

## **Bridging food commons and planning: exploring a dialogue between consumer cooperatives and socio-spatial strategies in Istanbul**

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Emerging trends regarding the food supply for urban consumers trigger growing interest of research and policy in urban and regional planning agenda, which once considered as external for urban dynamics. Offered to be defined as “new food equation”, prominent researchers unfolded these emergent trends as decreasing affordability, reliability and security of food supply. Also increasing discontent and objection of urban citizens for such circumstances, apparent transformations of eco-systems related with agri-food sector in the era of globalization and new land conflicts triggered by the growing demand on food by increasing numbers of urban consumers have been the popout headings.

Concept of Alternative food networks (AFN) became a far-reaching research strand and policy based tool to cope with emerging trends of food supply, considering urban consumers and rural (or so called peri-urban) producers. AFN literature and policy practice offers contemporary research agenda topics regarding future attempts to deal with food supply of urban areas in regional and local scales. These topics include on the one hand an evaluation of the potential and limits of local food networks to illustrate whether they are ecologically sustainable in environmental level, just enough to promote more integrated and embedded social relations across urban and rural settings in social level and healthy enough to respond to food crises. On the other hand they require creating new ways of policy-making to suggest or force grassroots initiatives and local governments for new institutional structures to maintain food-supply. In this sense, AFN traces for embeddedness, territoriality and institutionalization in local, and also global scale.

Accordingly; bridging urban consumers and farmers, triggering active food democracy, strengthening social relations, reducing negative attributes of global commodity chains and helping agricultural producers to develop agro-ecological production methods can also be listed as the pathways of urban-rural interactions in the context of food production and consumption. Local food networks demand for these crucial dimensions to cope with issues of localism. Such an attempt needs on the one hand dealing with power relations regarding marginalized producers seasonal food products and disadvantaged urban citizens to access healthy food within a territory. On the other hand it also have to deal with conditions of disadvantaged agricultural producers in the Global South reach to urban consumers together with the diminished role of middleman. Dimensions and challenges of AFN also offers a new agenda for urban and regional planning research and practice. In order to meet grassroots movements, local initiatives and non-governmental organizations acting to develop local food networks in terms of embeddedness and territoriality dimensions and public institutions, local governments and policy makers in terms of governance, urban and regional planning discipline should expand its current socio-spatial agenda. Inclusion of AFN concept and practice in spatial planning theory and practice needs a reconceptualization of urban-rural interactions, basically new socio-spatial relations between food producers and consumers. Also, theory-practice challenge of the discipline take cities into consideration as food policy actors to re-localize food networks, re-scale and re-define local food systems, conceiving new institutional forms like food policy councils as emerging tools for spatial planning agenda.

In this regard, food production-consumption relations (alternative food networks), consumer's practices and attitudes (prosumerism), new movements of food consumers (short food supply chains) will be considered as our framework. So, alliances between İstanbul citizens and farmers, will be in our scope to relate theory and practice. We aim to (1) Understand food production-consumption relations (alternative food networks) and changing consumer's practices and attitudes (prosumerism) as new movements of food consumers. (2) Analyze farmer organizations, cooperatives and short food supply chains. (3) Elaborate urban-rural interactions as the capacity for rural development. Depending on these objectives we'll

explore the emerging local AFN initiatives in Istanbul Metropolitan Region and struggles to maintain short food supply chain between producers in rural regions of Turkey and urban consumers of Istanbul, in the circumstances where local governance lacks any vision of food policy. Increasing consumer awareness on food and grassroots movements rising power on urban struggles include the initiatives that struggles for developing new forms of food producer-consumer connections. Organized as consumer cooperatives and associations, several initiatives improving their connections with small scale farmers in various regions of rural Turkey. These emerging AFNs in Istanbul experience finding their own ways to improve their connections across urban and rural settings without any institutional equivalent in local, regional or national level. In order to explore AFN initiatives socio-spatial relations in Istanbul, we will be presenting two consumer cooperatives practice, expectations and objectives according to our observations and interviews. Considering dimensions as embeddedness, territoriality and governance arrangements, we will be presenting current strengths these initiatives have been developed until now and possible pathways to lead to local food policy in regional scale.