work of the cooperative in a very broad, critical manner. For them, becoming part of an alternative consumer model reconfigures their relation to nature, food, society and capital. Volunteering is one of the many ways of pinching a hole in the running of food industry that is, to their opinion, more about profit-maximization.

'' …because responsibility here is different than in other places. You came and saw. Nobody has any trust issues with anyone. It's very important to build such trust. Leaving the cooperative to another person's responsibility is not an easy thing, for sure but we do that. Of course, there are times we have problems here. It is normal. But we are always up for by-passing these problems in a democratic medium… We also made other things come into life through this cooperative. I hope we will grow more and more in this direction. As long as we keep doing this, it will undermine capitalist system. By undermine, I mean being an alternative. To become an alternative we need to create, generate new things and new thoughts. I hope we will eventually achieve that'' (Eren)

He further adds that this cooperative promotes solidarity not only for fair food and fair trade but all other kinds of social struggles. Both Eren and Hakan see the works of cooperative as closely related to larger social struggles over nature, ecology and commodification of human environment and local means of production in Turkey. On the level of membership, in turn, it is surprising to see the awareness for the linkage between active decision-making on the self

and external strategies of governing (see Chapter 3.3). Their motivation to re-introduce traditional local production methods and to enable fair and secure food for a democratic mode of consumption is both individually and socially practiced. In a nutshell, eating healthier food and promoting its traditional production is a technology of the self which is susceptible to the effects of extant global food regime(s).

As I discussed in Chapter 4.1, even the way store is decorated and designed gives certain implications on its members' political stance against other social and environmental issues in Turkey. Compared to the interviews with those who do not have any organic tie with the cooperative, it was not hard for me to notice the heightened activist and politically motivated tone in cooperative members' responses. As I will dwell more in depth in the next chapter, most interviewees tend to approach health-conscious eating from a consumer standpoint, complaining mostly about the price gap and food access. However, cooperative members I interviewed, *Eren, Hakan and, Su who used to be a former member*, got more opinionated on the self-transforming process of health-conscious eating owing to the value of their voluntary work which aims to create an alternative space of consumption and getting in closer touch with the producers as consumers. One should also acknowledge the fact that BUKOOP's main principles[11] (see Chapter 4.1) are in a way set to craft its members into more politically conscious consumers and volunteers to stand for fair trade, fair food and food security in the framework of food produced with traditional means in their localities outside the realm of profit-making food industry. Nevertheless, it is still fair to argue that reiteration of eating healthier local foodstuff and internalizing the principles of the cooperative allow its volunteers to pursue a more disciplined and blatant process of self-forming if we were to compare them to regular consumers that have linkage to a cooperative or an organization of this nature. Although other interviewees are also cognizant of price-difference, mistrust in conventional market-

[11] http://bukoop.org/

oriented production and so forth, their language and vocabulary come from a more consumer standpoint whereas cooperative members are more opinionated and critical about the prevailing food regime; given that they were being asked the same set of questions.

Figure 1: A picture taken during a sale at BUKOOP, it is also available on their website and social media pages.

CHAPTER 5- ' YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT': Consuming Health-Foods As a Self-Forming Practice

This chapter aims to explore how ethical self-identity, health-conscious eating and class intersect in the light of the in-depth semi structured interviews I had. In so doing, it is important to see these intersecting aspects in continuation with my fieldwork experience at BUKOOP and my main source of data here come from the 11 semi-structured interviews I had with my informants.

5.1 Forming an Ethical Self

As one may know, using the term 'ethics' can pose several problems as meanings vary on different levels of analyses. In ethical self-formation, I intend to delve into my informants' understanding of a good life or a 'quality life' with regards to how much importance they give to nutrition and health-conscious eating. In so doing, Foucault's concepts of ethical self-formation and 'Technologies of the Self'[12] will be in a close tie with one another. This research is not give a 'yes' or 'no' answer to if my informants are ethically constructing themselves around healthy-eating. It is rather to see how they justify their takes on healthiness and health-conscious eating and how they perceive and act on their dietary habits within the current profit-seeking market. Their ethical statements on environment, animal welfare and fair trade are not necessarily different set of ethics outside the process of 'ethical self-formation' yet they are

[12] Skinner(2013, 908) suggests that technologies of the self 'operate through interaction with the technologies of power of modern-day governmentality to provide a platform for a subject to be active within the strategies adopted for managing others' . In this sense, prevailing and prevalent discourses on how to become an healthy individual can be seen as a form of governmentality that is mediated by technologies of the self and has an effect on them.

rather part of their larger ethical repertoire[13] in which they try to achieve a better version of them'selves'. In short, I will mostly refer to the larger, self-forming ethics by ethical self-formation while dwelling on my respondents' subjective takes on health-foods and health-conscious eating.

To my observation during the semi-structured interviews I had, almost all informants closely associate quality of life and health-conscious eating together, which may be not be surprising as food is commonsensically primal to survival for everyone. However, how they rationalize and justify this connection will be telling of their assumed or aspired ethical self-identity. Eren (22, BUKOOP volunteer) states that :

'' Of course these are inseparable. Without healthiness a quality of life or a better life is not possible… Actually we are almost like foreigners to food and nutrition. It would be good to know the process of growing and harvest, for example ''.

Eren's relation to health-conscious eating is closely tied with his voluntary experience at the local food cooperative at his university and it is reasonable to perceive his experiential knowledge and actual practice on food as intermingled. That is to say, the larger body of knowledge he has so far obtained on 'how food production is appropriated into a capitalist endeavor' is both product of internal and external processes of value-making (see Chapter 3.2). He started volunteering at the cooperative a few years ago and now his already existing conception of health-consciousness is molded and effected by this volunteer experience. This intermingled process of objectivation and subjectivation is also upfront in other interviewees discursive statements on food. For instance, Okan (25, MA student in Clinical Psychology) also states that '' As you may know, there is this prevailing discourse that without being healthy nothing can be done. It's so true. It is automatically a good way of life if you are healthy enough. So, I think a better life

[13] Most interviewees except 'Su' did not mention animal welfare as a reason to justify their ethical decision-making on their diet.

is closely related to being healthy; both mentally and physically''. As a consumer of organic and local food items, the value he assigns to the 'state of healthiness' and its relation to quality of life is an objectified value that is already commonsensically affirmed within the larger social circle he is bound to. And then, he connects this 'grand' standard of life quality with his own personal health-conscious eating practice:

'' I have started eating organic 2-3 years ago primarily because this process is largely affected by media and our social circle's indoctrinations. There is this prevailing discourse, packaged food is carcinogen. So, it's unhealthy. And through this discourse we have become more inclined to consume organic food. For the last 2-3 years we have been keener on eating organic food."

Thinking through what he says, aspiring to become a healthier individual no doubt involves certain set of operations on the body and mind (Foucault 1988). Substituting packaged food items with local or organic food is one edge of these techniques to achieve an ideal of state of being. In this regard, eating organic has strong connotations on health and being responsible for oneself. (see Chapter 3.1). Thinking through the lens of 'embodied capital', the process of self-improvement through acquisition of an ideal dietary routine is an investment for a self-transformation. (See chapter 3.3). In the same vein; Su is a 26-year-old student, on a vegetarian diet for 5 years and is now doing her MA in Gender Studies. She tells me about self-transforming aspect of health-conscious eating:

'' I prefer to eat food with better quality instead of consuming dirty street food. It's both because of sanitary and health-related reasons. I admit that these things enhance my quality of life and makes me feel mentally good as well. Let me put it this way, I feel like I'm not doing harm to myself by eating healthier food products''.

She normally lives in Istanbul but has been in Budapest for the last year and a half for academic purposes. She clearly emphasizes that being a student on budget, consuming locally produced

and/ or organic food is not sustainable and easy. However, she thinks that it is also a matter of priority:

'' *Some people spend more for clothing, for example. I prefer to spend my money on healthier food* ''. Prioritizing 'healthier' nutrition is thus a decision on the 'self' towards becoming and achieving a better version of living, at least physically (See Chapter 3.1). Nonetheless, this is not to single out the internal decision making or the process of 'subjectivation' to explain set of operations on the self. This 'self-induced decision' for health-conscious eating is actually a very social one in itself, which I will explain more in depth in the second part of this chapter. To further exemplify how dietary habits are very embedded in our sociality Hakan explains:

'' I have a daughter who loves and consumes fast-food very often. We suggest her that she should not but the life outside or her friend circle does not really entail the lifestyle you have and then your efforts fail. She goes to different places, you go elsewhere. And if you're single, for instance, you can live differently as you wish. However, things start to change when you share your life with other people and this makes you want to change your consumption habits. You end up keeping up with the world outside.''

Another informant of mine(Dilek) is a 35-year-old mother who used to manage an 'Eye Hospital' before she gave birth to 'Nese' two years ago. She explained to me that she and her husband have been very keen on what kind of food they consume ever since she was born. And she adds that choosing the healthiest option for their child to eat has now been a major concern for them.

'' We started consuming organic with the birth of Nese. We did not actually use to eat organic before". Soner, her husband, adds: "Before she was born, we did not even know what we ate was organic or not. We are now careful to but organic from grains to pasta when we go to a supermarket''. When I asked her about how she perceives a quality or better life to be, she goes:

'' A good life first and foremost depends on eating healthy and being on a balanced diet. We now live in Istanbul and cannot really trust food items here ''. And she elaborates further: '' Soner [her husband] is originally from Karamürsel and we benefit greatly from the fact that he grew up in a more local, village type of setting. Those people there grow their own food. And as I said, we now do almost our entire food shopping from that place even since Nese was born. So, a quality of life for us now is eating healthy and properly ''.

It is essential to see that all these respondents come from different familial backgrounds, age groups and class positions and thus the way they justify their dietary habits differs greatly. Making an ethical decision on nutrition is something for an MA student on scholarship and something else for a middle-class housewife or for a student volunteer at a local food cooperative. However, what's worth noting is that having a certain preference for food and being a health-conscious eater is to put forward a standard of living or at least work on a way of 'living' towards becoming 'better' as a whole. As shall be seen, most of my informants do not hesitate to associate a quality of life with eating healthy. This pairing might seem very self-evident or inevitable at first glance but the larger concept of a 'good life' or 'quality of life' and the specific concern for 'health-conscious eating' are put together from a very ethical and idealistic standpoint by these informants. Although a few of the respondents did not specifically prioritize eating-healthy as the basis of a quality life, a healthy diet is still an 'ideal' for them. Put differently, most informants strongly state that their dietary habits can be very decisive for their overall life quality. These ethical standards are never stable and fixed, they are always subject to change depending on changing discourses on food safety, health and environment in addition to the culture of eating one is born into. What constitutes a good and healthy diet is thus inseparable from the questions of '' What makes a good life?'', ''How is it possible to achieve a certain level life standard in an urban environment?'' and ''How independent is health

conscious eating of class position? ‘’, which compels us to talk about how the self and the social resonate together as I will discuss in the next chapter.

5.2 Socioeconomic Dimension and Symbolic Attributes

In very close relation to the discussion on ethical-self formation through health-conscious eating, the way my informants connect their dietary practice to prevailing market regime and class is of upmost significance to draw a more complete picture on eating-healthy. The representation of organic food and other health-foods through advertisement no doubt crafts and fortifies certain discourses on health, nature and how a heathy diet should be. Cityfarm[14], for instance, is a very renown chain store selling organic and local food produced in various regions of Turkey, claiming to bring best quality organic products into urban dwellers’ table. These stores are usually located in distinctively affluent neighborhoods of Istanbul such as Bagdat Street, Suadiye and Nisantasi. Their two main advertising slogans are ‘’ 100 % Made in Turkey, 100 % Organic ‘’ and ‘’Eat Organic, Grow Up Healthy!’’. As it is pretty self-evident, eating organic is deliberately associated with the vital concerns of ‘Growing Up’, ‘Being Healthy’ and being a domestic good, all of which are supposed to have positive connotations in the minds of Turkish consumers. In connection with this, Okan’s reasons for being keen on health-foods are embedded in his deeper inferences on how organic food is promoted and advertised. Agreeing that consuming health-foods is now part of being an ‘urban consumer’ he expresses:

‘’ Thinking of adverts 10 years ago, local food items were being looked down on. We used to hear things like ‘’ Are you still using your mom’s oil? Are you still using your mom`s ..whatever?‘’.

Then he further elaborates:

[14] CityFarm is the first and biggest organic food store in Turkey and its organic food items are certified by ECOCERT IMO. and Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

'' But now we can see that food produced or brought from villages and small towns have become more popular and on demand. For instance, even some fabricated products are depicted as if they were harvested in the villages in some televised adverts, so there is this changing trend. I think that this is also a change of how people feed themselves. You can observe it in a social setting too. For instance, one would go around saying '' Oh! Are you really using that? It's very harmful to health . On the other hand when I order olive oil from a village in the Aegean everybody goes '' Really? That's great. I should get one too. Where's that village? ''.

Departing from his statements, it is quite obvious for consumers to notice the frequent emphasis on nature, health, purity and local life in the promotion and sale of organic/local food products. Primarily targeted towards urban (upper)middle class consumers, the fetish on product being 'natural' acts almost as a remedy to the ills of urban way of living. (Murcott 1982). The duality between nature and culture is often implied in the marketing of health-foods, health-foods are to reverse or repair the adverse effects of 'too much human intervention' into nature. Accordingly, in promotion and incorporation of this rhetoric into a class-bound food purchase; advertisement and mass media are very instrumental in the spread of discourses around health-conscious eating. Many of my informants justify their economic power to afford health-foods within very commonsensical statements on what makes a good diet and living and what does not. Damla is a 25-year-old recent MA graduate, consuming health-foods as her budged allows her to. She tells me a short anecdote to explain how organic/local food is now a topic of conversation that has strong implications on class and lifestyle:

'' Eating organic is now a strong trend but not very sustainable for a family of 4, for example. They probably barely make ends meet but this reminded me of something. I used to tutor a young child who lives in a very luxurious exurb. Families living in this place would go to certain organic bazaars or they would just buy directly from certain farmer families in certain local areas. They would let them know of the foods they have so that they would make home-delivery for these families. This had always been a topic of conversation, for instance. The family I was working for had two kids and they were quite particular about how to feed their

children and this was something they were frequently discussing with their friends too. They would share home delivery contacts and let each know if a new food item arrives etc..'' and then she adds:

'' This is way I think this is about class. These people have the energy, time and most importantly money to be keen on this. Thinking of my family, for example, my mother has some health problems and she has to be on a particular diet but still cannot afford buying tomato that is four times more expensive in the organic section ''.

In my informants' minds, therefore, eating organic and local is an expense not everybody can afford. Choosing to be on a 'healthier' diet is thus a class specific practice as well whether or not one is fully aware of it. The very internal decision-making to become a healthier person is constantly restrained or enabled by budget along with the eating culture which is subject to constant change. Dilek reiterates the growing trend towards organic and local foods and states that:

'' Most people around me are trying to consume organic food too. Our social circle has shrunk a bit because of Nese's birth so we do not see our friends a lot but as far as I know mostly young, newly married white-collar couples are inclined to have a health-conscious lifestyle ''. Admitting the class aspect in health-conscious eating, Su states that:

'' I don't think people below a certain monthly income cannot consider consuming organic food. Their priority would rather be to eat properly enough and get by than eating organic. And we also see that organic food kind of represents a certain class identity. Some people on Instagram are so willing to share what kind of food they buy and show it off. However, as I said, this is not only about class. As a student on scholarship, for example, it would be so convenient for me to eat cheap chicken döner every day, but this diet would make me feel so bad mentally, if not physically. I definitely try to avoid food stuff that I believe is harmful for me.'' Similarly, Okan approaches the class aspect of this cautiously:

'' When I think about the universe of this health-conscious eating, we have from all social classes practicing it. I mean it shouldn't be peculiar to one single class. But if I were to generalize, I would say that middle and

upper-class people are keen on health-foods, more than necessary…For instance, there are certain chain organic markets in the city and these are all very well franchised. 'Cityfarm', for example, is one of them. I believe these are more market-oriented. And sometimes I see some adverts on Facebook promoting local soaps made by women from whatever town..I think those who try to be more conscious rather prefer local shops and bazaars than paranoidly seeking organic food. ''

Class, established rhetoric on 'health' and self-induced ethical decisions seem decisive factors in health-conscious eating; yet it is necessary not to single out one of these factors over the others. As we can observe through different respondents' takes, the primary reason why one prefers organic food or not varies greatly depending on one's budget and their specific relation to food items which is bound to socially constructed habits of eating and discourses on health. In this case, it is rather more reasonable to focus on which perspective these informants make sense of health-conscious eating. Is it mostly class or ethical decisions on the self to become a healthier human being or just being a product of the eating culture we are born into? Having admitted the strong class aspect of food consumption, Vildan adds:

''Dietary habits actually start from childhood and it's really difficult to leave these habits behind all of a sudden. This is why, I think, it will take some time for people to dramatically change their diets towards organic/local foods. '' Although many of the informants so far covered and justified all of these aspects during their interview, two of my informants focused heavily on the price and class-specific dimension of organic food sale and consumption. Irem is a 56-year old retired woman and do not prefer organic/local food. She expresses:

'' I believe that all of this health-food industry is a scheme and what people profit out of this is an unearned income. This is because there is no such thing as organic or there is no organic left at all. Even peasants may use different kind of seeds sometimes. This is also what they complain about. Many food products do not even grow on soil as we know it. It's either fertilized or contains many chemicals. They all might contain GMOs and other harmful chemicals.''

And then she further adds upon my question on how class identity and organic food come together:

'' Organic is definitely an upper-class food. I'm telling you, this is a scheme. I don't even think organic food consumers get any benefit out of these foods. They eat organic because they can afford. So what? 250 grams of lentils, lentils we all know, cost around 30 Turkish Lira. How can I even know if it is really organic or not? Yes, they are certified but I do not trust anything produced or labeled in Turkey. I believe they are all part of an unearned income. I think what we have is an upper middle class that is deceived and exploited for profit ''.

The skepticism and disbelief on the authenticity of health-foods is yet another indicator that its consumption is associated with it being a market item. Many of the informants, especially those not consuming organic/local food items contend that health foods are largely commodified and turned into a luxury item for most everyone. Thus, whether or not certified organic/local food items are as healthy as they are advertised to be is a big question mark in informants' minds. Having grown up in a rural area, Ali, in the same vein, believes that consuming health-foods is strictly bound to budget:

'' I think there are certain privileges in the consumption of organic food. It is being promoted towards economically more powerful people. That's what I think. I don't think a family on a budget can even think of consuming organic. I mean there is a strong demand for organic but the price difference blocks you from access to healthier foodstuff. It's all about purchasing power '' In relation to access to quality foods, Eren complains:

'' Looking at the prices, we can see that organic food are very expensive. They might be twice or even three times more expensive than non-organic food. Therefore, not everybody can afford it. It only serves people who have a certain level of income. This is the result of current market mechanism. For this reason, it's better to change the ways of producing foodstuff than simply decide consuming it or not''

Putting these responses in dialogue, we can see that every informant is aware of the class aspect whether they can afford organic food or not. This awareness, therefore, can be seen as an acknowledgement of another strong discourse on health-foods. '*Organic food is almost a luxury item'*, in the context of Istanbul, if not anywhere else. Having talked about how informants see organic food within a class perspective, it is essential to notice two conflicting yet coexisting discourses. On market's standpoint, ' natural is healthier' is reiterated through certain marketing tools (advertisement, promotion). On consumers' side, however; 'consuming the 'natural' is almost a luxury practice that is only accessible to relatively more affluent consumer segments in Istanbul. The coexistence of these two powerful discourses on health-conscious eating is worth dwelling on. Although there is this discursive divergence between consumption and distribution of organic/local foods, this gap is somehow softened and slightly closed by the aspect of ethical decision-making. While informants admit the fact that health-conscious eating signifies a certain level of purchasing power, they also acknowledge how necessary it is for human health to consume organic or locally produced food items. Therefore, it is safe to suggest that these discourses undermine each other's validity but are not necessarily mutually exclusive for most informants I interviewed including Eren and Hakan who normally volunteer at a local food cooperative. The coexistence of negating discourses on market and consumers' side compels us to deepen the level of analysis rather than prioritizing one single dimension of it; be that class or ethical-decision making.

Speaking of being conflictual yet coexisting, the relation between the self and the social can be treated in the same manner. Most informants, as mentioned above, agree that eating-healthy and consuming healthier food-stuff (organic/local) are ideal yet not achievable mostly due to economic constraints. Cognizant of the self-(trans)forming aspect of health-conscious eating, it compels us to acknowledge that health-food consumption is where the work on the self gets into a deep interaction with the social perception of leading a health-conscious life. Substituting

conventionally produced foodstuff with local home-delivery food items, for instance, may stem from a personal decision-making process. The decision on the self-improvement (Bourdieu 1986) is closely tied with 1) how one is supposed to lead a healthier lifestyle 2) what makes a quality food and what does not 3) what are the main rhetoric on unhealthiness within the prevailing social discourses. This is not to suggest that making a health-related decision on the self is mostly a structural process but rather to argue that 'personal' and the 'social' are in a quite interrelated and entangled linkage in the framework of health-conscious eating practice. Giddens' (2013) concept of structuration is also a very useful tool to understand the dynamic, two-fold process between structure and the agency; as two processes actually enable one another. As Su expresses:

'' I certainly recognize that eating/organic can be about class identity but that's not only it, should not be. It is also about whether or not people believe in these food products' claim for 'healthiness' .There should also be many other factors too, besides purchasing power".

She recognizes that class, individual-decision making, culture and socialization all go into the practice of consuming health-foods as a self-forming process. In this sense, it is fair to treat health-conscious eating as a melting pot of self-improvement and social workings of 'healthiness'.

Echoing the fieldwork and the interviews I had, it is also necessary to dwell on and problematize the imagined binary of local and global food systems. Given the activist and politically-motivated values promoted at the cooperative, it is reasonable to affirm that 'local production' and 'autonomous' community are re-valorized through their intermingled relation to globalizing food systems. (See Chapter 3.4). Local food systems are not exclusive, independent spaces of alternative food consumption and resistance to hegemonic food regimes prioritizing profit-making. Departing from my interview with Eren and Hakan, the main motivation for a local *foodshed* (See chapter 3.4) is to create a safe and 'saved' space to valorize

locally produced food that are chemical-free and suit the concerns for food safety and fair trade. In the light of how our informants question the prevailing market regime, however, the need for a saved space for local food efforts is deemed valuable and valid mostly because of the global food system's upper hand in local food's distribution and sale towards consumers. This translates that the efforts for local food systems are actually very much embedded and gain meaning within the globalizing food systems (Feagan 2007). Accordingly, to my take, the growing trend on local/organic food or on traditional food production is largely a global phenomenon as well. This perspective would also allow us to re-focus on the discussion of subjectivation and objectivation. In the case of globally accepted consumptive behaviors on food, trying to become a healthier being through health-conscious eating is an objectified value. The initial decision-making to opt for health-foods can stem from subjective and experiential reasons, yet; valuing the work on the self towards becoming a healthier one is not exempt from the very global and characteristically urban trend towards the same target. In turn, it is more reasonable to frame health-conscious eating as an oscillation between global and local processes. Whether as a politically motivated volunteer at a food coop or as a regular organic food consumer; my interviewees' practice, perception and justification for healthy eating are contingent to class, subjective ethical decision-making, social relations and culture. And it is very crucial to point out that these are all interconnected aspects of health-food consumption, which is why it stands out as a very complex 'social' practice rather than individual.

CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1 Implications

In this research, I have mainly argued how health-conscious eating is a very social and complex practice, which goes way beyond eating food for mere purposes of taste, quality or healthiness. In our contemporary society, eating-healthy can seem a very routine and invisible human practice at first glance. However, recognizing health-conscious eating as a self-forming ethical practice allows us to see 'food' as a field where 'the self' and 'the social' resonate together. In the context of a local food cooperative located at a university campus and 11 in-depth semi-structured interviews, this research proposes four main implications. First of all, organic/local food consumption should not be thought independently of class relations and eating culture. One's quest for achieving a healthier diet requires a decision-making process that is both subjective and susceptible to cultural/social rhetoric of 'being a healthy' person. As many of the informants expressed, health-foods are often marketed to more affluent income groups, which differentiates their regular consumption in terms of class. Whether (upper)middle class or not, almost every informant is wary of the class aspect on the marketing side of these food items. In relation to this class dimension, preferring organic/local food can also be seen as a preference on a certain life style that has attributions to be a healthy, self-responsible and individual being.

Secondly, I argued that choosing to be on a healthier-diet can be thought as a self-forming practice. Being selective of food items one consumes and deciding on what makes a 'quality food' and what does not are certain 'techniques' (see Chapter 3.3) to achieve a desired state of healthiness. This also coincides with the fact that most of the informants see healthiness and consuming quality food almost as two sides of a coin. It was also worth noting that making a

decision towards health-conscious eating may seem a very individual, subjective process at first glance. Nevertheless, this very decision-making process is embedded in the existing larger discourses of what kind of food consumption is healthier and what it entails to be a healthy, self-responsible individual in the context of Istanbul, Turkey. In the light of my fieldwork at the cooperative and semi structured interviews, it is reasonable to suggest that the linkage between subjective decision-making and objectified values of becoming a healthier 'being' is mediated by degree, recognizing that every individual is part of a different eating culture and has different relation to the class dimension of health-conscious eating. More clearly, this research is not to answer the question whether or not these consumers make subjective choices on their dietary habits. It rather acknowledges that self-forming through 'eating healthy' is neither a complete individual nor cultural/social process.

Third, my volunteering experience at the cooperative and interviews on health-consciousness in a way compelled me to re-visit the so-called binary of *global* and *local* in the framework of the discourses on health-foods and health-conscious eating. I argued that re-valorizing foods' place of origin and having a stance against capital's upper hand in health-foods is not purely a local process. Departing mainly from my fieldwork at the cooperative, I discussed that endeavors to create local and community-based alternatives to local/organic food consumption are indeed embedded in contemporary globalizing food systems. Gleaning specifically from my informants who volunteered at the cooperative, I highlighted that being politically critical against these globalizing systems and reacting to them are also processes unfolding worldwide, albeit in different contexts and geographies. Collective efforts to advocate fair food and fair trade and provide more democratic access for healthier, local food for all social classes actually stand out as trends that go hand in hand with global processes which transform health-foods into a market fancy. Having discussed health-conscious eating both discursively and practically,

therefore, it would be more insightful to go beyond a supposed binary between global and local and see it more as an oscillation between these two.

Lastly, in the case of Istanbul, organic/local food consumption can be seen as an arena of conflicting yet coexisting discourses. On the market's standpoint, the more natural the better and healthier, denigrating foodstuff produced through conventional and supposedly 'toxic' means. In consumers' mind, however, it is quite a luxury to consume health food products as part of their everyday diet given the price gap between health-foods and basically the 'rest'. This discursive gap is reflected on the price of these food items and on the purchasing power of consumers. Notwithstanding, the sharp divide between the two is somehow softened by the process of ethical decision making. Most informants agree on the 'pricey-ness' of health-conscious eating, yet they also acknowledge that consuming health-foods is in fact a necessity and an ideal practice for becoming a healthier person. Although these discourses are seemingly conflicting with one another, they actually coexist within the larger discourse and practice of health-conscious eating. The same way *global* and *local* are rather inclusive to each other than exclusive, 'healthiness' and financial cost do not seem to undermine each other's validity in the discussion of eating and becoming healthy through organic/local foods.

6.2 Future Research

This research in a way highlighted the fact that the trend towards organic/local food or eating healthy has been growing rapidly in the last two decades. On the other hand, the research literature on organic food consumption in Turkish context is very scarce and dissatisfying. Although this research focused mainly on the discursive and ethical dimension of becoming a healthier person through health-conscious eating, further research can still be proposed on the following subjects:

In what ways are discourses on healthiness and health-foods similar and/or divergent for urban Turkish consumers and their counterparts in other urban areas around the world?

How differently do people justify their food purchase depending on where they buy their food? (cooperative and commercial food shops, for example)

How does neoliberal market appropriate the concerns of clean/healthy eating, organic farming/ fair trade into itself? What are health-conscious eaters' takes on this and how do they differ according to whether they consume from cooperatives or commercial food shops?

How does gender play into the practice of health-conscious eating? How do education, gender and economic class intersect in pursuing a healthier lifestyle?

How do vegan and vegetarian consumers in Turkey exist and react within the extant hegemonic food regime in Turkey?

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