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Chapter 7

Commodification and the social commons: smallholder autonomy and 'rurban' relations in Turkey¹

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Introduction

The introduction of neoliberalism into the agrarian sector in Turkey, which began in the 1980s and accelerated in the 2000s, brought unprecedented changes to rural life. The old, state-led development strategy was phased out, in accordance with and as guided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Union, and neoliberal restructuring resulted in a squeeze on peasant farming and associated living structures. In addition to the entry and penetration of large-scale producers (especially food manufacturers), the withdrawal of government supports to agriculture in combination with stagnating product prices and increasing input costs led to a markedly increased smallholder vulnerability to market fluctuations.

Meanwhile, the Anatolian countryside has suffered a contraction of the natural commons. Ongoing developments and imminent threats from the state and business and combinations of the two involve millions of hectares already lost to the recent development of infrastructure (river dam projects, industrial zones, roads and housing, etc.) and in grave danger (with plans for the compulsory purchase of meadowland, the transfer of national park management, etc.). This de-commoning is manifested also as restriction and decline of the rural knowledge

commons – such as through the increasing control by international corporations of seed production, reproduction and trading – and occurs also at a more abstract level, in terms of reduced autonomy and communalism; at least, that appears to be the case. Against this, however, we argue for a rather different, more positive interpretation of current realities from the commoning perspective, one that focuses on small farmers, emerging peasant strategies and their associated living structures.

Our proposal here is for a socioeconomic analysis that includes forms of the agriculturally based social commons that are maintained in the face of capitalisation but places this in the context of new social commons that are being developed. Identifying two responses to the new economic environment that enable families to keep their land and their farms, we first look at a direct resistance to commodification (both through the maintenance of traditional practices and development of new skills and localised market relations) and then at an indirect, strategic resistance to commodification (primarily through income differentiation).

Basically, the evolution of employment strategies outside of agriculture, retirement revenues and other social security benefits and transfers – in combination with the development of market relations while yet avoiding dependence on these – enables families to keep their land and maintain their small-holdings. This desire to maintain family farms itself represents an exercise of autonomy against submission to capital. Since rural employment opportunities tend to be limited, it is facilitated by urban migration, along with the formation of extended (rural–urban) settlement structures, which involve various types of mobility and novel living structures, or spatial definitions, and

comprise a new form of solidarity network-based common. This implies that we need also to look at commoning as a geo-social practice, as a form of re-spatialisation.

Although a (partial) non-entry into markets and, at the same time, development of wage-labour relations appear contradictory, they tend to operate in tandem, combining socially with an integrative synergy premised on migratory and other movements between the rural and urban. Through this double strategy, that is, farming households not only mitigate the squeeze on small-scale agriculture and maintain a certain level of autonomy – by navigating a course somewhat outside of co-option by capital and independently of the state – but also create new socioeconomic spatial structures spanning village and city that function as expressions of a new form of social commons. This commoning constitutes a resistance to capital, not in the sense of political activism – either overt (like demonstrations, riots and strikes, mostly linked to urban contexts) or covert (false compliance, feigned ignorance and a range of other methods applied in peasant struggles) – but in a ‘resistance of a third kind’: that is, the ‘direct intervention in, and alteration of, the processes of labour and production’, and ‘a wide range of heterogeneous and increasingly interlinked practices through which the peasantry constitutes itself as distinctively different’ (van der Ploeg, 2007: 2.1).

The primary purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to present an approach to and notion of social commons in the contemporary context of neoliberalism in agriculture, using Turkey as a case study. First, the basic analytical approach to the idea of commons is introduced. Then, the main features of the resistance to commodification are outlined, focusing specifically

on (i) the maintenance and revision of autonomy, and (ii) the re-spatialisation of the social commons via external sources of income and rural–urban mobility. Two main data sources are employed: official Turkish statistics and the results of an original research project. The former are drawn from figures compiled by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TSI or TURKSTAT, TÜİK in Turkish). The latter are based on a research project implemented in two phases during 2010–11 (Öztürk, 2012a). The first phase consisted of focus groups with villagers (in twenty-five villages, nationwide) and in-depth interviews with Ministry of Agriculture district office managers and agricultural input sellers and product traders (in eighteen of the country's eighty-one provincial districts); the second comprised interviews with village households (436) and a village-based questionnaire (seventy-one).

Commons as practice

Three main issues characterise our approach to the recent development of the commons in the social and political sciences and the humanities (Ostrom, 1990; Hess & Ostrom, 2006; Hardt & Negri, 2008; Harvey, 2011). First, we consider commoning as social practice (Reckwitz, 2010: 249). The common is not just a resource external to us, on which we act, but also something (re)created in our actions, the practice by which the resource is produced and reproduced. Second, we position commons beyond the domains of the private and the public. Produced and reproduced on the basis of autonomy, access, participation, cooperation and caring, commoning should be distinguished from both of these. Combining this with the first point, we regard private, public and commons practices as all (re)producing

resources in their own particular way; thus, they also similarly (re)produce social relations, as characteristically instrumental – commodified by capital or administratively state-defined or else autonomous and communal.

Third, defined as a practice, the common is more than a remainder of the past or vague hope for the future but operates among us now, even though we tend to be blind to the ‘moral economy of common action’ (Hardt, 2010: 352; see also Harvey, 2011: 101). Indeed,

the common is always present, or potentially so ... [since it] concerns our capacity to control and reproduce our means of existence, our being in the world ... we are this common, making, producing, participating, moving, sharing, circulating, enriching, inventing, restarting. (Negri & Revel, 2008, emphasis added)

Thus, commoning may indeed ‘carry people beyond the limits established by the status quo’ (Bookchin, 1991: 3) and ‘perform new economic hopes’ (Gibson-Graham, 2008: 4). This then is an emancipatory notion of the commons, the idea ‘that through hard work, cooperation, joint actions and/or over struggle, progress might be wrought’ (van der Ploeg, 2008: 274).

Here, this notion of commoning is applied to the smallholder – or peasant (see Hilton, 2012: 13–16) – mode of production, and among rural migrants and urban dwellers with linkages to village and agricultural households. The primary locus lies in practices that connect, as indicated, the rural and the urban (and transnational), and a sense of the communal that is grounded in but no longer limited to a single place. Thus, refer loosely to social ties and networks in the context of commoning – the operation of

non-capital and non-state-defined social relations – as a novel form of autonomous communalism.

The maintenance and revision of autonomies

Since the 1950s, the historical 3:1 rural-to-urban population ratio in Turkey has inverted to today's 1:4. This marks the 'success' of a state policy initially aimed at an urban-based economic growth led by industry and services. At first, the demographic change was slow and gradual: the urban population simply increased more quickly than the rural. Then, with the initial introduction of market-oriented reforms in the 1980s, the absolute rural population started to fall, a trend that accelerated sharply after the turn of the millennium, when neoliberal policies were introduced into the agrarian sector.

The removal of the centralised system of structural supports constructed over the previous half-century was effected through the 2001–06 Agricultural Reform Implementation Project (ARIP), sponsored by the World Bank, which saw huge cuts in and/or the ending of a range of state production facilities, price control mechanisms (including fixed price purchases and high import duties) and input subsidies (such as subsidised fertilisers and cheap credit through the state Agriculture Bank), combined with the facilitation of land transfer and international capital entry (Aydın, 2010; Öztürk, 2012b). Largely as a result of this economic strategy, while the total population of Turkey during this period rose by 4%, its rural population dropped by 12%, from around 24 to 21 million, approximately half a million people per year. Within the space of less than a decade, that is, one in eight of all rural dwellers departed, and the village population returned to a level last seen forty years previously (TÜİK,

2000, 2008). In simple terms, the main narrative is of a massive assault on peasant agriculture, leading to urban migration and a demographic earthquake: as the young and healthy moved to the cities to find work and start new families – especially young women, for whom education and employment in the service sector offered liberating opportunities – the ageing and elderly stayed in the village (TÜİK, 2011).

The agrarian base of the old Turkish economy, it was understood, needed to be changed to a secondary/tertiary economy in order to increase value addition for economic growth. In this new model, agrarian-related value was to be added by the processing industry, and farmers were supposed to deliver higher yields for relatively lower costs. Since most farms had been small-scale, family operations, it followed that the recent huge change should lead to a similarly massive reduction in the number of smallholdings. Intriguingly, however, while the smallholder share of total agricultural land *has* fallen quickly – as agribusiness consolidated its holdings – in terms of the *number* of family farms, only that of the very smallest (up to two hectares) has declined. Indeed, half of all holdings in 2001 were still plots of 2–10 hectares, and yet by 2006 this figure had actually increased a little. Actually, this only follows historical trends since the 1950s, and by 2006, when the bulk of the most recent rural-to-urban migration wave had occurred (it continues still, but much more slowly), around four in five holdings (around three million) were still less than 10 hectares in size (Öztürk, 2012b: 77).

Thus, although simple subsistence farming is largely gone now, this is by no means the case for small-scale enterprise, and although the relative importance of small-scale enterprise in the food production system as a whole may be diminishing upon the

entry of capital, the effect of this on rural social life in general has been significantly mitigated. Looking more closely, we see that nearly all of these small farms were inherited (around 95% were on family land) and a majority (around 60%) engaged in mixed agriculture (Gürsel & Karakoç, 2009, citing TÜİK, 2008), suggesting low-level capitalisation – market-oriented perhaps, but supported by self-sufficiency and including arable farming for winter livestock feed. This is broadly the situation that we find today, based on data for rural household food supply, with over half of primary foods – bread and dairy products, along with *tarhana* (a traditional soup base) – still produced at home, on the farm.²

Self-produced food may be regarded as one of the commons of rural life. First, the basic material inputs, such as grain and milk, are mainly uncommodified, created outside of the market economy. Farmers use corn and cows raised from the previous generation of corn and cows with few or no external (state or private) inputs. Second, production skills, both on the land (raising animals, growing plants) and in the kitchen (making cheese, preserving vegetables), are maintained in village life, passed down through the generations. Food-making knowledge is acquired and shared, not purchased. Home-made foods are, therefore, produced for daily or seasonal consumption within village and family structures, mainly outside of the social relations of the market and its producer/consumer and employer/employee relations. The peasant mode of production is essentially autonomous and communal, representing a social common.

The traditional peasant way, as it may be characterised, centres on the maintenance of a non-commodity circuit (van der Ploeg, 2008: 29) in the production process, through which

smallholders assert control over the reproduction of their own farms independently of markets. Contrary to what is referred to as subsistence farming, however, the (contemporary) peasant method of production also involves a commodity circuit; in combination with the non-commodity circuit there thus develops a novel dual circuit system (Figure 7.1). When the commodity circuit starts to dominate, the farm becomes structured by the logic of capital (Figure 7.1, relation a), a development indicated by the importance of the relation of inputs to outputs in the farm as a whole (Figure 7.1, relation b). Peasant struggles for food sovereignty, as, for example, in Via Campesina, are characterised by the fight to maintain and develop autonomy through the non-commodity circuit. Furthermore, and in contradistinction to the anonymous markets of abstract exchange that mark the modern consumer society, a product becomes valued not only in terms of price, but also through the way the product is produced. Consumer relations in the contemporary peasant way are not governed by low price but by fair price, and the economy of exchange is expressed as a moral economy.

It should be noted that, from this perspective, even the agricultural marketing strategies of smallholders to maintain their farms should not necessarily be evaluated in terms of individual decision-making processes of market actors, but may be more relevantly considered in terms of the development of different social relations of production. Thus, in contrast to the process of increased external control constituted by heightened dependency on markets, many smallholdings in Turkey have survived partly through strategies that in some way support the non-commodity circuit, which is sited in the living social structures of family, friends and neighbours, of people with whom rela-

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Figure 7.1. The contemporary peasant way: a dual-circuit system

Source: Van der Ploeg (2008: 29).

tionships are based on interconnecting and multivalent human and locality (territorial) ties rather than their positioning in the linear and functional framework of commodity production–distribution and purchase–sale.

Commodification and autonomy are constantly under negotiation on the farm through countless decisions about how to organise the circuits of commodities and non-commodities. Certainly, a creeping commodification is manifested, for example, in rural consumption (see below). The cash or credit required for this is partly accessed through borrowing or sales – sometimes of assets but primarily of agricultural produce

supported by labour power – as well as through transfers (in which some of the wealth produced by the operation of capital generally is moved to smallholdings through personal entitlements, such as old-age pensions). The point to note here, though, is that it is precisely the access to such goods that enables the survival of the village and, thus, the maintenance of traditional social commons (expressed economically as the peasant way, the non-commodity circuit), and which also thus characterises the role of the village in the expression of what might be dubbed a post-modern common (the dual circuit).

Essentially, a peasant mode of production remains a transformative reference point in the rural social landscape where social commons not only endure, but through which new modes can emerge. Thus, a dialectical relationship manifests itself, as the very commodification that slowly eats into the social commons of village life enables its revival in altered form. Indeed, given the recent rise in GNP in Turkey and its causally associated urban migration, the number of village farmers would surely have already been decimated had they not gained sufficient entry into the market to compete well enough in order to survive – one way or another. A few brief examples of how commodification has entered traditional rural practices and how commons have not only declined but also been reformulated can serve to illustrate some of the complex socioeconomic dynamics at play here.

The uptake of consumer durables (Table 7.1) shows that farming families become tied into capital through the need to access financing, especially for vehicles, which are particularly important for people living and working on the land but very expensive. In addition to general purpose vehicles, ownership

of tractors and other farming equipment, such as for ploughing and harvesting, is also widespread now. We observed that around half of households possess their own tractors, a proportion in line with the official national average. There are forms of commoning even in this capital acquisition, however. First, extended families (two or three nuclear clusters) regularly pool resources, clubbing together to purchase, maintain and share usage of the goods. Then, vehicles and equipment are also sometimes shared with other families, perhaps paid for in kind – in around a third of cases (households and villages), we found this to occur. And then, when tractors (most commonly) are rented out for daily payments, the traditional independence and communal structuring of rural social relations means that the financialisation of sharing does not include profiteering and typically does not involve formal payment arrangements (people tend just to pay when they can).

Table 7.1. Rural household penetration of selected consumer durables (% , n = 436)

Durables	Present	Absent
Mobile phone	94	6
Washing machine	90	10
Vehicle*	44	56
Dishwasher	23	77

* Car, pick-up, truck
Source: Öztürk (2012a).

This entry of financial transfers (cash payments) does, nevertheless, represent a commodification of daily life that manifests itself in many ways, and older villagers do complain, for example, that 'people don't share anymore'. Again, though, lest it be too easily overlooked, the social commons continue to be enacted despite, and developed through, this commodification. In many mountain settlements, for example, it used to be a traditional practice for the whole village (and adjoining hamlets) to move their bovine (buffalo and cattle) herds together for summertime pasture on higher land, whereupon some villagers would stay in the mountain settlement (*yayla*) to look after the animals, while the rest returned to harvest the corn and scythe the grass for hay. This involved a range of communal social activities (the timing of the move would be decided by informal consensus, people would look after one another's herds, etc.) – and it still occurs, with modernising developments. Journeys are made by private vehicle now, including minibus trips (private enterprise) up and down the mountain, enabling the villagers to descend and return in a day, cutting and baling their grass for winter feed between the dawn and dusk herding and milking in the *yayla* – which, in turn, allows smaller numbers of people to maintain properties and farming activities, a vital development in the context of reduced populations.

Another aspect of commodification is observed in the ways in which agricultural inputs are obtained. In addition to mechanical hardware and the necessary fuel and maintenance, farmers purchase not only inputs like fertilisers (74% of small-holders) and pesticides (67%) – for which state subsidies have now been significantly reduced – but also certified seed (47%) and seedlings (20%). With regard to the latter, state restrictions, albeit loosely applied, limit farmers' rights to produce and sell

their own seeds, subject to legislation introduced by ARIP in accordance with EU regulations. The multinational operations of agribusiness are thus legally enabled to introduce patented seed products and related biotechnologies – millions of tons of genetically modified seed (corn, rape/oilseed and cotton) now enter Turkey, where they are converted into the constituents of several hundred food products. Here, though, the legislated construction of dependency meets with a relatively politicised resistance in the form of seed barter festivals, especially in the western (Aegean) region. At these festivals, farmers exchange seed in non-financial transactions, thus circumventing not only the new legislation but also the capitalised market. Even though the room for manoeuvre in the practice of independent farming is reduced, and with it the social commons restricted, therefore, it is re-engaged by an independent, communal response.

The purchase of tractors, fertilisers and seeds – and of washing machines and mobile phones, along with payments for fuel and health and education needs (Turkey has a reasonably well developed but not entirely free system for social welfare) as well as for all manner of other expenses – obviously requires smallholders to enter the market with cash or credit. Traditionally, when farmers/villagers needed access to goods, they would seek them in communal solidarity (without financial payment) or, if money was required, by localised, personal borrowing (from family, neighbours and friends). This grounding in communal social relations is also changing to one of capitalist commodity relations, as traditional methods decrease and credit relations grow. Thus financialisation constitutes another dimension of the commodification process. Again, however, there is a crucial caveat: bank loans are quite difficult for smallholders to secure,

and around a fifth of the households and villages we questioned borrow on the basis of human rather than capital relations, while another fifth would not, or simply do not, take loans, opting instead for other, belt-tightening and asset-realisation approaches, such as by reducing consumption and/or farming activities and renting out land (Table 7.2).

Table 7.2. Preferred credit/borrowing sources (household, $n = 171$)

Preferred credit source	Proportion (%)
Bank	35
Family/neighbours	21
Agriculture credit co-ops	12
Private ('loan shark')	7
Farmer's union	4
Nowhere (do/would not borrow)	21

Source: Öztürk (2012a).

In the quest for solvency, farmers may indeed attempt to transform assets into capital or make savings rather than raise money. Our research shows that around half of villagers draw on their savings in times of need; they certainly hold out against selling land, the preferred option of only 3%. At the same time, in another expression of the dialectic referred to above, the departure of people from the farms for jobs in the city, thereby entering into full capital relations, also has the effect of releasing the pressure on smallholding production capacity by reducing household consumption demand, indefinitely.

Whereas in the past, the loss of labour supply, of young people in particular, would have outweighed the gain for the farm of lower consumption, now, with the entry of capital, and when labour needs can be so reduced by mechanisation, this becomes a positive factor: labour loss becomes labour sale, with remittances contributing to the survival of family smallholdings and the traditions they maintain.

Another interesting contemporary strategy is that of investment in solar power. Very popular among smallholders now, this medium-term investment option not only enables savings in electricity costs but also contributes to rural development, reducing the pressure on environmentally damaging energy sources. Taking farmers away from national grid dependency, it also, of course, contributes to their autonomy. Indeed, we found that making savings – reducing farming expenses and cutting consumption generally – is practised, as necessary, by some 50–60% of farmers. Inevitably, however, smallholders cannot endure indefinitely with just scaling-down and stop-gap measures, such as belt-tightening and borrowing, and even long-lasting efficiencies, such as the departure of family members and introduction of cheaper energy supplies, will not stem the relentless tide of capital.

External income and rural–urban mobility

Eventually, if family farms and the associated social commons are to survive the vicissitudes of the market, they must either capitalise more fully for market efficiency, or develop other relations with markets such as through value addition ('deepening'), engaging in non-agricultural on-farm activities ('broadening') or reducing costs and finding non-farm, non-agricultural

sources of income ('re-grounding') (van der Ploeg & Roep, 2003). Among the positive market relations related to value addition – deepening – and the moral economy aspect of the peasant way is the adoption, by whole villages even, of a single, high-value product. This assumes two forms. One is general, the application of generic terms and techniques, such as 'organic', which are increasingly attractive to the urban middle class. The other is specifically related to quality definition via the branding of produce by locality, such as honey (parts of Turkey are ecologically rich in native flower varieties for pollen sources for bees) or cheese made from unpasteurised milk (e.g. in the Kars region of north-east Turkey). In the latter case, of a product that has both intrinsic quality value and a localised production structure, a recent initiative is now striving for recognition and protection under the geographical indication regulation of the EU to promote and protect quality agricultural products and food.

These examples of the emergence of embedded or 'nested' markets (Aguglia et al., 2009) represent informal and localised farmer-based developments, rather than determinations by distant and anonymous enterprises ordered by the logic of agribusiness. Although they are integrated into capital and dependent on markets, this is much more on local people's own terms than, for example, the medium-sized entrepreneurs of central Anatolia who produce potatoes to order for supermarkets to be converted to crisps, where the varieties, quantities and prices are all fixed by the industry, which also gains the most added value (through the secondary production process). On the one hand, these nested markets valorise community as bottom-up initiatives and through their need for and, thus, support of local skills and knowledge sharing; on the other

hand, they buttress independence through the development of what tend to be individually articulated markets with highly tailored yet flexible infrastructures that are inherently resistant to takeover.

Something else that contributes to rural development by enhancing the value of the common as a locality-based resource – the pluriactivity of broadening – involves the turn to tourism. The contemporary phenomenon of *yayla* tourism, essentially by urbanites touring the countryside as an alternative summer holiday, offers opportunities for income generation in various spheres, such as hotel and restaurant provision, in which localised entrepreneurial activities are currently expanding quite quickly. Again, although operative within the general context of commodification and market-driven, this also combines with smallholder practices to provide a combination of subsistence/livelihood inputs that afford families relatively high levels of control – to organise, for example, the particular mix of incomes received according to a range of factors that are self-determined (by individual preference and family changes).

Investment activities require external income sources, just like inputs into the commodification process to develop smallholdings in the market, or, for that matter, the mere maintenance (survival) of ‘inefficient’ family farming enterprises. For re-grounding, there are two main sources other than formal (bank) or informal (fellow villager) credit – namely pensions and wages/salaries. The relatively high proportion of elderly people living in villages and their increased coverage by state pension schemes nowadays means that this is a major contribution to the rural economy as a whole and certainly supports farming families – the contribution is typically pooled if they

live in a single household and otherwise informally shared according to need across households. Although clan-type and extended-family single-residence arrangements are no longer the norm, the more communal arrangements of large families remains usual – including multiple generation and adjoining homes. Pensions thus tend to go ‘into the pot’, with (ostensibly private) family arrangements operating as (relatively restricted) commons (see below). Obviously a more lucrative source of income, however, and preferred in almost half (46%) of the villages we surveyed, is paid employment.

Like borrowing, wage labour results in commodification and financialisation. It also leads to a dissolution of collective work, inter-work, loan work and solidarity via labour support, especially to the elderly: simply, one who sells their labour has less time for kinship/communal work. This is a de-commoning effected by the commodification of human relations at the level of agriculturally based social practice. Farmers cannot maintain their farms for any length of time simply through the addition of income from their paid employment, however, since their farms also demand their labour. Thus, families organise in ways that enable the maintenance of their smallholdings through the external financial inputs of some members and the on-farm labour of others. Official figures show rural employment outside of farming to have constantly increased, by over 50% since 2004, and now standing at nearly 40% of all paid labour in the countryside (TÜIK, 2013).

Although inputs into smallholder farms may come from local employment, in the nearest town perhaps, it more often comes in the form of remittances from work in a large city or metropolis, or abroad, and involves a rural-to-urban, or transnational,

change of residence. In terms of time period, this move may be a permanent one or else a temporary arrangement (e.g. seasonal, semi-annual), followed by return(s) to the village; so, rather than specify urban migration, we need to talk more generally about movements and mobility. Return to the village is also a function of overall economic activity: during a downturn, people in the city become unemployed and a proportion head back 'home'. Thus, while agricultural employment fell by nearly 15% in the period immediately prior the 2008 economic crisis, it then rose by a quarter. During periods of reduced employment, when capital – the market – fails, agriculture offers an alternative, a fall-back means of sustenance, an escape route for recent urban migrants in particular, who are typically marginalised in conditions of precarious labour.

Obviously, it is usually younger people who tend to engage in such wage labour, impelled not only by family needs and local economic capacity limitations, but also individual, life-course-associated desires to engage with the cosmopolitan, the wider world. Essentially, this is a function of modern mobility, enabled by local road and regional highway construction, in tandem with automobile ownership and a massive nationwide network of bus services, as well as, now, affordable, nationwide flights. Socially, it is organised around kinship, although it also involves lineage more broadly – especially clans (in Turkey, especially in the south-east, the Kurdish region) – and ties of place (villages, districts and beyond).

Kinship (and lineage/locality) may be regarded as an alternative mode of order. Although it is very much tied in with capital (e.g. in respect of inherited wealth) and tends to function for the social organisation of private property, it is also historically

pre-capitalist and stands outside the market, from a social relations perspective. In terms of social practices, kinship thus works as a common, on the basis of shared resources. Of course, we should not idealise kinship networks, since they operate, traditionally and to this day, in ways that privilege some, typically males and elders, over others, thus giving these groups greater access to the common wealth of the group. Indeed, insofar as kinship is bound to the private (as family wealth), we may also analyse it from an external perspective as structurally operative in ways defined by capital. Nevertheless, from an internal perspective (within families), kinship organises social practices on a communal basis. Its resources are fundamentally inaccessible to outsiders, but intrinsically open to those within, as commons. Kinship constitutes community in a way that, importantly, is not defined by capital, or, for that matter, the state, and thus persists autonomously.

Kinship is an important socioeconomic and cultural configuration. Practices of residence and resource mobilisation in Turkey are at least partly kinship-based or mediated, and especially in the rural contexts of agriculture. As Belge (2011) showed in reference to the Kurdish situation and the continuing contemporary efficacy of its clan structures, kinship networks may function as an important reservoir of resistance against a repressive and interventionist state – and from the perspective of the commons and social practice, the state is routinely repressive and interventionist, denying autonomy and the communal. The advance of capital may be considered to undermine and diminish kinship relations, as evidenced in the contraction of the primary family unit (from extended to nuclear). Essentially, this consists in the reduction of the overarching patrilineal

unit as a multiple household – a hierarchical structure strongly related to the pre-modern era of human development, generally organised around a male head, in which women are part of the extended family of their father, or an older brother, until their transfer upon marriage to the newly formed extended family of the husband (Kovanci, 2005).

This kinship-based societal system not only continues to form the bedrock of social relations in rural areas and heavily informs urban living patterns in Turkey, but also, as indicated, takes new forms of expression through resistance rooted in agriculture, the efforts of people and groups to maintain autonomy and their communal basis of human connectivity oriented to farming. Notably, in this context, the financial inputs from employment (engagement with capital) that enable the continuation of small-holdings are also skewed towards empowering, through wage employment, the young and also women (working especially in the growing service sector, such as in local supermarkets, banks, etc.). As another aspect of the multifaceted dialectic, capital thus has a liberating effect on the common.

Crucially, an extended family can develop an extended settlement pattern. Again, this is impelled by the operation of capital (as people are attracted to its centres) on the common (kinship structure) – or extended settlement patterns develop as a resistance of the common to the dominion of capital that informs new socioeconomic forms and practices. In addition to the weakening of traditional age and gender practices, this implies the development of communal living structures, which span rural and urban environments as out-migration causes families to spread from home village to towns and cities and maintain ties of solidarity to hold this social fabric together.

Composed of an indeterminate number of households, an extended family network commonly comprises a small number of households in the village and several in towns and cities – thus incorporating, one might argue, rather than being defined by, the paradigmatically capitalist, nuclear form. In addition to its constrictive (external) definition in terms of the private, this structuring has a tendency to function on the basis of shared resources, without these being pooled as such. We may understand them in terms of material commonalities, of accessible goods, finances and labour, rather than a simple commons. For example, male members of an extended family sometimes decide to cultivate the land to which they are entitled together and share the revenues, while household income generated from other work, like wage labour in the city or income from (other) entrepreneurial farming activities is not shared, or only partly (Jongerden, 2007: 28–9). Indeed, bonds of blood and locality have been reformulated rather than dissolved as a result of the entry of capital.

What has emerged in Turkey today, therefore, is an extended settlement pattern based on traditional, agrarian social relations of kinship and community that, linking the rural to the urban, serves to support village smallholders through diversified income-generating strategies. This we may refer to as a solidarity-network-based common. As a result of mobility and migration, this solidarity, or sharing, does not take place in a context of the village and agriculture, but in the context of mobilising resources across the rural–urban divide. From the village perspective, as a smallholder strategy of having household members working in the city, it is partly a response to decreasing incomes and insecurity in the countryside. Therefore, we can comprehend

smallholder families engaging with wage labour in the city as a strategy to gain or maintain autonomy through communal social practices, one that enables the small family farm to survive and yet also withstand the pressure to organise according to a purely capitalist logic. In other words, the solidarity-network-based common supports the dual-circuit economy of the contemporary peasant way. Thus are traditional commons maintained and new ones created, not only despite but also because of and in tandem with the development of capital.

For the several million people who have been pouring into Turkey's cities, we should also mention that access to housing in cities is mainly organised on the basis of relations of locality (*hemşehrilik*), in which those born in the same village or region help each other. Newly arrived urban migrants usually start out by living with family already based in the city and most typically in a part of the city where their home district *hemşeri* are located. Through these community-rooted relations, referring to place as well as family, housing and work are secured, as well as credit (gifts and loans to facilitate the establishment of a new life) (Karpas, 1976: 85; Kovanci, 2005). This constitutes a grouping together for urban networks of support that is even visible at the level of apartment blocks, in which members of the same lineage rent or buy flats on different floors of the same building, or even join together to build it.

The importance of these kinship- and locality-based solidarity networks – or communalism – has not diminished in Turkey over the last decade; on the contrary, it has increased, for two main reasons. First, compared to earlier migrants, recent arrivals have fewer housing opportunities due to de-commoning practices. Until the 1980s, migrants could occupy land relatively

easily, create their own housing and add value, but this changed during the 1990s, as the urban periphery morphed into the commuter belt, making land a scarce commodity that the state, municipalities and private construction and investment companies develop (the Turkish '*rantiye*', from 'rentier', is now in popular usage). Today's city newcomers generally cannot find land on which to build their own dwelling and instead become dependent on the private housing market. Second newcomers now have to accept the conditions of precarious employment. Previously, the urban poor worked for the state or local authority in official jobs with low salaries but job security. This has been radically undermined by the neoliberal downsizing of the state since the 1980s, with restricted employment in the public sector contributing to an excess supply of labour accompanied by a diminishment of the labour unions – all of which has depressed wages.

Obviously, this mostly affects the least powerful in the labour market, who are disproportionately urban migrants. Research on people who have migrated to twenty large cities in Turkey over the last two decades shows that slightly over a quarter (28%) are in casual or temporary employment and slightly under a quarter (22%) are 'self-employed', which tends to mean engagement in a low-level (insecure, low remuneration) enterprise or just street-hawking. Approximately half of these city migrants, therefore, are in marginal forms of employment. Some come from towns and other cities, but the majority, about two-thirds, are from villages. Their employment conditions do mean, therefore, that they are relatively free to move between city and village, as economic circumstances dictate, which offers at least a minimal level of autonomy. Further to this, white-collar work-

ers and even professionals are also observed to be engaged in village farming and dual-residence living patterns, suggesting that factors like independence and maintenance of close contact with the land may be actively valued and not just the result of economic necessity (Öztürk & Topaloğlu, 2013).

For the less fortunate, the increased difficulties of leaving their villages for the city means that, rather than sending remittances to their families in the village, it is they who need support to get established. This comes in both financial and other material forms (food, bedding) and through different avenues (e.g. produced at home, sent by bus). The net result is a complex picture of interaction, wherein solidarity network commoning operates in multiple expressions of a two-way movement of money and goods (Table 7.3).

Table 7.3. Migrant solidarity forms (*n* = 436)

Direction	Solidarity form	%
Rural-to-urban	Migrants produce own needs in village when visiting	35
	Basic necessities sent to migrants	28
	Financial aid sent to migrants	11
	Migrants borrow	7
Urban-to-rural	Financial aid sent to families	28
	Goods sent to families	20
	Aid sent for communal (village) needs (e.g. school)	8

Source: Öztürk (2012a).

Several other dynamics may be observed in the development of the new commons. Further compounding the blurring of urban and rural space, for example, is the incidence of urban agricultural practices. State figures show that a small but increasing proportion of agricultural labourers (now over three-quarters of a million people) live in towns and cities; also, as we have observed, there is a category of urban–rural farmers who either work their land from a town or city or who make land-use or sharecropping arrangements with villagers and return as necessary to manage the planting and harvesting. Another tendency is that of the village youth living with relatives in towns/cities where they go to school and of whole families similarly moving for education. Such arrangements are, of course, intrinsically temporary and subject to a variety of social patterning dynamics.

Also, in respect of capital movements, accrued wealth is not only sent in the form of rural remittances to support farming and ageing relatives and maintain family properties but also invested in village home rebuilding and extensions, particularly with retirement in mind. Further to the return of migrants, there is a significant flow of people to the countryside for the ‘good life’, both back to village homes and to new ones, especially in later life. In fact, people engage in a variety of rural-directed movements. These include retirement, with reverse (sometimes transnational), counter-urban (urban-to-rural) and even ‘trans-rural’ (rural-to-urban-to-rural) migration, along with dual-place residence, where people oscillate between city and village, typically escaping village winters (for the elderly) or city summers (going back to village roots for extended family holidays, perhaps, or just going home to help out on the farm). This seasonally based movement is a marked feature of rural

life in contemporary Turkey, with village populations doubling and trebling during the summer. In general, the phenomenon of village return is particularly productive of a rich variety of village residence-oriented dual- and multi-place (hybrid) living structures (Öztürk, Hilton & Jongerden, 2013).

Premised on mobility, these movement dynamics fudge the dichotomy of rural/urban; they involve the production of what may be dubbed the 'rurban', to borrow a term from the Turkish socialist Nusret Kemal Köymen (1940), whose novel conceptualisation of spatial settlement attempted to synthesise agriculture and industry. These spatial living structures and the social relations by which they are defined today are significantly determined by smallholder farming. Insofar as they are grounded in peasant ways and specified by communal ties of kinship and locality in a fundamentally a-statist and a-capitalist context, they invoke a social praxis that valorises commonalities. Thus, they may be deemed to fall under the original category of 'rurban' mobility as an agriculturally based social common – or an importantly 'ruraland' agriculturally oriented re-spatialisation that may be characterised as a novel, relatively autonomous communalism.

Conclusion

Despite the ancient history of property and its control, the massive encroachment of both state and market that we see in everyday life now is a relatively new phenomenon. Neither public nor private capital determined the centre from which order radiated across much of the world for most of its history. Social relations and the daily practices riding on them were rather organised around and through rural locality and family,

on the basis, that is, of kith and kinship. Related to this communal arrangement was a human or moral economy as opposed to a command or market economy. Now, however, family networks, the community and moral economy have been transformed worldwide in the drive for 'development', with neoliberal state policies and the commodification of agriculture and the rurality both causing and being facilitated by mass urban migration. Technological restructuring along with the financial advances of globalisation have produced sociopolitical expressions of capital that have profound implications for the commons – with de-commoning as an aim, indeed an instrumental necessity, rather than just tangentially operative.

Regarding the present state of social commons in the countryside, the snapshot presented in this chapter is a mixed one. The massive and ongoing outflow of population, market pressures on farmers, and partial collapse of traditional village life may all be cited in support of an arguably depressing thesis. Against that, however, the striking resilience of smallholder subsistence enterprises, with, on the one hand, both the maintenance of old and development of new autonomous practices and strategies and, on the other, the extension of family- and also community-based 'rurban' space and its material commonalities, all go to suggest an alternative reading. On the capitalist accumulation side, the commodification imperative operates as a function of the demand for profit, of course, but on the side of the common, ordinary human intent leads us to continually strive to determine our own social relations and maintain basic values even under the sometimes oppressive conditions of our lived environments. The balance of these contradictory vectors emerges as a synthesis, whereby even as commodification

appears to overcome the common and convert everything to a value for exchange, the common is enabled, both through the continuation of the 'natural' order based on communalism and autonomy and also as a constant rescuing of relations from the hegemony of capitalist logic.

Despite so many signs to the contrary, therefore, the analysis presented here suggests that the force of the common is not just a romantic nostalgia projected as a fanciful ideal for a future never to be realised. On the contrary, it represents a way in which the human spirit, as the drive for autonomy and need for community, emerges, like weeds ever-growing through the concrete of external, divisive, dehumanising controls, and thus in an unending dialectic with capital. Not only do families in Turkey manage to maintain rather than sell out and cash in on their land, but, as a result of the squeeze of the market and the underlying migratory pull of the urban sourced by capital through the terms of trade, their desire to farm has contributed to an extension of kinship and other communal ties across socio-geographical space in the production of new social forms.

Thus, the networks of support interconnecting cityscape and countryside observed here are, to a large extent, directly produced by the present neoliberal thrust. And even as they operate in the context of the village deteriorating from thriving community to shelter for the weak, aged and infirm unable or unwilling to compete in the urban labour market, so, equally, do they involve reverse movements of people and other material and immaterial resources from the city that help to sustain small-scale agriculture and rural life, including both the maintenance of non-commodified practices and human relations and the development of new ones. In the present development and

evolution of the social commons, therefore, previously disparate spheres of human activity now span and integrate the rural–urban divide to produce re-spatialisation as a contemporary, novel form of social re-commoning.

Notes

¹ This is a revised version of an article published in *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy* 3(3).

² Around a third of farming households produce their own fruit and vegetables, but this masks huge variations, dependent on local farming conditions, which in turn determine consumption levels; meat is traditionally regarded as a luxury in many areas and relatively little consumed.

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