

CAPITALIST FOOD REGIME AND THE AGRIFOOD PROBLEM:

A CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMIC AND POST-  
DEVELOPMENTALIST UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE  
AGRARIAN/PEASANT QUESTION

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **CAPITALIST FOOD REGIME AND THE AGRIFOOD PROBLEM: A CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMIC AND POST-DEVELOPMENTALIST UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE AGRARIAN/PEASANT QUESTION**

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The proliferation and differentiation processes in critical approaches on agrifood relations since the late 1980s can be seen as the rise of critical agrifood studies. When compared to the peasant studies of the era between the late 1960s and the late 1980s, critical agrifood studies signifies a radical theoretical reorientation in the field that especially becomes apparent in the post-developmental turn manifested in the contemporary agrarian/peasant question formulations. On this ground, by focusing on the last three decades, this study argues that the contemporary literature on the agrarian/peasant question is characterized by a divide between political economic and post-developmental understandings, which can also be seen as an impasse. This study, through a critical analysis of the implications of the neoliberal restructuring of agrifood relations for the agrarian/peasant question in social theoretical terms, claims that reformulating food regime as capitalist food regime on the basis of Marxism understood as a critical theory of society, and the agrarian/peasant question as the agrifood question of capitalism can provide a way out of this impasse by bringing the strengths of both political economic and post-developmental frameworks together.

**Keywords:** Critical Agrifood Studies, Peasant Studies, Post-Developmentalism, Agrarian/Peasant Question, Capitalist Food Regime

## ÖZ

### KAPİTALİST GIDA REJİMİ VE TARIM-GIDA SORUNU: TARIM/KÖYLÜ SORUNUNDA EKONOMİ POLİTİK VE POST-KALKINMACI YAKLAŞIMLARIN BİR ELEŞTİRİSİ

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Tarım-gıda ilişkilerine yönelik analizlerde 1980'lerin sonlarından bugüne uzanan zaman diliminde gözlenen çeşitlenme ve farklılaşma süreçleri, eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarının yükselişi olarak görülebilir. 1960'ların sonlarından 1980'lerin sonlarına kadar eleştirel çevrelere hâkim olan köylülük çalışmaları ile kıyaslandığında, eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarının yükselişi ilgili literatürde önemli bir kuramsal yeniden yapılanma anlamına gelmiştir. Bu kuramsal yeniden şekillenme süreci, kendisini özellikle tarım/köylü sorunu kavramsallaştırmalarında gözlenen post-kalkınmacı dönüşte göstermektedir. Bu zeminde, bu tez, güncel tarım/köylü sorunu tartışmalarının, aynı zamanda bir açmaz olarak da görülebilecek olan, ekonomi-politik ve post-kalkınmacı yaklaşımlar arasındaki bir yarılma ile şekillendiğini iddia etmektedir. Bahsi geçen yarılmanın sosyal kuram bağlamında eleştirel bir incelemesi olan bu tez, eleştirel bir toplum kuramı olarak Marksizm temelinde, gıda rejimi kavramının kapitalist gıda rejimi olarak ve tarım/köylü sorununun kapitalizmin tarım/gıda sorunu olarak yeniden kavramsallaştırılması aracılığıyla, tartışmanın her iki



kutbunun güçlü yanlarının bir araya getirebileceğini ve bu yolla bu açmazdan çıkılabileceğini savunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Eleştirel Tarım-Gıda Çalışmaları, Köylülük Çalışmaları, Post-Kalkınmacılık, Tarım/Köylü Sorunu, Kapitalist Gıda Rejimi

To those who are struggling for a better world...

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CAFS	Critical Agrifood Studies
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GHGs	Greenhouse Gases
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISA	International Sociological Association
JAC	Journal of Agrarian Change
JPS	Journal of Peasant Studies
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCP	Petty Commodity Production
RNN	Rural Research Network
RSS	Rural Sociological Society
SAF	Sociology of Agriculture and Food
SAES	State Agricultural Experiment Stations
TNCs	Transnational Corporations
UN	United Nations
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This is a conceptual study focusing on the contemporary form of the agrarian/peasant question of capitalism, and it analyzes the related approaches and debates with respect to their relation to the broader scope of social theory. Throughout the study, the concept of agrarian/peasant question is used to refer to the theoretical as well as social, ecological, political, cultural and economic specificities of capitalist agrifood relations within the general course of capitalist development. It should be noted that mainstream schools of social sciences in general, and sociology in particular have been shaped by attempts to understand the urban-industrial world and its social characteristics predominantly in a way that has consigned agriculture and food relations to the margins of social theory as well as social thought. In this regard, a conceptual study on agriculture and food relations might appear rather far-fetched and implausible at first sight. However, as I will try to show throughout the following chapters, social theory matters in the analysis of agrifood relations, and the analyses of agrifood relations have significant implications for social theory as well.

In this introductory chapter, I will elaborate on the significance of social theory in the analysis of agrifood relations through the following subsections: the social and the historical context, of which this doctoral thesis is also a product, that is characterized by the neoliberal restructuring of agrifood relations; the rise of critical agrifood studies, which constitutes the broader scope and the related literature of the study; the main problematic of the study, that is to say the post-developmental turn in the agrarian/peasant question formulations; and the related theoretical foundation and arguments of the study with respect to this problematic.

### **1.1. The Social and the Historical Context: Neoliberal Restructuring of Agrifood Relations**

The last three decades have been characterized by significant changes in capitalist agrifood relations. One of the most important changes has been the globalization process of agrifood relations in neoliberal terms (cf., McMichael, 2013). International commodity and money markets have been re-regulated in a way that created an enormous space and new opportunities for capital to penetrate agrifood relations, especially in the global South and the former Soviet Union countries. In addition to transnational corporations (TNCs) and international organizations like World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), the capital and the nation-states of the South have also played active roles in the neoliberal globalization of agrifood relations.

In line with the changing balance of power between capital and labor in general, the relationship patterns between the nation-state and small producers in the South have also been reorganized in favor of agrifood capital mainly through processes like privatization, de-functionalization of producer organizations and agricultural unions, and restructuring of agrifood policies and subsidy mechanisms. Through these neoliberal restructuring processes, we have also witnessed the emergence of a new international division of labor, in which the global South has shifted its crop design towards labor intensive and high value products like fresh fruit and vegetables on the basis of cheap labor as well as cheap nature.

Moreover, there have been significant changes in the technologies of agricultural and food production, which have also accelerated the increasing hegemony of agrifood corporations over the upstream (e.g., provision of machinery and other inputs) and downstream (e.g., processing, packaging, circulation, marketing and consumption processes) relations of agrifood production. In this regard, developments in transportation and storage technologies, substitution of organic components with chemicals and synthetic products, biotechnology, genetics, and the recent advances in terms of digitalization of agricultural and food production have played significant

roles. Here, one of the central features of those technological and ‘scientific’ developments has been the privatization processes in agricultural research and agrifood knowledge production, which are particularly manifested in the commodification of seeds and genetic materials in the form of intellectual property rights.

Those developments in the upstream relations of agricultural production have been paralleled in the downstream relations through the extension and intensification of commodification processes in the sphere of food that are dominated, led and controlled by transnational agrifood corporations. The increasing hegemony of agrifood corporations has also been backed by national and international food policies favoring commodification, which are manifested in food standards and food quality regulations as well as in mainstream liberal understandings of food security. Furthermore, the development of super-markets as significant actors in the agrifood system should also be noted in relation to the increasing hegemony of agrifood corporations over the downstream relations of the agrifood system. In close connection to this point, during this period there have been significant shifts in food culture in general, and in diets in particular, in line with capital accumulation processes, which have, in turn, accelerated the commodification processes of food at an unprecedented rate in the human history.

Within this context, agricultural producers, majority of whom are small-scale peasants dwelling mostly in the global South, have been forced either to leave their lands to join to “the planet of slums”, or to work and live in rural areas under devalorized conditions (Davis, 2007; cf., Araghi, 2000; Ecevit, 2006, 2009). It is estimated that “there are about 1.5 billion smallholders, family farmers and indigenous people on 350 million small farms, while 410 million practice gathering in forests and savannas; 190 million are pastoralists and well over 100 million are artisanal fisherfolk” (Rosset and Altieri, 2017: 69). Though there are controversies on the validity of these numbers, estimates say that “70–80 percent of the world’s food is still produced by small-scale food producers in plots averaging 2 hectares in size” (Rosset and Altieri, 2017: 69; ETC, 2017; cf., Bernstein, 2014, 2016). At this point, it should also be noted that while “farms smaller than one hectare account for 72 percent of all farms”, they “control

only 8 percent of agricultural land” (Rosset and Altieri, 2017: 69). To put it differently, contemporary agrifood system is characterized by the conflict between, on the one hand, billions of agricultural producers and consumers who are struggling with hunger and poverty, diet-related health problems and the consequences of environmental degradation; and, on the other hand, agrifood corporations that are monopolistically controlling agricultural and food production, and hence can be counted, at most, in hundreds (cf., Akram-Lodhi, 2013; Magdoff et. al, 2000; Weis, 2007).

In relation to this point, it should be immediately added that the commodification and capitalization processes in agrifood relations have not gone uncontested. During this time, we have witnessed the emergence and strengthening of agrarian movements in the rural areas mainly of the Global South, and food movements in the urban areas mainly of the Global North. In this regard, the following oppositions to capitalist agrifood relations and the related social movements, the list of which can easily be extended, might be helpful to understand the extent of the conflicts and the struggles over the capitalist agrifood system: food sovereignty movement against, *inter alia*, the liberal understandings of food security; the agroecological perspectives and practices against the industrial agricultural complex and its reductionist ‘scientific’ agrifood knowledge; the defense of peasant agriculture against corporate agriculture; the slow food movement against the fast-food culture; the defense of “food from somewhere” as opposed to “food from nowhere” (cf., Borras *et. al*, 2008; McMichael, 2013). New concepts and demands have also emerged out of these oppositions and movements such as: agrarian citizenship, food democracy, right to food, food citizenship, food justice, fair trade, agroecology, seed sovereignty, food sovereignty, and critiques of ecological footprint as well as ecological hoofprint of capitalist agrifood relations (cf., Borras *et. al*, 2008; Koç *et. al*, 2012; Weis, 2013).

## **1.2. Scope and the Related Literature of the Study: The Rise of Critical Agrifood Studies**

It is within the socio-historical context mentioned in relation to agrifood relations above that the related critical literature went through various kinds of differentiations,

proliferations, shifts and ruptures especially since the late 1980s (please see Table 2.1. in the second chapter for the differentiations in agrifood knowledge since the late 1980s). For instance, with respect to the analysis of the changing social and historical context of agrifood relations, while the already existing approaches like agrarian political economy have been reconsidered and extended with approaches like commodity- and value-chain analysis, and political economy of food; new approaches have also emerged that are widely debated among critical circles like: food regime analysis, subsistence perspective, eco-feminism, agroecological perspectives, reinvigoration of Chayanovian understandings, and actor-network theory based approaches.

One of the central claims of this study is that those differentiation and proliferation processes in agrifood knowledge can also be seen as the rise of critical agrifood studies. By critical agrifood studies (hereafter, CAFS), I refer mainly to theoretical and analytical perspectives, like those mentioned above, that analyze agricultural and food relations in relation to each other in a systematic way with a critical focus on their capitalist character and problems (please see Table 2.2. in the second chapter, for the scope, characteristics and theoretical orientations of CAFS). It is important to note that there are significant differentiations in theoretical as well as analytical terms among the constituents of CAFS. Still, I argue that there are at least three cross-cutting characteristic features that make it possible to assemble different perspectives under the same roof.

The first characteristic of CAFS is the call for a systematic and comprehensive analysis of agrifood relations. It should be noted that as agrifood relations become globalized in neoliberal terms and as our relation to food is characterized by a growing distance both in physical and mental terms, our knowledge about food also spread among various disciplines and issue/project based discussions. In this regard, the students of CAFS have put a great effort to counter the tendencies of specialization and compartmentalization characteristic of mainstream liberal approaches that limit our understanding of the agrifood system and the inter-related and systemic character of its problems.

The second characteristic feature common to different approaches constituting CAFS is the claim that no matter how contemporary agrifood system is conceptualized it is unsustainable. Through systematic and comprehensive analysis of capitalist agrifood relations, the students of CAFS have brought the question of sustainability as well as desirability of the industrial agricultural complex both in social and environmental terms. To put it differently, the underlying tendency that characterizes the theoretical as well as the political content of different perspectives has been the radical critique, if not the outright rejection, of the capitalist agrifood system.

In parallel to these two characteristics, the third common feature of CAFS is the endeavor to situate the debate over the problems and contradictions of capitalist agrifood relations within the context of capitalist modernity writ large. In this regard, the students of CAFS have formulated sharp criticisms towards mainstream liberal understandings that reduce agrifood related problems to technical and technological inadequacies and/or to market distortions arising from ‘non-economic’ interventions. To put it differently, one of the central features of CAFS has been the radical critique of the theoretical fallacies of mainstream approaches that are manifested particularly in the uncritical technicalization of agricultural production mainly through reductionist conceptions of productivity and efficiency on the one hand, and on the other hand, in the uncritical nutrification of food, which reduces food to calorie intake, and thereby renders its social, environmental, cultural and political aspects invisible.

Based on these three characteristic features, I argue that the rise of critical agrifood studies signifies a radical intervention to the marginal position of agrifood relations in social theoretical terms that is mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The marginalization of agrifood relations in social theoretical terms has its roots mainly in the schematic readings of the processes of transition to capitalism, which rest on a particular conception of capitalist social relations in which agricultural and rural settings can appear only as the “pre-history” of urban-industrial relations (Smith, 2011; cf. McMichael, 2008; Newby, 1980). It is possible to argue that the theoretical foundation of classical sociology – as well mainstream rural sociology that emerged as a reaction to it – is based on essentialism that is manifested in the conception of



distinctions like rural-urban, agriculture-industry, nature-culture, non-human-human, body-mind and the like as given and mutually exclusive dichotomies.

On this ground, while orthodox-modernity based approaches of classical sociology conceived urban/industrial relations as superior to rural/agricultural ones, and hence as the markers of 'progress'; the students of mainstream rural sociology set to work to reveal and show, uncritically, immanent qualities and superiority of rural life without questioning the essentialist ground on which these dichotomies were formulated in the first place. In this regard, I argue that the students of CAFS put an end to the marginalization of agrifood relations in social theoretical terms by situating the analysis of agrifood relations within the context of capitalist modernity through the three characteristic features mentioned briefly above.

Moreover, this study argues that the rise of critical agrifood studies signifies a radical theoretical reorientation of the literature not only with respect to mainstream sociological approaches and rural sociology, but also when compared to peasant studies, which dominated the critical circles between the late-1960s to the late-1980s, and the Marxist agrarian political economy therein. In that sense, while the task of contextualizing agrifood relations in relation to capitalist modernity and the related social theoretical debates constitutes the broader scope of this study, the theoretical evaluation of the shift from peasant studies to critical agrifood studies constitutes its related literature. This point is elaborated below in relation to the problematic and the theoretical foundation of the study.

### **1.3. Problematic, Theoretical Framework and Main Arguments of the Study: The Post-Developmentalist Turn in the Agrarian/Peasant Question Debate**

It should be noted that critical agrifood studies emerged in a context that is characterized by the retreat of Marxism both as a theoretical framework and as a political movement. There is a kind of consensus among both Marxist and non-Marxist circles that the 1980s and the 1990s signify a period of crisis for Marxism, from which, according to them, it could not recover. There are various reasons underlined by

various scholars for this crisis like the fall of socialist regimes, the rise of neoliberalism and the following adaptation of socialist and social democratic parties to it, and the rise of the so-called “East Asian tigers” that brought the concept of underdevelopment, among others, into question (cf., Bonefeld, et. al, 1992; Booth, 1994; Buttel, 2001).

To understand the extent of the criticisms of Marxism during the period in which CAFS emerged, it is also important to remember the claims of a transition to a qualitatively different era and society that dominated the course of social theory and the analysis of capitalist social relations during the 1980s and the 1990s. In this regard, the following list of concepts proposed to identify this so-called new era and society might be helpful: post-modern society, media society, consumer society, post-industrial society, information society, network society, global society, and the like. What is at stake in these claims on a transition to a qualitatively different form of society, for Marxism in particular, has been the argument that the concept of class is no more relevant in theoretical and analytical as well as in political terms.

Moreover, the criticisms directed towards Marxism have not been limited to its analysis of historical and social change on the basis of class relations. It should be noted that those debates on the ‘new’ historical and social context were being conducted within the intellectual context that is characterized by the *post-* turn in social theory, which is manifested in approaches like post-modernity, post-structuralism, post-Marxism, post-Feminism, post-coloniality, post-developmentalism, and so on. Arguably, the most influential critiques that led to the retreat of Marxism to a defensive position in theoretical terms came from those *post-* approaches, which re-located Marxism as nothing but a sophisticated version of modernist schools of thought, and which, thereby, according to these criticisms, reproduces modernist theoretical fallacies and inadequacies like universalism, essentialism, rationalism, determinism, reductionism, structuralism, teleology, and so on. It is within this historical as well as intellectual context, in which Marxism seemed to be unfashionable and outdated, that the critical agrifood studies have emerged.

I argue that backed by the *post-* turn in social theory in general, and post-developmentalism in particular, the students of CAFS have carried their criticisms of mainstream liberal understandings also to the critical approaches, i.e., mainly to the agrarian political economy that is dominated by certain forms of Marxism. It is in this sense that, I argue, there has been a shift in the agrarian/peasant question formulations from political economic understandings to post-developmental approaches that especially became apparent with the turn of the twenty-first century onwards. To put it differently, the theoretical reorientation in the critical literature on agriculture and food has been centered, to a great degree, on the reconsideration of the concept of development. That is so because, the concept of development, arguably, has provided the mediating link between conceptions of agrifood relations and the problematization of capitalist social relations writ large as well as the reorientation of social theory on the basis of the divide between modernity and postmodernity. Within this framework, I argue that the contemporary critical literature on the agrarian/peasant question is characterized by a divide between political economic understandings on the one hand, and post-developmental approaches on the other. And the theoretical analysis of this divide constitutes the central problematic of this study.

I argue that the students of CAFS have shifted the debate on agrarian/peasant question from the field of political economy to politics of knowledge on the theoretical ground provided mainly by post-developmentalism (please see Table 2.3. in the second chapter for the main features of post-developmentalism in relation to development studies and social theory). In line with the characteristic features of post-developmentalism in general that are going to be discussed in the third chapter in details, I argue that there are three distinctive features of the post-developmental formulations of the agrarian peasant question: (1) in opposition to the political economic conceptions that are, arguably, best represented by the petty commodity production debate, reformulation of the agrarian/peasant question first and foremost as a question of politics of knowledge, i.e. as a question of the relationship between power and knowledge; (2) based on this shift in focus, a radical critique of agrarian political economy as well as mainstream approaches with the accusation of complicity in the

abstraction and obliteration processes of differences, other subjectivities and practices in the sphere of agriculture and food that is performed by capitalist modernity; (3) based on these two features, a call for revaluing “peasant agriculture” as opposed to “corporate agriculture” and/or “industrial model of agriculture” through a reformulation of peasantry as a political subject against the capitalist agrifood system.

These three characteristic features of the post-developmental reformulations of the agrarian/peasant question can be observed in the differentiations and shifts with respect to the following areas in comparison to the political economic conceptions: historical and intellectual context, major theoretical assumptions, prevailing methodological strategies, prominent problematics and main political propositions (please see Table 4.1. in chapter four, for those differentiations). This divide between political economic and post-developmental understandings of the agrarian/peasant question manifested in the areas mentioned above, I argue, can also be seen as the impasse of the agrarian/peasant question literature, in which both sides of the divide, despite their significant contributions, limit our understanding of capitalist agrifood system and our imagination of its beyond.

One of the central arguments of this study is the following: while political economic conceptions of the agrarian/peasant question limit our understanding of agrifood system and our imagination of its beyond by seemingly bringing its capitalist features to the fore, post-developmental formulations limit our understanding and imagination by devaluing the centrality of capitalist social relations in the trajectories of agrifood relations mainly through conceptualizing the contradictions and the problems of the capitalist agrifood system at the level of politics of knowledge and thereby as contradictions and problems of epistemology. With respect to this impasse of the agrarian/peasant question literature, I argue that reformulation of Marxism as a critical theory of society – as opposed to Marxisms that reduce Marx’s work to the standpoint of political economy – and reconceptualization of the contemporary form of the agrarian/peasant question as the agrifood question of capitalism that is understood as a food regime itself can provide us a way beyond the divide between political economic and post-developmental frameworks.

In this regard, the theoretical framework of this study can be formulated as contemporary Marxism, which mainly signifies a theoretical position that takes the critiques of *post-* approaches in relation to the theoretical fallacies of modernity seriously, while as opposed to them, that conceives those theoretical problems on the basis of the capitalist social relations of (re)production themselves, rather than a supposedly Western rationality and/or Euro-Atlantic episteme. To put it differently, contemporary Marxism here implies a position that conceives the divide between modernity and postmodernity characterizing the contemporary social theory, not as a matter of either/or, but as parts of the same theoretical ground despite their radically different characters (please see Table 3.1. in the third chapter for the characteristics of contemporary Marxism with respect to the modernity-postmodernity divide). The possibility of such a reading of Marxism lies, *inter alia*, in the conception of Marx's so-called "early" studies on alienation and alienated labor, and his "late" studies on commodity fetishism, value-form and capital as a totality, as it is discussed in detail in the third chapter (cf. Clarke, 1992; Bonefeld, 2014). Within this framework, this study is a tentative attempt to conceptualize capitalism itself as a food regime – through dissociating the concept of food regime from its current formulations, in which it is used predominantly as a concept of and a tool for periodization – and to reformulate the agrarian/peasant question as the agrifood question of capital on this ground.

I argue that one of the main contributions of this reformulation of the concept of food regime as capitalist food regime, and the agrarian/peasant question as the agrifood question of capital within the framework of Marxism as a critical theory of society, lies in its attempt to reformulate the theoretical as well as the political content of the agrarian/peasant question on the basis of class formation through class struggle, that is to say *class in struggle*. Here, one of the central points is that class, as it is understood in this study, is a concept of contradiction rather than a simple tool for classification on the basis of property relations. On this ground, this study argues that peasants, in our era, have indeed emerged as a political subject in and against the capitalist food regime and its neoliberal form. At the center of this emergence of peasantry as a political subject, I argue, lie the processes of direct penetration of capital to agrifood

relations, which should be seen as part of the attempts to reduce other subjectivities and doings to value and surplus value production that is nothing but the defining feature of capitalist social relations.

To put it differently, on the one hand, contrary to the post-developmental approaches, this study argues that the political character and subjectivity of peasants cannot be based on their supposedly already existing cultural and/or ethical traits that are assumed to be arising from some unique internal qualities with respect to the power-knowledge nexus that externally surrounds them. Class still matters and the political character of peasantry should be analyzed in class terms. On the other hand, contrary to the political economic approaches, this study argues that the differentiation process of peasants on the basis of petty commodity production relations is not simply a process of the elimination of peasantry, which renders the concept of peasant anachronistic in analytical and social terms, but rather it is the process of their class formation. In other words, peasants neither constitute an eternal class on the basis of some unique and/or distinguishing qualities of which they are assumed to be the historical carriers, nor are they predestined to disappear as a social category that can never become a class in the supposedly never ending process of differentiation. Since class formation processes of peasants cannot be assumed on an a priori ground, and since it requires a detailed concrete analysis based on the new insights that this reformulation attempt brings forward, this study, I argue, has the potential to open up new discussions and new research questions through bringing the strengths of both post-developmental and political economic understandings.

#### **1.4. Organization of the Study**

This study is organized in five chapters that elaborate on and develop further the points and the arguments that are mentioned above briefly. Following this introductory chapter, in the second chapter, I will elaborate mainly on the scope and the related literature of the study, and briefly expose its main problematic. With respect to the scope of the study, I will discuss the significance of social theory in the analysis of agrifood relations mainly in relation to its marginalization by mainstream sociological

as well as rural sociological approaches. There, I will argue that despite the difficulties in thinking agrifood relations in social theoretical terms and in their totality in a systematic way, there is the need to situate the analysis of agrifood relations within the broader literature on the trajectories and contemporary characteristics of capitalism, which cannot be done without taking into account the divide between modernity and postmodernity that characterizes the contemporary social theory.

Second chapter will also provide a reading of the related literature particularly in relation to this point. In this regard, I will analyze differentiations, shifts and transitions that have been characterizing the critical literature since the late 1980s at three inter-related levels: from rural sociology to sociology of agriculture and food at the disciplinary level; from peasant studies to critical agrifood studies with respect to the interrogations of the capitalist character of agrifood relations; and from political economic understandings to post-developmental conceptualizations of peasantry in relation to the agrarian/peasant question.

The task of the third chapter is the evaluation of post-developmentalism in general. As mentioned above, the rise of critical agrifood studies has been, in a sense, centered on the reconsideration of the concept of development, which, arguably, manifests itself in the post-developmental turn in the agrarian/peasant question debate. In this regard, a critical evaluation of contemporary debates on the concept of development especially in relation to the post-developmental critique becomes a necessary task for this study. In accordance with the central problematic of this study, a critical review of the distinguishing features of post-developmentalism will also be provided on the basis of the divide between political-economic and post-developmental conceptions of development that arguably dominates the critical circles. With respect to this divide, there I will argue that bringing Marxism back into the development debate as a critical theory of society rather than a critical form of political economy, and reconceptualization of development as capitalist development within this framework can provide us a way that goes beyond the limitations of both political economic and post-developmental understandings of development.

The fourth chapter will analyze the related debates on the contemporary form of the agrarian/peasant question based on the theoretical framework formulated in the third chapter on the basis of Marxism as a critical theory of society. The central question that the fourth chapter deals with is the following: What is the agrarian/peasant question of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, or is there any? I will try to provide an answer to this question through an analysis of the theoretical implications and consequences of the neoliberal restructuring of agrifood relations for the agrarian/peasant question conceptualization, which can be found in the divide between political-economic and post-developmental conceptions that characterizes the related contemporary literature. After providing a review of this divide, in that chapter, I will argue that reformulating capitalism itself as a food regime with its two defining features – (1) primitive accumulation, understood not only as a historical process in the social constitution of capitalism, but also as the mode of existence of capital as a social relation, and as the principle mechanism and strategy in its reproduction; (2) the dissociation of rurality, agriculture and food both in historical and analytical terms – can provide us a way out of the impasse of the agrarian/peasant question debate.

Finally, in the fifth chapter, I will provide a summary of the arguments formulated throughout the previous chapters, with a particular focus on the limitations of this study as well as its possible contributions for the future studies.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE POST-DEVELOPMENTALIST TURN IN THE AGRARIAN/PEASANT QUESTION: THE RISE AND CONTOURS OF CRITICAL AGRIFOOD STUDIES

#### 2.1. Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to highlight and portray the main concerns and issues of this study, which focuses on the contemporary form of *agrarian/peasant question*. To that end, *the scope, the literature, and the problematic* of the study are discussed respectively in the following sections. In the broadest sense possible, the agrarian/peasant question is understood, throughout the study, as the *theoretical* as well as the political, economic, social, cultural and ecological implications of the *specificities* of the *capitalist agrifood system* within the general course of capitalist development and with respect to the related theoretical debates. The term *specificity* here implies predominantly *non-commodity* forms and relations that have been central to the widespread form of agricultural producers, which have been conceived through various concepts like “smallholder”, “small producer”, “peasant”, “family farmer”, “peasant household”, and “petty commodity producer” (Bernstein, 2010: 12; Ecevit, 1999). In other words, this study is mainly conceptual, which explores the theoretical tendencies within the literature on the neoliberal restructuring of agrifood relations, particularly in relation to the agrarian/peasant question formulations.

Within this framework, the claim of this study is that the last three decades can be seen as the rise of *critical agrifood studies*.<sup>1</sup> This rise signifies a theoretical reorientation of

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<sup>1</sup> The term – *critical agrifood studies* – is inspired by the title of the book, *Critical Perspectives in Food Studies*, edited by Mustafa Koç and his colleagues (2012), and also by Carolan’s (2012) discussions in his book titled *The Sociology of Agriculture and Food*. I use this term to refer to the studies that analyze

the literature not only in relation to the traditional field of *rural sociology* but also in relation to the *peasant studies* and *petty commodity production* debate of the period between late 1960s and mid-1980s. It is important to note that this was also the period in which the classical Marxist agrarian/peasant question was reformulated, arguably, within the frame of ‘underdevelopment’. I argue that the scholarly reorientation in the related literature and the contemporary theoretical tendencies with respect to the neoliberal restructuring of agrifood relations have been realized in the form of a transition that can be observed at least at three levels: (1) from *rural sociology* to *sociology of agriculture and food* at the subdisciplinary level; (2) from *peasant studies* to *critical agrifood studies* in relation to problematizations of the capitalist character of the agrifood system; and (3) from *petty commodity production* formulations to post-developmental *peasantry* conceptualizations in relation to the agrarian/peasant question debate.

It should be mentioned that this theoretical reorientation may not be apparent in the literature at first sight, but has had significant theoretical implications. The related literature is dominated mainly by product (commodity) based empirical studies, rather than theoretical discussions on agrifood relations. In other words, although there is a proliferating debate starting with the second half of the 2000s on the agrarian/peasant question of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is not easy to say that theoretical implications of the neoliberal restructuring of agrifood relations in relation to agrarian/peasant question are adequately questioned. In this regard, the arguments formulated throughout this study are rather an attempt to make the implicit theoretical tendencies of the related literature more explicit. With this aim this chapter is organized in three sections that follow this introduction.

In addition to the tacit character of the theoretical tendencies in the literature, there are other difficulties that a conceptual study on agrifood relations with respect to social theory confronts. These difficulties, as I will try to show in the second section, arise

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agricultural and food relations in relation to each other in a systematic way with a critical focus on their capitalist character and problems.

mainly from the contemporary characteristics of the capitalist agrifood system, and also from the theoretical fallacies of the mainstream approaches that dominate both the development of sociology in general and rural sociology in particular. Hence, the first task of a theoretical study on agrifood relations would be defending this theoretical need itself. To put it differently, the question of *why and how theory matters in agrifood relations* must be answered at the first step. Having this need in mind, the second section will focus on this question through a discussion on the difficulties in thinking agrifood relations in theoretical terms, and the concomitant need for a theoretical evaluation of the contemporary tendencies and trends in this field. This discussion will provide the broader scope of this study, which, to put it in a nutshell, is the relation of the rise of critical agrifood studies to social theory.

The third section will review the literature that has been characterized by various theoretical differentiations and shifts since the late 1980s. As mentioned above, I argue that these differentiations and shifts can be formulated as a transition from *rural sociology* to *sociology of agriculture and food* at the subdisciplinary level, and as a transition from *peasant studies* to *critical agrifood studies* in terms of interrogations on the social character of the capitalist agrifood system. These transitions, as I will try to show throughout the study, can be observed with respect to *the historical and intellectual context* that gave rise to critical agrifood studies, major *theoretical assumptions* implicit in the discussions, prevailing *methodological strategies*, main *issues* problematized, and the predominant *political propositions* formulated in relation to alternatives to capitalist agrifood system. Keeping these differentiations in mind, which will be discussed in the fourth chapter in detail, third section of this chapter will provide a review of the reorientation in the related literature particularly in relation to its implications for the agrarian/peasant question formulations.

Based on this review of the literature, the fourth section aims to explore the central problematic of this doctoral dissertation. The theoretical reorientation mentioned above, I argue, has been realized in the form of a *post-developmental turn*, particularly in relation to the agrarian/peasant question debate. Despite the significant differentiations among various perspectives in the critical literature, I argue, the

underlying common ground has been provided by the post-developmental approaches that were influential in the development studies during the 1990s. It is this post-developmental ground that makes it possible to see the rise of critical agrifood studies as a theoretical rupture from the peasant studies of the pre-1980 period. To put it differently, the rise of the critical agrifood studies reflects a theoretical break with Marxist understandings of the agrarian political economy and petty commodity production conceptualizations that dominated the broader field of peasant studies and the agrarian/peasant question debate therein. In this regard, I argue, the post-developmental turn characterizing critical agrifood studies has resulted in a cleavage in the contemporary literature on the agrarian/peasant question between post-developmental approaches and political economy based frameworks. The central problematic of this study, therefore, is the analysis of this cleavage itself by focusing on the following question: *What is the agrarian/peasant question of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, or is there any?*

After discussing the scope of this study, reviewing the related literature within this scope, and exploring the central problematic of the study based on this literature review, finally, in the concluding section I will provide a summary of the arguments formulated in this chapter and how the rest of the study is organized based on them.

## **2.2. Scope of the Study: Why Does Theory Matter in the Analysis of Agrifood Relations?**

At first glance, it seems rather far-fetched to talk about agriculture and food in terms of social theory.<sup>2</sup> Theory is understood here as the analysis of social relations that constitute the capitalist agrifood system in their totality on the basis of tendencies and

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, I have had difficulties in explaining the broader scope of my research topic – that is the relation of critical agrifood studies to social theory – in different occasions with a variety of people. The question underlying the bewildered looks that I have faced with has usually been “*How sociology could be related with food and agriculture?*” This point, in addition to the factors that I discuss below, is also a reflection of the fact that the literature on Turkey has mostly been unsuccessful in following the developments in the related debates on agrifood relations.

contradictions, which have given the capitalist agrifood system its coherence.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, the ‘non-theoretical’ or ‘atheoretical’ appearance of agrifood relations<sup>4</sup>, I argue, is a reflection of contemporary characteristics of the capitalist agrifood system, and also has its roots in the problematic development of sociology and social theory in general, which has marginalized agrifood relations in social theoretical terms. In addition to these two, one might argue that the *post-* turn (post-structuralism, post-modernity, post-Marxism, post-Feminism, post-coloniality, etc.) in social theory has also meant a significant shift in understandings of theory, which has been particularly influential in undermining the concept of *totality*, and systematic analysis.

In this subsection, first, I will try to elaborate on the difficulty of thinking agrifood relations in theoretical terms in relation to these points just mentioned. Then, I will argue that despite these difficulties, a theoretical discussion on agrifood relations is important, *inter alia*, in relation to three intermingled tasks: (1) situating agrifood relations within the trajectory of capitalism and the related debates in the literature on capitalist development, (2) relating the contemporary debates on agrifood relations with the modernity-postmodernity divide that characterizes the contemporary social theory, (3) the theoretical gap between critical agrifood studies and the peasant studies of the pre-1980 era, which is reflected in the poor dialogue between these two bodies

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<sup>3</sup> Such an understanding of theory on the basis of concepts like *totality*, *tendency* and *contradiction* is a reflection of my position within the broader scope of social theory. Since the 1980s, the prevailing conception of history and contemporary characteristics of social theory has been based on *modernity-postmodernity* divide. Based on this divide, Ecevit (2016) highlights four major theoretical moments – not necessarily in chronological order – in the course of the development of social theory: *orthodox modernity* (understandings based on uncritical use of assumptions like rationality, essentialism, universalism, reductionism, determinism, etc.), *contemporary modernity* (criticisms of the modernist assumptions while remaining within the domain of modernity – predominantly Marxism and Feminism), *postmodernity* (radical rejection of the modernist assumptions), and *relational sociology* (an attempt to transcend the modernity-postmodernity divide through a reformulation of subjectivity). Following Ecevit’s reading of social theory, my position in this study can be formulated as *contemporary critical modernity*, which, in a nutshell, implies the possibility of a position that neither rejects nor uncritically accepts the modernist assumptions *in toto*. The possibility of such a position, I argue, lies in the contemporary reformulations of Marxism as a *critical theory of society* as opposed to the understandings that reduce Marxism to a form of political-economy. I elaborate on this point in the third chapter, which comes to grips with the underlying theoretical framework of critical agrifood studies.

<sup>4</sup> I use “non-theoretical appearance” here to refer to popular as well as scholarly approaches that reduce agriculture to productivity and food to nutrition through abstracting the social and political content of agrifood relations. I return to this point in the next subsection.

of critical literature, and in the theoretical reorientation implicit in the contemporary formulations in relation to agrarian/peasant question. This discussion will help in clarifying the broader of scope this study, and provide the ground for a particular reading of the developments in the related literature since the late 1980s.

### **2.2.1. Marginalization of Agrifood Relations in Social Theory**

The difficulty of thinking the social character of agrifood relations in their totality arises, first and foremost, from the agrifood system itself. The contemporary agrifood system is, arguably, characterized by a growing *distance* in terms of our relation to food both in physical and mental terms. Food is clearly one of the most intimate and indispensable items of our survival. In addition to this simple fact, when the apparent proliferation of varieties of food and its abundance for those who can afford them are considered, it is rather surprising to talk about food in terms of a growing distance to it.<sup>5</sup> However, if one starts to reflect on what she eats, from where and through which processes that particular food comes to table, she would be surprised with the physical distance covered in order to make that particular plate of food ready for its final consumption. The distance that food items travel from land to spoon has been growing at an unprecedented level, especially for the last three decades that has been characterized by the globalization processes of agrifood relations on neoliberal terms. For instance, Clapp (2012: 1) mentions that “the average plate of food eaten in Europe and North America travels around 1500 miles before it is consumed”.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> A quick look at books written mainly as course materials in the field of *sociology of agriculture and food* is enough to reveal the fact that starting the discussion with the dilemma of *intimacy* and *distance* of food is quite common (see, for instance, Carolan, 2012, Clapp, 2012, Koç et. al., 2012). Besides the pedagogic advantages of such a beginning in terms of enriching the sociological imagination of the intended readers, this point reflects the fact that food has become first and foremost a question of knowledge in our era.

<sup>6</sup> Especially with the globalization of the agrifood system on neoliberal terms, critiques of the growing physical distance in our relation to food with its ecological consequences have been one of the central issues in the rise of critical agrifood studies. The concern about the greenhouse gas emissions that is one of the primary sources of global warming and climate change, and associated with production and transportation of food across the globe played a particular role in this increasing attention (Clapp, 2012: 1-2). At the core of this growing interest has been the claim that the distance that food items cover has significant social and political implications. For that matter, for instance, the political propositions of the *food sovereignty* movement have been emblematic. According to the proponents of the food

In addition to the growing physical distance between producers and consumers, which is measured mainly as *food miles*<sup>7</sup>, the mental distance between food and its consumers, and even producers is also growing at an unprecedented level. Either based on their political views or taste, or their health concerns, those who consume “locally grown”, “organic”, and/or “ethically traded” food may pay attention to the details of the production, transportation, processing, marketing and exchange relations of their food. However, the time, energy and also the budget required for such a diet are considerably high.<sup>8</sup> In other words, most of us lack sufficient knowledge about the complex set of “natural and human conditions under which our food is produced” as well as their economic, social, political and ecological consequences (Clapp, 2012: 2).

The growing mental distance to food can also be pointed out at the cultural and individual level. The past decade has witnessed an increased popular attention on what, when and how to eat. This might not be surprising since the importance of food in terms of biological survival is obvious. Moreover, food has always been central in relation to constitution of social relations and personal identity. In this context, Fischler (1988), for instance, highlights the following:

The way any given human group eats helps it assert its diversity, hierarchy and organization, but also, at the same time, both its oneness and the otherness of whoever eats differently. Food is also central to individual identity, in that any given human individual is constructed, biologically, psychologically and socially by the foods he/she chooses to incorporate. (Fischler, 1988: 1)

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sovereignty movement the contemporary agrifood system is characterized by the contradiction between the neoliberal principle of “food from nowhere” and the movement’s claim for “food from somewhere” (McMichael, 2013). In this regard, the characteristics and contradictions of the contemporary agrifood system and their political implications particularly in relation to the agrarian/peasant question will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

<sup>7</sup> The concept of *food miles* first appeared in 1994 in the report of *Sustainable Agriculture, Food and Environment Alliance* (S.A.F.E.). The report calls for more attention to not only the greenhouse gases emitted as a result of “long distance food”, but also “the wider social and ecological implications of international food trade” (Paxton, 2011: 7).

<sup>8</sup> As food becomes more of a commodity, differentiation of diet in terms of social inequalities based on class, gender, ethnicity, age, etc. also has become one of the central themes in critical agrifood studies (cf., Carolan, 2012). Another issue in relation to this point has been the increasing significance of the concept of *taste*, which, according to some scholars, can be seen as part of a cultural turn in food studies (Carolan, 2012: 129-155).

Although, as Fischler (1988) mentions, what we eat and the way we do so have always been significant in biological, psychological and social ways, I argue that there is a new aspect in the recent increase in popular interest in food. This new aspect can be formulated as an ambiguity regarding what food itself is – an ambiguity strengthened by the popular interest and various ‘explanations’ provided by ‘experts’. In other words, as food items cover significant distances globally, the knowledge of food also becomes separated both from producers and consumers. Therefore, in the contemporary agrifood system, food itself has become an enigma, an unknown that should be ‘explained’ by some ‘experts’. In this regard, in addition to the concept of “food miles”, Fischler’s (1988) concept of *gastro-anomie* can also be seen as a reflection of the changing patterns in our relation to food. The concept of *gastro-anomie* refers to Durkheim’s (1964) concept of *anomie*, which, in its first formulations, pointed out social uncertainties and disorder that arose with industrial relations. Loyal to this formulation, the concept of *gastro-anomie* “explores the effects that a globalized food economy” and the food industry have “on the cultural meanings of food” and on the construction of the self and identity (MacDonald, 2014: 13). For instance, in addition to the scholarly proliferation of food studies, which will be discussed below, the increasing role of dieticians, experts, magazines, and TV shows/channels at the popular level, can also be seen as a reflection of the mental distancing we are experiencing today in relation to social and political context of food. The underlying processes effective in this mental distancing, I argue, are also related to the neoliberal restructuring of the agrifood system as will be discussed in the fourth chapter. Suffice it here to say that as food becomes more of a commodity, it also assumes all those “mysterious” attributes of the commodity form<sup>9</sup> and the question of

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<sup>9</sup> Marx (1990: 163-4), in his analysis of commodity fetishism, refers to commodity and economic categories as “a very strange thing”, “mystical” in character, “abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties” (cf. Bonefeld, 2014). The “mysterious” character of the commodity form, arguably, has significant consequences for the debates in social theory on ontology and epistemology (cf., Clarke, 1992; Bonefeld, 2014). Ontological ground and epistemological consequences of the commodity form will be discussed in the third chapter of this study, particularly in relation to the post-developmental turn in the field of development studies that has played a significant role in the rise of critical agrifood studies as it is discussed below in this chapter.



food becomes first and foremost a question of knowledge and theory (Marx, 1990: 162-3).

In addition to our growing physical and mental distance to food, the difficulty of thinking agrifood relations in social theoretical terms also arises from the theoretical fallacies of the mainstream approaches, which are hegemonic both at the popular and at the scholarly level. It is possible to argue that mainstream social thoughts and social scientific approaches tend to marginalize agriculture and food relations in the analysis of capitalist social relations. This marginalization has been realized particularly through reduction of social relations constituting agriculture and rural settings to the question of transition to industrial/urban ones, which are assumed to be ‘progressive’ for various reasons. For instance, it is well-known that the founding debates of sociology as a scientific discipline have been centered on the emergence and the development of industrial/urban social relations (cf., Bottomore and Nisbet, 1979; Callinicos, 2007; Giddens, 1971, 1982; Ritzer and Goodman, 2004; Swingewood, 2000; Zeitlin, 2001). Depending on the theoretical standpoint, there have been significant differentiations in conceptualization of these relations, as reflected in concepts like *industrial society*, *modernization* and *capitalism* (cf., Giddens, 1982). However, despite these theoretical differentiations, the common ground – which, in line with Ecevit’s (2016) reading of social theory, can also be seen as the ground of *orthodox-modernity* based classical sociology – has been the marginalization of agricultural/rural relations and their role in the development of industrial/urban relations with respect to social analysis, particularly on the basis of a schematic reading of the process of transition to capitalism.

Especially for the early capitalist (‘developed’) countries, it is a fact that transition to capitalism meant a rapid growth of urban population employed mainly in industrial and service sectors at the expense of rural population.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, it is also a fact that

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<sup>10</sup> In fact, it is only very recently, in 2007, that the urban population outnumbered the rural population for the first time in human history at the world scale (United Nations, 2014). As of 2016, the ratio of urban population to world population was 54.5%, and it is expected to be 60% in 2030 (United Nations, 2016).

industrialization on the basis of transition to capitalism meant a qualitative transformation in terms of organization of social relations. However, the problem, I argue, lies in the mostly explicit *essentialism* of mainstream schools in theorizing these facts. Here I understand essentialism as a particular (progressive/evolutionary) understanding of history, in which urban/industrial relations are assumed to be superior than rural/agricultural relations, on the basis of conceptualization of distinctions like *rural-urban*, *agriculture-industry*, *nature-culture*, *non-human-human* as given and mutually exclusive dichotomies (cf. Federici, 2004). Within this framework, as agricultural/rural relations are conceived as ‘traditional’ or as ‘remnants’ of feudalism, and, hence, as signs of ‘backwardness’, they are no longer considered to be meaningful objects of analysis and have been marginalized in the conceptualizations of modern/capitalist society (cf. Smith, 2011: 16-17; Federici, 2004; Buttel and Newby, 1980).<sup>11</sup> In other words, in mainstream approaches, agricultural relations can become a matter of theory only in terms of their difference from industrial/urban relations. It is worth noting that in this framework this difference is understood and conceptualized in a non-relational manner with a pejorative content. The pejorative connotations of the term *peasant*, for instance, in popular discourse and in scholarly debates are emblematic at this point (cf. van der Ploeg, 2008: 8-9).

I argue that another central problem implicit in these mainstream approaches, contemporary form of which can be seen as neoliberalism, has been *reductionism*. This reductionism can be observed particularly in the uncritical technicalization of agrifood relations that has been made possible through a reified conception of social relations at large. At the risk of oversimplification, it can be said that technicalization of agrifood relations is reflected in the form of an uncritical conception of productivity in agriculture, and in the form of nutrification in food. To put it differently, once agriculture is reduced to an instrumentalist interaction of abstract individual with nature, which is also conceptualized in “abstract materialist” terms (i.e. an objectified

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<sup>11</sup> At this point, it is also important to note that the colonialist/imperialist character of the spread of capitalism at the world scale has played a significant role in the establishment of the “civilized/modern/developed industrial societies” vs. “uncivilized/traditional/underdeveloped agricultural societies” dichotomy both at the popular and scholarly levels (cf. Moore, 2016: 89-92).

conception of *nature* abstracted from its social character, cf. Moore, 2015), and once food is reduced to calories, carbohydrates, proteins, etc., in terms of the requirements of individual human body conceived in abstract terms, the *naturalization* of the existing agrifood relations is made possible.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, once agrifood relations are naturalized, presenting a socio-political process as a technical issue and socio-political problems as technical problems also become possible.<sup>13</sup> In short, the analysis of agrifood relations in social theoretical terms has been marginalized by mainstream approaches in sociology through a reified conception of agrifood relations that is made possible by abstracting them from their constitutive social/political character.

In fact, the emergence and the institutionalization processes of rural sociology during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in North America and Europe as a discipline apart from general sociology were characterized by a reaction to the essentialist and reductionist character of the orthodox-modernity based classical sociology and its universalist understanding of history (Smith, 2011; Buttel and Newby, 1980). Accordingly, based on the concepts like *social division of labor* and *specialization*, the characteristic feature of the classical sociology has been conceptualizing rural as the “pre-history” of urban (Smith, 2011: 15-16). As opposed to classical sociology, the starting point of rural sociology has been the argument that rural should be conceived as a modern category that is being reshaped by urban/industrial relations (Smith, 2011: 15-16). Nonetheless, it is possible to argue, mainstream rural sociology’s defense of *rural* as

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<sup>12</sup> At this point it is worth recalling Moore’s (2016a: 2-3) conceptualization of “cheap nature” as one of the main constituents of the capitalist development. “Cheap” here means both ““cheap” in price” terms, and also in the sense of “*to cheapen*, to degrade or to render inferior in an ethico-political sense”. In other words, to consider something as natural not only obscures the social and the political context of the issue at hand, but also makes it possible to degrade it to a level that it can be violently appropriated and exploited, as in the case of “the rationalizing disciplines and exterminist policies imposed upon extra-human natures”, and the “long history of subordinating, women, colonial populations and peoples of color” (Moore, 2016a: 2), since “the realm of Nature – as ontological formation and world-praxis – encompassed virtually all peoples of color, most women, and most people with white skin living in semicolonial regions (e.g., Ireland, Poland, etc.)” (Moore, 2016b: 93).

<sup>13</sup> One of the central premises of the critical agrifood studies, I argue, has been the critique of developmentalist and political economic perspectives in the agrarian/peasant question formulations based on this point. While the third chapter of this study is devoted to the debates on the concept of development in general, the fourth chapter analyzes the implications of the criticisms of the concept of development in terms of essentialism, universalism, reductionism and the like for agrarian/peasant question formulations in particular.

a meaningful object of analysis has been realized in a framework that maintains the essentialist conception of the rural-urban divide. However, this time, the values attributed to the parts of this dichotomy have been reversed. That is to say, the students of the mainstream rural sociology attributed 'positive' features like "beauty, order, simplicity, rest, grassroots democracy, peacefulness" to the category of the rural, while associating the urban relations with "ugliness, disorder, confusion, fatigue, compulsion, strife" (Buttel and Newby, 1980: 6).<sup>14</sup> Hence, the analyses conducted within the mainstream rural sociology mostly aimed to praise the rural based on the features that are uncritically attributed to it (Buttel and Newby, 1980; Newby, 1980).

Within this framework, the belief in the possibility of transcending the 'negative' effects of the urban/industry relations on the basis of the immanent 'positive' features of the rural, and hence the possibility of building a modern "rural civilization" have characterized the development and the political content of the subdiscipline (cf., Smith, 2011: 24-25). On this ground, it is possible to argue, the research agenda of rural sociology till the 1970s was also shaped by this political content. In this regard, two main tendencies within the discipline have emerged. On the one hand, some have studied the cultural and social features attributed to rural relations on an essentialist ground; on the other hand, some have analyzed the processes of expansion of 'modernization' in rural areas, by reducing this 'modernization' process to technical developments abstracted from their capitalist character (cf. Buttel and Newby, 1980; Buttel, 2001).

In this regard, the developments in the related literature that became visible in the 1970s have been based on the critique of both classical sociology and mainstream rural sociology. At the center of this critique has been the argument that rural relations should be analyzed based on agricultural production relations and their position within the context of capitalist social relations writ large. While classical sociology,

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<sup>14</sup> It should be noted here that 'positive' and 'negative' features attributed to rural and urban were also shaped by the working class movements of the era, which were threatening the 'order' of capitalist social relations. In other words, the fear of the working classes was, arguably, also influential in the emergence of the negative image of urban life.

particularly “modernization theory” that was still influential at the times, has been criticized for its “universalist”, “functionalist” and “ahistorical” tendencies; mainstream rural sociology has been criticized for its tendency towards “aversion to theory” and its uncritical usage of the concept of rural, i.e. attributing an explanatory power to the concepts of rural and urban without providing adequate theoretical explanations (Newby, 1980; Buttel and Newby, 1980; Aydın, 1986a, 1986b; Buttel, 2001; Bonanno, 2009). These criticisms have provided the basis for the rise of *peasant studies* and *petty commodity production* conceptualizations as well as the development of *sociology of agriculture*, which arguably dominated the critical circles till the late 1980s. I will turn back to this point in the next section where the literature of this study is discussed in terms of the rise of *critical agrifood studies*, which, I argue, should be seen as another rupture in the related literature. Here, my point is that mainstream schools of both sociology and rural sociology have played a significant role in the marginalization of agrifood relations in relation to the analysis of capitalist relations and the related social theoretical developments.

Another reason that makes analyzing agrifood relations difficult in their totality is the vast array of differentiation of agrifood relations themselves in terms of both space and time. For example, the social settings of tea producers in the plantation districts of South India (see, for instance, Neilson and Pritchard, 2009) are considerably different from those in Eastern Black Sea region (see, for instance, Bellér-Hann and Hann, 2003; Eren and Büke, 2016). Moreover, agricultural products may be used in quite different forms like as input to non-food industry (e.g., cotton), as source of energy as in the case of corn used for biofuels, as medicine, as food, and as feed. These clear differentiations in agrifood relations, both *within* itself and *from* other sets of social relations, become a particular theoretical issue, especially when the *post-* turn in social theory is considered in its various forms like post-modernity, post-structuralism, post-Marxism, post-feminism, post-colonialism. That is to say, sociology in particular, for the last three decades, has been characterized by a theoretical reorientation on the basis of the critique of the abstract universalism of mainstream ‘modernist’ schools (cf., Anderson, 1999; Best and Kellner, 1991; Eagleton, 2003, 1996; Jameson, 1998, 1991;

Harvey, 1989; Sarup, 1993). The central characteristic of this reorientation, arguably, has been the shift of focus in the analysis “from general to particular, from historical generality to conjuncture, from determinism to relativity, from consistency to eclecticism, from relationality to difference, from class and status to identities, from facts to texts” (Özügürü, 2002: 29).

This theoretical shift has meant, among others, a revaluation of *difference*, which has been conceived in pejorative terms as mentioned above by mainstream approaches, on the basis of the question of subjectivity. Thus, the elevation of this revalued difference to self-evident object of analysis<sup>15</sup>, particularly, in certain depoliticizing forms of *post*-approaches, resulted in the devaluation of the concept of *totality* itself.<sup>16</sup> Contrary to this position, it is important to note that this marginalization of systematic conceptions of social relations in their totality has been taking place in a period in which certain tendencies and contradictions constituting capitalism have been generalized throughout the globe through an unprecedented process of commodification.<sup>17</sup>

### **2.2.2. The Importance of Agrifood Relations in Social Theoretical Terms**

Despite the difficulties discussed above, this study argues that a theoretical discussion on agrifood relations, which considers them in a systematic way, is necessary. The necessity of a systematic social theoretical analysis of agrifood relations lies mainly in three interrelated issues that also constitute the broader scope of this study. The first is

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<sup>15</sup> It is possible to argue that the tendency towards the proliferation of approaches in search of difference has also been intensified by the neoliberal reorganization of the knowledge production in the institutional context of universities based on projects (cf. Ecevit, 2016; Büke et. al, 2017: 7-18). Project-based knowledge production, arguably, necessitates *making a difference* to be able to get a funding, which might be termed as the *liberalization of difference* in knowledge production.

<sup>16</sup> One of the central claims of this study is that the rise of critical agrifood studies is also characterized by a *post*- turn in the form of post-developmentalism. However, it should be noted that, here, the central issue has not been the devaluation of the concept of totality, but, its problematic conception arguably on the basis of “Western episteme” (Escobar: 2000). A critical evaluation of the problematic conception of totality in post-developmental approaches is the main task of the third chapter, and its implications for the agrarian/peasant question formulations will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

<sup>17</sup> The analysis of the contemporary forms of contradictions and tendencies in the capitalist agrifood system in relation to the agrarian/peasant question will be the main task of the fourth chapter of this study.

the task of situating agrifood relations within the trajectories of capitalist development and the related debates. Closely related to this one, the second is situating the debates on agrifood relations within the broader scope of social theory, whose contemporary form is characterized by the modernity-postmodernity divide. Last but not least; the third issue is the theoretical reorientation in the related literature itself that is reflected in the rise of critical agrifood studies in the form of a post-developmental turn. These three points are discussed below respectively.

Contemporary features of agrifood relations cannot be understood without an analysis of the history and contemporary features of capitalism. This is also true for the other side of the same coin: that is to say, without an analysis of agrifood relations in terms of their history, contemporary tendencies and contradictions, it is not possible to understand the contemporary aspects and possible future trajectories of global capitalism as well. At this point, as I will discuss in the next section in more detail, it should be noted that the emergence of peasant studies literature and petty commodity production conceptualizations in the late 1960s and the 1970s, and the development of sociology of agriculture and food during the late 1970s and the 1980s were a radical intervention to the mainstream schools of general sociology and rural sociology (cf. Newby, 1980). This was so because these literatures, by situating agrifood relations within the trajectories of capitalist development, arguably, brought two major problematics at the center of the analysis: the capitalist character of agricultural relations and structures, and the social/political character of capitalism itself (cf., Ecevit, 1999; Bernstein and Byres, 2001). To put it differently, these literatures were a rupture from mainstream approaches, mainly because they shifted the focus of analysis to the sphere of *political economy* by reformulating the divide between agriculture/rural and industry/urban within the question of capitalist *development* and *underdevelopment*.

Within this framework, it is possible to make a distinction, as Bernstein (2010: 109) does so, between *tendencies* and *trends* that characterize agrifood relations within the trajectory of capitalist development. Here, tendencies that “can be identified theoretically” as well as empirically in agrifood relations are understood as the long-

term processes discussed in the literature through concepts like *industrialization* and/or *proletarianization*, *modernization* and/or *scientification*, *commercialization* and/or *commodification*, *developmentalism* and/or *capitalization*.<sup>18</sup> The concept of *trend*, on the other hand, denotes short-term processes in agrifood relations as the outcome of ““many determinations” (Marx) [that] mediate between tendency and particular concrete circumstances and local dynamics” (Bernstein, 2010: 109). On this ground, it is possible to argue that despite significant differentiations in their conceptualizations, there is a kind of consensus in the critical literature that the contemporary agrifood system is characterized by tendencies and trends such as the following: globalization, (neo)liberalization, financialization, feminization, the rise of contract farming, the increasing significance of biotechnology, substitution and digitalization in agricultural technology, the emergence of a new international division of labor, environmental degradation, and the convergence of agriculture/rural and industry/urban on the basis of the increasing hegemony of agro-input and agro-food corporations over the agrifood system.

It is possible to extend the list of these tendencies and trends in agrifood relations, which are conceived in this study as forms of *direct penetration of capital to agrifood relations* and as the contemporary forms of the defining features of the capitalist food regime. I will return to this point in the fourth chapter in relation to the agrarian/peasant question of the twenty-first century. Here, my point is that the rise of critical agrifood studies has been based on elaborations of these contemporary developments in agrifood relations, especially in terms of their implications for the conceptualizations of the capitalist agrifood system itself. In this regard, one of the central debates of our era revolves around the question of whether capitalism is at crossroads in terms of the sustainability of “the industrial model of agriculture” as it is usually referred to. In other words, whether the contemporary tendencies and trends in agrifood relations

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<sup>18</sup> Here, it is important to note that one way of reading the history of the critical approaches in agrifood studies is based on the divide between *agrarian populism* and the *Marxist agrarian question* formulation (cf. Brass, 2000). In that sense, it is possible to argue that to which concept within the pairs listed above (like industrialization vs. proletarianization) analytical priority is given can also be seen as the marker of the position within the divide between populism and Marxism.



signify a “terminal” crisis of capitalist agrifood system is one of the constituent debates of the critical agrifood studies (Moore, 2010; see also: Akram-Lodhi, 2013; Bello and Bavera, 2010; Magdoff and Tokar, 2010; McMichael, 2010; Rosin et. al, 2012). To see how the worries about the sustainability of the current system have gained wide currency both in scholarly and popular discussions, the following quote from the recent report of *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations* (FAO) on the future of agriculture and food is illustrating:

One clear message that emerges is that ‘business-as-usual’ is not an option. Major *transformations* of agricultural systems, rural economies and natural source management will be needed if we are to meet the multiple challenges before us and realize the full potential for food and agriculture to ensure a secure and healthy future for all people and the entire planet. (FAO, 2017: 7; emphasis added)

This quote is important particularly in relation to its emphasis on the need for *transformations*, rather than, for instance, “regulations” or “changes” as it is more expected from an organization like FAO that is a part of the mainstream institutional framework. It should be noted that, the ongoing debate on the sustainability of the capitalist/industrial agrifood system has its roots in the increasing awareness of the environmental consequences of the capitalist agrifood system like soil degradation, water deficiencies, pollution, global warming and climate change. Moreover, I argue, the debate on the question of sustainability is also a part and a reflection of the theoretical reorientation in the related literature. In that sense, critical agrifood studies should be seen as another significant intervention/rupture in the related literature in relation to the task of situating agrifood relations into the course of capitalism. That is so because, by bringing the questions of *sustainability* and also *desirability* of capitalist development both in general and in agrifood relations in particular, the students of critical agrifood studies have shifted the focus of analysis from the sphere of political economy to the field of *politics of knowledge*. Elaborations on the problems and contradictions of contemporary agrifood system on the one hand, and the *post-* turn in social theory on the other, I argue, have led to a theoretical reorientation in the literature realized as the rise of critical agrifood studies. This theoretical reorientation is particularly evident in the critiques of the concept of development, “industrial model

of agriculture” and its techno-scientific understandings as Euro-Atlantic constructions imposed upon the rest of the world through a promise of progress. In that sense, I argue, undergirded by the *post-* turn in social theory, the students of critical agrifood studies have made a significant move to question the social theoretical assumptions implicit in the conceptualizations of capitalist development in agriculture, particularly in relation to (under)development problematizations.

This last point also leads us to the second issue with regard to the necessity of a theoretical discussion on agrifood relations, which is related to the broader scope of social theory that is characterized by the modernity-postmodernity divide. That is to say, no matter how the contradictions implicit in agrifood relations and the crisis of “industrial model of agriculture” are conceptualized, and no matter how alternatives to the capitalist agrifood system are formulated, questioning agrifood relations within the trajectories of capitalism requires a critical inquiry of mainstream schools of social theory. As briefly discussed above, this is so because these schools basically argue for a teleological understanding of history in which the processes of *urbanization*, *industrialization* and *capitalization of agriculture* have been conceived as signs of progress when compared to *rural societies*, *agriculture* and *subsistence relations*. This understanding, which is mostly explicit in classical sociological theories and arguably implicit in certain critical approaches including certain forms of Marxism, has reflected itself in formulations of dichotomies like urban-rural, industry-agriculture, culture-nature, mind-body and human-non-human, in which the first term has been privileged against the second. To put it in terms of the broader context of social sciences, an analysis of agrifood relations within the history of the capitalist development provides also an opportunity to critically engage with the theoretical fallacies notoriously attributed to ‘modernity’ such as essentialism, reductionism, determinism, universalism, rationalism, and alike. In other words, situating agrifood relations within the context of capitalist development goes hand in hand with situating the debate over these relations within the broader scope of modernity-postmodernity divide in social theory. These two intermingled tasks constitute not only the broader

scope of this study, but also the ground on which critical agrifood studies have risen as it will be discussed in the next section.

The third issue in terms of the need for theory in the analysis of agrifood relations is related to the developments in the literature itself. The rise of critical agrifood studies can be seen as a rupture with the agrarian/peasant question debate of the 1970s and 1980s. When compared to the agrarian/peasant question debate, the contemporary literature on agrifood relations is characterized by various theoretical shifts and differentiations. It is possible to trace this rupture in the related literature in terms of historical and intellectual context, major theoretical assumptions and methodological strategies, research topics, and political propositions formulated in parallel to these theoretical shifts. This rupture, which I argue has taken the form of a post-developmental turn, has resulted in a theoretical gap in the related literature. In other words, the dialogue between critical agrifood studies and the petty commodity production debate and peasant studies of the 1970s and 1980s has been rather weak. In this regard, the shifts and differentiations that are implicit in the rise of critical agrifood studies and the correspondent theoretical gap with the previous debates themselves have become a theoretical issue.

Thus far, I have tried to make the broader scope of the study clear through situating this study within the broader context of social theory. I have argued that despite the difficulties in thinking agrifood relations in social theoretical terms and in their totality in a systematic way, there is the need to situate the debate on agrifood relations within the broader literature on the characteristics and possible trajectories of contemporary capitalism, which will be inadequate unless the divide between modernity and postmodernity is taken into account. These two intermingled tasks have also been the ground on which critical agrifood studies have risen since the late 1980s onwards, which has also meant a theoretical shift in the related literature. On this ground, I have argued, the theoretical reorientation in the related literature itself has become a subject of a theoretical discussion. Hence, while the task of situating the debate on agrifood relations within the context of capitalist modernity constitutes the broader scope of this

study, the theoretical evaluation of the shift from *peasant studies* to *critical agrifood studies* constitutes its related literature.

If we return to the question posed in the title of this section, which was “Why does theory matter in the analysis of agrifood relations?”, it is possible to argue that the problem or the need in the analysis of agrifood relations is more of a theoretical discussion, which is capable of creating “big enough stories”, in Harraway’s (2016: 73) terms, that encompasses the vast array of factual differentiation of agrifood relations as well as the conceptual diversification of approaches in the related literature in a systematic way. In other words, the problem we are facing is not a quantitative one, i.e. the lack of sufficient number of studies on agrifood relations, but a qualitative one, i.e. the lack of an adequate effort to theorize the differentiation and proliferation of agrifood relations themselves and the related literature. For that aim, the next section deals with the rise of critical agrifood studies since the late 1980s and its contours on the basis of the theoretical shifts that characterize the literature when compared to agrarian/peasant question debate of the pre-1980 era.

### **2.3. Literature of the Study: The Rise of Critical Agrifood Studies**

In line with the changing historical conditions and the intellectual context, there have been significant differentiations in the related literature since the late 1980s, which, I argue, culminated as the rise of critical agrifood studies. It is possible to observe these new tendencies in the field of agrifood knowledge in terms of *disciplinary differentiations*, *thematic proliferations*, and *theoretical shifts and ruptures* (see Table 2.1 below).

**Table 2.1 Differentiations in Agrifood Knowledge since the Late 1980s**

Differentiations, Proliferations, Shifts & Ruptures	1960s to Late 1980s	Since Late 1980s
<b>Disciplinary Differentiations</b> (cf. Koç et. al, 2012)	Agricultural Sciences Nutrition (Development) Economics <i>Rural Sociology</i>	Agricultural Sciences Food Engineering Chemistry Biology & Genetics Environmental Sciences Nutrition Health Sciences Economics Business Administration <i>Sociology of Agriculture and Food</i>
<b>Thematic Proliferations</b> (cf. Koç et. al, 2012)	Food as a source of nutrition Food as a source of income Food as a political tool Food as a developmental issue	Food as a source of nutrition Food as a commodity Food as a political tool Food as an object of pleasure, anxiety, or fear Food as a symbol Food as a constituent of social identity, status, and class Food as a basis for ritual acts Food as an indicator of quality of life and health Food as gendered item Food as culture Food as an environmental issue
<b>Theoretical Shifts &amp; Ruptures</b>	<i>Peasant Studies</i> & Petty Commodity Production Debate ~ Developmentalism ~ Political Economy	<i>Critical Agrifood Studies</i> ~ Post-Developmentalism ~ Politics of Knowledge

At the disciplinary level we have witnessed the emergence of new areas of investigations both in social and natural sciences. For instance, compared to the traditional areas of investigation on agrifood relations, which are *agricultural sciences*, *nutrition*, (development) *economics* and *rural sociology*, the scope of the scholarly debate diversified over a variety of disciplines such as: *food science and engineering*, *chemistry*, *biology* and *genetics*, *environmental sciences*, *health sciences*, *economics*, *business administration*, *social sciences* and *humanities*, and *sociology of agriculture*

*and food* (cf. Koç *et. al*, 2012: 4-5). In addition to this disciplinary diversification, new questions in relation to food have also been posed especially in social sciences and humanities. These areas have started to consider food not only as a source of nutrition, but also as an object of pleasure, anxiety or fear; as a symbol; as a marker of class and ethnic identity; as a gendered item; as a basis for ritual acts; as an indicator of quality of life and health; as a commodity, as a political tool, etc. (cf. Koç *et. al*, 2012: 4-5).

In short, in line with the changes in agrifood relations themselves, there has been a parallel differentiation with respect to knowledge production in this field. At the center of this process has been the increasing questioning of *food* relations through situating them within the context of capitalist development and the related debates. Within this context, I argue, the last three decades can be seen as a transition from *rural sociology* to *sociology of agriculture and food* at the subdisciplinary level, and as the rise of critical agrifood studies in relation to the problematizations of the capitalist character of contemporary agrifood system. Moreover, this study argues, the underlying theoretical framework of the critical agrifood studies has been post-developmentalism. In other words, compared to the peasant studies and petty commodity production (PCP) debate, which dominated the critical literature from the late 1960s to mid-1980s, the rise of critical agrifood studies signifies a theoretical shift and/or rupture with respect to the interrogations of the capitalist character of agrifood relations. In the following two subsections, first I will focus on the disciplinary transition to sociology of agriculture and food, and then I will elaborate on the rise of critical agrifood studies in comparison to peasant studies and petty commodity production debate. This will also provide the ground on which the main problematic of this study is formulated, which is briefly explored in the section 2.4.

### **2.3.1. From Rural Sociology to Sociology of Agriculture and Food**

In line with the changing historical and intellectual context, critical students of rural sociology started to reconsider the classical themes and foundational assumptions of their field. This reconsideration process has started in the mid-1970s with a particular focus on *agriculture*, and accelerated since the late 1980s, when *food* relations started

to become a major theoretical as well as substantial issue. In this regard, at the subdisciplinary level it is possible to see the last three decades as a transition from *rural* sociology to sociology of *agriculture and food* (cf., Bonanno, 2009; Bonanno and Constance, 2008; Büke, 2008, 2017; Ecevit et. al, 2009). In addition to its theoretical and substantial criticisms of rural sociology that are discussed below, the development of sociology of agriculture and food (hereafter, SAF) can also be seen as an attempt to eliminate the increasing mental distancing that we are experiencing in our relation to food discussed in the previous section.

Before an elaboration of this transition at the subdisciplinary level, it is worth briefly mentioning what is meant by rural sociology throughout this study. In this regard, Howard Newby (1980: 8-9; cf. 1983: 67), one of the prominent scholars in rural sociology, after pointing out “the most common definition of rural sociology” as “the scientific study of rural society”, defines the subdiscipline conceptually as follows: “the sociology of geographical localities where the size and density of the population is relatively small”. However, as Newby (1983: 67) immediately adds, “this conceptual definition fails to convey the fact that rural sociology also refers to a set of institutions” which include “university departments, journals, societies, textbooks, research teams, [and] teaching activities” among others. This point is particularly important in terms of the separation of rural sociology from areas like *sociology of development* and *peasant studies* that proliferated between the 1960s and the mid-1980s. Although rural is one of the central concepts of the fields of sociology of development and peasant studies as well, in terms of the set of institutions mentioned above, the point here is that “rural sociology has been, for the most part, institutionally separated from them” (Newby, 1980: 5). In other words, although these fields “are included in the conceptual definition” of the subdiscipline given above, “[i]n terms of how it institutionally defines itself”, rural sociology has had historically and theoretically assumed characteristics that separated it from other areas concerned with rural.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The separation of rural sociology from sociology of development and peasant studies, “which are equally rural and equally sociological”, Newby (1980: 5) argues, “has tended to deny rural sociology both a historical perspective and a holistic approach to rural society from which it would otherwise

Based on these characteristics discussed below, and in terms of its institutional definition, therefore, it is “convention” to apply rural sociology almost exclusively to “advanced industrial societies”, at least till the 1980s (Newby, 1983: 67; 1980: 5). Following this convention in the related literature on the development and the history of the subdiscipline, I use rural sociology as the rural sociology of “advanced industrial societies” with a particular focus on its trajectory in the USA. Although it is quite limited in scope, this focus still provides the opportunity to evaluate the subdiscipline in the context where its institutionalization as well as theoretical and methodological considerations has been the most developed. In addition to the characteristic features of its institutionalization process in the US, with a particular attention on its “style of research”, Nelson (1965: 410, emphasis added), for instance, was able to say the following: “As an accepted college and university discipline, rural sociology is *indigenous to the United States*” (cited in Newby, 1980: 6). Moreover, it should be added, “the influence of American rural sociology has spread” to Europe – and subsequently to other parts of the world – following the Second World War particularly in the form of a “mental Marshall aid” complementing the Marshall Plan of the period (Hofstee, 1963: 341; cited in Newby, 1980: 6). Within this framework, I use *mainstream rural sociology* throughout this study to refer to the hegemony of the American rural sociology in terms of theoretical, methodological and institutional orientations of the subdiscipline.<sup>20</sup>

Here, it should be noted that criticisms of mainstream rural sociology became evident during the 1970s (cf. Marsden, 2006: 3-4). For instance, Howard Newby and Frederick H. Buttel (1980a: vii) – the former is known for his neo-Weberian stance, while the latter for his neo-Marxist background in terms of their theoretical orientations – point

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benefit”. In this regard, as I will try to show below, the emergence of SAF literature, which in turn facilitated the rise of critical agrifood studies, has been based on an effort to eliminate the historical and theoretical gap between rural sociology and the fields of sociology of development and peasant studies.

<sup>20</sup> In this regard, the arguments summarized and formulated in this subsection in relation to the history of rural sociology, its criticisms and the emergence of sociology of agriculture and food are mainly based on the following studies: Bonanno, 1986, 2009; Bonanno and Constance, 2008; Buttel, 2001; Buttel and Newby, 1980a, 1980b; Büke, 2008, 2017; Carolan, 2012; Ecevit, 2006; Ecevit et.al, 2009; Friedland, 1982, 2002, 2010; Marsden, 2006; Newby, 1980, 1983, Smith, 2011.



out the general attitude towards the subdiscipline during the 1970s as follows: “*a moribund subdiscipline with little chance for scholarly redirection*”.<sup>21</sup> At the center of this general attitude and the criticisms formulated towards the subdiscipline was the following question (Buttel and Newby, 1980b: 3): “[W]hat constitutes rural sociology in the first place?” With regard to this point, for instance, the presidential address of James Copp, in 1972, to the *Rural Sociological Society*<sup>22</sup> (RSS) is striking:

Many of us think that we know what rural sociology is, but I am not sure that we do ... In my opinion we know less about contemporary rural in 1972 than we knew about the contemporary rural sociology in the 1940s ... If most of the research which rural sociologists were doing in 1969 and 1970 were to have somehow disappeared the world would have noticed very little loss ... I came to the conclusion that rural sociologists really were not the masters of the phenomena of rural society. We toyed with it, but I did not perceive a great depth of understanding. The world was changing faster than the discipline was growing in its knowledge of the phenomena occurring in rural areas (1972: 515, 516, 521; cited in Buttel and Newby, 1980b: 1).

The “definitional problems” like what rural sociology is, or what rural itself means that Copp rather sharply highlights were, in fact, “symptomatic of a more profound conceptual difficulty” (Newby, 1980: 5). In that sense, the *raison d’être* of the discipline was at stake, and from the perspective of the 1980s onwards, it is quite common to designate 1970s as a period of crisis for rural sociology.<sup>23</sup> There have been three major interrelated domains pointed out as the sources of rural sociology’s crisis, and in relation to which the subdiscipline has been severely criticized: (1) the disinterested character of the subdiscipline in relation to socio-historical changes in

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<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that Bonnonna (2009: 31) considers Buttel and Newby’s this study, *The Rural Sociology of the Advanced Societies: Critical Perspectives*, as the “manifesto of sociology of agriculture and food of the late seventies”.

<sup>22</sup> In fact, *Rural Sociological Society*, which became a separate institution in 1937 by splitting off from the American Sociological Association, and its official journal *Rural Sociology* that is published since 1935 are usually seen as the representative of mainstream rural sociology. For the history of rural sociology in terms of its institutional development in the USA especially see: Friedland (2010 [1979]), Newby (1980), Smith (2011).

<sup>23</sup> While there was an ongoing debate on the subdiscipline’s crisis during the 1970s in the context of “advanced industrial societies”, it is imported to note that the influence of American rural sociology was also spreading to other parts of the world “further and faster than ever before” in the same period (Newby, 1980: 6).

agrifood relations, (2) its theoretical and methodological orientations especially in relation to the concept of rural, and (3) its institutional character particularly with respect to the question of knowledge and power. These three major criticisms are elaborated below particularly in relation to the emergence of sociology of agriculture and food.

In retrospect, it was not surprising that criticisms of rural sociology based on its conception of the category of rural became evident in the 1970s. This is so mainly because, by the 1970s, certain tendencies and trends mentioned in the previous section also started to become apparent. These capitalist tendencies and trends, in fact, signified a restructuring of agrifood relations in such a way that the concepts of *agriculture*, *food* and *rurality* started to decouple both historically and analytically (cf., Bonanno, 2009; Friedland, 1982).<sup>24</sup> As Bonanno (2009: 31) mentions “[a]griculture, food, farming and the study of rural areas were largely considered synonyms for the first seven decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”. Arguably, there was a strong ground for this interchangeable use of these concepts, since till the 1970s “most of what was considered food was generally produced within the “farm gate”, and farming was the primary socioeconomic activity of rural areas” (Bonanno, 2009: 31).

However, this identification of rurality with agriculture and food started to dismantle with the capitalist development through processes like: “concentration and centralization of agricultural and food production” and “increasing corporatization” in agrifood relations, in Friedland’s terms “the development of agribusiness”; “the increase in the size of production units” and mechanization, which also paralleled “continuous emphasis on monocultural specialization and corporatization”; “the concentration of sales in a smaller segment of agricultural producers” that is followed by “increased marginalization of small family farms” (Bonanno, 2009: 31; Friedland, 1982: 592-594). In other words, capitalization processes in agrifood relations have been simultaneously followed and, arguably, enhanced by “the process of decoupling

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<sup>24</sup> I will return to this issue in the fourth chapter, in which I will formulate the dissociation of agriculture, food, and rurality both in historical and theoretical terms, as one of the defining features of capitalism itself as a food regime.

the concepts of agriculture and food, and rurality” (Bonanno, 2009: 31). In addition to the processes of penetration of agrifood relations by capital, this decoupling process in analytical terms has also been strengthened by “the development of other commercial uses of rural space” and “decentralization of industrial production away from urban regions” (Bonanno, 2009: 31). Thus, in brief:

By the 1970s, most food items could not be identified with the commodities produced within the “farm gate.” Even “fresh” products were now parts of complex commodity chains transcending the farm. Simultaneously rural industrialization, decentralization of industrial production away from urban regions and the development of other commercial uses of rural space created new conditions whereby the identification of agriculture and food with rural areas was simply no longer tenable. (Bonanno, 2009: 31)

It is this historical as well as analytical restructuring of relationships among agriculture, food, and rurality that has provided the ground on which rural sociology is sharply criticized. As Friedland (1982: 594; emphasis added) succinctly and rather severely puts:

With all of these trends ... farming as known in song, story, and myth has effectively disappeared. ... For agriculture is no longer a phenomenon based on rural society; it is a process of production, like all other production subject to the same rules as other processes and comparable thereto. While there may be some differences by virtue of historical antecedents and the uncertainties remaining in some parts of the production process, the similarities to other production systems are what is significant. *The continued focus on rural society makes rural sociology an anachronism in search of a non-existent social reality.*<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Here, as opposed to mainstream rural sociology, Friedland situates agricultural relations within the trajectory of capitalist development. This point is particularly important since peasant studies and especially petty commodity production formulations also emerged on this ground. However, as it can be seen from the quotation, Friedland rather undervalues the differences between agriculture and other forms of capitalist production processes. Contrary to this position, as I will discuss in the next subsection, both peasant studies and petty commodity production formulations, though in different ways, have been based on prioritization of differences rather than similarities with industrial production processes. In fact, in a sense, it is possible to say that at the core of the agrarian/peasant question debate and the related conceptual divisions has been the question of whether the differences of agricultural production or its similarities with capitalist production process is going to be analytically prioritized. I will return to this point in the fourth chapter.

To put it differently, rural sociology has been charged with lagging behind the historical developments in agricultural and rural relations, and, hence, with anachronism implying that the ontological ground it was based on has gone for good. In fact, the “irrelevance” of rural sociology with respect to socio-historical changes that brought significant declines in rural and farm populations, as Smith (2011: 1) highlights, has been “the most sustained criticism levied at rural sociology”, particularly from the perspective of mainstream sociology. More importantly, I think, the disinterested character of the subdiscipline with respect to socio-historical changes in agrifood relations was seen as symptomatic of a deeply rooted theoretical incapability. In other words, the charge was not simply underestimating the significance of socio-historical processes in agrifood relations and in that sense lagging behind, but rather it was the claim that rural sociology was lacking in theoretical and methodological equipment that are necessary to analyze these processes. This charge of theoretical incapability, which was reflected in the silence over the farm and food crisis of the period, was arising mainly because of the subdiscipline’s choice on rural as object of analysis instead of agriculture – a choice that has its roots both in theoretical and institutional orientations of the subdiscipline:

... rural sociology made a primordial decision in its formative period to become associated with *rural* society rather than *agriculture*. That decision accrued despite initial concerns by the founding fathers about agriculture and the erosion of the agricultural population. As these concerns came into conflict with productionist orientations in the land-grant complex, research on a number of agricultural issues was actively discouraged. Despite initial concerns, therefore, the subdiscipline was shaped in ways that left its interests in agriculture remote... (Friedland, 1982: 590, emphasis added)

As it is discussed in the previous section briefly, the reactional character of mainstream rural sociology towards sociological theories that marginalize rural relations in social analysis had resulted in certain problems. In that section, I have argued that orthodox-modernity based schools of sociology<sup>26</sup> “devoted comparatively little attention to

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<sup>26</sup> Here I use orthodox-modernity based schools of sociology to refer particularly to those which conceive the rise of capitalism in terms of schematic and social typeal transitions. In this regard figures of classical sociology like Tönnies, Durkheim, Parsons, and schools like industrial society thesis,

agriculture and rural life, concentrating their efforts on the emerging urban-industrial sector” (Newby, 1980: 23). The result was the devaluation of rural and agricultural relations in analytical terms, since they were seen merely as “backward”, “archaic” or “residual” implying a triviality in terms of social analysis (cf., Smith, 2011). I have argued that reaction to such conceptions was central to the development of rural sociology, and contrary to “the idea that rural life was marginal or backward ... much rural sociology was devoted to upholding the integrity of what were believed to be distinctive qualities of rural life” (Newby, 1980: 24). However, I have argued, despite its criticisms of classical sociology in terms of its universalist and evolutionary understandings of history, rural sociology continued to share the same theoretical ground with orthodox-modernity based approaches that conceive the rise of capitalism in terms of schematic transitions such as: from *rural* to *urban*, from *traditional* to *modern*, from *mechanic* to *organic*, from *gemeinschaftlich* to *gesellschaftlich*, from *agriculture* to *industry* and so on. In other words, the subdiscipline simply reversed these dichotomies in favor of rural, while leaving the essentialist character of these understandings unproblematicized, and in that sense could not be able to move beyond reproducing the problems of classical sociology. In other words, as Newby (1980: 12) argues:

Rural society itself was rarely seen as problematic; the problem was rather how to preserve its wholesome qualities against enfeeblement by alien social forces, to avert the disintegration of rural communities and the decline of the ‘traditional rural way of life’, and not the least, to preserve the existence of a separate rural identity.

It is on this ground that the “rural-urban continuum” was formulated, which, in the due time, became the major theoretical problematic of the subdiscipline. This point is particularly important, since the common observation about subdiscipline’s relation to social theory has usually been that “it has been *atheoretical* or even *anti-theoretical* in its orientation” (Newby, 1980: 23, emphasis added). Contrary to this observation, it was, arguably, the idea of “rural-urban continuum” complemented with a

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modernization school and structural functionalism have been particularly influential (cf. Friedland, 1982).

methodological “inductivism” that has provided rural sociology its coherence in terms of its theoretical orientation (cf., Newby, 1980). The architects of this theoretical coherence are usually pointed out as Pitirim Sorokin and Carle C. Zimmerman, especially with their textbook, *Principles of Rural-Urban Sociology* published in 1929 (Buttel and Newby, 1980; Newby, 1980). The characteristic analytical move of Sorokin and Zimmerman, according to Newby (1980: 23-27) was to translate Tönnies’ *gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* typology into a *rural-urban* continuum conception.<sup>27</sup> In other words, by integrating “the European tradition of theorizing” with the empiricist research style of the US rural sociology, Sorokin and Zimmerman “fixed the theoretical framework of rural sociology” till the mid-1960s (Newby, 1980: 24-26). For instance, in the trend report on rural sociology that evaluates the first 50 years of the subdiscipline, Smith (1957: 12) was pointing out Sorokin and Zimmerman’s book as “the finest synthesis of the field of rural sociology achieved to date” (cited in Newby, 1980: 26). In this regard, the following quote from this “finest synthesis” might be helpful to illustrate the theoretical orientation of mainstream rural sociology:

[T]he fundamental task of rural sociology is to describe the relatively constant and universal traits or relations of the rural social world as distinct from the non-rural or urban social universe. In this description, rural sociology, like general sociology, concentrates its attention not at the traits which are peculiar to a given rural aggregate at a given time, but at the traits and relations which are typical for rural social world generally as distinct from urban social phenomena. In other words, rural sociology describes the rural-urban differences, which are repeated in time and space and, in this sense, are constant characteristics of the rural in contradistinction from the urban social phenomena. (Sorokin and Zimmerman, 1929: 8-9)

Since Sorokin and Zimmerman’s textbook is usually accepted as emblematic of mainstream rural sociology that dominated the works in this field till the mid-1960s, it is worthwhile to point out how these “constant characteristics of the rural in contradistinction from the urban social phenomena” are conceived. In that sense,

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<sup>27</sup> In addition to Sorokin and Zimmerman, and also Redfield’s (1947) paper, “The Folk Society”, from rural sociology, Newby (1980: 25) mentions that Simmel’s (1903) famous essay titled “The Metropolis and Mental Life”, and Wirth’s (1938) paper, “Urbanism as a Way of Life”, played a particular role in this translation “from an urban perspective”. Such an understanding has been strengthened later by the conceptions of “industrial society” and the post-industrial society debates (cf., Newby, 1980).

though rather lengthy, Newby's (1980: 26-27) choice "as a representative illustration" of this approach from the same book might be helpful:

Up to recent times, at least for the bulk of the city population, the city environment, as such, has been much less natural and has given much less opportunity for the satisfaction of basic human needs and fundamental impulses than the rural environment. ... Can such a city environment and manner of living satisfy these fundamental impulses and habit developed in quite a different situation and adapted to quite a different environment? The answer is no. Neither the impulses for creative activity; nor the orientation, curiosity and novelty; nor lust for variety and adventure; nor the physiological needs for fresh air; ... nor the physiological and psychological necessity for being in touch with nature; nor to enjoy with eyes the greenishness of the meadows, the beauties of the forest, the clear rivers, the waves of golden wheat in the fields; nor to hear the birds singing, the thunderstorm or the mysterious calm of an evening amidst nature; these and thousands of similar phenomena have been taken from the urban man. ... In spite of the enormous improvement of the conditions of the urban labor classes in these respects, the city still has a great deal of these elements of 'unnaturalness' and through that stimulates dissatisfactions and disorders.

The farmer-peasant environment, on the contrary, has been much more 'natural' and much more identical with that to which man has been trained by thousands of years of preceding history. The basic impulses of man as they have been shaped by the past are to be satisfied much easier in the environment and by the occupational activity of the farmer. There is neither lack of nature nor the killing monotony of work, nor the extreme specialization, nor one-sidedness. His standard of living may be as low as that of a proletarian; his house or lodging may be as bad; and yet the whole character of his structure of living is quite different and healthier and more natural. (Sorokin and Zimmermann, 1929: 466-7)

Such a conception of rural – associated with qualities like 'creative activity', 'curiosity', 'novelty', 'variety', 'adventure', 'beauty', 'cleanness', 'naturalness', 'psychological and physiological health' – in contradistinction to urban also enhanced "a particular style of research" that produced, arguably, nothing more than detailed empirical descriptions of differences and similarities between rural and urban mainly understood as "ways of life" (Newby, 1980: 28). Once the rural-urban differences are considered as given, and even "constant", the methodological orientation of the subdiscipline has been characterized with the claim of "the scientific study of *rural society*" (Larson, 1968: 580; emphasis added; cited in Newby, 1980: 7). Here,

‘scientific’, as in the case of orthodox modernity based schools, is associated with characteristics like “positivist, inductive, quantitative and ‘applied’”, and this association has been strengthened by the institutional character of rural sociology within the land-grant university system in the US (Newby, 1980: 7). This, in turn, led to a “shallow empiricism – the endless descriptions of rural organizations, the interminable studies of diffusion of innovations and the ultimately meaningless ‘tabulations’ of rural-urban differences”; i.e. a “book-keeping approach” to rural, which has also been intensified further by international organizations like OECD and FAO (Newby, 1980: 18, 103). It is, arguably, on this ground that Copp, as quoted above, in his presidential address was pointing out that rural sociologists “toyed with” the “phenomena of rural society” without being able to create “a great depth of *understanding*” (emphasis added).

It is in the context of historical changes in agrifood relations and based on the theoretical and methodological orientations discussed above that the crisis of rural sociology and its nature are formulated:

Hence the nature of rural sociology’s current crisis: the decline of the rural-urban continuum has left the subject matter of rural sociology bereft of a theory while the continuing “eclipse” (Stein, 1964) of the rural world has threatened to deprive it of its subject matter, too (Buttel and Newby, 1980b: 5).

At this point, it is worth to mention how the institutional character of the subdiscipline also fortified its theoretical and methodological orientations. In fact, historical roots of rural sociology in the context of the US “rest in the early recognition of the problems afflicting those who lived in rural surroundings and earned their living through agricultural pursuits” (Friedland, 1982: 590). In other words, “the comparative disadvantage of living on the land” that “led to a flight to urbanism” was one of the constitutive concerns of the subdiscipline (Friedland, 1982: 591; cf., Smith, 2011). However, with the inclusion of rural sociology to the institutional complex of the land-grant college/university system that is complemented with state agricultural experimental stations and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), these concerns started to lose their significance. To put it differently, in addition to the



reaction to general sociology, the institutional character of mainstream rural sociology fortified the subdiscipline's choice of rural as its object of analysis, and more importantly, this institutionalization process actively precluded the critical path that the discipline might follow otherwise:

Responding to the incentives of the productionist-oriented science establishment dominating the land-grant complex as well as recognizing the punishments of those that persisted in examining controversial issues, rural sociology as a subdiscipline departed its antecedents and became transmogrified into a very different subdiscipline, concerned with restricted issues and failing to raise critical questions about the changing character of rural society. (Friedland, 2010 [1979]: 85)

In fact, the land-grant complex was established in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the Morrill Land Grants Act of 1862, particularly in order to facilitate higher education in "agriculture and the mechanic arts".<sup>28</sup> Promoting agricultural production as well as industrial production was a key factor in the development of the land-grant system:

The belief that a strong agricultural production system underlies democratic society traces its roots to the formation of the republic and was embodied in Jefferson's belief that a strong independent yeomanry was essential to preserve democratic institutions. At a later stage, this democratic urge became more focused in a belief in the need to develop a firmer economic base in agriculture, which took the form of a push toward the introduction of science into agriculture. In the middle of the nineteenth century, this orientation shaped the development of a scientific network that grew into what is known as the 'land-grant complex' with the adoption of the Morrill Act of 1862. (Friedland, 2010: 76).

In this regard, the establishment of land-grant colleges/universities was followed by the creation of State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES) with the Hatch Act of 1887 with respect to "the need for rigorous scientific research" in agriculture (Friedland, 2010: 76). The inclusion of rural sociology to this "land-grant complex" was with the Purnell Act of 1925, which enabled "the colleges of agriculture and agricultural experiment stations ... to support rural sociological research" (Newby,

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<sup>28</sup> For the related code please see: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2015-title7/html/USCODE-2015-title7-chap13-subchapI-sec304.htm>

1980: 13). This inclusion to the land-grant complex meant for rural sociology departments to be able to access “a lucrative source of research dollars”, which also established a close relationship between rural sociologists and the interests of state bureaucrats, agriculture experts, and agrifood entrepreneurs (Friedland, 1982: 590). In other words, rural sociology’s institutional character was shaped by a close engagement with the state policies on the one hand and with the agrifood capital on the other. This process of inclusion was further intensified with the New Deal policies and with “the development project” following the Second World War that created “an enormous influx of federal money ... flowed into rural sociological research” (Smith, 2011: 28-29, cf. McMichael, 2008). Given this institutional context, rural sociology, arguably, took agricultural economics as its role model, and strived to achieve a “policy-relevant” and “applied” character:

The institutional basis of rural sociology in the United States consists mainly of the agricultural colleges of the land-grant universities. This setting has not always been conducive to intellectual creativity and imaginative sociological debate. ... First, in the land-grant universities rural sociology has been expected to be "policy-relevant" or "applied"-i.e. influential upon the thinking of minor bureaucrats ("policymakers") in rural affairs. ... Second, the administrators of the land-grant colleges, principally applied scientists from the production end of agriculture, have conceived of rural sociologists primarily as researchers charged with the task of overcoming the "social problems" that interfere with cost-efficiency in agriculture. They have tended to be impatient with "useless" sociological research that has no direct application. Finally, the agricultural economists, often departmental colleagues, confident, quantitative and "applied," have shared the goal of cost-efficiency and have all too often been envied by rural sociologists for their policy influence and "scientific" superiority. (Newby, 1983: 69)

With these pressures by the land-grant complex on rural sociology to be “scientific”, which is understood almost solely in terms of “quantitative” and “applied” research, the already existing gap between the subdiscipline and general sociology was also widened further. In other words, the isolation of rural sociology from the theoretical developments in sociology was intensified, and the “atheoretical” or “anti-theoretical” outlook of the subdiscipline was enhanced. Moreover, this institutional character of rural sociology has had further methodological implications. For instance, the productionist orientation of the land-grant complex was mainly focusing on local

issues, which in turn facilitated “parochialism” in rural sociology that precluded structural analysis of rural and agricultural relations:

The fact that each land grant university and state agricultural experiment station receives a substantial share of its funding from its state legislature presents a strong “localizing” or “parochializing” influence on the rural sociologist because of the land grant university’s strong identification with its own state and the perceived need to place highest priority on problems specific to that state. The structure of the land grant college system thus tends to steer rural sociologists toward studies conducted principally within their own state. This localizing tendency serves to mitigate against societal analysis, and virtually precludes comparative research. (Buttel and Newby, 1980a: vii-viii)

Given these theoretical and methodological orientations fortified by the land-grant complex, the most salient research topic in the field during the 1950s and 1960s has been the analysis of “adoption and diffusion” of technology in rural settings, i.e., “the process by which a technology is communicated through social channels” (Carolan, 2012: 3). In fact, endowed with a social psychological orientation “the adoption-diffusion research tradition” dominated the field till the mid-1970s (Carolan, 2012: 3). This social psychological orientation and the related conception of technology abstracted from its capitalist character were also important in methodological terms, since with this focus rural sociology’s “tendency toward quantifiable research” was also intensified and the subdiscipline “departed from its early concerns with collectivities particularly with communities and replace them concerns for individuals as the unit of analysis” (Friedland, 2010: 76).

In relation to the critique of this institutional character of mainstream rural sociology, Jim Hightower’s book published in 1973, *Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times*, has been particularly influential. Arguably, Hightower’s critique of the land-grant system and rural sociology therein “for being the quiescent clients of corporate agribusiness” broadened the debate by reformulating the critique as a question of *politics of knowledge* (i.e. problematization of the relationship between knowledge and power) in the field of agrifood studies:

In their efforts with food gadgetry, in their work for the input and output industries and in their mechanization research, land grant colleges and state

agricultural experiment stations exist primarily as tax-paid clinics for agribusiness. Land grant college research is directed toward those private interests that least need assistance, while it ignores or works against the interests of those who desperately need help. The advantage is all one side – agribusiness, millions; folks zero. It is an outrageous allocation of public resources.

Land-grant college research for rural people and places is a sham. Despite occasional expressions of concern from land grant spokesman, a look at the budgets and research reports makes clear that there is no intention of doing anything about the ravages of agricultural revolution. The focus will continue to be on corporate efficiency and technological gadgetry, while the vast majority of rural Americans – independent family farmers, farm workers, small town businessmen and other rural residents – will be left out get along as best they can, even if it means getting along to the city. If they stay in rural America, a rural sociologist will come around every now and the poke at them with a survey. (Hightower 1973: 50-1, 57; cited in Newby, 1980: 19)

Although Hightower's main target was agricultural economics and rural sociology has had a secondary role in his "partisan attack on America's land-grant complex", his study stimulated critical perspectives on issues like "the green revolution, the environmental impacts of conventional farming, the growing grip the agribusiness complex had over the food system, and the perceived role that land-grant universities had in promoting agricultural technology to the detriments of the family farm" with a particular focus on the problematic relation between knowledge and power (Newby, 1980: 19; Carolan, 2012: 4; cf. Buttel, 2001: 166-167). In other words, the "top-down, expert driven model of social change" and social analyses on this ground have both become the target of sharp criticisms (Carolan, 2012: 3). This point is particularly important with respect to the rise of critical agrifood studies, since, as I will try to show below, the *post*- turn in social theory in general and the post-developmental turn in agrifood studies in particular, have centered on the problematization of the relationship between knowledge production and power. I will return to this point in the next subsection.

To summarize, the transition from rural sociology to sociology of agriculture and food at the subdisciplinary level has been based on these criticisms of mainstream rural sociology formulated at three interrelated domains which are discussed above: the

changing socio-historical context of agrifood relations based on capitalist development; the theoretical inadequacies of the subdiscipline and its methodological orientations particularly in relation to its “rural-urban continuum” conception; and the institutional character, which, in addition to its methodological implications, has restricted the scope of the subdiscipline in accordance to state policies and the interests of agrifood capital. Based on these concerns, the “rediscovery of agriculture” as a central problematic played a particular role in the subdiscipline’s scholarly reorientation, which focused “not on supposedly obsolete questions of rural life but instead on agriculture as industrial production” during the late 1970s and early 1980s (Smith, 2011: 1-2).

This emphasis on agriculture, in fact, was also reflected in the name given to this reorientation. During the initial phase of this process, critical students of the subdiscipline used tags like “new rural sociology” or “critical perspectives” to name their orientation, but it was with the name “sociology of agriculture” that this process of transition has become apparent. In this regard, the transition from rural sociology to SAF can be dated to 1982, when Sociology of Agriculture was officially established as an “ad hoc committee” within the institutional frame of *International Sociological Association* (ISA) (Bonanno, 1989). In fact, “the symbolic beginning of SAF coincides” with the annual meeting of RSS in 1976, in which “a large group of young rural sociologists made explicit its intention to approach the study of agriculture and food with fresh intellectual insights and in a way that separated it from traditional Rural Sociology” (Bonanno, 2009: 31-2). Following this occasion, at the Ninth World Congress of Sociology organized by ISA in 1978, this group, which includes names like William Heffernan, William Friedland, Frederick Buttel and Larry Busch as leading figures, “decided to create a permanent organizational structure within the ISA” which “resulted in the constitution of an ad hoc committee whose status formally recognized in 1982 at the Tenth World Congress of Sociology” (Bonanno and Constance, 2007: 34). This reorientation of the subdiscipline, arguably, has accelerated when “the word food was formally added” to the original name of the research group (sociology of agriculture) in 1987, and gained its maturity when the Sociology of

Agriculture and Food has been elevated to the official status of a research committee (RC-40) within the institutional setting of ISA in 1992 (Bonanno, 2009: 32; cf. Bonanno and Constance, 2007).<sup>29</sup>

The choice of ISA as opposed to RSS can also be seen as an attempt to close the gap between rural sociology and general sociology. In this regard, backed by the developments in general sociology, the students of SAF have opposed to rural sociology's closedness to "fresh theoretical insights", particularly through criticizing the concept of rural that is equipped with an *explanatory* power without an adequate theoretical effort:

The issue at stake ... is not the lack of any rural-urban differences in behavior, but the necessity of demonstrating any *causal* link between the concept of "rural" and particular kinds of social action. In the absence of such a link the concept of "rural" becomes sociologically uninteresting, if not spurious. The inductivism which characterizes rural sociology has compounded this problem by taking the differences which have dully been discovered between rural and urban behavior as though they *in themselves* provide a justification for establishing a rural sociology. As an essentially empirical, descriptive term, however, the notion of "rural" is simply incapable of bearing any *explanatory* significance in this way. (Buttel and Newby, 1980b: 8)

Here, the emphasis on agriculture as opposed to rural, arguably, signifies a theoretical break, since it reflects the fact that analytical priority is now given to the analysis of *production relations* as opposed to mainstream rural sociology's emphasis on rural culture as a way of life. This point can also be seen in the fact that during the early 1980s sociology of agriculture was used almost synonymously with *political economy of agriculture* (cf., Buttel 2001). In this regard, Bonanno (1989: ix; emphasis added) differentiates sociology of agriculture, which emerged also as a critique of the "modernization school", from rural sociology in substantial terms as follows:

Sociology of agriculture is not directly interested in the study of rurality. Though rural events may take center stage in some of its studies, its emphasis is on *the totality of processes of production and distribution of food and their*

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<sup>29</sup> The official journal of this Research Committee on Sociology of Agriculture and Food (RC-40) is the *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food* that is published since 1991. Please see: <http://www.ij saf.org/> (last visited on 05.05.2018).

*relationships to society*. Accordingly, sociology of agriculture transcends the confines of rurality, though it does not exclude rurality from its agenda. Furthermore, it should not be considered a separate discipline from sociology. Rather, sociology of agriculture aims to be a substantive area within sociology whose boundaries are set by the specific characteristics of the issues investigated.

In other words, with a strong emphasis on “the totality of processes of production and distribution of food”, which is later termed as *agrifood system*, and also by situating analyses of agrifood relations within the broader scope of sociology, the students of SAF have opened up the literature to the developments in the field of social theory. In this regard, as opposed to inductivism of rural sociology that is discussed above – in Bonnano’s (1989: ix) terms, “logical positivism ... in which reality is often equated with appearance and ... empirical is translated into empiricism” – sociology of agriculture’s “endeavours are based on a large and diverse background which includes neo-Marxism, neo-Weberianism, dialectic and critical theory, sociology of knowledge, and historical sociology” (Bonanno, 1989: x). Within this framework, during the period between the late 1970s and late 1980s “the principal research foci” of sociology of agriculture included the following issues: “the structure of agriculture in advanced capitalism, state agricultural policy, agricultural labor, regional inequality, and agricultural ecology” on the basis of questioning agriculture’s relationship to technology with a particular attention on the increasing use of chemicals and mechanization (Buttel and Newby, 1980: 15).

At this point, it is important to note that the inclusion of *food* to the title of the RC-40 can also be seen as another turning point in terms of SAF’s theoretical orientations, since it signifies a distancing from Marxist approaches that stimulated the analysis of agriculture in the first place. The emergence of sociology of agriculture during the late 1970s and early 1980s was, in fact, mediated “through a variety of passageways”, which include the following:

the appropriation of theoretical tools from the sociology of development and peasant studies (e.g., Goodman and Redclift 1981; deJanvry, 1981), the fortuitous ‘rediscovery’ of a very large classical literature in the political economy and anthropology of agriculture (of Kautsky, Chayanov, and Lenin)

by persons such as Goodman and Redclift (1981) and Theodor Shanin (1987) (see Buttel and Newby, 1980), and the related fortuitous entry of non-rural sociologists (e.g. Howard Newby, Susan Mann, Harriet Friedmann, William Friedland) into rural sociology and the sociology of agriculture (Buttel, 2001:167).

Despite this variety of mediations, however, it is possible to argue that the theoretical coherence of sociology of agriculture was provided by the neo-Marxist wave that flourished during the 1970s:

[T]he 1970s were a period in which dozens of pathbreaking neo-Marxist works, many of which remain influential today were written. From the USA one can say that James O'Connor's *The Fiscal Crisis of the State* (1973) literally helped to revolutionize political sociology, while Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* did so in sociology of work and technology, and Wallerstein's *The Modern World-System* (1974) did so for development studies. The *Journal of Peasant Studies* played the same role in its field of study. (Buttel, 2001: 167)

Given the stimulus by this neo-Marxist wave of the 1970s, the development of sociology of agriculture can also be seen as attempt to eliminate the theoretical gap that is mentioned above between rural sociology and the fields of sociology of development and peasant studies. In this sense, the transition process from rural sociology to SAF was occurring within the broader scope of 'underdevelopment' debates that were facilitated by Marxist approaches of the times. Marxist approaches were particularly influential in the critique of mainstream rural sociology in terms of its essentialist conception of rural-urban differences based on the schematic readings of the process of transition of capitalism discussed above. As Friedland (1982: 590-591) mentions:

Rural society represented an initially weak conceptual approach of some of the founders of sociology. This approached view the transition to capitalism in terms of polarities of societal types that distinguished small-scale, agriculturally based societies from large scale, complex industrial, urban societies.

In that sense, in addition to the empirical studies that led to "the discovery that *gemeinschaftlich* relationships could be found in urban settings" as well, the rediscovery of classical Marxist analysis of agriculture, especially the works of



Kautsky and Lenin, and also Chayanov, played a particular role in the re-reading of rural relations on the basis of situating agricultural production processes in the trajectories of capitalist development (Friedland, 1982: 291; cf. Buttel, 2001). Besides the theoretical insights that it provided, (neo-)Marxism was also answering to the methodological need that was urgently felt by the students of SAF for “structural mode of explanation, which had been lacking in the rural sociological tradition” (Buttel, 2001: 167; cf., Bonanno, 2009; Bonanno and Constance, 2007). It is on this ground that neo-Marxism “set the agenda and asked the most important questions” during the late 1970s and 1980s, though it “never dominated rural sociology per se” (Buttel, 2001: 167).

However, the inclusion of food to the name of this restructuring process in the related literature in the late 1980s was also coincided with the demise of neo-Marxist wave particularly in the field of development studies. The reasons for the decline of the influence of Marxist approaches vary, and I will return to this point in the third and the fourth chapters. Here, the point is that especially with a focus on food relations, the SAF literature has diversified since the late 1980s in terms of its theoretical orientation. This diversification that can also be seen as a theoretical decomposition process – which is followed, I argue, by a recomposition in the form of a post-developmental turn particularly in relation to the agrarian/peasant question formulations – represents another turning point in the literature. The next subsection explores this turning point that has been reflected in the rise of critical agrifood studies.

### **2.3.2. From Peasant Studies to Critical Agrifood Studies**

In the previous subsection, I have argued that the emergence of SAF should be seen as a theoretical break with mainstream rural sociology. The main motive was to problematize agricultural production relations through situating them within the general course of capitalist development, and to reinterpret rural relations on this ground. In that sense, it is possible to argue, the transition at the subdisciplinary level was occurring within the broader scope of development and underdevelopment debates, which dominated the analysis of capitalist relations especially during the

1970s. In this context, particularly the development of sociology of agriculture, which like mainstream rural sociology focused mainly on the rural settings of the “advanced industrial societies”, can also be seen as a reflection of the rise of *peasant studies*. This is so because peasant studies, during the late 1960s and the 1970s, situated the debate within a broader scope and political context by extending the analysis to the agricultural structures of the “Third World” countries (cf., Bernstein and Byres, 2001).

In fact, it is with the peasant studies and particularly petty commodity production formulations therein that the divide between rural/agriculture and urban/industry was reformulated within the question of capitalist development and underdevelopment, and thereby the focus of the analysis was shifted to the sphere of political economy. In this subsection, first, I will briefly explore the main concerns of peasant studies particularly in relation to the agrarian/peasant question debate therein in the form of petty commodity production formulations. Then, I will discuss the rise of critical agrifood studies since the late 1980s as another theoretical rupture in the related literature that has shifted the focus of analysis from the sphere of political economy to the field of politics of knowledge, which, I argue, has been realized in the form of a post-developmental turn in the agrarian/peasant question formulations with the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The rise of peasant studies during the late 1960s and 1970s, based on the concepts like *peasant societies*, *peasant economy*, and *peasant agriculture*, was, in fact, reflecting the increasing interest, both in scholarly and political circles, in the relationship between *peasantry* and *politics*, and the *agrarian structures* of ‘underdeveloped’ countries on this ground. In this regard, Bernstein and Byres (2001: 3-5), in their comprehensive and detailed review of the “themes and approaches” discussed between 1973 and 2000 in the *Journal of Peasant Studies (JPS)*, which, arguably, has been one of the most important conduit of peasant studies, underline three “principal preoccupations” as “the founding moment” of the area.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Terence J. Byres, together with Charles Curwen and Teodor Shanin, was the founder, and joint editor from 1973 to 2000 of the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, which is being published since 1973. Henry

The first “was the effort to understand better the problems and prospects of economic and social development of poorer countries ... in which the ‘peasant is a very essential factor of the population, production, and political power’ as Engels (1970: 457) had remarked of France and Germany some 80 years ago” (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 2). In other words, one of the central concerns of peasant studies was the analysis of agrarian relations in ‘underdeveloped’ regions and countries in relation to the question of capitalist development. In this regard, ‘problems’ like “the increasingly evident difficulties of capitalist development in poor countries with large peasant populations”, and the ‘survival’ of peasantry in these countries as opposed to the related projections on capitalist development were at stake (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 3). These problems were, arguably, the founding concerns of peasant studies not only in terms of their economic, political, social and cultural implications, but also in terms of the theoretical questions that they pose in relation to capitalism itself.

The second major concern was related to those theoretical questions. The analysis of the then contemporary problems of ‘underdeveloped’ countries was, in fact, requiring a broader discussion on the trajectories of capitalist development of these countries in comparison to ‘developed’ ones. In that sense, “exploring and testing the possible contributions to such understanding of knowledge” in issues like the following became important:

- (i) pre-capitalist agrarian change in different parts of the world, (ii) paths of agrarian change in transitions to capitalism in the now developed countries and (iii) the dynamics of agrarian transformation – or lack of transformation – in Latin American, Asian and African experiences of colonialism, and the legacies of those dynamics for subsequent processes of development/underdevelopment. (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 2).

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Bernstein was also joint editor from 1985 to 2000. The arguments summarized here in relation to peasant studies are based on their article, which, on the one hand reviews the three decades of *JPS*, and on the other hand, introduces the new journal, *Journal of Agrarian Change (JAC)*, leading figures of which have been Byres and Bernstein. In fact, I argue, the course of *JPS* after the separation of its long-term editors in 2000, and the founding of *JAC* in 2001 with a specific emphasis on *agrarian political economy* in terms of its theoretical orientation, can be seen as the reflection of the cleavage between post-developmental and political economic understandings of the agrarian question in the related literature during the last two decades.

Third, it is important to note that the commitment to analyzing these issues was also deeply rooted in the political context of those times. In addition to the existence of a “socialist bloc”, the 1960s and the 1970s were characterized by the national liberation movements and anti-imperialist struggles of which ‘peasants’ were one of the main actors. As Bernstein and Byres (2001: 2) mention, “the Vietnamese war of national liberation against US imperialism and the ‘Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution’ and its aftermath in China” were “two of the defining global moments of the 1960s and early 1970s”. It was within this context, and particularly with the stimulus provided by Maoism that the concept of peasant was reinvigorated in relation to theoretical as well as political problematics such as: transition to capitalism, “class struggle in conditions of (emergent) bourgeois democracy”, and “the conditions, strategies and prospects of socialist development” (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 3-4). Hence:

[I]f historical and comparative approaches to issues of development/underdevelopment in poor countries related the study of peasantries to the paths of development of *capitalism* (and their pre-capitalist antecedents), the contemporary ‘peasant question’ (or better ‘peasant questions’) also resonated the concerns of anti-imperialism and transition to *socialism*. (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 2)

It is important to note that the intellectual repertoire to analyze these concerns was provided mainly by Marxism. In the previous subsection, I have mentioned the influence of neo-Marxism in the development of sociology of agriculture and food. In this regard, it can be said that the late 1960s and the 1970s were a period of “intense interest in Marxist ideas” that fueled the debates on the issues mentioned above, and also provided the intellectual context for the development of SAF (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 4). The following list of “the first English translations of important texts that were taken up by the emergent ‘peasant studies’” may help in illustrating this point (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 4):

- The first full translation of Marx’s *Grundrisse* published in 1973;
- Appendix to *Capital* (Volume 1) 1976, which include “Marx’s theorization of the formal and real subsumption of labor by capital”;

- Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1971), *Letters from Prison* (1975) and *Political Writings, 1910-1920* (1977);
- Extracts from Kautsky's *The Agrarian Question* in 1976, full translation of which appeared in English in 1988;
- The Bolshevik debates of the 1920s, such as Preobrazhensky (1965, 1980) and Bukharin (1971);
- Mao Zedung's *Selected Works* and other writings such as Schram (1969, 1974).<sup>31</sup>

In addition to Marxism, another important intellectual and academic stimulus came from the works of figures like Eric Wolf (1966, 1969), Barrington Moore Jr. (1966) and A.V. Chayanov (1966 [1925]), which elevated the term *peasant* to a significant analytical concept in the analysis of agrarian relations with respect to *society, politics* and *economy* (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 4). Wolf's *Peasants* (1966) and *Peasant Wars of Twentieth Century* (1969) were particularly influential in terms of the literature on "peasant societies" and "peasant social structure and its dynamics" (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 4). While Moore's, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (1966) fortified the interest in "peasants and politics", Chayanov's *The Theory of Peasant Economy* (1925), English translation of which appeared in 1966, did so in relation to the debates on "the nature and logic of peasant agriculture" (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 4). Moreover, in addition to these works, James Scott's *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (1976) should also be noted particularly in terms of the analysis of "peasant 'moral community'" (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 4). In fact, their works with *peasant* as the common term in their titles were one of the main factors in designation of the field as *peasant studies* (cf., Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 5).

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<sup>31</sup> In addition to the translation of these texts to English, new journals that were added to "the existing independent socialist journals like *Monthly Review* and *Science and Society* in the USA and *New Left Review* in Britain" were also influential in the debates appeared in the *JPS: Antipode, Capital and Class, Critique of Anthropology, History Workshop, Journal of Contemporary Asia, Race and Class, Radical Sociology, Review of African Political Economy* and *Review of Radical Political Economy* (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 5).

Given these “principal concerns, intellectual sources and terms of references and debate that fueled an emergent and critical ‘peasant studies’”, the 1970s and the 1980s were characterized by an intense literature on the following themes in relation to peasants and agrarian structures: *pre-capitalist formations, transitions to capitalism, colonialism, development and underdevelopment, and the question of socialism* (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 6-36). Within this scope and content, this study argues that the rise of peasant studies – which also provided the ground for the emergence of sociology of agriculture during the late 1970s and early 1980s as it is discussed in the previous subsection – has been a significant move away from mainstream analysis of rural and agrarian relations. In other words, the development of both peasant studies and sociology of agriculture signify a theoretical rupture from the essentialist conceptualizations of rural/agriculture-urban/industry divide, and the conceptions of rural that is abstracted from the totality of capitalist relations.

Though it may appear ironic, it should be noted that one of the most controversial issues of peasant studies has been the concept of *peasant* itself. The controversy has been related to the question of essentialism, which, as discussed above, was characterizing mainstream rural sociology:

At its outset, the ‘peasant studies’ ... confronted the central issue of peasants/peasantry as a general (and generic) social ‘type’: whether there are essential qualities of ‘peasantness’ applicable to, and illuminating, different parts of the world in different periods of their histories, not least the poorer countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa and their contemporary processes of development/underdevelopment. (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 6)

Arguably, the petty commodity production (PCP) debate, which can be seen as the reformulation of classical Marxist agrarian/peasant question within the context of underdevelopment, flourished in this context. In other words, the development of PCP debate can also be seen as a response to this “central issue” of “peasantness”. This is so because, the starting point of the PCP debate, I argue, has been the claim that sociology of agriculture and peasant studies are reproducing the theoretical fallacies of mainstream rural sociology through essentialist understandings of concepts like *family farming, small-scale agriculture* and/or *peasant agriculture* (cf. Aydın, 1986a,

1986b; Ecevit, 1999). In this regard, it is possible to argue that the PCP problematic has been one of the most important issues of the peasant studies, and arguably, the central problematic of the agrarian political economy at least till the late 1980s (cf., Bernstein, 2010; Ecevit, 1999).

At the expense of simplifying the discussions that have a fairly rich content, the PCP problematic can be pointed out as follows: Analysis of distinctive forms and specificities of the capitalist development in agriculture in a way that encompasses their implications for the capitalist society writ large on the basis of the concept of petty commodity production. Here, what makes PCP a theoretical problematic has been its contradictory character with respect to Marxist theories of capitalism. That is to say, although PCP is usually understood as a capitalist “form of production”, the agricultural production processes are organized mainly through non-commodity family/household labor and on the basis of "simple reproduction" (subsistence production), which clearly diverges from a typical capitalist organization in which production process is organized based on wage labor and capital accumulation on the basis of extended reproduction (cf., Ecevit, 1999; 2006-2014).

Within this framework, in contradistinction to the concept of *family farming* that is brought forward by sociology of agriculture in the context of “advanced industrial societies”, and the concept of *peasants/peasantry* that has become prominent in the analysis of the agrarian structures in "underdeveloped" countries, the founding thesis of the PCP conceptualization has been the following: With the capitalist development in agriculture, agricultural producers have begun to realize their production and reproduction processes by leaning towards commodification tendencies and, thus, become petty commodity producers (cf., Bernstein, 1986, 2009; Ecevit, 1999; Aydın, 1986a, 1986b). As Ecevit (1999: 4) states, "the relations of production of petty commodity production are *defined* by the relations of production of the dominant capitalist mode of production". In other words, even though petty commodity producers engage in subsistence production as well as commodity production on the basis of non-commodity family labor, their survival, in terms of both production and

reproduction processes, has become possible only through within the commodification tendencies and patterns (Ecevit, 1999).

From this point of view, the specific contribution of the PCP problematic can be seen as its criticisms towards the concept of *family farming* and/or *peasant farming*. These criticisms that can be pointed out at three levels – (1) in terms of conceptualization of capitalism itself, (2) in relation to the analysis of capitalist agriculture (i.e., the development of capitalism in agriculture), and (3) with respect to the analysis of agrarian classes in connection with the question of transcending capitalism – are still, arguably, part of the contemporary divide in the literature on the agrarian/peasant question. I will return to these criticisms in relation to this point in the fourth chapter. Suffice it here to say that the constitutive claim of the PCP problematic has been the rejection of the concept of peasant as a meaningful analytical tool in the context of capitalism, and in the analysis of capitalist agrifood system. To put it differently, according to these criticisms, the development of capitalism in agriculture has meant a differentiation process among agricultural producers in *class* terms, which precludes the possibility of a conception of “peasants/peasantry as a general (and generic) social ‘type’”. Here it is also important to note that, as opposed to PCP formulations, I argue, the constitutive claim of the post-developmental turn in agrarian/peasant question formulations has been the reinvigoration of peasants/peasantry not only as a concept but also as a political subject in opposition to the capitalist agrifood system. At the core of the main problematic of this study, lies this controversy as I will briefly explore in the next section and analyze in the fourth chapter in detail.

To sum up the debate I conducted, it can be claimed that analyses of rural and agricultural relations which remained marginal up until the 1970s, started to occupy a more central position in both the social theoretical debates and the analyses of capitalism *via* debates revolving around sociology of food and agriculture, the peasant studies and the PCP problematic. The importance of rural and agricultural relations in terms of the analyses of capitalism became more notable through the deepening and accelerating processes of commodification within the neoliberal period. In that sense, through the processes of commodification in particular, that extend well into the recent



years from the 1990s onwards, the expansion of the scope from the debates focused on the PCP predicated upon the relations of production in the analyses of rural and agricultural relations to the debates focused on the circulation of food, can be perceived as another turning point with regards to the relevant literature. This process, which had its reflections at the sub-disciplinary level in terms of the diversification of the studies based particularly on food relations from the late 1980s onwards within the field of sociology of agriculture and food, was also experienced as a process of diversification and differentiation in various areas such as theoretical orientations, methodological strategies, research agendas and political proposals (cf. Buttel, 2001). This study claims that the mentioned processes of diversification and differentiation can be perceived as the rise of critical agrifood studies. I will discuss below the meaning of the critical agrifood studies, with a particular focus on its differences with the peasant studies.

The historical context upon which the rise of critical agrifood studies is based has been the process of neoliberal restructuring of the agrifood system. In line with the variegation of the forms and content of the penetration of capital into the agrifood relations, one of the aspects becoming more prominent from the late 1980s onwards has been the *globalization* and *commodification* of agrifood relations, which previously assumed a local form and characterized mainly by production for subsistence for a considerably long period of time. In relation to this point, developments accelerating and deepening commodification in agrifood relations can be listed as follows (Büke, 2008, 2016, 2017; Büke and Gökdemir, 2010; EBA, 2006-2008):

- *Globalization processes of agrifood relations on the basis of neoliberalism:* basically, the re-regulation of international money and commodity circulations in a way to open up markets of the South to the multinational agrifood corporations.
- *Neoliberal restructuring of the patterns of the relationship between the nation-state and small producers:* basically through privatizations, de-

functionalization of producer organizations and agricultural unions, and restructuring of agrifood policies and subsidy mechanisms in favor of penetration of capital to agrifood relations.

- *The emergence of a new international division of labor*: in which, on the basis of cheap labor as well as cheap nature the global South has shifted its crop design towards labor intensive products like fresh fruit and vegetables.
- *The changing technological infrastructure of agrifood production*: particularly through the developments in areas such as technologies of transportation and storage, biotechnology, substitution, and the recent developments in terms of digitalization of agriculture (e.g., “smart agriculture”).
- *The rise of transnational agro-input and agri-food corporations*, and their increasing hegemony over the upstream (e.g., provision of machinery and other inputs) and downstream (e.g., processing, packaging, circulation, marketing, and consumption processes) relations of agricultural production.
- *The development of super/hyper-markets* as significant actors in the agrifood system, and thereby the increasing role of commercial capital over the production and consumption relations of food.
- *The changing food culture* in line with the capital accumulation processes.
- *Privatization processes in agricultural research*.
- *Intensification of commodification processes in relation to seeds and genetic materials*, particularly in the form of intellectual property rights – which, in addition to the technological developments mentioned above, have significant implications in terms of the (previously) organic (i.e., nature-dependent) character of agriculture and food.
- *The expansion of the processes of contract farming*.
- *The increasing role of women labor in agriculture*, in parallel to the diversification processes of household labor towards non-agricultural income (i.e. “feminization of agriculture”).

- *The increasing financialization of agrifood relations*, which was especially reflected in the rapid increase of food prices in 2008.<sup>32</sup>

On the basis of the analysis of these processes, there have been significant differentiations in the related literature especially since the late 1980s, in terms of approaches and theoretical orientations. For instance, in relation to the analysis of the processes listed above, the most widely debated approaches since the late 1980s, among others, can be listed as follows: *subsistence perspective* (Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen, 2000), a reinvigoration of *Chayanovian perspective* (van der Ploeg, 2013), *actor-network theory* based analysis of agrifood relations (Goodmann and Watts, 1994, 1997), *commodity studies* (Friedland et. al., 1981; Mintz, 1985; Sanderson, 1987; Wells, 1996, DuPuis, 2002; Barndt, 2008), *global value-chain analysis* (Gereffi and Korzeniewicz, 1994; Neilson and Pritchard, 2009), *political economy of food* (Fine, 1994), *agrarian political economy* (Bernstein, 2010), and *food regime perspective* (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; Friedmann, 2005, 2012; McMichael, 2009, 2013).

I argue that the contemporary critical literature on the neoliberal restructuring of agrifood relations – which can also be seen as attempts to overcome the problems of specialization and compartmentalization characterizing mainstream approaches in agrifood studies on the basis of systemic critiques of the “industrial model of agriculture” and capitalist agrifood system in general – can be labeled as *critical agrifood studies* (see Table 2.2 below). Here, it is important to note that there are significant differentiations among the critical perspectives listed above. In fact, these perspectives can be seen as “contenders for scholarly dominance” in the field of agrifood studies (Buttel, 2001: 172). Still, I argue, the possibility of assembling these perspectives under the same roof as critical agrifood studies lies in three interrelated claims that crosscut them.

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<sup>32</sup> These developments, which this study conceives as the forms of *direct penetration of capital to agrifood relations* will be re-visited in relation to the contemporary agrarian/peasant question debate in the fourth chapter.

**Table 2.2 Critical Agrifood Studies: Scope, Characteristic Features and Theoretical Orientation**

Critical Agrifood Studies	
<b>Scope</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capitalist Development ~ Crisis of Capitalism</li> <li>• Capitalist Modernity ~ Crisis of Social Theory</li> <li>• Agrarian/Peasant Question ~ Crisis of Capitalist Agrifood System ~ Agrifood Question</li> </ul>
<b>Characteristic Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematic and comprehensive analysis of agrifood relations</li> <li>• Radical critique of the existing agrifood system</li> <li>• Problematization of agrifood relations within the context of capitalist modernity</li> </ul>
<b>Theoretical Orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critique of political economic understandings</li> <li>• Post-Developmentalism</li> </ul>

The first, as opposed to specialization in mainstream approaches, is the call for a systematic and comprehensive analysis of agrifood relations. This point is particularly important in relation to the compartmentalization and specialization processes on the basis of issues and/or academic disciplines that are characterizing mainstream approaches for the last three decades (cf. Koç et. al., 2012). To put it differently, as food becomes globalized through various socio-political and technical processes, and as it becomes distanced physically from our tables, our knowledge about food also spread among different disciplines and issue/project based discussions. In this respect, there have been various theoretical attempts, as listed above, to counter this tendency towards specialization in agrifood knowledge, with the claim that such an issue/project-based knowledge production limits our understanding of the systemic character of the problems that we are facing today. In this regard, the widespread attention that the concepts pointing out the structural character of the agrifood system

like *industrial model of agriculture*, *agrifood system*, *food regime*, and *commodity chain* have attracted, arguably, is a reflection of this point.

The second is the claim that the contemporary agrifood system, no matter how it is conceptualized, is *unsustainable*, especially when the problems in relation to human health and environment, and also social inequalities that it (re)produces are considered. In other words, the underlying tendency that characterizes the political content of different perspectives is the radical critique of the existing capitalist agrifood system. In this regard, based on this radical critique, we have witnessed the emergence of new discussions around the following themes since the early 1990s (Beznerr-Kerr, 2015): agricultural knowledge and differentiation of farming practices (e.g., organic farming, agroecological farming); the question of ecology, particularly in relation to the “biophysical overrides” that arise from the “industrial model of agriculture” (Weis, 2013); the question of gender inequalities in agricultural production processes as well as in nutrition relations; food policies particularly in relation to concepts like *food security*, *food standards*, and *food quality*; agrifood social movements and alternatives to capitalist agrifood system based on the concepts like *food democracy*, *agrarian citizenship*, and *food sovereignty*.

In parallel to these two points, the third common feature in critical agrifood studies is the claim that the problems of the contemporary agrifood system cannot be reduced to technical inadequacies in terms of production relations and to market inefficiencies in terms of distribution and consumption relations as it is argued by mainstream neoliberal approaches. In other words, one of the constitutive arguments of critical agrifood studies has been the critique of reductionism characterizing mainstream approaches. In contrast with this reductionism, the students of critical agrifood studies have argued that the problems and contradictions of the agrifood system should be analyzed in relation to the problems and contradictions of the capitalist modernity writ large.

Hence, I argue, despite the significant differentiations and variations in their conceptualization of the characteristics of the agrifood system and its problems, those

studies that share these three characteristic features can be seen as part of the field of critical agrifood studies. These three critical points, on which critical agrifood studies have risen, can also be seen as similar with the ground of the peasant studies and the PCP debate therein that dominated the related literature till the late 1980s. However, I argue, the rise of critical agrifood studies has been characterized by a theoretical shift. The main determinant of this shift was the *post-* turn in social sciences, besides the neoliberal restructuring in agrifood relations. The scope expanding from rural sociology to the sociology of agriculture and food, and the theoretical diversification as well as the differentiation extending from the peasant studies to the critical agrifood studies have taken place within this theoretical setting. However, it should be noted that the *post-* turn setting its seal on the 1980s and 1990s, the devastating impact of which was observed, for example, in debates on social classes, was not in effect to the same extent within the debates on agriculture and rural relations. The prominent scholar of the field Frederick H. Buttel, for example, stated (2001: 176):

Unlike the sociology of development in the 1990s, the sociology and political economy of agriculture have avoided the more depoliticizing forms of postmodernity that have proliferated in certain quarters of European environmental sociology (see, for example, Eder 1996; MacNaghten and Urry 1998) and the development studies (e.g., postmodernist post-developmentalism associated with Arturo Escobar and Wolfgang Sachs).

One factor influential in this avoidance of “the more depoliticizing forms of postmodernity” is, arguably, the fact that the Marxist influence in the analysis of agrarian/rural relations came at a later time, during the 1970s and 1980s, when compared to the analysis of class relations in the urban/industrial context. In that sense the 1990s, with respect to the relevant literature, was characterized rather with the problematization of the processes of neoliberalization with particular emphasis on the globalization debates.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> For a critical evaluation of the SAF literature in relation to its position within the globalization debate of the 1990s please see Büke (2008).

Nevertheless, despite the fact that this process provided a relative immunity for sociology of agriculture and political economy of agriculture from the depoliticizing forms of postmodernity, it had implied an early escape from the analysis of the relations of production that occupied the core of PCP problematic. At this point, Ecevit (2006: 341-342) lists the differentiating features of the contemporary literature that is focused more on food relations from the PCP debates as follows: “(a) transnational character of capital accumulation instead of state policies, (b) agrifood policies instead of agricultural policies; (c) industrialization of agriculture instead of continuation of agricultural relations; (d) processing, marketing and distribution relations of food instead of relations of production”. In this respect, it can be claimed that there has occurred a theoretical rupture between the debates from the late 1980s to the mid-2000s on the circulation of food and the debates on the agriculture/peasant issues revolving around the PCP trope (see Büke, 2008).

From the mid-2000s onwards, we witnessed the revitalization of the interest in the agrarian/peasant question.<sup>34</sup> The reactions from agricultural producers, especially from *La Via Campesina* (“Peasant Way”) against the capitalist agrifood system brought the concept of peasant to the fore on the one hand and accelerated the search for alternatives to capitalism in theoretical terms on the other. Within this framework, the issues that marked the peasant studies up until the 1980s, which are mentioned above, were re-addressed in terms of the social character of capitalism and the struggle for overthrowing capitalist system. Still, I argue that the basic tenet providing theoretical directions for the debates on the revitalized agrarian/peasant question was the aforementioned *post-* turn. In other words, the impact of the *post-* turn in social theory became apparent in the agrarian/peasant question debate revitalized on a post-developmental ground from the mid-2000s onwards.

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<sup>34</sup> For the contemporary debates on the agrarian/peasant question please see the following studies: Akram-Lodhi and Kay (2010a, 2010b), Araghi (2009, 2000), Bernstein (2016, 2014), Friedmann (2016), Magdoff *et. al* (2000), McMichael (2016, 2014).

In this regard, I argue, the rise of critical agrifood studies, despite its internal differentiations, has been characterized predominantly with the critique of agrarian political economy, which, arguably, dominated the agrarian/peasant question debate and the related peasant studies till the mid-1980s (cf. Buttel, 2001). It is the claim of this study that the theoretical ground for this critique of the agrarian political economy has been provided by the post-developmental turn in the development studies that was particularly influential during the 1990s. With the post-developmental turn in the agrarian/peasant question debate, especially for the last two decades, it is possible to argue that the contemporary literature on the agrarian/peasant question has been characterized by the divide between ‘Marxist political economy’ and the post-developmental formulations of the agrarian question. The central problematic of this study, which is briefly explored in the following section, is the analysis of this divide itself.

#### **2.4. The Problematic: From *Petty Commodity Production* Debate to *Post-Developmentalist* Understandings of the Agrarian/Peasant Question**

It can be argued that, especially with the turn of the twenty-first century, and with the decline of the hegemony of the concept of globalization in the social sciences, there has been a proliferation of the literature on the question of how to problematize the contemporary agrarian/peasant question so that the possibility of an ecologically and socially just agrifood system can also be strengthened. However, I argue, this proliferation, did not lead to a closure of the aforementioned theoretical gap, but, on the contrary, strengthened it. One of the central arguments of this study is that the underlying feature in the apparent differentiations and shifts in the contemporary critical agrifood studies has been a post-developmental turn, particularly on the basis of the critiques of the Marxian analyses of development in which the agrarian/peasant question debate of the 1960s and 1970s was situated. A critical evaluation of the post-developmental challenge in general will be the main task of the third chapter and its implication for the agrarian/peasant question formulations will be discussed in detail in the fourth chapter. However, in order to make the central problematic of this study



clear, a brief formulation of the post-developmental turn and its implications for the contemporary debate on agrarian/peasant question is necessary here.

It is possible to trace back the history of post-developmentalism to the 1980s, which was characterized by the transition from Keynesianism to neoliberalism. With the claim that the development debate was characterized by an “impasse”, the central challenge posed by the post-developmental turn, especially during the 1990s, has been carrying the debate on development both as a concept and as a set of practice beyond the field of political economy (see Table 2.3 below). This has been done mainly through the problematization of the relationship between knowledge and politics in the case of development on the basis of the question of subjectivity formulated in terms of difference.

**Table 2.3 Post-Developmentalism in terms of Development Studies and Social Theory**

	In terms of Development Studies	In terms of Social Theory
<b>Post-Developmentalism</b> (cf., Escobar, 1995; Rahnama and Bawtere, 1997; Sachs, 1992)	Reconceptualization of development as a discursive construct, as a specific way of thinking and form of knowledge production, as a paradigm, and/or as a myth – as opposed to its conceptions as a socio-economic process, as an issue of technical performance, and/or as a class contradiction	Critique of the theoretical fallacies that are attributed to the modernist tradition such as: universalism, essentialism, reductionism, determinism, functionalism, teleology, abstraction...
	Critique of the Westernizing/modernizing political content of development, which has been realized as an assault on difference	Critique of epistemologies and methodologies that give way to the processes such as technocratization, technicalization, specialization, professionalization...
	A post-developmental call to revalue ‘other’ subjectivities and doings, as opposed to development’s subjectivities and doings	Critique of dichotomies like: modern vs. traditional, urban vs. rural, industry vs. agriculture, culture vs. nature, reason vs. body, human vs. non-human...

In line with the general *post-* turn in social theory, post-developmental critique argued that hitherto critical approaches to development were in search of *development alternatives* while the real need was formulation of *alternatives to development*. The ground for such a critique has been the reformulation of development as the forcible attempt of Euro-Atlantic centers of power to universalize a “Western episteme” that is characterized by certain assumptions on the superiority of the “Western mode of production” and its way of life, whose history, according to the students of post-developmentalism, can be traced back to the period of colonialism and even before.

It is, arguably, on this ground, that the classical agrarian/peasant question debate was started to be considered as guilty of sharing the same theoretical fallacies with ‘modernist’ social thoughts, that is to say reduction of agrifood relations to the question of transition to capitalism, which is considered to be progressive when compared to pre-capitalist and/or non-capitalist modes of production, particularly on the basis of the concept of *the development of productive forces* understood, arguably, on abstract materialist terms. In other words, I argue, the theoretical ground for the proliferation of the studies on the contemporary form of agrarian question with the turn of twenty-first century has been provided by the assumptions of post-developmentalism, and the main aim for these studies has been the reformulation of the concept of *peasantry* with a claim to move beyond the capital-centric and modernist formulations of not only the mainstream approaches but also the critical ones that have been dominated by ‘Marxist political economy’.

The form assumed in agrifood knowledge by the *post-* turn, which was itself framed in a radical critique of modernity in general and Marxism in particular, has been the critique of political economic analyses of agrifood relations. In this respect, the basic critique directed against the PCP formulations has been that the literature could not overcome the boundaries of the developmentalist perspective which conceived subsistence farming and petty commodity producers as reflections of “backwardness”, to the extent that it reduced the problem to identification of the obstacles against capitalist development. Hence, it can be posited that the theoretical orientation of the critical trends in the analyses of agriculture and food is post-developmentalism. To put

in other words, the debates on contemporary agrarian/peasant question literature is dominated by approaches that criticize Marxist political economic analyses on the basis of the radical critique of the concept of development.

Within this framework, fundamental criticisms of critical agrifood studies against the analysis of agriculture and rural within the scope of peasant studies and based on the PCP problematic can be summarized as such:

- Political economic analyses which became increasingly dominant until the late 1980s and that were theoretically inspired by Marxism, despite grounding themselves on an objection to the modernization approaches were not devoid of problems characteristic of modernist schools. The main symptom of turning into what you criticize was to be found in situating the agricultural/rural issues within the question of capitalist development.
- PCP debate within peasant studies, could not become free of the methodological constraints of structuralism while remaining limited to the nation-state level in terms of the unit and level of analysis.
- Analyses based on elaborations of relations of production, development of the forces of production, formation of wage labor in agriculture remained not as critiques of capitalist social relations but rather critiques of underdevelopment due to the belief in capitalist development as such. In this respect, peasantry and agricultural/rural relations were conceived mainly as symptoms of “backwardness” and handled in capital-centric theoretical terms in a not so dissimilar fashion to the modernization approaches.

Based on these critiques, post-developmental emphases and arguments that are highlighted in critical agrifood studies can be summarized as follows:

- The analysis of capitalist agrifood system is first and foremost related to the debates on the relation between knowledge and politics, rather than political economy *per se*. The *development issue*, which provides the larger frame for agricultural and rural analyses, rather than being an economic/technical

process, is related to a particular mode of thinking and knowledge production. Therefore, the concept of development should be revisited as a discursive construct, paradigm and a myth. In this respect, the analyses of agrifood relations should be based on a critique of modernist theoretical fallacies (e.g. universalism, essentialism, rationalism, reductionism, determinism, teleology and so on) intrinsic to the concept of development. Not doing so inevitably leads to the reproduction of the same fallacies.

- The analysis of agrifood relations should be based on the acknowledgement of the transnational character of capital accumulation rather than being limited to the nation- state level and focusing on agriculture/rural relations. This should also rest on the critique of Eurocentric modernizing/Westernizing modes of knowledge production, which still shapes the processes of capital accumulation.
- Scholars should revisit the industrialization of agriculture, the development of the forces of production and formation of wage labor in agriculture, against the background of the destruction of environment, observable particularly in global warming and climate change. Abandoning the obsession with productivity, which can also be seen as an extension of the idea of progress based on modernity, the political aspects and significance of agricultural production and peasant practices in terms of providing an alternative to the capitalist agrifood system should be emphasized. Peasantry is not an issue of backwardness and should be acknowledged as a political subject reframed in due course.

These criticisms that reoriented the agrifood studies both in theoretical and political terms should also be grasped as the reflection of the divide between *political economic approaches*<sup>35</sup> and *post-developmental approaches*.<sup>36</sup> The basic problematic of this

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<sup>35</sup> For the political economic approaches, the following can be given as examples: commodity and value chains analyses (Barndt, 2008; Bonanno et al., 1994; Friedland, 1984; Neilson and Pritchard, 2009), agrarian political economy (Bernstein, 2009), and studies on the political economy of food (Fine, 1994).

<sup>36</sup> The reflection of post-developmental theoretical orientation in agrifood studies can be traced in the following: Chayanovian approaches (van der Ploeg, 2013), subsistence perspective (Mies and

study is this mentioned divide itself, re-weaved around the question of defining agrarian/peasant question in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this regard, one of the central arguments of this study is that both sides of the divide reduce Marxism to political economy, whereas Marxism transcends the field of political economy as a *critique* of political economy as such and as a critical theory of society. I will provide in the following sections and the chapter, the details of the argument, which is presented as an outline here.

I should also note my contention that the theoretical orientations and emphases I referred to and listed do not reflect a richness in itself of the various positions within the relevant literature. It is relatively hard to encounter these orientations and emphases in such sharpness summarized here. The main reason should be sought in the dominance of empiric and commodity/product-based studies rather than theoretical debates within the field of agrifood studies. In other words, though there has occurred a revitalization of debates around agrarian/peasant question from the mid-2000s onwards, it is hard to argue that the analyses on neoliberal restructuring in agrifood studies have been questioned with respect to their theoretical results and implications. In that sense as well, my attempt to sharpen these orientations and emphases that I believe to be embedded in critical agrifood studies, is also a call for theoretical discussion much needed.

## **2.5. Concluding Remarks: The Organization of the Rest of the Study**

The main aim of this chapter has been introducing the central problematic of this doctoral dissertation. In this regard, firstly, I have discussed the broader scope of the study that is situating the trajectory of agrifood relations and the related debates within the context of capitalist modernity and the related literatures. In relation to this point, I have argued that agrifood relations occupied a marginal position especially till the 1970s with respect to development of both social theory and analyses of capitalist

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Bennholdt-Thomsen, 2000), agrifood studies based on actor-network theory (Busch and Juska, 1997; Goodman and Watts, 1997); food regime analyses (McMichael, 2013), and agroecological perspectives (Rosset and Altieri, 2017).

social relations. In addition to the problems arising from the capitalist agrifood system itself, the marginalization of agrifood relations in social theoretical terms, I have argued, has its roots in the orthodox-modernity based schools of sociology as well as mainstream rural sociology which apparently developed as a reaction to them. At the core of this marginalization has been a schematic reading of the processes of transition to capitalism and a particular conception of capitalist social relations. I have argued that the common ground of both classical sociology and mainstream rural sociology can be pointed out as essentialism characterizing their conceptions of the dichotomies like rural-urban, agriculture-industry, nature-culture, and non-human-human. This is so simply because while the former valued the second terms of these dichotomies the latter privileged the first ones without questioning the theoretical ground they are formulated. As opposed to these mainstream understandings of rural/agrarian relations and other difficulties in thinking agrifood relations in their totality in a systematic way, I have argued that a theoretical discussion on agrifood relations is necessary in relation to three entwined tasks: (1) situating agrifood relations within the trajectory of capitalism and the related debates within the literature on capitalism, (2) situating the debates on the capitalist agrifood system within the broader scope of social theory that is characterized by the modernity-postmodernity divide, (3) analyzing the theoretical reorientation of the related literature reflected as the rise of critical agrifood studies, which can be observed particularly in the form of a divide between political economic and post-developmental understandings in relation to the agrarian/peasant question.

Within this scope, secondly, I have provided a review of the related literature of this study. In that section, I have argued that the development of peasant studies and petty commodity production debate therein during the 1960s and 1970s, and the emergence of sociology of agriculture and food at the disciplinary level in the late 1970s and early 1980s should be seen as a theoretical break with mainstream analyses of rural and agrarian relations. These literatures, arguably, put forward two major problematics through situating agrifood relations within the trajectories of capitalist development: the capitalist character of agricultural relations and structures, and the social/political character of capitalism itself. In that sense these literatures, I have pointed out, shifted

the focus of analysis to the sphere of political economy by reformulating the dichotomies mentioned above within the question of capitalist development and underdevelopment, and by prioritizing the analysis of agricultural production relations in analytical terms. In relation to this point, I have emphasized that the intellectual sources of the development of peasant studies and the SAF literature were provided mainly by Marxism that was particularly influential in the second half of the 1960s and throughout the 1970s. It is within the historical and intellectual contexts that are discussed in the third section of this chapter that agrifood relations have started to become a significant subject matter, both in substantial and theoretical terms, in relation to social theory and analyses of capitalist relations.

Following this reading of the related literature, I have argued that the rise of critical agrifood studies since the late 1980s in relation to the neoliberal restructuring of the capitalist agrifood system should be seen as another theoretical break in the related literature. In relation to this point, thirdly, I have briefly discussed the central problematic of this study. As it is discussed in the literature and problematic sections of this chapter, in addition to the historical context characterized by the globalization processes on neoliberal terms, the rise of critical agrifood studies has been facilitated by the *post-* turn in social theory. The characteristic form of the *post-* turn in the related literature on agrifood relations, I have argued, has been post-developmentalism, which can be observed particularly in the agrarian/peasant question formulations since the mid-2000s. With the help of the theoretical tools provided by the post-developmental understandings, this study argues, the students of critical agrifood studies have shifted the focus of analysis from the field of political economy to the sphere of politics of knowledge, and from the analysis of agricultural production relations to the agrifood system writ large with a particular emphasis on the relations between knowledge and power. To put it differently, I have argued that the contemporary literature on agrarian/peasant question is characterized by a divide between political economic and post-developmental understandings. On this ground, the central problematic of this doctoral thesis has been formulated as the theoretical analysis of this divide itself. With respect to this formulation, the central

claim of this study is that the problem with the both sides of this divide is the reduction of Marxism to political economy, which, in fact, is a critical theory of society. In other words, this study can be seen as an attempt to reformulate the agrarian/peasant question as agrifood question through situating itself within the contemporary Marxism in social theoretical terms, particularly within the current that reformulates Marxism as a critical theory of society as opposed to those reducing it to political economy.

Based on the arguments summarized above, the following third chapter is devoted to the critical evaluation of post-developmentalism in general. This chapter will also provide the theoretical ground for a detailed analysis of the divide in the agrarian/peasant question formulations, which is the main task of the fourth chapter.



## CHAPTER 3

### **CRITICAL EVALUATION OF POST-DEVELOPMENTALISM: BRINGING MARXISM BACK IN TO THE DEVELOPMENT DEBATE**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter I have argued that the related literature on agrifood relations has been characterized by various shifts and differentiations particularly since the late 1980s onwards. I have pointed out that these shifts and differentiations can be brought together as the rise and development of critical agrifood studies. As it is discussed in the second chapter, one of the defining features of the theoretical shift from peasant studies to critical agrifood studies has been the rethinking of the concept of development, which arguably has led to post-developmental formulations of agrarian/peasant question. In other words, the reorientation of the related literature on agrifood relations has been, in a way, centered on the reconsideration of the concept of development. Here, the concept of development played a significant role, arguably, for it has provided the mediating link between conceptions of agrifood relations and the problematization of capitalist social relations writ large as well as the reorientation of social theory on the basis of the *post-* turn. It is within this framework that a critical evaluation of the contemporary debates on the concept of development becomes a necessary task for this study as well. However, it should be mentioned that there are two main limitations of this evaluation, which are arising from the main aim and the limits of this study.

The first limitation of the discussions provided throughout this chapter is related to the scope. Rather than a comprehensive review of the related literature on development, here, only critical approaches are taken into account. Furthermore, rather than a

detailed and comparative analysis of critical approaches that vary significantly among themselves, the literature is presented here as a cleavage between political-economic perspectives and post-developmental approaches. This is so mainly because, there is such a divide that becomes apparent in the theoretical assumptions at higher levels of abstraction of these two different schools, as I will try to make it clear below. Moreover, the other reason for such a reading of the development literature is related to the post-developmental turn characterizing critical agrifood studies. As elaborated briefly in the previous chapter, the contemporary debate on the agrarian/peasant question is characterized by the divide between political economic and post-developmental understandings that can be seen as a corollary to the divide in the development literature itself. In other words, in accordance with the central problematic of this study, the discussion on the concept of development provided here is also centered on the divide between political economic and post-developmental conceptions of development.

The second limitation with respect to the discussions provided in this chapter is related to the content. The post-developmental turn in agrarian/peasant question formulations has been centered particularly on the critique of the agrarian political economy, which has been dominated mainly by schools that are influenced by Marxism. To put it in a different way, the transition from peasant studies to critical agrifood studies has, in fact, meant the expansion of the critiques of mainstream schools of sociology and rural sociology in terms of their theoretical fallacies (like essentialism, universalism, reductionism, etc.) to Marxist and Marxian approaches via the *post-* turn in social theory. In other words, if the main targets of peasant studies in its criticisms were orthodox-modernity based schools of sociology and mainstream rural sociology, then, I argue, in addition to mainstream approaches, political economic understandings and Marxism have also become the targets of critical agrifood studies. In parallel to this point, if the intellectual sources of peasant studies were provided mainly by Marxism, then the theoretical repertoire of critical agrifood studies has been fueled mainly by the *post-* turn in social theory.

Since the central problematic of this study is the analysis of this theoretical shift in the agrarian/peasant question debate, the analysis of the post-developmental critique of the concept of development provided in this chapter is limited to the issues that are related to the discussions that will be provided in the fourth chapter in relation to the post-developmental formulations of the agrarian/peasant question. This is also why the influences of neo-Marxist and, arguably more importantly, feminist schools of thought on the reconsideration of the concept of development as a question of knowledge are not elaborated here.<sup>37</sup> That is to say neo-Marxist and especially feminist schools have arguably played a significant role in the emergence of post-developmental critique, however since the archeology of post-developmentalism is beyond the scope of this study they are not discussed here.

In this regard, a critical evaluation of post-developmentalism is pursued here particularly in order to explore the theoretical standpoint of this study, namely *contemporary Marxism*, that is to say Marxism understood not as a form of political economy but as a *critical theory of society* on the basis of critique of political economy *as such*. In short, both the scope and the content of this chapter are shaped by the central problematic and the theoretical standpoint of this study.

Given these limitations, it is possible to argue that despite significant varieties and commonalities in and among themselves, critical approaches to *development* can be grouped into two broad categories: one that sees development *as a strategy of capital* (in extreme versions as *the strategy of capital*), and the other that sees development *as a discourse of modernity* (in extreme versions as *the discourse of modernity*). While the former can be brought together as political economic perspectives, the latter can be seen as part of post-developmentalism. I argue that, besides their significant contributions in terms of deciphering power relations that surround the idea and practice of development, these two currents of thought share a common limitation: that is the lack of, and at best, one-sided understanding of the subjectivities (i.e., capital *or* modernity as *the* subject of history) that enabled the rise and fall of development as an

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<sup>37</sup> I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Ayşe Gündüz Hoşgör for drawing my attention on this point.

idea and practice. Arguably, it is this lack of and/or one-sided conception of subjectivity that made it possible for post-structuralist/post-modernist critiques of development to associate development with modernity that is considered as the process of unfolding of *power/reason*, rather than as product of a contentious process. That is to say, the problem with this understanding of development and modernity is that it reduces critical reason of modernity to power, and modernization processes to the political and theoretical claims of the “modernization school” and/or developmentalist understandings.

Similarly, it is possible to argue that the critiques of development on the basis of its conception as an interventionist strategy of capital, fail to see capital as a relational category (i.e. capital as a social relation) embodying inherent contradictions and conflicts in itself. That is to say, in this case, development (*and* underdevelopment) is reduced to the unfolding of *laws of motions of capital*, which are conceptualized mainly from the standpoint of political economy. In other words, while modernity and development appear as almighty categories in post-developmental approaches, capital and development play the same almighty role in understandings of development in political economic perspectives. The central problem, I argue, that leads to this common limitation has been the problematic conception of contradiction(s) that characterize development in particular, and capitalism in general, inherent in these two opposing critical schools. In relation to this problem, I argue that Marxism, understood not as a form of political economy as it is conceived by both of these schools, but as a critical theory of society through the critique of political economy, can provide us a way out of the contemporary dilemma of the debate on development.

When the history of development debate is considered, a critical evaluation of these two currents of development critiques, on the basis of their understandings of contradiction(s) and subjectivity/ies can also be seen as a timely attempt. The capital-based understandings and critiques of development that were hegemonic in critical circles during the late 1960s and the 1970s have been replaced by post-structuralist/post-modernist critiques, arguably best reflected by *post-developmental*

approaches, since the 1990s onwards. Although post-developmental approaches still dominate critical studies in development, these have been in retreat since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Among others, one of the underlying reasons for this retreat has been the multifaceted crisis of capitalism reflected in economies, politics, environment, climate, food, energy, etc., *and* the failure of critical understandings and oppositional movements in producing a large-scale and a sustainable alternative as an answer to this crisis. This multifaceted crisis – and a dearth of alternatives – calls for a return to structural understandings of social relations in the field of development. In other words, there is now a tendency not only in the field of development but also in the broader context of social sciences to reconsider the 19<sup>th</sup> century debates in light of the new developments in the history of capitalism and modernity (Makki, 2014). By the 19<sup>th</sup> century debates, I mean the interrogations, whether in a positive or negative way, of capitalist social relations as a totality. In other words, the central issue that characterized especially the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which also provided the ground for the first three quarters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the question of social change (in the form of reform) and transformation (in the form of revolution) directly in relation to the emerging social problems of *capitalism* itself (cf., Clarke, 1992).

This tendency, however, is characterized by the mediation of critical insights provided especially by the *post*- turn in its various forms like post-structuralism, post-modernity, post-coloniality, post-Marxism, and post-feminism. To put it differently, there is now an opportunity to reconsider the value of the critiques of development on a more structural<sup>38</sup> basis with the help of critical insights and contributions provided by the *post*- debates. In that sense, I argue, a simple return back to the capital-based critiques of development of the 1960s and the 1970s is neither feasible nor desirable. This chapter attempts to seize such an opportunity for revitalizing 19<sup>th</sup> century debates in order to find sustainable, large-scale alternatives for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In other words, through a focus on and a critical evaluation of post-developmental approaches, particularly in terms of their understandings of contradictions and subjectivities, this

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<sup>38</sup> At this point, it is important to dissociate structural analysis from structuralism. I will return to this point in the fourth section of this chapter in relation to critique of structural Marxism.

chapter tries to enrich the ground for conceptualizing capitalist social (re)production and contemporary forms of its contradictions.

In addition to this broader scope of the debate, and more importantly, as it is mentioned above, the main aim of focusing on the shift from developmentalism to post-developmentalism, and a critical evaluation of post-developmental arguments is the relation of post-developmental arguments to critical agrifood studies. It is one of the central arguments of this doctoral dissertation that critical agrifood studies is characterized by the underlying post-developmental tendencies, arguably, best reflected in the contemporary formulations of the agrarian/peasant question, and alternatives formulated as opposed to “modern/industrial model of agriculture” on the basis of concepts like food sovereignty, food democracy and agrarian citizenship.<sup>39</sup> This makes it a must to come to grips with the theoretical challenge posed by post-developmental critique in its broader scope as well. It is this task that this chapter deals with.

With that aim, the next section of the chapter will explore the rise of the concept of post-development and its distinguishing features that bring various scholars from different perspectives together under the rubric of post-development. I argue that both the strengths and the weaknesses of the post-developmental critique lie in these distinguishing features, namely (1) conception of *development as colonization of minds*; (2) conception of *development as abstraction and obliteration of social and ecological differences*; and based on these two critiques (3) a call for a post-development age on the basis of *revaluing difference, other subjectivities and doings*.

This elaboration of the distinguishing features and the strength of post-developmental approaches, however, will lead us to a discussion on how contradictions are formulated and problematized in post-developmental approaches so that they end up with a one-sided understanding of subjectivities reflected in their

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<sup>39</sup> A critical evaluation of the underlying post-developmental tendencies in the critical agrifood studies and their formulation of contemporary agrarian question will be the main issue of the fourth chapter.

conceptualizations of immanent contradictions of development and capitalism as mutually exclusive categories and (reversed) dichotomies. Hence, in the third section, in parallel to the three distinguishing features of post-developmental approaches, the problematic conceptualization of contradictions in post-developmental approaches will also be examined at three levels: (1) the conception of *development as a Western construct as opposed to a capitalist construct*; (2) the conception of *development as a closed system of totality*; and as a result of these two problems (3) a *limited understanding of difference and construction of one-sided subjectivities* that limit our search for “alternatives to development”.

In the fourth section, I will argue that bringing Marxism back in to the center of the debate via the mediation of *post-* critiques (i.e. contemporary Marxism), can provide us an opportunity to go beyond the reified sphere of capitalist knowledge production and the politics formulated on this ground that is characterized by mutually exclusive categories, binary oppositions and one-sided subjectivities. There, I will argue that the post-developmental critique, in its attempt to dismantle the apparently rational and natural character of the concept of development, is much closer to the spirit of Marx understood not as a critical political economist but as a critic of political economy. However, this attempt remains partial and inadequate since the students of post-developmentalism leave the contradictions of the capitalist system intact.

Contrary to the post-developmental critique, this study argues that development is nothing else than *capitalist* development, and the problems of the *rationality* of development and/or *developmentalist rationality* have their roots not in a supposed Western/Euro-Atlantic rationality, but in the *irrational rationality* and/or *objective irrationality* of capitalist social relations of (re)production. On this ground, I will discuss the implications of this formulation of development for the concept of development as well as for its post-developmental and political economic critiques in the fourth section. Overall, the main aim of this chapter is to provide the outlines of the theoretical standpoint of this study in relation to the development debate, which will also guide us in the discussions on the agrarian/peasant question of the neoliberal era that is going to be pursued in the fourth chapter.

### 3.2. The Rise of the Concept of Post-Development and its Contours

Although post-developmental approaches gained ascendancy in the 1990s, their roots lie in the 1980s in a period characterized by “the impasse of development” (Booth, 1994; cf. Schuurman, 2014).<sup>40</sup> Following the ‘golden years’ of development that started after the Second World War and lasted until the 1970s, the practice and concept of development started to lose its power, particularly due to the long-lasting crises of capitalism. The failure of “the development project” (McMichael, 2008) to deliver its basic promises to humanity – like *material well-being*, *social justice*, *economic growth*, *personal blossoming*, and *ecological equilibrium* (Rist, 1997) – became apparent in the 1970s and led to sharp criticisms of development as a set of ideas and practices. It was not only mainstream schools of thought on development like the modernization school and Keynesian economics, but also critical understandings of development like Marxist and neo-Marxist schools that have had their shares of these sharp criticisms.

When seen in retrospect, it is possible to argue that two different paths emerged out of this impasse: the “neoliberal right” and its neoliberal critique of development, and the “cultural left” and its post-developmental critique of development (Hart, 2001). Those who still believe in the core of the idea of development in terms of *progress* in the form of *economic growth*, blamed Keynesian formulations of development for the failure and set to work to shape the world on the basis of neoliberalism and the liberal conception of globalization. While neoliberalism and the “globalization project” (McMichael, 2008) were becoming the new hegemon, the other path started to formulate a total rejection of the idea of development with the claim that it represents “not simply an instrument of economic control over the physical and social reality of Asia, Latin America and Africa”, but more importantly “the primary mechanism

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<sup>40</sup> The impasse of development is generally discussed in the literature as the impasse of the development debate, and particularly used for the impasse of the critiques of development referring to Marxist, neo-Marxist, and Marxian approaches (Booth, 1994; Escobar, 1995b; Esteva, 2010). It is also possible to extend the scope of the impasse into the mainstream approaches and the practices of development during the 1970s and 1980s. Here, the term impasse is used in this broader sense to designate the transitional period from Keynesian welfare politics (“development project”) to neoliberalism (“globalization project”) (McMichael, 2008).



through which the Third World has been imagined and imagined itself, thus marginalizing or precluding other ways of seeing and doing” (Escobar, 1995b: 206).

Marxism, during this period, was arguably paralyzed and pushed to a defensive position by ideological attacks from liberals following the collapse of the Soviet type of socialism, by theoretical criticisms formulated on the basis of the rise of East Asian tigers, and more importantly by methodological and epistemological critiques coming from postmodernism, i.e. the *zeitgeist* of the 1980s (Rosenberg, 2000).<sup>41</sup> For the postmodernists, Marxism was guilty of reproducing Euro-centric views of *progress* and *necessity*, the methodological reflections of which have been *essentialism*, *reductionism*, and *determinism* (cf. Booth, 1994). In short, if the counterpart of the Keynesian developmentalist era was Marxism and Marxian understandings in their various forms, it has been post-developmentalism in close connection to other various forms of *post-* approaches that played a similar role as the counterpart of the neoliberal globalization era.<sup>42</sup>

Given this historical context, what are the distinguishing features of post-developmental understandings, so that we can bring different scholars from different perspectives together under the rubric of post-development? The short answer to this question, in Escobar’s words (1995b), is the transition from a search for “development alternatives” to “alternatives to development”, not only in a methodological and epistemological sense but also in political terms.<sup>43</sup> In other words, the core of the post-

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<sup>41</sup> It should be noted that the crisis of Marxism, which appeared particularly in the 1980s, has its roots also in the problems of traditional/orthodox Marxism itself. I will return to this issue of the crisis of Marxism in the fourth section of this chapter.

<sup>42</sup> This point is important in the sense that, if it is possible to criticize Marxist and Marxian approaches for strengthening the idea of development by sharing the implicit idea of progress, as post-developmental scholars do (e.g.: Esteva, 2010: 7), it is also possible to criticize post-developmentalism in terms of strengthening the idea of neoliberalism and neoliberal globalization by sharing an uncritical engagement with the concept of civil society and “antipathy to the state”, by deploying a similarly “crude conceptions of power”, and by invoking “certain sorts of populisms” (Hart, 2001: 650-51).

<sup>43</sup> In fact, problematizing the very distinction between epistemology and politics has been one of the central characteristics of the *post-* turn in general, with the claim that epistemological choices are themselves historical products and has “political consequences” (Escobar, 2000: 12).

developmentalist critique is the idea that hitherto existing approaches (especially the critical ones) were, at best, in search of a “better development”, which, according to post-developmental critique, means an explicit or implicit submission to the very idea of development. Rather, what we need, according to these accounts, is to reformulate development as the very source of the problem as a Western/Euro-Atlantic construct that has its historical roots in modernity, colonialism, and even before.

On this ground, it is possible to argue that post-developmental critique – as a simultaneous attempt to *deconstruct* development and *reconstruct* alternatives to it – has at least three distinguishing features: (1) a conception of development as *colonization of minds*, and hence colonization of reality; (2) a conception of development as a war waged against *difference* and *diversity*; and based on these two central criticisms of development, (3) a conception of post-development as an endeavor to revalue *difference* and *subjectivities* other than those that “development” has been trying to create.<sup>44</sup> I argue that the very weaknesses as well as the strengths of post-developmental critique lie in these characteristic features of post-developmental thinking. A return to a Marxist analysis in the field of development should consider seriously not only the weaknesses of this school, as is usually done (cf. Kiely, 1995, 1999; Peet, 1997), but more importantly its strengths. To that aim, each of these three features is briefly reviewed in the following pages, with an emphasis on the first aspect, as the other two features are arguably implicit in it.

### 3.2.1. Development as Colonization of Minds

Writing in 1992, Sachs opens up the edited book *The Development Dictionary* with an assertive claim: “The last forty years can be called the age of development. This epoch

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<sup>44</sup> This discussion of the distinguishing features of the post-development school is mainly based on the review of three works that are considered to be the founding texts of post-developmental critique (cf., Ziai, 2007a; Escobar, 2000): *The Development Dictionary* edited in 1992 by Wolfgang Sachs; the seminal work of Escobar titled *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* that was published in 1995; and *The Post-Development Reader* edited by Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree and first published in 1997.

is coming to an end. The time is ripe to write its obituary”.<sup>45</sup> Here, what is arguably most important is the conception of the end of the age of development not in terms of its failure as a “technical performance”, or as “class conflict”, but rather “development as a particular cast of mind” (Sachs, 2010: xvi). Here, we also find one of the most important distinguishing features of post-developmental thinking formulated in Sachs’ words (p. xvi): “[D]evelopment is much more than a just socio-economic endeavor; it is a perception which models reality, a myth which comforts societies, and a fantasy which unleashes passions.” This conception of development as a perception that “models reality” can also be seen in Rahnema and Bawtree’s *The Post-Development Reader*, which is also considered as one of the founding texts of “the post-development school”. In their introduction to the book, Rahnema and Bawtree (1997: xvi) formulate development as a “paradigm”, which is formulated as “the sum of the assumptions underlying the concept, and the beliefs or the world-view it both prescribes and proscribes.”

One of the critical points here is that by conceptualizing development as a cast of mind, or as a paradigm, and by the juxtaposition of the terms like *myth*, *metaphor*, and *belief* next to it, post-developmental approaches carried the debate on development beyond the field of political economy that has been dominated mainly by Marxism and Marxian approaches (Makki, 2014). Based on radical critiques of modernity provided by *post-* approaches in different forms, the students of post-development changed the very question related to development from “how can we do development better?” to “why, through what historical processes, and with what consequences did Asia, Africa and Latin America come to be “invented” as “the Third World” through discourses and practices of development?” (Escobar, 2007: 19). It is with this change of the very question of development that post-development signifies a radical break with

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<sup>45</sup> After almost two decades, when writing a preface for the new edition of the book in 2009, it seems Sachs has changed his mind, and thinks that development is continuing its life in the form of globalization: “Development, in short, became denationalized; indeed, globalization can be aptly understood as development without nation-states.” Indeed, it is interesting to compare his preface written in 2009, and his introduction written in 1992 in terms of changes and continuities in his conception of (post-)development.

“development alternatives”, and a transition to “‘alternatives to development’, that is, a rejection of the entire paradigm” (Escobar, 1995b: 209).

Arguably, it is Escobar (1995a, 1995b, 2000, and 2007) who provides an understanding of development as colonization of minds in its most sophisticated form, and with its most explicit reference to post-structuralist understandings in the sense that *colonization of minds* goes hand in hand with the *colonization of reality* through institutionalization of development discourse and production of certain types of objects of analysis and subjectivities in line with it. In his study titled *Encountering Development* – widely considered to be a seminal work in post-development studies – Escobar (1995a: 10, emphasis added) proposes a formulation of development:

as a historically singular experience, the creation of *a domain of thought and action*, by analyzing the characteristics and interrelations of the three axes that define it: the forms of knowledge that refer to it and through which it comes into being and is elaborated into objects, concepts, theories, and the like; the system of power that regulates its practice; and the forms of subjectivity fostered by this discourse, those through which people come to recognize themselves as developed or underdeveloped. The ensemble of forms found along these axes constitutes *development as a discursive formation*, giving rise to an efficient apparatus that systematically relates forms of knowledge and techniques of power.

It is clear that there are significant differentiations among the post-developmentalists thinkers. Conceptualization of development as a discursive formation (Escobar, 1995a) is, arguably, something different from conception of development as a paradigm (Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997), or as a perception (Sachs, 2010; Esteva, 2010). However, what is common to all is that by reformulating development beyond the field of political economy, post-developmentalists critiques, in their various forms, have brought *knowledge* and *knowledge production* into question. At the expense of over simplification of the *post-* critiques of modernity, it can be noted that by situating the idea of development within the historical and intellectual trajectories of modernity, post-developmentalists approaches made it possible to criticize the concept of development and the associated knowledge production, in terms of the theoretical critiques of modernity formulated on the basis of its ‘fallacies’ like universalism,

rationalism, reductionism, essentialism, determinism, teleology, etc..<sup>46</sup> Universalizing and reductionist characteristics of development knowledge is brought forward especially with the critique of the temporal idea of progress in the form of *economic growth* that is often explicit in developmentalist approaches. In that sense, while formulating development as a specifically post-WWII phenomenon in its form, post-developmental approaches emphasized the continuity between the development discourse and the colonial discourse in terms of the content.<sup>47</sup> That is to say: representing the “Euro-Atlantic civilization” (Sachs, 2010: xi) as the most progressive stage in the human history, and asserting that the rest (“under-developed”, “Third World”, “developing countries”, “the South”, and the like) can overcome their so-called ‘backwardness’ only by following the Western path. In other words, for post-developmental approaches, from the very start “development’s hidden agenda was nothing else than the Westernization of the world” (Sachs, 2010: xviii). With this general critique, post-developmental approaches demonstrated how theories, concepts<sup>48</sup>, and objects of analysis<sup>49</sup> are (re-)constructed in various fields of knowledge production, in accordance with the Euro-centric reference point. In short, “a critical stance with respect to established scientific knowledge” (Escobar, 1995b: 209) is one

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<sup>46</sup> Esteva (2010), for instance, traces the intellectual roots of development as a perception back to the second half of the eighteenth century in which the transfer of the biological metaphor of development (e.g. growth and development of plants and animals) to the social sphere occurred. One of the most ambitious figures, in that sense, is arguably Rist (1997) who traces the historical origins of the development idea back to Aristotle and the Antiquity.

<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that the continuity of colonialist discourse in terms of linear understandings of history, and a conception of the West as the measure of progress does not undermine the significance of the differences between developmentalism and colonialism, such as: the hegemonic role of the US in the new historical conditions characterized by decolonization and the Cold War; the rise of science and technology that are supposed to be universal and non-ethnocentric, as the measure of progress; transition from transitive usage of the term civilization to the intransitive usage of the term development; the equation of progress with economic growth, etc. In that sense, post-developmental approaches usually starts the age of development with “US-President Truman’s ‘bold new program’ announced on January 20, 1949, which defined Africa, Asia and Latin America as ‘underdeveloped areas’ in need of ‘development’” (Ziai, 2007a: 4).

<sup>48</sup> For post-developmental critiques of concepts like poverty, population, planning, equality, need, state, science, technology, market, production, etc. see Sachs (2010).

<sup>49</sup> See, for instance, Mitchell (1995) and Ferguson (1994) to see how Egypt and Lesotho, respectively, are constructed as objects of development.

of the distinguishing features of post-developmental critique that is common to its all different forms.<sup>50</sup>

It should be noted that one of the most common critiques of post-developmental approaches has also been directed to this point, in the sense that post-structuralist approaches, over-emphasize discourse so that they neglect material realities like capitalism and poverty. This is, in fact, a tempting critique for the “realists”, as Escobar (2007: 22) calls them, especially for those who are considering the sphere of ideology without a social basis and a material effect (e.g. formulations of ideology in terms of false consciousness, cf., Larrain, 1979). As opposed to these critiques “operating in the name of the real”, Escobar (2007: 22) argues that for post-developmental approaches “modernity and capitalism are simultaneously systems of discourse and practice.” Discourse, in this sense, has its materiality as well. In other words, post-developmental approaches highlighted not only the discursive character of development, but also how this discourse is institutionalized through international organizations like IMF, WB, USAID, UN, and nation-states and local organizations, so that colonization of minds has been followed simultaneously by the colonization of reality. However, I argue, the real issue is not the materiality of the discourse or the discursive character of the reality, but how these discourses and their realizations are conceptualized. In other words, although one of the strengths of the post-developmental critique and its one of the most significant contributions rests in its problematization of science and knowledge production, i.e. the relation between knowledge and politics, the way it does so constitutes its very weakness that becomes most apparent in its essentialist conception of modernity and development by defining them, at worst, at the level of civilization, and at best, as a one-sided subjectivity/rationality. I will return to and elaborate upon this point in the fourth section, where I will formulate development as nothing else than *capitalist* development.

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<sup>50</sup> For an extreme case in terms of the critique of scientific knowledge as violence, see Shiva (1997).

### 3.2.2. Development as Abstraction and Obliteration of Difference

Based on the conceptualization of development as colonization of minds and hence reality, students of the post-development school made a significant effort to disclose how problematic assumptions implicit in the production of developmentalist knowledge are set to work to efface difference at all levels of social relations. At the center of this critique has been the idea that knowledge production in the field of development is designed to produce a certain type of object of analysis and thereby a certain type of subjectivity; i.e., “target populations”, that is in need of a certain type of change, and intervention by the representatives of the ‘developed’ world in that aim. In other words, conceptualizations of development as a discourse made it possible for post-developmentalists scholars to show how objects of analysis that are assumed to be scientific are also “partly constructed by the discourse that describes them” (Mitchell, 1995: 126).<sup>51</sup> Escobar (1995a: 7), with reference to Mitchell (1988), discusses this point as the emergence of “a regime of objectivism in which Europeans were subjected to a double demand: to be detached and objective, and yet to immerse themselves in local life.” Mitchell (1995: 151) clarifies this point as follows:

Development discourse wishes to present itself as a detached center of rationality and intelligence. The relationship between West and non-West will be constructed in these terms. The West possesses the expertise, technology and management skills that the non-West is lacking. This lack is what caused the problems of the non-West. Questions of power and inequality, whether on the global level of international grain markets, state subsidies, and the arms trade, or the more local level of landholding, food supplies and income distribution, will nowhere be discussed. To remain silent on such questions, in which its own existence is involved, development discourse needs an object that appears to stand outside itself.

To put it differently, the universalist, essentialist and reductionist character of knowledge production in development, according to the post-developmentalists critique, is operationalized through processes like professionalization, expertification, technicalization, and hence technocratization of development problems. Once this

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<sup>51</sup> Mitchell (1995) provides a good example of how the object of analysis is constructed by developmentalist thinking in the case of Egypt, in which categories like geography, climate, population, land, capital, and labor are reformulated so that they pave the way for developmentalist interventions.

operationalization is more or less achieved, the representation of social and political problems as simply technical problems outside of the political sphere becomes also possible. By way of technocratization of knowledge production, development discourse operating as an “anti-politics machine” as Ferguson (1994) aptly puts it, framed the universe of possible questions and their answers in relation to the problems that are, in fact, social and political in character.

Besides the implications for the science and knowledge question, the post-developmental critique further highlighted how a certain type of subjectivity has been cultivated through such an operationalization of developmentalist thinking. The war waged against difference, in Sachs’ (2010: xvi) words, went together with the establishment of “the cognitive base for both arrogant interventionism from the North and a pathetic self-pity in the South”. Based on this cognitive base, development practice linked ideas of prosperity and well-being with economic growth and showed no tolerance to any *other* “styles of prosperity” and “doings”. According to the post-developmental critique, in other words, local cultures, histories, world views and knowledge of “the vernacular world” have been destroyed by way of subordinating them to the Northern/Western expertise and institutions (Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997; cf. Parpart, 1995).

It should be noted that, despite its special attention to difference in terms of subjectivities outside of the world of development, one of the common criticisms formulated against post-developmental critique has been *its neglect of difference* in development practice (Escobar, 2000, 2007; cf. Friedman, 2006; Kiely, 1995, 1999; Peet, 1997). According to this critique, post-developmental understandings with a failure in noticing the contentious character of development, “presented an overgeneralized and essentialized view of development, while in reality there are vast differences among development strategies and institutions” (Escobar, 2007: 21). I argue that, although there is a point in this critique, representing development discourse as a *totality* is not the problem itself, since despite the heterogeneous and contentious character of development, it has a common epistemological and political core of which we became aware particularly thanks to the post-developmental



critique. However, besides this strength and contribution of post-developmental understandings, the real problem lies in the way this totality is conceptualized so that development and its contradictions are formulated as an external “encounter” between development discourse and “the vernacular world”, a point to which I will return later.

### 3.2.3. Post-Development as Revaluing Difference(s) and Other Subjectivities

In addition to the problematic assumptions implicit in developmentalist knowledge production and their institutionalization as a war waged against difference at the social level, post-developmental critique also made it apparent that the real problem of development is not its failure in terms of its own promises and the impossibility of achieving its goals. Especially with the ecological crisis that has become apparent in different forms like loss of biodiversity, desertification, pollution, global warming and climate change, and with the following environmentalist turn in development debates, the post-development school argued that it is the very success of development that “has to be feared”, rather than its failure (Sachs, 2010: xviii).<sup>52</sup> Writing almost two decades ago, Rahnema (1997: 379) states that, “were the rest of the world to consume paper, including recycled paper, at the same rate as the United States, within two years not a single tree would be left on the planet”. It is now clear that the overuse of “biotic resources” and heavy dependence on “fossil-fuel resources”, not only resulted in “a tremendous loss of diversity” in an ecological sense, but also brought the planet earth to a threshold in terms of the very conditions of possibility of life itself for humanity as a species-being (Sachs, 2010; Rahnema, 1997; cf. Klein, 2014).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> It should also be noted that, among others, the question of ‘the rise of China’ and its likely consequences for the environment, have played a special role in the rising fear from development’s success (Makki, 2015).

<sup>53</sup> In relation to this point, the ongoing debate on the concept of *Anthropocene* is quite important. Especially with the development of the *earth-system science* since the 1980s onwards, and based on its findings in relation to the critical thresholds for the *planetary boundaries* that provided the ground for the emergence and the proliferation of human societies, some natural as well as social scientists have claimed that we have entered a new geological era, *Anthropocene*, in which ‘humans’ have become a major force equal to planetary forces like the earth’s orbit. The central claim of those who argue for the ‘Anthropocene’ era is the end of the planet earth as we know it, which threatens the very possibility of life for human beings as a species. I will return to the environmental problems and their role in the reorientation of the literature on agrifood relations in the fourth chapter particularly in relation to the

Therefore, in addition to the exposition of the Eurocentric character of development, with the ecological question it produces, in Rahnema's (1997: 379) terms, more people started to "realize that everything in the old, 'non-developed' world was not so bad". In other words, by formulating development as colonization of minds and a war waged against diversity both in its social and ecological senses, "an interest in local economy, culture and knowledge; and the defense of localized, pluralistic grassroots movements" (Escobar, 1995b: 209) has been one of the common features of post-developmental approaches. To put it differently, if it was the idea of *delinking from the capitalist world-system* that characterized the capital-based critiques of development in the 1970s, the cornerstone of the post-developmental critique has been "*delinking the desire for equity from economic growth* and relinking it to community and culture-based notions of well-being" (Sachs, 2010: xii, emphasis added).

One of the heated debates around the post-development concept has been related to this endeavor of its proponents to revalue difference and subjectivities other than the world of development. Some of the main criticisms are formulated in terms of the *romanticism* that arises, according to critics, from the uncritical celebration of the concepts like *local*, *civil society* and *grassroots* (Escobar, 2000, 2007; cf. Kiely, 1995, 1999; Peet, 1997). In other words, according to the critics, local, grassroots, or social movements are conceptualized in post-developmental approaches as if they are outside of the power relations. Escobar (2007: 23), who paraphrases this critique in terms of a "romantic, neo-luddite and relativist stance" of post-developmental understandings, replies as follows:

For the post-structuralists and cultural critics, this commentary is a reflection of the chronic realism of many scholars that invariably label as romantic any radical critique of the West or any defense of 'the local'. In addition, post-structuralist authors pointed out that the realist notion of social change that

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problems and contradictions of the capitalist agrifood system. For the ongoing debate on the concept of 'Anthropocene' please see the following studies: Chakrabarty, 2018; Clark and Gunaratnam, 2017; Foster, 2016; Lewis and Maslin, 2015; Malm and Hornborg, 2014; Moore, 2016; Zalasiewicz, 2016.

underlies the commentary fails to unpack its own views of ‘the material’, ‘livelihood’, ‘needs’ and the like.

This is, in fact, the general attitude of Escobar (2000, 2007) that he ascribes any criticism formulated against the concept of post-development to a realist methodology, and replies simply as “whether you like it or not, we do not share your epistemological and methodological choice”.<sup>54</sup> In that sense, we can redirect Escobar’s reply to himself by changing the key wordings as follows: “Escobar’s commentary is a reflection of the chronic *post-structuralism* of many scholars that invariably label as *realist* any radical critique of the concept of *post-development*”. Once this labeling is achieved, then, there is no need to provide a serious reply since we are now on a different epistemological ground on which these criticisms are not only meaningless, but also impossible to be posed. So, the debate over post-development itself comes to a deadlock – in Friedman’s (2006) terms, a “post-structuralist impasse” – and the very possibility of a productive debate becomes at risk. Arguably, this deadlock arises not only from over-simplifications of post-structuralist arguments by the critics of post-development school, but also from the post-development school itself, since the framework is formulated in such a way that there is no room left for a discussion especially on *the social conditions of the possibility* of “alternatives to development”. Despite all the post-structuralist claims about the discursive character of truth and reality, post-developmental critiques constitute themselves as a closed system of truth. In other words, the real problem is not the claim that post-developmental approaches do not take into account the relationship between development discourse and capitalism that conditions not only the development discourse but also alternatives to development, but the fact that this relationship is established as an external one. Arguably, that is also why the search for alternatives to development is restricted mainly to *local communities* and *vernacular worlds*.

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<sup>54</sup> To strengthen his reply, Escobar (2000: 13) mentions that “almost without exception the anti-post development critics are white male academics in the North”. It is interesting to note that Friedman (2006: 205) makes a similar point for the post-developmental critics that “unlike many of the earlier dependency critics, post-structuralist critics of development are mostly Western academics”.

Thus far, I have tried to review the distinguishing features of post-developmental critique in terms of their conceptualization of development as colonization of minds, as a war waged against difference, and their call for a post-development age on the basis of revaluing difference and other subjectivities. These features also constitute their major contributions to our understanding of development. As Friedman (2006: 203) puts it, “any honest assessment of the post-structuralist critique of development must acknowledge its important contributions to the anthropological study of development.” It is especially with the post-developmental critique that we become aware how deep the problematic character of science and knowledge production in the field of development is rooted. The ways that development effaces social and ecological differences have become apparent without dispute especially through post-developmental critique of development as an “anti-politics machine” that objectifies, reifies and technocratizes knowledge in relation to itself as well as to the other(s). In short, based on its three distinguishing features discussed above, the post-developmental critique has made a significant contribution in terms of decolonizing our minds and broadening the horizon to imagine “alternatives to development”.

However, it is not possible to argue, as Ziai (2007a: 9) does so, that “the task of ‘slaying the development monster’ (Escobar, 2000: 13) has been accomplished”. I argue that the “monster” is still there, not simply because its core assumptions, its “semantic network” (which includes “growth, evolution, maturation, modernization”, Esteva, 2010), or processes that characterize it (like “industrialization, agricultural modernization, and urbanization”, Escobar, 1995b: 208) are still at work in different forms. This is a point that Ziai (2007a, 2007b) is also well aware of. His claim is rather based on the observation that the central hypotheses of the post-development school – which, according to him, are “the traditional concept of development is Euro-centric and has authoritarian and technocratic implications – are hardly contested even by the sharpest critics”. My point, rather, is that the weakness of the post-development concept is where it appears to be the strongest: its critique of development as a Western/Euro-centric/Euro-Atlantic construct.

### 3.3. Reversed Dichotomies vs. Immanent Contradictions of Capitalism

Critiques of the post-development concept are numerous. Some of the most prominent issues raised throughout the debate are the followings:<sup>55</sup>

- *In terms of theory*: lack of agency; totalizing understanding of development; neglect of uneven character of development policies and their results; crude understanding of technology; little attention to the historical writings of Marx, Engels, Trotsky, Lenin, Gramsci; neglect of the uniqueness of capitalism and the significance of the processes of transition to capitalism.
- *In terms of methodology and epistemology*: empiricism; lack of explanation (descriptive character); methodological essentialism; discursive idealism; relativism.
- *In terms of politics*: overemphasis on the politics of difference; uncritical and ahistorical analysis of fragmented social relations and concepts like democracy, civil society, and social movements; uncritical celebration of the local; limited politics; the problem of scaling up.

All these critiques have some valid points as well as their own problems, and it is beyond the scope of this study to review them one by one. My point is that these critiques are originating predominantly from the problematic understanding, implicit in post-developmental approaches, of contradictions in relation to development, and its relation to capitalism. In parallel to the three distinguishing features of post-developmental critique discussed in the previous section, the conceptualization of contradictions in terms of mutually exclusive categories and (reversed) dichotomies, characteristic of post-developmental approaches, can also be pointed out and analyzed at three levels: (1) a conceptualization of development as a Western/Eurocentric/Euro-Atlantic construct, at worst, at the civilizational level (Sachs, Rahnema and Bawtree, Rist, Esteva), or, at best, as a one-sided rationality (Escobar); (2) a conceptualization of development discourse as a closed-system of

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<sup>55</sup> In addition to the replies by Ziai (2007a, 2007b) and Escobar (2000, 2007) to their critics, this list is derived from the following critics: Kiely, 1995, 1999; Peet, 1997; Hart, 2001; Friedman, 2006.

totality; and as a result of these two problems, (3) a limited understanding of difference and construction of one-sided subjectivities, and thereby, limitations on the search for “alternatives to development”. This problematic understanding of contradictions, I argue, ironically, leads the post-development school to construct binary oppositions and one-sided subjectivities in their reversed forms when compared to the developmentalist approaches. The irony, arguably, is that, binary oppositions and one-sided subjectivities were the main enemies of deconstruction, and post-structuralism in general, in their original formulations (cf., Best and Kellner, 1991).

### 3.3.1. Development as a Western, Euro-Atlantic Construct?

As discussed in the previous section, the rise of the post-development school corresponds with a period in which Marxism was under heavy attack. Particularly in the case of the development debate, the impasse of the 1980s was attributed mainly to the (neo-)Marxist and Marxian approaches. Within such an intellectual and historical context, I argue, post-developmental approaches went too far in terms of their relationship to Marxism that resulted in throwing the baby out with the bathwater. This point is most obvious in concepts/terms used frequently by post-developmental critics like: “Western model of development” (Ziai, 2007), “Western mode of production” (Rist, 1997), “Euro-Atlantic model of civilization” (Sachs, 2010), “Euro-Atlantic model of wealth” (Sachs, 2010), “the industrial mode of production” (Sachs, 2010), “industrial society” (Esteva, 2010), “economic society” (Esteva, 2010), “modern market” (Esteva, 2010), and “Western episteme” (Escobar, 1995). Surprisingly enough, it is almost impossible to see the concept of *capitalist mode of production* in these accounts, and the concept of *capitalist society* is used in rare occasions. If the concept of capitalist mode of production is a particularly orthodox one, then I can also make the same emphasis with a milder concept, that is, *capitalist relations of production*. But, as it is clear from the concepts quoted above, apparently, the post-development school has no problem with the concept of *mode of production* but with the *capitalist* mode of production. Arguably, the zeitgeist of the period (“avoid Marxism in all possible manners!”) has been realized, in the case of post-developmental approaches, in the form of a conception of development as a Western

construct at the level of civilization, or at best, as a one-sided rationality and/or subjectivity. To avoid misunderstandings, I should say that, here, the issue at stake is not whether the emergence and the rise of development (within the context of capitalist modernity) has some specific Western origins or not. My question is that what *kind* of a West we are talking about, and how we are going to conceptualize modernity and its relation to capitalism and development.

The post-development school, arguably through a shift to Weberian conception of capitalism in an attempt to avoid Marx (and/or by blaming Marx), answered this question predominantly in terms of a *rational* West as opposed to a *capitalist* West. With this shift to Weber, historical processes that gave rise to modernity and capitalism are melted in the same pot of the process of *rationalization*, or, in Escobar's words, the rise of "Western episteme". Since this process of rationalization is conceived, arguably, on evolutionary grounds<sup>56</sup> (i.e., the progressive development of a particular rationality since the time of the Antiquity, e.g. Rist, 1994), the rise of modernity, capitalism, and development are seen as the product of the same "cast of mind". In that sense, it is not surprising that there is no serious discussion of the relationship between modernity, capitalism and development in post-developmental approaches. Rather, since these concepts are conceived as products of a particular cast of mind (that evolved throughout the centuries), their relationship to one another is assumed to be obvious. To explore this point, Hart's (2001) distinction between "big D" Development and "little d" development is a useful one. In Hart's (2001: 650) terms while "big D" Development refers to "a post-second world war project of intervention in the 'third world' that emerged in the context of decolonization and cold war", "the

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<sup>56</sup> For a critique of teleological understandings of the rise of capitalism in the case of Weber see Wood (1995). Wood, in this article argues that the concept of capitalist mode of production was in fact a product of a critique of classical political economy which conceived the rise of capitalism merely in terms of the elimination of the obstacles in front of its development, so that the seed of capital rooted in the first exchange of goods can achieve its mature form thanks to the evolution either of trade or a particular rationality. In that sense the concept of capitalist mode of production is (re)formulated as an attempt to historicize the specificity of capitalism, rather than establishing a new teleology with a belief in development or progress. This point is highly significant since in post-developmental approaches Marx and his followers, almost without exception, is presented as one of the founding fathers of the development discourse. I will return to this point in the next section while elaborating on the *differentia specifica* of capitalism.

little d” development refers to “the development of capitalism as a geographically uneven, profoundly contradictory set of historical processes”. In post-developmental approaches, the problem is not that they are unaware of the relationship between *Development* and *development*, but that, rather than scrutinizing the relationship between development, capitalism and modernity, this relationship is established on *external* grounds by simply assuming them as being *internal* to the same cast of mind.

Once the historical processes of modernity, capitalism and development are conceived in terms of the gradual development of a particular cast of mind, the conceptualization of development as product of a particular civilization and/or rationality also becomes possible. One of the important outcomes of this move, arguably, has been the conception of the rise of capitalist modernity and development, solely through the lens of power. In that sense, it is possible to argue that post-developmental approaches reduce critical reason of modernity to power and modernization processes to the political and theoretical claims of modernization school and developmental perspectives.

By doing so, post-developmental approaches not only neglect the inequalities, conflicts and struggles of the pre-capitalist/pre-colonial era (and the significance of the non-West for the rise of capitalist modernity itself), but they also make the struggles *within* the West that gave rise to basic premises of capitalist modernity invisible. In other words, I argue, the very basic promises of development like material well-being, social justice, economic growth, personal blossoming, and ecological equilibrium (Rist, 1997) not only represent (whether in a disguised form or not) the interests of power but also *the struggles of the masses and their demands from below*. It should be noted that the realization of the demands from below – like fraternity, equality, and freedom – has occurred and still continue to happen in a refracted form, i.e. in a form subsumed to power. In other words, the history of these struggles is also the history of their incorporation to the will of power. This however, does not, and cannot, eliminate the fact that the rise of capitalist modernity is full of struggles not only from the



colonized parts of the world but within the West itself.<sup>57</sup> In post-developmental approaches, however, the driving force of the history appears as an almighty power either in the form of a civilization or an episteme *without conflicts and contradictions in itself*. Once the relationship between modernity and capitalism is loosely formulated, and once the struggles within (*and between*) modernity and capitalism are effaced, development also appears *as a logical conclusion* of the “Western episteme” in post-developmental approaches. Hence, there is no room left for a discussion on the immanent contradictions of capitalism, or capitalist modernity, let alone the possibility of conceiving *development as a particular historical form of these immanent contradictions on the basis of class struggle*.

Development, in that sense, once situated within the trajectories of modernity understood as the rise of Western episteme as a homogenous entity, turns out to be the playground of power, no matter how that power is defined. In other words, the problem is not that post-developmental approaches are unaware of the struggles against the idea and practice of development, but that these struggles become visible only when they emerge *outside* of development, and those struggles *within and against* capitalism that gave rise to the very idea of development itself have been made invisible by the power-lens implicit in these approaches.

This, arguably, leads to a reconstruction rather than deconstruction of dichotomies like Western vs. non-Western, modern vs. vernacular, universal vs. particular, global vs. local, and the like. In other words, post-developmental approaches, in their emphasis on deconstruction, remain at the level of inverting the hierarchical relationship between the two terms of these dichotomies by simply re-valuing the second term. In short, the issue is not that post-developmental approaches are unaware of the contentious character of development, but that this contentious character is conceptualized as an *encounter* – a term that assumes by definition an *externality* – between the Western/developed world and the non-Western/un-developed world, as

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<sup>57</sup> In that sense it is not surprising that the concept of development is itself product of a period characterized by the rise of socialism, and socialist and anti-colonial movements and struggles.

the title of Escobar's book (*Encountering Development*) itself reflects.<sup>58</sup> I will return to this point in the next section in relation to the question of the power of the concept of development, and with respect to theoretical as well as socio-historical sources of this power in capitalist social (re)production relations.

### 3.3.2. Development as a Closed Totality?

This problematic understanding of the relationship between modernity, capitalism and development represents itself also in the problematic understanding of the *totality* of the development discourse. Once the contradictions immanent in development (and capitalist modernity) are avoided in post-developmental accounts, development discourse emerges as a closed-system of totality with whom the rest *encounters*. Here, I argue, for the possibility of keeping the concept of totality without conceiving it as a homogenous entity and closed-system, but as an open-ended set of relations. That is to say, totality as a *contradictory unity* with its own *potentiality* that is arising from its *immanent* contradictions. It should be noted that the concept of potentiality as understood here has nothing to do with the concept of teleology or progress, since the end result of this potentiality is *contingent* upon the struggles based on those immanent contradictions of the totality itself.<sup>59</sup> In other words, what is at stake here is a *social process*, not a natural and/or social and/or rational *structure* external to the acts of social individuals.

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<sup>58</sup> For a critique of post-modernist, as well as modernist, approaches in terms of their mostly explicit assumption that the emergence and the rise of modernity is a specifically Western phenomenon see: Bhambra (2007). Bhambra (2007) with the concept of *connected histories*, argues that, by neglecting the significance of colonial relations in the very formation of modernity and its categories, modernist and post-modernist accounts both remain Eurocentric. My point, as opposed to Bhambra as well, is that even when we take into account the connected character of history seriously, the task still remains to be problematizing how the struggles and conflicts *specific to West* gave all these inter-subjectivities their final form, that is the rise of capitalist mode of production with its own internal contradictions and struggles. Then, within this framework, development can be problematized as a specific historical form of these contradictions, i.e. the contingent result of the struggles within the broader framework of connected histories that are characterized by *capitalist* power relations.

<sup>59</sup> The problems of necessity and teleology are closely related to the problem of reification, since arguably, these problems arise when the final form of a contentious process is considered, in retrospect, as the only possible outcome of that process. With this move, a contentious process, all of a sudden, turns into a gradual development of that final form.

Post-developmental critique, which, in fact, is directed against teleological, evolutionary<sup>60</sup>, and progressive assumptions implicit in the idea of development, is reintroducing these problematic assumptions by formulating development as a closed system of totality, but this time at the level of discourse. While reading post-developmental accounts on the rise of the idea and practice of development, one cannot avoid the sense of watching *the development of the development discourse* – development understood here in its very metaphorical sense criticized by the post-developmental approaches themselves. Contrary to its own premises and terms then, post-developmental critique represents itself as the most developed form of epistemology without any reflection on the historical, social and political conditions that gave rise to itself. In other words, the “epistemological choices” (Escobar 2000, 2007) of the post-development school, in terms of theories, concepts, objects of analysis, and politics, never become a subject in the debate since this epistemological approach is assumed to be the one that is in perfect harmony with the social reality itself.<sup>61</sup>

This problematic understanding of development as a closed totality, arguably, is best reflected in the critique of developmentalist knowledge production processes, which leads to the reconstruction of binary oppositions like universal vs. particular, modern/scientific knowledge vs. vernacular/traditional/local knowledge, which are socially represented by experts/scientists/developers vs. locals/laymen/so-called underdeveloped. In post-developmental approaches, in other words, there is no room left for the problematization of the contentious character of science and knowledge production and the struggles within this field as well. However, I argue, the real problem of post-developmental approaches is that, while they are criticizing developmentalist knowledge production, they themselves remain in the same reified

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<sup>60</sup> At this point it should also be noted that there is now apparently a consensus in the field of evolutionary biology that the concept of evolution in its original formulations by Darwin is itself aimed to show the contingent character of the process rather than representing as a teleology tending towards perfectionism. In that sense I should say that the term “evolutionary” is used here in its commonsensical meaning.

<sup>61</sup> It is possible to argue that this is also one of the implicit assumptions in Escobar’s replies to the critics in terms of formulating the problem as an issue of being on different epistemological grounds.

domain of knowledge production. That is to say the social analysis is limited to a conception of social reality understood in its reified and objectified forms either at the level of discourse or at the level of realization of this discourse in society. This point is best reflected in post-developmental accounts, in their formulation of problems mainly in terms of reified and objectified forms like *industry, science, urban-centers, wealth, consumption patterns, commodification*, whose social representatives are also presented in their objectified forms like *experts, scientists, the elite, the rich*, etc. These are, however, I argue, the fetishized forms of the immanent contradictions of capitalist production relations, and capitalist modernity realized in the form of development. I will return to this point in section 3.4 where the basic premises of contemporary Marxism are elaborated.

### **3.3.3. Limited Understanding of Difference and Construction of One-Sided Subjectivities**

Conceptualization of development as a one-sided rationality and as a closed-system of totality implicit in post-developmental approaches, I argue, limits our understanding of difference to an external encounter, and this process goes hand in hand with construction of one-sided subjectivities. This problem becomes obvious in conceptions of development as a war waged against difference in which the question of difference can only be formulated *outside* of the modern, capitalist, developed world. Hence, the clues and potentials for “alternatives to development” become limited to the analysis of “vernacular societies” in post-developmental approaches. Rahnema and Bawtree’s (1997: x) formulation of development is emblematic of such limitations:

A merciless war [development] was waged against the age-old communal solidarity. The virtues of simplicity and conviviality, of noble forms of poverty, of the wisdom of relying on each other, and of the arts of suffering were derided as signs of ‘underdevelopment’. A culture of ‘individual’ success and of socially imputed ‘needs’ led younger men to depart their villages, leaving behind dislocated families of women, children and older men who had no one to rely on but the promises of often unattainable ‘goods’ and ‘services’.

Since this selection undervalues the contributions of the post-development school, one might argue, it is one of the easiest ways of criticizing post-developmental

approaches in terms of their implicit romanticism of the past – a point with which I would be happy to agree. Still, I argue, besides the perception of the past in terms of wisdom, simplicity, conviviality, or nobility, as if the history of inequalities started with the “development age”, the way the problem is formulated in terms of “a culture of ‘individual’ success and of socially imputed ‘needs’” is emblematic of post-developmental approaches. This understanding of a culture of individual success, arguably, is already implicit in Sachs’ terms of “Euro-Atlantic model of wealth”, or in Escobar’s conception of “Western episteme”, or the very *desire* that we should delink from economic growth according to Sachs. Once the capitalist character of development *and* modernity is ignored, (or simply assumed, as in Rist’s (1994) reduction of capitalism to exchange shaped by demand and supply), the line between liberal conceptions of individual and post-developmental approaches also blurs. To put it differently, since the problem is formulated at the level of civilization characterized by a certain type of individualistic desire, the capitalist character of the accumulation of ‘wealth’, and the impersonal and systemic impositions of the capitalist market over the masses (as well as the capitalists themselves) never become an object of analysis and a part of the question. Thereby, as it is clear in the above quotation, migration to urban-industrial centers, for instance, can be formulated as younger men’s manipulated desires!<sup>62</sup> In other words, although, post-developmental approaches rightly bring the issue of *the politics of desire* to the discussion, they do so without taking into account the social conditions (capitalist production relations) that characterizes the politics of desire.

This neglect of the capitalist character of ‘wealth’, and production in general, is also reflected in the problematic conceptualization of contradictions in post-developmental approaches at the social level, which leads to loosely defined social categories and dichotomies like the rich/elites (and in some cases middle-classes) vs.

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<sup>62</sup> Rahnema’s (1997: 377-404) own contribution to *The Post-Development Reader*, which takes the responsibility of concluding the reader, is also emblematic of the political consequences of the epistemological choices of the post-development school. There, he formulates the problem as a conflict between “bad people” and “good people” and their “friends”. A conflict that can be resolved on behalf of the good ones mainly through a journey to our inner selves!

the poor/excluded, with almost no reference to the contradictory relationship between capital/capitalist and labor/wage-labor. The problem with these loosely defined categories of the rich and the poor is that social categories in post-developmental approaches appear only in their reified forms as briefly discussed above. That is to say post-developmental approaches remain at the level of thinking in terms of *haves* and *have nots* rather than in terms of *contradictory class relations and subjectivities* that both inform and are informed by the contradictory character of capitalist accumulation processes. This point can also be seen in the conceptualization of development as the eradication of ecological differences. Here the question can only appear in its reified form that is over-consumption of a given amount natural resources – in Moore’s (2010: 403) terms, formulation of the ecology in “abstract-materialist terms” in which biophysical properties are “narrowly defined”, as opposed to a “historical-relational” approach that is based on “the standpoint of socio-ecological organization” which brings the issue of *capitalism as a world ecology*.

In short, I argue, without a consideration of the contradictions of capitalist social relations as a central issue, the search for “alternatives to development” such as the “interest in local economy, culture and knowledge; and the defense of localized, pluralistic grassroots movements” (Escobar, 1995b: 209), not to mention the question of difference itself, remains limited – a limitation which reintroduces reified categories, dichotomies and one-sided subjectivities that are, in fact, characteristics of developmentalist thinking. In this regard, I argue that Marxism understood not as a form of political economy but as a critical theory of society can provide a way out of this problem. The next section provides an elaboration of this point which also constitutes the theoretical framework of this study.

### **3.4. Bringing Marxism Back in to the Development Debate: Marxism as a Critical Theory of Society**

At the beginning of this chapter, I have argued that, due to the multi-faceted crises of capitalism, there is now a tendency in the field of development towards a return to structural analysis, i.e. interrogations of social relations as a constituted totality on the

basis of their capitalist character. It should be mentioned that a critical evaluation of post-developmental approaches has been pursued throughout the chapter, *not* simply to legitimize this return, but to *enrich* it. That is to say, a return to Marxist critiques of development of the 1970s is not only infeasible but also undesirable. This is so, not simply because in these accounts capital and development appear as one-sided subjectivities and almighty categories (i.e. capital as the driving force of history), but also, as post-developmental approaches rightly pointed out, they largely conceived of development as an end in itself, arguably, on the basis of a problematic conception of *the development of forces of production*, which is arguably best reflected in the agrarian/peasant question formulations of the era. As I will try to show below, despite the fact that their starting point is the critique of capitalism, the central problem implicit in these accounts is the naturalization of capitalist production relations themselves. In that sense, without a serious consideration of the contributions of post-developmental accounts (and *post-* approaches in general), the search for alternatives to development will also remain problematic.

However, as it must be clear by now, despite its attempts to broaden our horizon for alternatives, post-developmental critique reintroduces reified categories, mutually exclusive dichotomies, and one-sided subjectivities that limit the “decolonization” of our minds and search for alternatives. While post-developmental critique brings the discursive character of reality to the fore, and thereby questions the *rational* character of the concept of development, they do so in a way that reproduces the problems previously attributed to the developmentalist thinking at the discursive level. While post-developmental critiques illuminate the problematic and political character of knowledge production, i.e. politics of knowledge, they do so in a way that remains within the fetishized and reified field of knowledge production. While post-developmental critiques engage with the question of difference and the politics of desire, they do so in a way that confines the question of difference to an external encounter in which the social conditions of the politics of desire also become invisible. In short, the main endeavor of post-developmental approaches in terms of decolonization of our minds remains partial and problematic.

These problems, I argue, can be resolved by bringing the distinctive features of the capitalist mode of production, i.e. immanent contradictions of capitalism, to the center of the analysis. This means leaving the zeitgeist of the 1980s behind, and bringing Marxism back in to the development debate. However, it is important to note that this task of bringing Marxism back in to the center of the analysis is mediated by the critiques formulated by *post-* approaches in their various forms. But, what does this mean? What are the consequences of this mediation for Marxism?<sup>63</sup> I use *contemporary Marxism* as a theoretical standpoint in relation to this question.

Simply put, I understand contemporary Marxism as an attempt to take the critiques of *post-* approaches directed towards modernity in terms of the theoretical problems of *rationalism, universalism, essentialism, reductionism, determinism, teleology*, etc. seriously, while, as opposed to them, conceiving these theoretical problems on the basis of the capitalist social relations of (re)production themselves, rather than a Western rationality or Euro-Atlantic episteme. To put it in relation to the broader scope of social theory, contemporary Marxism here implies a position which considers the divide between modernity and postmodernity not as an either/or formulation, but that conceives modernity and post-modernity as parts of the same theoretical ground despite their radically different character. In the *Table 3.1* below I have tried to schematize the theoretical framework of contemporary Marxism with respect to the modernity-postmodernity divide in relation to ontology, epistemology, major theoretical assumptions, and methodology.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> This is an important point since, if one of the characteristic features of *post-* approaches has been avoiding Marxism, the majority of the Marxist reactions to these critiques have also been limited to their crude interpretations.

<sup>64</sup> This table, in addition to my readings, is, to a great extent, a product of Ecevit's (2006-2018) seminars on social theory in the Department of Sociology at METU.



**Table 3.1 Contemporary Marxism with respect to the Modernity-Postmodernity Divide in Social Theory**

	Modernity	Postmodernity	Contemporary Marxism
<b>Ontology</b>	Unified, holistic and rational individual Unified, holistic and rational class Unified and holistic social reality	Subjective individual Fragmented identities Discourse Imaginary, discursive, symbolic	Concrete individual Social relation Individual as a set of social relations Form as mode of existence Human-human and human-non human relations One reality
<b>Epistemology</b>	Objectivism Constructionism Realism	Subjectivism	Objective irrationality Subject-object dialectics Essentialism as sociability (Relational essentialism)
<b>Major Theoretical Assumptions</b>	Universalism Generality Holism Abstraction Foundationalism Rationality Teleology Substantialism	Partiality Specificity Particularism Critique of meta-theories Eclecticism Subjectivity based on difference Contingency and conjuncture Textuality ~ Discursiveness	Contradictory unity Concretization: continuous flow between the abstract and the concrete Contradictory subjectivity History as a process and potentiality Contradictory relationality as a critique of reification
<b>Methodology</b>	Essentialism Explanation Determinism Reductionism Dualism Causality Structuralism Individualism Analysis of Dichotomies	Relativism/Agnosticism Narration/Description Contingency Relativism Difference Articulation (Eclecticism) Deconstruction of structures Deconstruction of subjectivities Discourse Analysis	Dialectics Form-analysis Contradictory unity Determinate abstraction as opposed to formal abstraction Structure as a process and relation Relationality Analysis of contradictions

The theoretical roots of such a conception of Contemporary Marxism lies in the formulations of Marxism as a *critical theory of society* which emerged during the late

1970s and developed throughout the 1990s, particularly as a critique of liberal social theory as well as orthodox/traditional Marxism and “Western Marxism”.<sup>65</sup> In this subsection, in relation to the distinguishing features of post-developmentalism that are discussed above, I will outline the basic features of this reformulation of Marxism, which is arguably best reflected in the call for an “open Marxism” as opposed to a “closed” one. Through this discussion, I hope to show that the power and weaknesses of development both as a concept and a historical process lie in capitalist social (re)production relations.

### **3.4.1. Going Beyond the So-Called Crisis of Marxism: *Closed* vs. *Open* Marxism**

As I mentioned in the previous sections, the post-developmental arguments have been formulated, at least partly, as opposed to Marxist understandings of development and underdevelopment that were influential especially during the 1970s and 1980s. It is quite common to designate the 1980s as a period of crisis of Marxism. There are various factors underlined by various scholars both within and outside of Marxism for its crisis such as: the rise of neoliberalism and the following adaptation of “socialist and social democratic parties to a ‘realistic’ monetarism”, the fall of socialist regimes, the rise of the so-called “East Asian tigers” that brought the concept of “underdevelopment” into question, and, arguably, most importantly the theoretical inadequacies of Marxism which according to *post-* critiques is nothing but a sophisticated version of modernist schools of thought (Bonefeld et. al, 1992: ix; cf., Booth, 1994; Buttel, 2001).

At this point, it is also essential to recall the claims of a *transition to a qualitatively different era and society* that dominated not only the field of sociology but also the course of the social theory writ large during the 1980s and 1990s. To make this point clear, it is helpful to list the concepts proposed, by what Bonefeld *et. al* (1992: ix) label as “New Right sociologies”, to qualify the so-called “new times” and the “new

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<sup>65</sup> For the reformulation of Marxism as a critique of political economy, hence as a critical theory of society please see the following studies: Bonefeld (2014, 2016), Bonefeld, Gunn and Psychopedis (1992a), Bonefeld, Gunn and Psychopedis (1992b), Bonefeld, Gunn, Holloway and Psychopedis (1995); Bonefeld and Psychopedis (2005), Clarke (1980, 1988, 1992).

society”: *media society, consumer society, post-industrial society, information society, network society, post-modern society, global society* etc. (cf., Bell, 1973; Castells, 1996; Harvey, 1999; Held and McGrew, 2003; Jameson, 1991, 1998; Lyotard, 1984). The common ground for these diverging and mostly opposing schools of this *new times sociology* has been the critique of Marxism, especially on the basis of the claim that, even if it had had an analytical value for the previous eras, the concept of *class* is no more relevant both theoretically and politically. It is within this context that Marxism “seemed to be at best unfashionable and at worst outdated” (Bonefeld *et. al*, 1992a: ix).

The central argument of the reformulation of Marxism as a critical theory of society in response to this so-called crisis of Marxism has been the following: “In all of this, however, the target identified by Marxism’s critics has been Marxist theory and practice to which various kinds of ‘closure’ applies” (Bonefeld *et. al*, 1992a: ix). In other words, according to this approach, what is in crisis is not Marxism in general, but a particular kind of Marxism, which is hegemonic among Marxist circles. And, indeed, so far as this particular kind of Marxism is considered the crisis is a real one. Closure of Marxism, and hence the term “closed Marxism”, according to Bonefeld and his colleagues (1992a: ix-xix) here refers to those hegemonic forms of Marxism which have been usually labeled as: traditional/orthodox Marxism, structural/Althusserian Marxism, Rational Choice Marxism, Regulation School, critical realism, analytical Marxism, capital-logic Marxism, scientific Marxism, and the like.

The theoretical problems implicit in these accounts become apparent especially in their attempts to *keep up* Marxism with respect to the so-called “new times”, especially when confronted with the claim of a qualitative transition as in the case of the context of the 1980s and the 1990s: “It was as if Marxism felt it necessary to trump new right sociologies by playing the card of a sociology of its own” (Bonefeld *et. al*, 1992a: ix). Here, what is particularly at stake is the debate on periodization of capitalism (e.g. the debates on transition from Fordism to post-Fordism, or from nation-state to trans-national state), the arguments of which are implicitly based on technological determinism, teleological conception of social change and/or conceptions of individual

as atomized and self-interested – all of which are, in fact, the main targets of Marx’s own works:

The attempt to reconstitute social relations on the basis of flexibilization and ever more sensitized market relations (imposed, in the event, through international money markets) was proclaimed as the end of Marxist social theorizing *per se*. Underwriting this attempt was the boom of the 1980s. Thus, the ‘legitimacy crisis’ of the Keynesian state and the ‘crisis of Marxism’ could be portrayed as one and the same. Marxism where it endorsed this diagnosis became accordingly disarmed. The resulting incorporation into Marxism of scientism, of structures reinvoked and reformulated, of conceptions of historical periodization ... dependent ultimately on Weberian ideal-type discourse and analytic-philosophy concepts of the individualist agent within market arose, consequently, from particular social and political conditions. (Bonefeld *et. al*, 1992a: x)

To put it differently, “inasmuch as such Marxism took as its object precisely the structures [e.g., Keynesianism] whose demise now seemed to be sure”, the crisis of these structures also became the crisis of Marxism – a Marxism which is, in fact, anything but “Marxism of structures”. It is within this framework that “closed Marxism” is formulated as:

Marxism which does either or both of two interrelated things: it accepts the horizons of a given world as its own theoretical horizons and/or it announces a determinism which is causalist or teleological as the case may be. (...) These two aspects are interrelated because acceptance of horizons amounts to acceptance of their inevitability and because determinist theory becomes complicit in the foreclosing of possibilities which a contradictory world entails. (Bonefeld *et. al*, 1992: xi)

What is formulated as opposed to closed Marxism understood in this way has been an “open Marxism”, in which openness refers to “Marxist categories themselves”. To put it differently, openness, according this approach, has nothing to do with the “positivist” and “scientist” understandings of openness that is mainly understood as “the ability-to-be-continued of empirical research”, but it is “the openness of theory which construes itself as the critical self-understanding of a contradictory world”:

This openness appears in, for instance, a dialectic of subject and object, of form and content, of theory and practice, of the constitution and reconstitution of categories in and through the development, always crisis-ridden, of a social

world. Crisis refers to contradiction, and to contradiction's movement: this movement underpins and undermines the fixity of structuralist and teleological-determinist Marxism alike. Rather than coming forward simply as a theory of domination – 'domination' reporting something inert, as it were a heavy fixed and given weight – open Marxism offers to conceptualize the contradictions internal to domination itself. Crisis understood as a category of contradiction, entails not just danger but opportunity. Within theory crisis enunciates itself as critique. (Bonefeld *et. al*, 1992: xi-xii)

In other words, the students of "open Marxism" set to work to reformulate classical Marxist themes and concepts by bringing the contradictions inherent in capitalist social relations of (re)production to the fore in a particular way. These classical themes and concepts can be listed as follows: epistemology, subject-object dialectics, the relationship between theory and practice, the question of science and knowledge, the relation of abstract to concrete analysis, historical materialism, theory of the capitalist state, crisis, value theory, the concepts of class and class struggle, the relationship between structure and struggle, normative values, form analysis, questions of periodization, relations of production, forces of production, abstract labor, etc. (cf., Bonefeld *et. al*, 1992: xii- xiii).

It is beyond the scope of this study to review the alternative views on these themes and concepts formulated by the students of open Marxism. I will return to these issues in the fourth chapter when it is necessary in relation to the main problematic of this study. Here, what is important for the critique of post-developmental arguments as well as political economic perspectives on development that this chapter is aimed for, is the fact that at the center of all these theoretical reconsiderations has been the reformulation of the concepts of *alienated labor* (i.e. the works of the so-called early Marx) and *commodity fetishism* and *value-form* (i.e. the works of the so-called late Marx), as parts of Marx's theoretical project, which, in fact, constitute a totality as a critique of political economy and liberal social theory (cf. Clarke, 1992). With respect to this point the following quotation might be helpful to relate this point to the conception of "closed Marxism" as well:

[A] central target for Marxism with an open character is *fetishism*. Fetishism is the construal (in theory) and the constitution (in practice) of social relations as

‘thinglike’, perverting such relations into a commodified and sheerly structural form. Closed Marxism substitutes fetishized theory for the – critical – theory of fetishism which open Marxism undertakes. Hostile to the movement of contradiction, the former reinforces and reproduces the fetishism which, officially, it proclaims against. It follows that the crisis of structures is equally the crisis of the Marxism which takes structures as its reference point, and however allegedly ‘flexible’ the structures, the crisis of their theory runs no less deep. (Bonefeld *et. al*, 1992a: xii)

It is in relation to this understanding of fetishism, which I will elaborate on below, that we find the *differentia specifica* of capitalism as the appearance of “human sociability ... in the form of objective constraint”, of “human qualities” in the form of “properties of things”, of human subjectivities and social relations in the form of “relations between things”, and social and historical processes in the form of laws of structures either on the basis of nature, or society, or reason and/or a specific rationality (cf., Clarke, 1992: 306, 325). It is on this ground that I argue, the post-developmental critique is much closer to the spirit of Marx since its main aim is also to dismantle the apparently *rational*, *objective* and/or *natural* character of the capitalist development and its related knowledge production. Arguably the most succinct formulation of such an understanding of commodity fetishism, which radically differs from its conceptions by orthodox/traditional Marxism as well as the so-called Western Marxism, can be found in Clarke’s (1992: 325-26) study titled *Marx, Marginalism and Modern Sociology*:

For Marx the fetishism of commodities is not simply an ideological mystification, to be referred back to a constitutive subject, whether that subject be a class interest or the dominative interest of reason itself. The fetishism of commodities is only the reflection of a real social process, constituted by the social relations of alienated labor. It really is the case that social labor only appears in the form of a thing, and it really is the case that the products of labor confront the laborer as an objective power. However, alienation is not the expression of an ideological process of ‘reification’ in which subjectivity is eradicated. Alienation is a process which starts from labor as the subjective element which is never effaced. It is not that human powers become incorporated in things, but that human qualities *appear in the form of* the properties of things. It is not that social relations appear as relations between things, but that social relations *appear in the form of* relations between things. These forms of appearance arise not because relations between things *replace* or *conceal* relations between persons, but because relations between persons

are *mediated* by things. Thus reification does not constitute a self-sufficient world which is imposed on human beings, but rather a world which is only constituted and reproduced through human activity, and so a world which can always be reclaimed by that activity.

The critical aspect of such an understanding of alienation and commodity fetishism is the attempt to foreground human *subjectivities*, through the critique of the *irrational rationality of capitalism* and/or its *objective irrationality* (Clarke, 1992; Bonefeld, 2014, 2016). It is this attempt of highlighting and emancipating subjectivities on which Marxism is reformulated as a critical theory of society and which demarcates this reformulation from political economy and political economic conceptions of Marxism (orthodox/traditional Marxism) as well as orthodox modernity based approaches of sociology and Western Marxism, in which human subjectivity appears as nothing but a “‘metaphysical’ distraction” (Bonefeld, 2014: 21). In this regard, it is possible to argue that while political economic approaches and economic theory in its neo-classical forms substitute “the myth of economic fate with the myth of God’s wrath”, orthodox modernity based schools of sociology substitute “God’s wrath” with structures (e.g., economy, politics, culture, ideology, etc.) and society (which is itself understood as a complex set of relations between structures, and thereby abstracted from its human content), by attempting to sociologize the ‘economic’ without questioning what this ‘economic’ itself is (Bonefeld, 2014: 23-24; cf. Clarke, 1992). Based on their reading of the concepts of alienated labor and commodity fetishism, the students of open Marxism argued that both orthodox Marxism and Western Marxism reproduce the problems of political economy and modern sociology, though in their own ways. Contrary to these understandings, by bringing the contradictory character of capitalism, they argued that “society *is* the movement contradiction”, and “[s]ocial ‘structures’ only have a parlous existence in a contradictory world” (Bonefeld, et. al, 1992a: xvii-xviii, xiii). Underlying this idea, as it is also emphasized by Clarke in the above quotation, has been the reformulation of the concept of *form* in relation to Marx’s concept of alienation, which is later developed in his analysis of value-form, capital and commodity fetishism:

Most often, at any rate in Anglophone discussion, ‘form’ is understood in the sense of ‘species’: the forms of something are the specific characters it can assume. For instance, the state can adopt specifically ‘fascist’ or ‘authoritarian’ or ‘bourgeois-liberal’ or ‘fordist’ or ‘post-fordist’ forms. An enormous amount of Marxism (especially recent Marxism, and not only Anglophone Marxism) has understood form in this way. On the other hand, ‘form’ can be understood as *mode of existence*: something or other exists only in and through the form(s) it takes. The commodity, for example exists only in and through the money-form and the credit form and the world market. (Bonefeld et. al., 1992a: xv)

According to the students of open Marxism, this distinction between “form as a species of something more generic” and form as a “mode of existence” has significant consequences for theory and practice, and the relationship between them. For those who conceive form in terms of a “dualistic separation of the generic from the specific ... and of the abstract from the concrete”, the task of theory turns out to be application of some “*general laws*” to “*specific social instances*”, and, in the case of historical analysis this reflects itself as formulation first of “a global theory of social change”, and then to deploy it to specific conjunctures (Bonefeld et. al, 1992a: xv-xvi).<sup>66</sup> To put it differently, the problem implicit in these accounts of seemingly dialectical-materialist understandings, is, arguably, that of a reductionist conception of the relation between *essence* and *appearance*:

Putting the matter in the bluntest possible fashion, those who see form in terms of species have to try to discover something behind, underlying the variant social forms. Those who see form as mode of existence have to try to decode the forms in and of themselves. The first group of theorists have, always, to be more or less economic-reductionist. The second group of theorists have to dwell upon critique of and the movement of contradiction as making clear, for its own part, the ‘forms’ that class struggle may take. To this, old-style dialectics together with new-style sociology are, thus, implacably opposed. (Bonefeld et. al., 1992a: xvi)

As opposed to “closed Marxism” which conceives social relations and human subjectivity only as a reflection and/or effect of some underlying structures or laws, the starting point of the students of “open Marxism” has been the following motto:

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<sup>66</sup> There are serious theoretical consequences of this understanding of form and periodization for the concept of food regime. I will return to this point in the next chapter in which, based on Philip McMichael’s discussions, I will formulate *capitalism itself as a food regime*.



“There is only one reality, not two, and content is the content of forms, however split reality might seem” – i.e., “[t]here is only one world, and that is the world in which we live” (Bonefeld, 2014: 141; Bonefeld, 2016: 235). As I mentioned above, this understanding of *form*, and hence *form-analysis* is based on a re-reading of Marx, particularly of his concepts of alienation (alienated labor) and commodity fetishism. At the core of such a renewed reading of Marx lies the conception of the works of early Marx and late Marx, which structural and/or scientific Marxism separates radically, as constitutive parts of a total project that is nothing but the *critique* of political economy *as such* on the basis of the critique of the assumptions of the liberal social theory. Among the Marxist circles, this point is debated particularly in relation to the question of how to read the subtitle of Marx’s *Capital*, that is “A Critique of Political Economy”:

Either it can be said that Marx criticized only bourgeois political economy, and sought to replace it with a revolutionary political economy of his own. In this case – and it is the reading of the subtitle favored by Marxists and Marx-critics as diverse as Hilferding, Lenin, Althusser, and Joan Robinson – we are returned to the notion that social structures exist, as facts or artifacts, and that the only problem is to identify the cogwheels which allow structures to be meshed. Or it can be said that Marx sought to criticize, not just bourgeois political economy, but the notion of political economy as such. (Bonefeld, et. al, 1992a: xiii)

This study situates itself within the latter reading and shares the argument that “Marx’s intellectual achievement was to develop a theory of the economic forms of the social relations of capitalist production” (Clarke, 1992: 7). At the center of this achievement lies the following question: “*why human social reproduction manifests itself in the form of self-moving economic forces that assert themselves behind the backs of the acting subjects, indifferent and indeed hostile to their needs*” (Bonefeld, 2014: 21-22). An elaboration on this point is necessary not only to make the basic premises of open Marxism mentioned briefly above more explicit, but also to explore the implications of this theoretical framework for the concept of development and its critique by both post-developmentalism and political economic perspectives. To that aim, the next subsection provides the outlines of Marx’s critique of political economy and liberal social theory on the basis of this re-reading of the concepts of alienation, alienated

labor, value-form and commodity fetishism in relation to the defining characteristics of capitalism.

### 3.4.2. Marxism as a Critique of Political Economy and Liberal Social Theory<sup>67</sup>

In the previous subsection I have argued that the way out of the so-called crisis of Marxism can be found in the reformulation of Marxism as a critical theory of society through an analysis of the social constitution of economic categories (e.g., wage, profit, rent, production, distribution, exchange, competition, money, value, capital, division of labor etc.) which appear as objective, natural and/or rational, and hence as external to social relations themselves. The basic premise of this reformulation has been the conception of Marxism as a *critique* of political economy *as such*, rather than a Marxism understood simply as another form, be it *radical* and/or *critical*, of political economy:

Marx developed his theory of capitalist society through a critique of the theories of classical political economy. However, many features of Marx's work that are commonly identified as its central themes were already commonplace in political economy. (...) Clearly what sets Marx apart from the political economists is not simply a 'materialist conception of history' nor a 'class conception of society', for versions of these are already to be found in classical political economy. (Clarke, 1992: 49)

For instance, Adam Smith had already formulated a “thoroughgoing ‘materialist’ conception history, in which class relations emerge out of mode of subsistence”, a conception of history in which the modes of subsistence are conceived as parts of a progressive development from hunting to pasturage, then to agriculture and finally to commerce, on the basis of a progressive development of division of labor (Clarke, 1992: 49). According to Clarke (1992: 32), Smith was also “the first to analyze systematically the emerging capitalist society in terms of the fundamental class division between capitalists, landowners and wage-laborers”. Moreover, in an attempt

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<sup>67</sup> This subsection is based on Simon Clarke's (1992) study titled *Marx, Marginalism and Modern Sociology: From Adam Smith to Max Weber*, in which he reads Marx in relation to the implications of Marx's critique of classical political economy for the following marginalist turn and the development of modern sociology on the basis of marginalist assumptions.

to provide “a more rigorous basis” for Smith’s model, David Ricardo had already “produced a theory that could be easily interpreted by Ricardian socialists as a theory not that of class harmony, but of class conflict, in which profit derives from the exploitation of the laborer and the development of the forces of production are held back by capital and landed property” (Clarke, 1992: 49).

In that sense, although Marx “relied heavily on Smith and Ricardo in his condemnation of the capitalist system in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and the *Poverty of Philosophy*”, what sets him apart from political economists is his relentless *critique* of their materialist conception of history, their understanding of class, and labor theory of value (Clarke, 1992: 49). This point is particularly important in relation to post-developmental critiques of Marx that considers him as a sophisticated theoretician of developmentalism. Contrary to this, according to the reading of Marx provided here, any archeological search for the intellectual origins of the concept of development should start with the classical political economy; and Marx, rather than being a developmentalist, is conceived here as the first who systematically criticized the uncritical conception of progress that naturalizes capitalist social relations on the basis of either development of forces of production, or of reason, or of a particular kind of rationality.

In this subsection, I will try to explore this point through an analysis of Marx’s early critique of *alienated labor* and his later studies on the *value-form* and *commodity fetishism*, which together constitute the totality of Marx’s “overall project”, that is defining “an alternative basis on which to conceptualize the forms of capitalist social relations in which human sociability appears in the form of objective constraint” (cf., Clarke, 1992: 50, 306). This point is also important, since, arguably, the divide between orthodox/structural/scientific Marxism and humanist/Western/Hegelian Marxism that dominates the Marxist literature, has also been based on the radical separation of the so-called *Early Marx* from the *Late Marx*. For instance, it is quite common to qualify *early Marx* as an integration, or at best as a synthesis of “critical historicist perspectives of utopian socialism and of Hegelian idealism with the bourgeois materialism of Feuerbach’s philosophy”, which led to a “humanistic

philosophy based on the theory of alienated human nature”, while referring to works of *late Marx* as a “scientific economics, which formulates objective economic laws which operate independently of the human will” (Clarke, 1992: 49, 92). The problem with such an understanding is that:

Marx’s critique of political economy is then seen as an ‘extrinsic’ philosophical critique, expressed from the standpoint of human nature in the early theory of alienation, and from the standpoint of the economic interests of the working class in the mature theory of surplus value, so that the development of Marx’s critique is seen as a move, for good or ill, from ‘philosophy’ to ‘economics’. (Clarke, 1992: 49-50)

Whether the relationship between early Marx (i.e., his “youthful romanticism”) and late Marx (i.e., his “mature economism”) is conceived as complementary with or in opposition to each other, such an understanding leads to a distinction between Marx’s *philosophy of history*, his *sociology*, and his *economics*. According to these dominant interpretations, then, Marx’s *philosophy of history* is assigned with the task of defining “the ontological primacy and historical variability of the social relations of production”, his *sociology* with the analysis of “historically specific configurations of these social relations”, and his *economics* with the task of defining “the underlying economic laws of motion which determine the development these social relations” (Clarke, 1992: 93). The central problem implicit in this orthodox interpretation is that of identifying “the fundamental error of political economy ... *not* in its characterization of the ‘economic’ laws of capitalism, nor even in its characterization of the social relations of capitalist production, *but* in its philosophy of history, which ignored the historically specific character of social relations of capitalist production, based on the private appropriation of the means of production” (Clarke, 1992: 93, emphasis added). In other words, on the basis of a separation of early and late Marx, these accounts of Marxism leave aside the question of what the social constitution of the ‘economic’ *itself* is, which is, arguably, the main question for Marx, and thereby they leave “intact the field of ‘economy’ as the object of analysis, alongside ‘society’ and ‘history’” (Clarke, 1992: 99). To put it differently, for the orthodox interpretations, the originality of Marx lies simply in his historicization of the capitalist relations of production mainly on the basis of *property relations* and the particular way the surplus labor is

appropriated, which implicitly implies a submission to the political economic understanding of production and production relations, and thereby economic categories. A good example of this orthodox interpretation of Marx, which arguably still dominates the popular as well as scholarly understandings (and critiques) of Marxism, can be found in a Soviet textbook of 1977, which argues that social relations of production “are determined primarily by who owns the means of production”:

*Ownership of the means of production ... underlies the social relation between people at all stages of social development. It is the development of the means of production that necessitates changes in property relations and the sum total of social relations. Property relations, in turn, effect the development of the means of production. When the form of ownership corresponds to given level development of the productive forces, it facilitates their progress. If property relations are obsolete, they act as a break on the development of the productive forces. (Kozlov, 1977: 14-5; cited in Clarke, 1992: 94).*

As Clarke (1992: 50) mentions, it is possible to find “some textual justification” for such a radical separation of early and late Marx, and hence for a possibility of a ‘Marxist political economy’ on the basis of property relations, since Marx benefited from a wide range of theoretical sources in a way that “his early works, in particular, can easily be dismissed as an eclectic and contradictory mixture of borrowings and original insights”. However, this study shares the argument that Marx’s early works and later ones constitute a totality. According to this argument, what gives Marx’s works their “coherence”, “originality” and “critical power” is his critique of political economy *and* liberal social theory on the basis of *not* labor theory of value, *but* his theory of alienated labor, which is further developed in his later conceptualizations of commodity, value-form, capital and commodity fetishism. To put it differently, although “there is a difference between the philosophical character of Marx’s early critique of political economy and the historical character of the intrinsic critique developed in *Capital*”, this difference does not signify an abandonment of his earlier studies in his ‘mature’ stage, but rather it signifies “the extent to which he fulfilled” his earlier critique through giving his philosophical categories a historical content (Clarke, 1992: 95-96).

At the risk of repetition, it must be stressed that what makes Marx's early and late works a totality is their intellectual and political core, that is to say his relentless critique of presentation of capitalist social relations, though they produce certain social problems, as the best of all possible worlds, and his relentless attempt to establish a ground that will lead to transcendence of the capitalist system. Presentation of capitalist social relations as the best of all possible worlds can take the form of their rationalization through Reason, and/or their naturalization through establishing the ground of capitalist social relations in Nature. The former is the main target in Marx's critique of Hegel's philosophy and Hegel's understanding of the contradictory relationship between the universal (the state) and particular (civil society); and the latter is the main target in Marx's critique of political economy's technical and naturalistic conception of production and labor. It is in this sense that Marx's early works and late studies are parts of the same project. Marx's critique of Hegel and political economy constitutes a totality simply because both understandings have their roots in "bourgeois thought and bourgeois philosophy", the hallmark of which is "the categorical opposition between individual and society" on the basis of conception of individual as *private individual* with *private interests* (Clarke, 1992: 59). In other words, both Hegel and Smith uncritically accepted the bourgeois assumption of the private interests of private individuals, and then tried to solve, in their own ways, the problems arising from the opposing character of these private interests:

Smith and Hegel were both concerned to discover the foundation of society in order to reform their own society so that it would accord with the dictates of reason. Both observed that civil society is based on egoism, albeit moderated in for Smith, so that the coherence and unity of society, its inherent harmony, is not immediately apparent. Thus for both Smith and Hegel the rationality of society could only be imposed on society from outside. While Hegel looked to the idea of universality to provide the rational principle of unity, Smith looked for the roots of reason in nature. Thus while Hegel wanted to show the nation-state as the self-realization of the Idea, classical political economy strove to see the capitalist economy as the self-realization of Nature. While Hegel established the rational necessity of the constitutional state, classical political economy established the natural necessity of the capitalist economy. Both Smith and Hegel thereby abolished society, Hegel absorbing it into absolute Reason, Smith into an absolute Nature. Thus in each case society is abstracted from humanity and attributed to some external force. (Clarke, 1992: 56)

It is on this ground that Marx's focus is centered on the conception of private interest, which according to him is not "an expression of atomistic individualism in human nature", but can "only be an expression of the 'privatization' of socially defined interests" (Clarke, 1992: 59). In other words, contrary to the Hegelian philosophy and political economy that attribute the social character of the alienated forms of existence to the Idea and Nature, Marx based his arguments on *society* as the mediating link between the categorical oppositions of the Enlightenment thought such as: matter vs. idea, material vs. ideal, individual vs. society, humanity vs. nature, nature vs. reason, and the like. However, the critical point, here, is that for Marx, society is not simply another form of abstraction from its human origins, but it is understood as "the everyday practical activity of real human beings" (Clarke, 1992: 57). As Marx (1845) states in *Theses on Feuerbach*, at the center of the analysis lies the "sensuous human activity, practice": "All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice."<sup>68</sup> To put it differently, the individual, for Marx, "is only a human individual within society, so that human individuality is a form of sociability" (Clarke, 1992: 53): "Above all we must avoid postulating society ... as an abstraction vis-à-vis the individual. The individual *is the social being*" (Marx, CW, 3: 299, cited in Clarke, 1992: 53). Or as Marx (1845) states in the sixth thesis on Feuerbach: "[T]he human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations." The central point here is that alienation, i.e., the problems of capitalism which appear in the form of opposing private interests on the basis of private property, is our own making and it is a social construct. In other words, alienation here implies not alienation from some innate essence, but from its constituting social relations:

The opposition of privatized interests is constructed socially, as the individual expression of a social institution, the institution of private property. It is the private appropriation of the means and products of social production which constitutes interests as private, exclusive, and opposed. Smith and Hegel, developing Locke's theory of private property, conceal the social foundations

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<sup>68</sup> For the quotations from *Theses on Feuerbach* please see the following link: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm> (last access: 24.07.2018)

of private property in conceiving of private property as ultimately deriving from a primitive proprietorial relation of the individual to her own body and, by immediate extension, to the things produced by the exercise of her physical and mental powers. It is only by uncovering the origins of private property in human social activity that the alienation expressed by Hegel's idealism and by Smith's materialism can be traced back to its source. *The critique of private property provides the key to the critique both of political economy and of Hegelian philosophy.* (Clarke, 1992: 59; emphasis added)

In other words, Marx's focus on private property and thereby on property relations is based on his critique of private individual as the presupposition of bourgeois thought. The significance of the concept of alienation and his theory of alienated labor is related to this point. However, contrary to the orthodox Marxist understandings, Marx's critique is based on the argument that "proprietorial relation between a person and a thing expresses a more fundamental social relation between people", that is to say, "before labor can be appropriated in the form of property it must *first* take the form of alienated labor" (Clarke, 1992: 67). To put it differently, the link between Marx's early studies and his late works is the understanding of private property *as the consequence* of alienated labor, which is in sharp contrast with the traditional interpretations of Marxism that see private property as the *cause* of alienated labor. Marx (CW, 3: 279-280) is quite clear on this point:

Thus through estranged labor man ... creates the domination of the person who does not produce over production and over the product ... The relationship of the worker to labor creates the relation to it of the capitalist ... *Private property* is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of alienated labor.

True, it is as a result of the movement of private property that we have obtained the concept of alienated labor (of alienated life) in political economy. But analysis of this concept shows that though private property appears to be the reason, the cause of alienated labor, it is rather its consequence ... Later this relationship becomes reciprocal. (cited in Clarke, 1992: 67)

This apparently simple argument has devastating implications not only for Marx's critique of Hegelian philosophy and political economy, but also for liberal social theory itself and for the Enlightenment thought as its roots. This is simply because, private property understood as the consequence of alienated labor, which, as Marx (1968: 181; cited in Clarke, 1992: 70) acknowledged later "served as a guiding thread



for my studies”, “undermines the apparently *a priori* character of the fundamental categories of bourgeois thought” (Clarke, 1992: 70):

Marx offers a simultaneous critique of political economy and of Hegelian philosophy which rests on his critique of the concept of private property, which is the presupposition on which liberal social thought constitutes the rational individual as its primitive theoretical term. This critique was first developed in Marx’s theory of alienated labor, in which Marx argued that private property is not the foundation of alienated labor but its result. Capitalist private property presupposes the development of a system of social production in which the products of labor are exchanged in the alienated form of the commodity. The relation of private property, as a relation between an individual and a thing, is therefore only the juridical expression of a social relation, in which the products of *social* labor are *privately* appropriated. This critique of private property immediately implies that the abstract individual of liberal social theory is already a socially determined individual, whose social determination is implicit in the proprietorial relation between the individual and the things which define that individual’s mode of participation in society. This critique cuts the ground from under the feet of liberal social theory, in making it impossible to relate social institutions back to their origins in some pristine individual instrumental or normative rationality. The only possible foundation of social theory is the historically developed social relations which characterize a particular form of society. Social theories could not be derived from *a priori* principles, but could only be developed through painstaking empirical investigation and conceptual elaboration. (Clarke, 1992: 7)

In other words, at the center of Marx’s critique lies private property as “the hidden presupposition of liberal social thought in general”, since private property “constitutes the abstract individuality of the bourgeois subject” mainly by isolating the individual from society “through her *private appropriation* of the conditions of her *social existence*” (Clarke, 1992: 70). Moreover, this understanding also cuts the ground from under the feet of orthodox Marxist interpretations as well. This is simply because these schools of thought without providing an explanation of the social constitution of private property, they “assimilate Marx to classical political economy” (Clarke, 1992: 94). Contrary to this, for Marx, the explanation of capitalist social relations of production “on the basis of the private ownership of the means of production ... *was precisely the source of the errors of political economy*, which failed to see that private property was only the expression of alienated labor” (Clarke, 1992: 96, emphasis added). It is this theoretical point that is further developed in late Marx through his

critique of Ricardo's labor theory of value, arguably with the claim that "the validity of 'labor theory of value' is not the presupposition of the theory of surplus value, but is its result, to the extent that it is the inadequate expression of the social form of capitalist production" (Clarke, 1992: 117). In other words, according to this reading of Marx, labor theory of value is not the basis of his theory of surplus value, but rather it is the result of the theory of surplus value.

Within this framework, the central question that Marx deals with both in his early and late studies can be formulated as follows: if it is not private property and property relations, then, what is the source of alienation that is understood as the appearance of social relations in the form of "economic fate", i.e. appearance of economic categories in the form of an external force to their constitutive social/human character? In other words, for Marxism understood as the critique of political economy, the central question is the social constitution of economic categories, which simply implies that "economic nature is not the essence of economics", but rather "the essence of economics is society, and society is the social individual in her social relations" (Bonefeld, 2014: 27). Within this framework, and with the question mentioned above at the center, it is through the analysis of "the historical development of alienated labor as the expression of different social forms of production" that Marx fulfilled his earlier critique of presentation of capitalist social relations as the best of all possible worlds in his late studies, which starts with *Grundrisse* and is culminated in *Capital* (Clarke, 1992: 87, 91). In other words, what was lacking in early Marx was the "analysis of the historical development of different *social forms of labor* as the foundation of the development of different forms of the division labor and private property"; and it is this lack that led to the "eclectic" and "extrinsic" appearance of his early studies, which are, in turn *partially* rejected by the orthodox/structural/scientific interpretations of Marxism on this ground (Clarke, 1992: 87).<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *Partially* because, arguably, the orthodox interpretation is based mostly on Marx's earlier critique of political economy (especially *German Ideology*, *The Communist Manifesto* and the *Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*), which is abstracted from its political and intellectual core that is presented here, and reduced to the standpoint of political economy through an understanding of the relationship between *forces of production*, which is mostly reduced to *technical division of labor*,

In this sense, the historical analysis of the *form of value* in capitalism has played a particular role in the fulfillment of Marx's project. However, it should immediately be added that historical analysis of the social form of labor in capitalism through an analysis of the value-form "does not simply add an historical and sociological dimension" to the categories of political economy but rather it *transforms* the substance of political economy "through the critique, for the processes through which the economic categories are determined are no longer natural processes: of subsistence need, of fertility of the soil, of demographic increase" (Clarke, 1992: 99). It is in relation to this point that "Marx's critique of political economy, *centered on the critique of the labor theory of value*, is the core of Marx's theory of capitalist society" (Clarke, 1992: 99, emphasis added). This is so simply because, contrary to the classical political economy, and particularly in opposition to Ricardo's labor theory of value that conceive labor as "the labor-time of the individual embodied in the product of her labor, which thereby constituted that product her property":

Marx's labor was not individual but social labor, the attribution of that labor to the individual only appearing in the form of the attribution of a value to the commodity. It is only in the alienated social form of commodity production that the laborer's own activity, as a part of social labor, confronts the laborer in the form of a quality (value) of a thing (the commodity), which can thereby be appropriated as private property. Thus Marx does not provide an external socio-historical critique of political economy, which leaves intact the field of the 'economy' as the object of analysis, alongside 'society' and 'history', for the 'economy', the world of quantitative relations between things, can only be understood as the alienated social form of the reproduction of social relations of production. Marx's critique of political economy does not create a space for a Marxist political economy since political economy can never do more than describe the alienated forms of social existence. (Clarke, 1992: 96)

To put it differently, Marx's critique of political economy eliminates the ground for a Marxist political economy mainly because political economy provides a *theory of production* on the basis of a trans-historical conception of labor "as a purposeful and

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and *social relations of production*, which is mostly reduced to *property relations* as political economy does so. For the summary of the achievements of Marx's earlier studies and their limits in relation to Marx's theoretical and political project formulated here as the critique of naturalization of capitalist social relations and presentation of their economic categories as rational and thereby eternal, please see Clarke (1992: 81-91).

goal-oriented exchange with nature”, and thereby “construes this necessity of the human metabolism with nature as a general economic law of history, in which developments in the technical division of labor give rise to historically definite forms of property, relations of distribution, forms of government, social institutions and ideological conceptions” (Bonefeld, 2014: 22-23, 30-31). Contrary to such a theory of production, the intellectual and political core of Marx’s studies is arguably based on the *critique of production and labor*, rather than a sanctification of them as it is usually conceived. This point has significant implications for the hegemonic structuralist conceptions of Marxism as well, for they arguably also could not go beyond the reproduction of the errors of political economy through the problematic conceptions of forces of production and/or base-superstructure dichotomy:

For the structuralist tradition, the most fundamental economic law comprises the inescapable necessity of labor as the purposeful activity of social reproduction. Labor expresses thus a trans-historical materiality, which is defined by its metabolism with nature. Capitalism is therefore viewed as a historically specific modality of this necessity of labor. As Postone<sup>70</sup> argues most succinctly, instead of a ‘critique of production’, this view offers a ‘theory of production’ defined by technical relations combining factors in material production, which is about the production of use-values. There is, then, the enduring general law of labor as purposeful exchange with nature in the abstract, regardless of time and space, and there is the historically specific modality of this same exchange. These two forms of labor are said to form a contradictory unity between materiality and social form – which is traditionally discussed as a contradiction between the transhistorically conceived forces of production and the historically specific social relations of production – and it is this relationship between the materiality of labor as a trans-historical force of production and the historically specific social relations of production that establishes the fundamental contradiction of capitalism. (Bonefeld, 2014: 29-30)

Such an understanding that reduces production to a technical, and thereby an eternal process, assigns labor an ontologically privileged status, and rather than explaining the production relations on the basis of their social constitution, it attempts to explain social relations on the basis of production relations. Arguably, the fundamental errors of classical political economy and traditional accounts of Marxism that read Marx from

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<sup>70</sup> The reference here is to Moishe Postone’s (1996) study titled, *Time, Labor and Social Domination*.

the standpoint of classical political economy lay in this inversion. And, arguably, that is why Marx's critique of capitalism is centered on the critique of Ricardo's labor theory of value, which is nothing but the most developed form of naturalization of capitalist relations within the tradition of classical political economy on the basis of the trans-historically conceived labor that is mentioned above. To put it differently, Marx's conceptual distinctions between use-value and exchange-value, concrete labor and abstract labor, constant capital and variable capital, and most importantly his distinction between *labor* and *labor power* do not signify theoretical corrections to labor theory of value via adopting the standpoint of working class mainly in order to prove its exploitation:

Far from adopting the labor theory of value to 'prove' the exploitation of the working class, Marx's critique of Ricardo undermines any such proof, both philosophically, in undermining the liberal theory of property which sees labor as the basis of proprietorial rights, and theoretically, in removing the immediate connection between the expenditure of individual labor and the value of the commodity, so that the relationship between 'effort' and 'reward' can only be constituted socially. Thus Marx was harshly critical of 'Ricardian socialism' which proclaimed labor's entitlement to its product, arguing that such a 'right' was only a bourgeois right, expressing bourgeois property relations. For Marx what was at issue was not ethical proofs of exploitation, whose existence requires no such proof since it is manifested daily in the contradiction between the growing wealth created by social labor and the relative impoverishment of the working population, but "to prove concretely how in present capitalist society the material, etc., conditions have at last been created which enable and compel the workers to lift this social curse" (Marx, SW: 317). (Clarke, 1992: 97)

Marx's critique of the naturalization of capitalist relations on the basis of a technical and technological conception production, and a trans-historical understanding of labor manifests itself in his critique of Ricardo's understanding of value as "embodied labor" in the product. Marx's distinction between labor and labor power is also related to this point. In other words, Marx concept of labor power is not a simple correction to labor theory of value, but rather is the basis of the rejection of its political economic understandings. The question at hand in relation to the concept of labor power is the value of a commodity. According to Ricardo's labor theory of value, the value of a commodity is determined by the expenditure of labor-time that is to say "by the

quantity of labor required for its production, given the knowledge, techniques and implements available, irrespective of the form of society within which the thing is produced” (Clarke, 1992: 100). The problem with this understanding of value is that it conceives value essentially in technical/technological sense, that is to say its determination occurs “prior to, and independently of the social relations between the producers” (Clarke, 1992: 100). Marx’s intervention to such a technological understanding of labor is based on the argument that “it is only in a particular kind of society that the products of labor take on the form of commodities and appear as values” – that is to say labor that appears in the form of value is not “labor in general”, but the social form of labor in capitalism, that is to say “commodity-producing labor” which is itself commoditized in the form of labor-power (Clarke, 1992: 100). As Marx (TSV, I: 167) states:

When we speak of the commodity as the materialization of labor – in the sense of its exchange value, this itself is only imaginary, that is to say a purely social mode of existence of the commodity which has nothing to do with its corporeal reality; it is conceived as a definite quantity of social labor or of money. ... The mystification here arises from the fact that a social relation appears in the form of a thing. (cited in Clarke, 1992: 101)

Here the critical point is the distinction between conceptions of value on the basis of “embodied labor” irrespective of the constitutive social relations on the one hand, and on the basis of “socially necessary labor-time” to produce the commodity on the other. It should be noted that the distinction between “embodied labor” and “socially necessary labor time” is not simply a technical issue that is “of interest only to economics”. Underlying this conceptual distinction is the theoretical distinction between “the naturalistic conception of value as the labor embodied in the commodity as a thing and the social-historical conception of value as the labor that is socially attributed to the thing as a commodity”:

Value is labor for others; labor in so far as it is socially recognized within a division of labor; labor whose social character has been abstracted from the activity of the laborer to confront the laborer as the property of a thing; labor whose human qualities have been reduced to the single quality of duration; dehumanized, homogenous, in short, *alienated* labor. The social foundation of

value is precisely the alienation of labor that Marx had analyzed in 1844. (Clarke, 1992: 101)

The point here is that although the commodity is produced *privately* with a use-value (since a commodity without a use-value is of interest to nobody), it is not produced “for the producer’s own use”, and “it can only become a use-value by being exchanged as a value” (Clarke, 1992: 102). In other words, that particular commodity is not simply produced for the satisfaction of some human need, but it is produced with the expectation that it can be sold and realized as value so that the producer can buy in turn the commodities with use-values that she is in need of. That is to say the implicit assumption in the ‘private’ production of a commodity is the existence of an already generalized commodity production. That is why despite the fact that value of a commodity appears as a consequence of private production and in the form of individual labor embodied in it, “the commodity is necessarily a social product and the labor which produced it is necessarily a part of social labor” (Clarke, 1992: 102):

The mysteries of the commodity arise because the social relations within which commodities are determined as values are not immediately apparent. Although value is attributed to a commodity within a social relation of exchange, it is a matter of accident with whom any particular exchange is made. The individual producer is not concerned who buys the product, but is concerned only to realize its value. The individual has a determinate relationship with the commodity as a value, but a purely accidental relationship with other producers. The value of the commodity then appears to be a property inherent in the relation between the private individual and the commodity as a thing. (Clarke, 1992: 102)

It is on this ground that both the labor theory of value that “derives the value of a commodity one-sidedly from the relationship between the commodity and the laborer as producer”, and “the theory of utility” that “derives it equally one-sidedly from the relationship between the commodity and the purchaser as consumer” are problematic in the sense that they abstract the power of commodity from its social character:

In each case the value of commodity appears to be independent of the social relations of production: the relations between people appear to arise because the commodity has a value, as product of labor, on the one side, and as object of desire, on the other. Hence the social powers of the commodity production

appear to be inherent in the commodity as a thing. This is the origin of the ‘fetishism of commodities’.

It should be noted that Marx’s analysis of *exchange*, which is conceived by political economy simply as the generalization of the elementary form of barter, as a particular moment of the social relations of production; his conception of *money* as a social relation “in which the power of the commodity is expressed in its most abstract and universal form” are all based on this understanding of value-form and commodity fetishism (Clarke, 1992: 103-108). It is in this framework – that is to say the analysis of the social form of labor as commodity-producing labor on the basis of the analysis of the value-form – that we find Marx’s conception of capital as “a further development of the contradictions inherent in the commodity form” (Clarke, 1992: 113). Here, Marx’s concept of capital refers to the process of the self-expansion of value, i.e. the process in which “a sum of value in the form of money is expended in the buying of commodities, and commodities are later sold in order to realize a greater sum of value in the form of money” (Clarke, 1992: 114). The critical point here is the following:

Money and commodities are not in themselves capital, they are simply forms taken on by capital in the process of self-expansion. It is not the value of money nor that of the commodities that increases in the process, otherwise there would be no need for capital to go through these changes of form to expand itself. To believe otherwise is to identify capital with one of its forms, to see capital ‘*as a thing, not as a relation*’ (Grundrisse, p. 258) and so to succumb to the fetishism of commodities” (Clarke, 1992: 114).

Marx’s concept of labor power, which signifies a different object when compared to the object of the concept of labor, provides the answer to the question of the source of surplus-value. As it is well known labor-power as a commodity “has a unique characteristic in that the ‘consumption’ of labor-power is itself the expenditure of labor and so the production of value” (Clarke, 1992: 115). In other words, although labor-power is also bought at its value as it is the case for any other commodity, the difference is that it “can be set to work to produce value in excess of its own value” (Clarke, 1992: 115). The critical point here is that Marx’s concept of labor power, in relation to his conceptions of “socially necessary labor time” and the distinction



between concrete labor and abstract labor, does not reproduce the technical and naturalistic and trans-historical conception of production and labor of the classical political economy. In other words, Marx's concepts of *labor power* as the capacity to work and *abstract labor* as the producer of value are not trans-historical categories with an antediluvian existence, but rather they are the products of the social form of labor in capitalism. It is arguably in this sense that labor theory of value is not the presupposition of theory of surplus value but is its result:

It is important to notice that the theory of surplus value does not depend on the determination of value by labor-time, but on the analysis of the social form of capitalist production, based on the distinction between labor and labor-power, the value of which is determined quite independently of one another. Surplus value derives from the quantitative relationship between two quite distinct magnitudes, as the difference between the sum of value acquired by the capitalist for the sale of the product and the sum paid out in the purchase of labor-power and means of production. The latter sum has to be paid out as the condition of production. The size of the former depends on the ability of the capitalist to compel the workers to work beyond the time necessary to produce a product equivalent in value to the sum initially laid out, whatever may be the particular units in which value is measured. It is the capitalist form of the social determination of production which makes it appropriate to express the value of the product in terms of the expenditure of labor-time, since it is capital, not Ricardo or Marx, which subordinates the concrete activity of labor to the expenditure of labor-time. (Clarke, 1992: 117)

This understanding of surplus value on the basis of the distinction between labor and labor-power immediately implies that the source of exploitation is not the inequality of exchange between capital and labor "so that the abolition of exploitation depends on the abolition of the wage-relation and not simply on its equalization" (Clarke, 1992: 117). In other words, class relations of capitalism are not constituted on the basis of the ownership of certain things (i.e. wage-laborers as the owner of labor-power, landowners as the owner of land, capitalists as the owner of the means of production) but on the basis of "the separation of the laborer from the means of production and subsistence that compels the laborer to sell her labor-power as a commodity in order to participate in social production and so gain access to the means of subsistence" (Clarke, 1992: 117). It is in this sense that the social foundation of labor-power as a commodity lies in the concept of *primitive accumulation* that is understood here not

only as a historical presupposition of capitalist social relations but also as the principle on which capitalist social production relations are reproduced (cf., Bonefeld, 2014: 79-100):

It is this separation that is consequently the social foundation of surplus-value and so of capital. Capital, like the commodity, is not a self-sufficient thing with inherent social powers, but a social relation that appears in the form relation between things. The social relation that is concealed behind capital is, however, a new social relation, not the relationship between private producers concealed behind the commodity, but a relation between social classes. This *class* relation is the logical and historical presupposition of capitalist production, the social condition for the existence of individual capitalists and workers, and the basis on which the labor of one section of society is appropriated without equivalent by another. The foundation of this relation the separation of the mass of population from the means of production and subsistence. (Clarke, 1992: 117-8)

Based on this understanding of primitive accumulation both as a “precondition of capitalism” and its “constitutive premise”, this study argues that “the capital relation can spring to life only on the condition that labor power exists in the form of a commodity” (Bonefeld, 2014: 42). That is why, as Bonefeld (2014: 9) highlights, “the class antagonism is the constitutive premise of economic categories”.<sup>71</sup> Before discussing the implications of this reading of Marx for the post-developmental critique of development, it might be helpful to overview the main points formulated above.

Thus far, contrary to the traditional accounts of Marxism I have argued that Marx’s early and late works constitute a totality on the basis of his critique of political economy as such, and thereby of the liberal social theory itself. The central target of this critique is the presupposition of *private individual* endowed with *private interests* that are opposing to each other. It is through this conception of private individual that both classical political economy and liberal social theory are based on the categorical

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<sup>71</sup> This understanding of primitive accumulation as both “the foundation of [capitalist] production ... [and] given in capitalist production” (Marx, TSV, 3: 272; cited in Bonefeld, 2014: 81), and class in terms of contradiction rather than simply as a matter of classification on the basis of ownership of things, has significant implications for the critique of political economic formulations of agrarian/peasant question. I will return to this issue in the fourth chapter in relation to the conceptualization of capitalism itself as a food regime.

opposition between individual and society, and their central concern has been to reconcile the opposing character of private interests with society, which in fact later became the central concern of orthodox-modernity based schools of sociology predominantly on the basis of the question of *social order*. To put it differently, the core of classical political economy and liberal social theory is the abstraction of their concepts “immediately from the fetishized forms of appearance of capitalist society, and specifically from the relations of commodity exchange, in which prices and revenues appeared to derive from the inherent qualities of things” (Clarke, 1992: 140). In other words, the concepts of political economy “are formulated in abstraction from the specific historical characteristics of capitalist society”, and it is in this sense that they are “formal abstractions” that leave the substantive content of their concepts intact, and thereby present capitalist social relations as natural and rational, and hence as the best of all possible social worlds (Clarke, 1992: 82). Since its concepts are based on formal abstraction, “political economy could at best *describe*, but it could not *explain*” the capitalist social relations and their contradictions (Clarke, 1992: 140):

Classical political economy develops a theory of society on the basis of the formal abstractions of the individual, private property, production and exchange. The foundation of political economy is the conception of the private property owner as an abstract individual, unconstrained by imposed obligations, who is capable of making and of acting on her own rational judgments. The individual is inserted in relations of production, distribution and exchange, on the basis of her ownership of physical things which can serve as factors of production. Thus the social relations of capitalist production, distribution and exchange exist independently of persons, as relations between things. (Clarke, 1992: 109)

At the center of this naturalization of capitalist relations has been a conception of production simply as a “technical process of the production of things” on the basis of a trans-historically conceived labor (Clarke, 1992: 109). It is on this ground that classical political economy presents capitalist private property, which “imposes no social constraints”, as “an expression of the reason that is the defining characteristic of human nature” (Clarke, 1992: 109). Based on this framework “the fundamental conclusion of political economy” turns out to be the necessity of “the freedom of the individual property owner to dispose of her property according to private judgements

of individual self-interest” as the precondition “for the realization of the productive potential inherent in the technical conditions of production, through the extension of social division of labor and the application of machinery” (Clarke, 1992: 109). That is why classical political economy cannot be seen simply as a theory of economic relations, but rather it provides a model of capitalist society writ large:

Classical political economy is not simply a theory of capitalist economic relations. The realization of human rationality through capitalist relations of production distribution and exchange presupposes the freedom and security of property, on the hand, and the freedom of the individual from external moral and political constraint, on the other. It therefore defines the constitutional, legal and political circumstances within which rational judgments of self-interest can be made and acted on, and derives moral imperatives from the rational self-interest of the abstract individual that can serve as the basis of education, enlightenment and legal regulation. Thus classical political economy offers a liberal theory of the ideal society that can reconcile the necessity of legal, political and moral constraint with the freedom of the individual by establishing that such constraint corresponds to the rational self-interest of the enlightened individual. Classical political economy develops a complete model of capitalist society as the expression of human reason. It describes ‘a very Eden of the innate rights of man. It is the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham’ (Marx, Capital I, p.280). (Clarke, 1992: 110)

To put it differently the foundation of classical political economy as well as liberal social theory is the assumption that “capitalist social relations can be analyzed as relations between ‘private’ individuals, related as property owners through the ‘things’ which they own” (Clarke, 1992: 110). That is why Marx’s formulation of private property as a form of social relation and as the result of alienated labor is a critique not only of classical political economy but also of liberal social theory writ large. In this subsection I have tried to show that what is at the center of Marx’s analysis and critique of alienated labor is the social form of labor. In other words, contrary to the naturalistic conception of production and labor of classical political economy, Marx’s early and late studies are based on the historical analysis of the social form of labor, which in capitalism takes on the form of the commodity-producing labor.

It is within this framework that Marx’s later studies on commodity, labor-power, value-form, theory of surplus value, capital, commodity fetishism, etc., are presented

here as the fulfillment of his earlier critique of alienated labor. To put it differently, Marx's analysis of social production relations is not based on the idea of some ontological primacy of production relations, but its central concern is to expose why economic categories appear as objective constraints and external to social relations in capitalism. It is on this ground that this study argues that the theoretical fallacies attributed to Marxism as a supposedly sophisticated representative of the modernist social thought have their roots not only in the theoretical inadequacies of orthodox interpretations of Marxism, but also and more importantly in capitalist social relations themselves.

In relation to this point I argue, *it is not that Marxism has an essentialist conception of production relations, but production relations explains the irrational rationality of capitalist social relations; it is not that Marxism has a reductionist conception of production relations on the basis of a sacritized and trans-historically conceived labor, but it is capital as a social relation that reduces everything to value and surplus-value production; it is not that Marxism has a teleological understanding of history, but it is capital that presents itself as the culmination of the progressive journey of the human kind and as the most developed form of human societies; it is not that Marxism has a structural determinist understanding of social relations, but it is through capitalist social relations that human qualities and subjectivities appear as the qualities of things, and hence as objective and structural constraints.* It is in this sense that these *social* problems cannot be overcome by some *epistemological* interventions and corrections. I will elaborate on this point in the next subsection, particularly in relation to the concept of development and its post-developmental critique.

### **3.4.3. Capitalist Development as a Form of Class Struggle**

In the previous sections, I have provided the main concerns and arguments of the post-developmental critique of development. At the risk of repetition, the characteristic feature of post-developmentalism has been the reformulation of development in a way that has shifted the debate from the field of *political economy* to *politics of knowledge*. In this context, by reformulating development as a “particular cast of mind”, as a

“paradigm” and/or as a “discursive formation”, and by arguing that it is first and foremost a “Western/Euro-Atlantic construct”, post-developmentalists have set to work to carry the critiques formulated by the *post-* turn in social theory in general with respect to modernity to the debate on development both as a concept and as a historical process. In this sense, it is possible to argue that the central target of the post-developmentalists’ critique has been the *rationality* of development and/or *developmentalist rationality*, which, according to this critique, has been imposed upon the non-Western world and societies in an authoritarian and technocratic way.

It is, arguably, through the critique of developmentalist rationality that the students of post-developmentalism have strived to dismantle the presentation of development as objective, natural and/or rational not only by the mainstream developmentalist schools, but also by the critical conceptions of development which includes certain forms of Marxism as well. It is on this ground that they have formulated the central issue not as a search for “better development”, i.e. “development alternatives”, but as a search for “alternatives to development”, i.e. the rejection of the idea of development itself. It is in relation to this radical critique of the naturalization and/or rationalization of development that I argue, the post-developmentalists’ critique is much truer to the spirit of Marx’s critique of capitalism. As I have discussed in the previous section, this is so mainly because Marx’s main endeavor was also to dismantle the apparently objective and/or rational character of the economic categories through explaining their social constitution. In other words, I argue that there is a kind of convergence between the post-developmentalists’ critique of the political economic formulations of development and Marx’s critique of political economy as such.

However, one should be careful with respect to this comparison, since as I have argued, the central problem of the post-developmentalists’ critique is precisely the neglect of the capitalist character of development, and thereby the neglect of its immanent contradictions, which is best reflected in the reformulation of development as a Western/Euro-Atlantic construct and/or episteme without conflicts and contradictions in itself. To put it differently, this study argues that while traditional/orthodox Marxist critiques of development limit our understanding of development and our imagination

of its beyond by seemingly emphasizing the distinguishing features of capitalism, post-developmental approaches limit them by neglecting the capitalist social (re)production relations. This is, in fact, the way I reformulate the so-called “impasse” of the development debate. I have argued that bringing Marxism back in to the development debate can provide the way out of this impasse, and in relation to this point, I have outlined, in the previous subsections, the central claims of Marxism understood as a critical theory of society as opposed to Marxisms that assimilate Marx to the standpoint of political economy. Based on this framework, in this subsection, I will try to provide the outlines of a conception of development as a form of class struggle. The constitutive claim of such an understanding is apparently a simple one: development is nothing else than the development of capitalism, that is to say development is *capitalist* development.

This apparently simple reformulation of development as capitalist development has, in fact, significant implications for the conceptions of development as well as the post-developmental and political economic critiques of it. Here are the conclusions that derive from this reformulation, particularly in relation to the distinguishing features of post-developmentalism: (1) the problems of developmentalist rationality arise not from a supposedly Western/Euro-Atlantic rationality and/or episteme, but from the irrational rationality and/or objective irrationality of capitalism; (2) the “hidden agenda” of development has not been “Westernization” as post-developmental critics argue so, but it has been *capitalization* and this agenda has never been hidden; (3) the intolerance of development to “other subjectivities and doings” (i.e. the question of difference), and the related problematic character of the developmentalist knowledge production have their roots not in reason and/or science as such or in Western rationality, but in the alienated character of the social form of labor in capitalism; (4) development is contradictory from the outset, since its social presupposition has been the contradictory relation between capital and wage labor; and, hence, finally (5) the task of “slaying the development monster” cannot be accomplished unless the capital wage-labor relation is targeted, which simply means that the search for “alternatives to development” *outside* of development, can do

nothing more than the reproduction of the ‘monster’ itself. I will briefly elaborate on these conclusions, which can also be seen as the outlines of a theory of development as a form of class struggle, below. The focus will be on the first one, since, arguably, the other arguments are already implicit in it.

The understanding of development as capitalist development immediately implies that the problems of the rationality of development lie not in the supposedly Western/Euro-Atlantic civilization and/or rationality, but in the *irrational rationality* and/or *objective irrationality* of capitalist relations of social (re)production. It can be argued that at the core of the objective irrationality of capitalism lies the claim that the solution to the social inequalities is the progressive development of material wealth, which is understood in abstract materialist terms. In this sense the discourse of capitalism, of which classical political economy is one of the best representatives, is developmentalist from the outset. As Bonefeld (2016: 234) mentions:

The idea that modernity is the civilized manifestation of an historically unfolding logic of socio-economic properties was articulated with lasting effect by Adam Smith, who viewed ‘commercial society’ as the civilized manifestation of a natural human propensity to truck and barter.

However, contrary to the post-developmental understandings, it should be noted that this developmentalism has its roots in the capitalist social relations of production, the constitutive feature of which is nothing else than class relations on the basis of alienated labor. It is in this sense that “the evils of capitalism were not merely the contingent effects of human greed, ignorance and superstition, but were the necessary aspects of social form of capitalist production” (Clarke, 1992: 7). In order to make this point clear, a brief elaboration on the contradictory character of the capitalist labor process is necessary. As it is briefly mentioned in the previous subsection, “the social presupposition” of capital as a social relation is “the separation of the direct producer from the means of production”, which simply means that “the direct producer can only work under the direction of another, the capitalist” (Clarke, 1992: 118). The central issue here is the simple fact that “for the capitalist the aim of production is not the production of use-values, but the production of value and surplus-value”:



The capitalist production of use-values is only incidental to the capitalist production of surplus-value. The capitalist labor process is no longer a process in which workers produce use-values by setting the means of production to work. It becomes the process in which capital sets labor to work to produce value. (Clarke, 1992: 118)

In other words, as Marx (1990: 425) states in the volume one of *Capital*, during the course of the capitalist labor process: “It is no longer the worker who employs the means of production, but the means of production which employ the worker”. However, as I have tried to show in the previous subsection, things “can only acquire social power within particular social relations”, which means that the domination of the means of production over the worker in capitalist labor process is not a technical issue, simple because labor process itself is not a technical but a social process: “Hence the rule of the capitalist over the worker is the rule of things over man, of dead labor over living, of the product over the producer” (Marx, *Capital*, I, p. 990; cited in Clarke, 1992: 118). In other words, developmentalism of capitalism has its roots in the subordination of production to value production on the basis of alienated labor. As Clarke (1992: 118-119) puts it succinctly:

It is only within the capitalist labor-process that the process of production is completely subordinated to the production of value. ... In the capitalist labor-process the only criterion is labor-time and the attempt to reduce the labor time spent to a minimum. It is this unqualified subjection of production to the production of value and of surplus-value that characterizes the capitalist labor process. Production is therefore not in any way the technical arena of co-operation in the production of use-values presented by classical political economy; it is a constant arena of struggle over the length of the working day, over the intensity of labor, over the degradation and dehumanization of labor through which the worker seeks to resist her complete subordination to capital.

Here, it is important to emphasize the *social* as well as the *contradictory* character of the capitalist labor process, which mainly arises from the alienated character of the social form of labor as I have discussed in the previous subsection. The subordination of production to value and surplus-value production in capitalism means that the struggles over production is not simply “a matter of the subjective motivation of the capitalist”, but it is the systemic character of the capitalist social relations of production on the basis of the alienated labor. On the one hand, since capitalist labor process is

based on labor that is in the form of commodity through the separation of the mass of the population from the means of production and subsistence, the labor process itself turns out to be an arena of struggle (cf., Harvey, 2001: 312-316). On the other hand, since production is subordinated to surplus value production, the motive of production turns out to be *production for the sake of production* and *accumulation for the sake of accumulation*. This motive “is imposed on every capitalist by the pressure of competition, which is the expression of the tendency for capitalism to develop the forces of production without the regard to the limits of the market”:

Capitalist production is not marked by the subordination of social production to social need, even as that is expressed in the restricted form of ‘effective demand’ in the market, for the purposes of the capitalist is not to meet social need, but to expand his capital. The pressure of competition forces every capitalist constantly to develop the forces of production, which leads to the general tendency for capital, in every branch of production, to develop the forces of production without limit and, in particular, without regard to the limits of the market. This tendency to the overproduction of commodities and the uneven development of the forces of production is only overcome by the expansion of the world market and the development of new ‘needs’, and by the regular destruction of productive capacity and redundancy of labor in the face of crises of overproduction. The development of capitalist production relations is subject neither to the needs associated with producers, nor to the need of the latter as consumers, but to the contradictory logic of production and accumulation of surplus value. (Clarke, 1992: 119)

It is in this sense that “the two fundamental features of capitalist development” arise, which can also be seen as the basis of the “objective irrationality” of capitalism: “on the one hand, the tendency to increase the productivity of labor to an extent never before seen; on the other hand, the tendency to increase productivity *not for the benefit of, but at the expense of, the mass of the population*” (Clarke, 1992: 119; emphasis added). In Marx and Engels’ (1969[1848]: 16) words: “The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production and with them the whole relations of society.” To put it differently, the unprecedented increase in the “productive powers of labor” in capitalism, which is manifested in the “increasing scale of production, the application of machinery and the application of science” has its roots in the contradictory relation

between capital and wage-labor (Clarke, 1992: 120). And it is important to note that this increase is at the expense of the mass of population.

The second implication of the reformulation of development as capitalist development for the post-developmental critique is also related to this point. That is to say, contrary to Sachs' (2010: xviii) claim that "development's hidden agenda was nothing else than the Westernization of the world", I argue that development's agenda has been nothing else than *the generalization of the subordination of other subjectivities and doings to the production of surplus value*, and it has never been hidden. To put it differently, development in this sense has been nothing else than a particular form of the creation of a world by capital in its own image, that is to say the extension of capitalist social relations of production at the world scale, rather than the unfolding process of a Western/Euro-Atlantic rationality.<sup>72</sup>

It can be argued that the post-developmental critique is also much truer to the spirit of Marx when it brings the question of difference forward through the critique of the intolerance of development to "other subjectivities and doings". This is so mainly because the students post-developmentalism address "not only the undoubted exploitative features of capitalism, but also the dehumanization and cultural degeneration inherent in capitalist 'rationalization'" (Clarke, 1992: 311).<sup>73</sup> It is also quite important to expose, as the post-developmental critique does so, the fact that developmentalist knowledge production has been a central part of "the war waged against difference" mainly through its characteristic features like reification,

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<sup>72</sup> As Marx and Engels (1969[1848]: 16; emphasis added) put it in one of their widely quoted passages from the *Communist Manifesto*: The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilisation. The cheap prices of commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. *In one word, it creates a world after its own image.*

<sup>73</sup> This is, in fact a point that Clarke highlights in relation to Weber. As I have mentioned in the previous sections, since the post-developmental critique can also be seen as a move from Marx to Weber in terms of conceiving the relationship among modernity, capitalism and development on the basis of the development of a particular rationality, that is to say developmentalist rationality in the case of post-developmentalism, I think this point can also be made with respect to post-developmentalism as well.

expertification, technicalization, professionalization and technocratization. However, contrary to the post-developmental critique, I argue that the character of development as an “anti-politics machine”, *modus operandi* of which is to obliterate social as well as ecological differences, and the related problematic character of developmentalist knowledge production have their roots not in reason and/or science as such, but in the alienated social form of labor in capitalism. This is the third implication of the formulation of development as capitalist development, and the significance of the reading of Marx, which sees his early and late studies as a total project on the basis of his theory of alienated labor, provided in the previous subsection lies particularly at this point:

The world of alienated labor is not a world under the rule of instrumental reason, but a profoundly irrational and contradictory world in which any form of rationality is subverted by the systemic dissociation of the intentions of human actors from the outcome of social action. This dissociation is not the result of the arbitrary intervention of unforeseen circumstances, but is the systematic result of the alienated forms of social labor through which human sociability is imposed by the subordination of the individual to a thing. Thus ‘alienation’ is not the result of a subjective attitude to labor, the expression of a ‘reified consciousness’, but is an objective characteristic of the social forms of capitalist production and reproduction, of which reification is the subjective expression. Similarly, the reified consciousness cannot be seen as an expression of the deformed Reason of the Enlightenment, since it is the alienated forms of social labor which define the limits of the rationality of that Reason. Competition imposes the ‘rationality’ of capitalism on individuals as an objective force, submitting capitalists no less than the working class to its contradictory logic, but in abstraction from the fragmentation of social relations imposed by the rule of competition, which is only another expression of the alienated forms of social labor, the ‘rationality’ of capitalism is profoundly irrational. Finally, if capitalism is profoundly irrational, domination cannot be seen as immanent in the rationalist project of Enlightenment, but on the contrary that projects leads to the radical critique of the stunted reason of capitalism. (Clarke, 1992: 324-25)

As it is discussed in the previous subsection, the “irrationality of capitalism” arises on the basis of the social form of labor, through which “social qualities appear in the form things”, and economic categories appear as external and hostile to their constitutive social relations (Clarke, 1992: 325). In this regard, I argue that the post-developmental call for revaluing difference, subjectivities and doings other than that

of development should be taken into account seriously since the underlying feature of this attempt is to expose the social constitution of the economic categories and practices. In this sense, this study shares the critical stance of post-developmentalism “with respect to established scientific knowledge”. However, I argue that the central problem of this “critical stance” is the tendency to attribute the problems of the knowledge production of fetishized forms to science and/or reason itself, which, in fact, leads to the loss of the *critical* aspect itself, precisely through the *critique* of the fetishized forms themselves. In this sense, there is a close relationship between attributing the problems as well as the powers of the social form of labor in capitalism to capital understood not as a social relation but as a thing, and the problems of the capitalist form of knowledge production to science and reason itself.<sup>74</sup> As Marx (*Capital*, I, pp. 1052-3; cf., *TSV*, I, pp. 377-80) states:

The *social configuration* in which the individual workers exist ... does not belong to them ... On the contrary, it confronts them as a *capitalist arrangement* that is *imposed* on them ... And quite apart from the combination of labour, the social character of the conditions of labour – and this includes machinery and *capitale fixe* of every kind – appears to be entirely autonomous and independent of the worker. It appears to be a *mode of existence of capital* itself, and therefore as something ordered by *capitalists* without reference to the workers. Like the *social character* of their own labour, but to a far greater extent, the *social character* with which the conditions of production are endowed ... appears as capitalistic, as something independent of the workers and intrinsic to the conditions of production themselves ... In the same way, *science*, which is in fact the general intellectual product of the social process, also appears to be the direct offshoot of capital. (cited in Clarke, 1992: 120)

One of the central merits of the reformulation of Marxism as a critical theory of society is related to this point, that is to say the relationship between the subject/subjectivity

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<sup>74</sup> In relation to this point Clarke (1992: 120) mentions the following: Capitalism makes possible unprecedented increases in the productive powers of labour. These increases are associated with an increasing scale of production, the application of machinery and the application of science. These are characteristics of the greater socialization of production achieved under capitalism. But this socialization only takes place under the direction of capital, and the product of socialised labour is appropriated by the capitalist. Thus the social powers of labour, which appear only when labour is organised socially, appear to be the powers of capital. Moreover, since capital in turn is seen as a thing and not a social relation, these powers of capital seem to be inherent in the means of production, so that productivity appears as a technical characteristic of the means of production and not as a social characteristic of the labour process.

and the object/objectivity. I have tried to show that the central task of Marxism as a critique of political economy as such, has been to expose the appearance of economic categories as objective as if they are not socially constituted. In this sense, one of the central issues of Marxism as a critical theory of society is to expose the subjective character of the reification of social relations in the form of economic categories. The concept of alienated labor is highlighted particularly in relation to this point, since it is through the alienated social form of labor in capitalism that human sociability appears in the form of objective constraint, human qualities appear in the form of qualities and properties of things, human subjectivities and social relations appear in the form of relations between things, and social and historical processes in the form of laws of structures either on the basis of nature, or society, or reason and/or a specific rationality. However, it should be immediately mentioned that this appearance is real, and the central issue here is not the objectification as such, but its reified mode. As Bonefeld (2014: 63) puts the matter:

Rather than replacing the object by the subject, be it the subject of the history as an objectively unfolding force or Man herself as being in alienation, or indeed, economic being as an ontological force that, in the last instance, colonizes the life-world of social action, the critique of political economy sets out to comprehend the social subject in the form of the object, which is the mode of existence of the subject. Just as objectivity without the subject is nonsense, subjectivity detached from its object is fictitious. Man is a social being qua objectification [*Vergegenständlichung*]. Man is always objectified Man. Subjectivity means objectification. To be an object is part of the meaning of subjectivity. The issue that the critique of fetishism brings to the fore is not the subject's objectification but its reified mode. Appearance [*Schein*], 'is the enchantment of the subject in its own world'.

In other words, the central issue in the theory of alienated labor or commodity fetishism is not the critique of capitalist social relations on the basis of some ideological and/or epistemological ground, but to point out its objective character on which the objective irrationality of capitalism is grounded: "[T]he fetishism of commodities is not simply an ideological mystification, ... [it] is only the reflection of a real social process, constituted by the social relations of alienated labor" (Clarke, 1992: 325). This means that the contradictions of capitalism have their roots not in "the contradiction between one form of reason and another, whether between formal

and substantive rationality, or between capitalist and proletarian reason, but [in] the contradictions inherent in the irrationality of alienated forms of social production”:

The irrationality of capitalism is an ‘unintended consequence’ of subjectively rational action, but it is a consequence which is systematically embedded in, and determined by, forms of social relation whose social character is not given immediately, arising from social interaction between people engaged in co-operative activity, but is imposed on people by the *mediated* form of social relations, in which the social character of their labor confronts them in the form of a thing. It is Marx’s demystification of the ‘fetishism of commodities’ through his analysis of the value-form that makes it possible to penetrate the apparently objective character of this social determination to re-establish its human origins. (Clarke, 1992: 325)

The fourth and the fifth conclusions that derive from the formulation of development as capitalist development are related to this point. To put it differently, development is contradictory from the outset. However, the contradiction of development is not a contradiction between a Western/Euro-Atlantic rationality and/or mode of production, and local cultures and economies, and the knowledge and wisdom of vernacular worlds as the post-developmental critique argue so. Rather, the contradictions of development have their roots in its social presupposition that is to say the contradictory relation between capital and wage-labor, through which other subjectivities, doings and values are subordinated to production of surplus value. This point implies that capitalist development occurs not despite its contradictions, but it occurs precisely through these contradictions. As Bonefeld (2014: 69-70) points out: “Capitalist society reproduces itself not despite the class antagonism. It reproduces itself by virtue of the class antagonism. The class antagonism is immanent to its concept.” It is in this sense that the task of “slaying the development monster” cannot be accomplished unless the capital wage labor relation is targeted.

This immediately implies that the search for “alternatives to development” in local cultures, economies and vernacular worlds with the assumption that they have remained rather untouched by the developmental practices, that is to say the search for alternatives *outside* of development, can do nothing more than the reproduction of the “development monster”. That is to say the social conditions of the individualistic

desire that the post-developmentalists brought forward lies in the alienated form of social labor, which simply means that delinking from this desire in general can be achieved neither through a journey to our inner selves, nor to the so-called local cultures and vernacular worlds. This point has also significant implications for the certain forms of Marxist critiques of capitalist development, which arguably “sought the possibilities of human liberation in *another form of reason* ... which had managed to avoid incorporation in the instrumental reason of modernity” (Clarke, 1992: 323). In more orthodox and traditional interpretations of Marxism the source of that reason is identified usually with “the proletariat and its Party”, and in the case of Western/Hegelian Marxism this source has usually been identified with “the sphere of art and high culture, in the unconscious, in marginalized social strata, or of civil society” (Clarke, 1992: 323).

Thus far, I have tried to formulate the outlines of a theory of capitalist development on the basis of the reformulation of Marxism as a critical theory of society, particularly in relation to the characteristic features of the post-developmentalists critique that have been discussed in the previous sections. I would like to end this section with a brief discussion on the political implications of this discussion. It can be argued that the divide between post-developmentalists and political economic critiques of development manifests itself at the political level as the divide between *moral* critiques of capitalist development on the one hand, and *objective* critiques of capitalist development on the other. The merit of Marxism understood as a critical theory of society lies also at this point, that is to say its reformulation of capitalist development on the basis of alienated labor and commodity fetishism provides the possibility of criticizing development on both moral and objective grounds at one and the same time. Since the divide between moral and objective critique of capitalist development is also a divide that characterizes the contemporary agrarian/peasant question debate, a brief elaboration on this point is needed here. I will, however, return to this issue in the next chapter.

Marxism understood here is a moral critique, as mentioned also above, “in establishing that the evils of capitalism were not merely the contingent effects of human greed, ignorance and superstition, but were necessary aspects of the social form of capitalist



production” (Clarke, 1992: 7). In other words, Marx’s critique of political economy is “at the same time a moral critique of capitalist society” for it “shows that it is on the basis of the particular social form of alienated labor, and not of an impoverished human nature, that this dehumanizing society arises” (Clarke, 1992: 76). It is important to note that the moralism here “is not an abstract moralism” that “refers back to moral truths hidden in an unrealized human nature” (Clarke, 1992: 76-77). Contrary to such a moralism, the moral critique in Marx is “an expression of the contradictory form of capitalist social relations as the estranged form of human sociability” (Clarke, 1992: 77). It is on this ground that Marxism as a critical theory of society is simultaneously a moral and an objective critique of capitalist development. The significance of this point becomes apparent particularly in relation to the distinction between this understanding of Marxism that is based on the totality of the early and the late Marx, and its orthodox/traditional interpretations that criticize the so-called young Marx as romantic.

In order to put the matter in relation to the post-developmental critique, I argue that if there is one thing that post-developmentalism is right without dispute, then it is the claim that what we must be afraid of is not the failure but the very success of development. Here, the point is not simply that capitalist development could not and cannot deliver its basic promises to humanity like material well-being, social justice, economic growth, personal blossoming, and ecological equilibrium. The point is that capitalist development must be stopped, not only because of the social and the environmental troubles that it creates, but more importantly, because its ‘progress’ is nothing else than the progress of the rule of capital over labor. This is so mainly because, the objective irrationality of capitalism is manifested in the increasing productivity of labor and material wealth at the expense of the mass of the population as it is mentioned above. To put it differently:

Far from expressing the possibilities of human intellectual and material freedom, the social relations of capitalist production increasingly subject humanity to domination by an alien power, the power of capital. The development of human productive and intellectual capacity serves only to increase the power which stands over humanity. (Clarke, 1992: 143)

It is in this sense that “[t]he more rapid is ‘progress’ the more rapidly is work dehumanized and workers degraded, exploited and cast aside” (Clarke, 1992: 120). The significance of the understanding of the commodity fetishism as the reflection of a real process lies also at this point. As it is quoted in the previous subsection as well: [A]lienation is not the expression of an ideological process of reification in which subjectivity is eradicated. Alienation is a process which starts from labor as the subjective element which is never effaced” (Clarke, 1992: 325). As Marx (1844) states, it is in this sense that in capitalism:

The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and size. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. The *devaluation* of the world of men is in direct proportion to the *increasing value* of the world of things. Labor produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a *commodity* – and this at the same rate at which it produces commodities in general.

In contradistinction to this understanding, I have tried to show in the previous subsections that orthodox/traditional accounts of Marxism assimilated Marx to the standpoint of political economy through a rejection of the so-called “youthful romanticism” of Marx. As Clarke (1992: 307) mentions:

The orthodox interpretations of Marx’s mature works have been overwhelmingly ‘economistic’, in assimilating Marx to the conceptual framework of classical political economy, seeing the foundation of his ‘economics’ in the classical labor theory of value, reinterpreted as a theory of exploitation according to which the appropriation of surplus labor is constituted by the property relations which determine the form of distribution, while socialism was reduced to a change in property relations, from private to state property. Marx’s critique of political economy was seen as a historicist critique, which noted the historical specificity of the capitalist mode of distribution, which political economy supposedly ignored, to point beyond capitalism to a new form of society. Thus political economy was adequate to the early stages of capitalist development, in which the private appropriation of the product fostered the development of the forces of production. But in a mature capitalist society such a mode of distribution acts as a fetter on the development of increasingly socialized production, calling for new forms of property. The subjective expression of this objective contradiction lies in the conflict between the rationality of the capitalist, representing an outdated mode of distribution, and that of the working class, representing socialized forms of production.

It is arguably within this framework that the central contradiction of capitalist society is identified in these accounts with the contradiction between *forces of production* and *relations of production*. Within this interpretation, while development of the forces of production are defined by the laws of production, relations of production belongs to the concept of “laws of distribution, defined by the private appropriation of the product” (Clarke, 1992: 307). According to this understanding, the contradiction between the laws of production and the laws of distribution “is in turn a particular manifestation of the fundamental laws of ‘historical materialism’, according to which the driving force of history is the development of the forces of production” (Clarke, 1992: 307).<sup>75</sup> It is arguably at this point that Marx’s historical materialism is assimilated to the standpoint of classical political economy and thereby to the Enlightenment thought:

Thus Marx’s ‘historical materialism’ is identified with that of the Enlightenment, in seeing that the historical development of society as the adaptation of social institutions to the unfolding of quasi-natural historical laws, with the link between the two being constituted by the class interests defined by ownership of the means of production, the difference being that Marx carries the historical process one stage further. (Clarke, 1992: 308)

It is arguably with this understanding of capitalist contradictions, and through such an understanding of the development of forces of production that traditional Marxist critiques of development have been centered on the concept of *underdevelopment*. It should be noted that the problem implicit in the concept of underdevelopment has not been the fact that capitalist development develops underdevelopment as these accounts rightly and without dispute have shown. But rather the problem is that the conception of underdevelopment itself has been formulated on developmentalist ground, political

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<sup>75</sup> In relation to this point, Bonefeld (2014: 37) argues the following: “The ‘forces of production’ do not ... comprise some general law of economic motion in abstraction from society. Rather, they belong to the society that contains them. As Marx [1973: 706] put it, the forces of production and social relations of production are ‘two different sides of the development of the social individual’. This point is fundamental not only because it characterizes the distinction between classical political economy and Marx’s critique of political economy, it is fundamental also for the distinction between the critique of political economy as a critical social theory and the traditional Marxist accounts of political economy that ascribe a material force to history, which purports historical materialism to be a dialectics between the trans-historically conceived, or in any case naturally determined, forces of production and the historically specific social relations of production.” (Bonefeld, 2014: 37)

implication of which has been the idea of “delinking from the capitalist world-system” so that the unfinished task of development can be accomplished. That is to say, the central idea, which is usually stated explicitly, in the concept of underdevelopment has been the task of eliminating the obstacles in front of the development of forces of production, which simply implies the promotion of the capitalist development. It is important to note that, according to these accounts of Marxism, it is usually assumed that the elimination of the obstacles in front of the capitalist development would in turn lead to transition to socialism.<sup>76</sup> I argue that this is also the ground on which the post-developmental critique as well as the so-called young Marx is criticized as romantic. To put it differently, the romantic appearance of the post-developmental critique to these accounts, arises, at least partially, because of this problematic understanding of the development of the forces of production that is in fact based on a teleological conception of history and progress.

More contemporary formulations of this understanding can, arguably, be seen in what Bonefeld (2014) terms as “personified” and/or “spellbound” critiques of capitalism, which according to him embodies also the elements of antisemitism in itself, that become particularly apparent in the critiques of finance and financial capitalism. According to these accounts, while financial capital signifies the “hated forms of capitalism” as a form of “effortless wealth”, industrial capital is conceived predominantly as the “productive activity” and as the source of the material wealth (Bonefeld, 2014: 209-210). The central problem here is that the search for alternatives to capitalism in these understandings turns out to be “a demand for better capitalism”, as it is in the case of the critiques of development for the sake of “better development”; and more importantly in these accounts capital as a social relation is elevated to a level beyond critique, though it may seem ironic, precisely through the personalized critique of the capitalist himself. As Bonefeld (2014: 196) argues:

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<sup>76</sup> This point is particularly important with respect to the contemporary debates on the agrarian/peasant question, since arguably at the core of the reformulation of the agrarian/peasant question within the framework of underdevelopment during the 1970s and 1980s has been this problematic understanding of the development of the forces of production. I will return to this issue in the next chapter.

The critique of the capitalist leaves the category of capital not only entirely untouched, it also elevates ‘capital’ as a thing beyond critique. Instead of a critique of the capitalist social relations, it identifies the guilty party, condemns it and demands state action to sort things out. It thus attributes capitalist conditions to the conscious activity of some identifiable individuals, who no longer appear as the personification of economic categories but, rather, as the personalized subject of misery. Here the distinction between use-value and concrete labour, on the one hand, and exchange value and abstract labour, including the manifestation of value in the form of money, on the other, appears in the form of distinct personalities – pitting the creative industrialist against the parasitic banker-cum-speculator. There emerges, then, the idea of a capitalism that is corrupted by the financial interests. Finance turns capitalism into a casino that spins the fortune wheel of the world at the expense of national industry, national wealth, national workers and national harmony.

It is possible to argue that in the same way with the orthodox interpretations of Marxism, the post-developmental critique of development has also the tendency to criticize capitalist development in a personalized manner, but this time through the critique of a personalized rationality. As I have discussed in the previous sections, the post-developmental critique formulates the contradiction of development as a contradiction between Western/Euro-Atlantic rationality that is represented mainly by the individualistic desire for economic growth and the local cultures and economies that are represented best by the community values of the so-called vernacular worlds. It is on this ground that development is formulated mainly as an external encounter in these accounts, and alternatives to development are sought mainly outside of the development construct as I have criticized above.

To sum up, contrary to both political economic and post-developmental critiques of development, this study argues that the contradictions of development are immanent in the capitalist social (re)production relations, the constitutive feature of which is the class antagonism, and the central task of the critique of development is to expose this class character of development not in order to further the capitalist development but rather to stop it. Contrary to political economic and post-developmental critiques of capitalist development, which in the former case the subjectivities of real individuals are reduced to “abstract collectivities” and in the latter case to abstract rationalities; the merit of the reformulation of Marxism as a critical theory of society on the basis

of the reading of Marx's theories of alienated labor, commodity fetishism and surplus value as a totality is its attempt to foreground the subjectivities of the "real individuals whose concrete collectivity makes up society" (Clarke, 1992: 11).

### **3.5. Concluding Remarks**

Throughout this chapter I have elaborated upon the post-developmental critique of development both as a concept and a historical process. This is done mainly because the theoretical shifts in the related literature on agrifood relations have been based, arguably, on the reconsideration of the concept of development since the late 1980s. I have argued that the divide between post-developmental and political economic understandings that characterize the contemporary debate on the agrarian/peasant question can be seen as a corollary to the divide between post-developmental and political economic conceptions and critiques of development. It is in this sense that this chapter has dealt with the concept of development. In this regard, I have argued that bringing Marxism, which is formulated here as a critical theory of society on the basis of the critique of political economy as such, back in to the development debate can provide us a way beyond the impasse of the development debate that is characterized by the inadequacies of both political economic and post-developmental conceptions of the contradictions of the capitalist development. In the next chapter, I will try to analyze the implications of this framework for the contemporary debates on the neoliberal restructuring of agrifood relations and the agrarian/peasant question debate therein.

## CHAPTER 4

### CAPITALISM ITSELF AS A FOOD REGIME: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE POST-DEVELOPMENTALIST TURN IN THE AGRARIAN/PEASANT QUESTION DEBATE

#### 4.1. Introduction

In the second chapter I have argued that the critical literature on agrifood relations has been characterized by various shifts and transitions, especially since the late 1980s. There, I have discussed these shifts and transitions at three inter-related and entwined levels with a particular focus on the first and second ones. First, at the subdisciplinary level I have mentioned that we have witnessed a shift from *rural sociology* to *sociology of agriculture and food*. Second, I have suggested that this shift at the subdisciplinary level should be seen as part of the transition in the broader field of knowledge on agricultural and food relations particularly in relation to the interrogations of the capitalist character of agrifood relations, which I have formulated as a transition from *peasant studies* to *critical agrifood studies*. Third, I have argued that the characteristic feature of critical agrifood studies in theoretical terms has been the post-developmental turn that especially becomes apparent in the contemporary formulations of the agrarian/peasant question. In that sense, the central claim of this study is that especially with the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there has been a shift from *political economic* understandings to *post-developmental* conceptions in the agrarian/peasant question conceptualizations. On this ground, it is possible to argue that the contemporary agrarian/peasant question literature is characterized by a divide between political economic and post-developmental understandings. As it is briefly mentioned in the second chapter, theoretical analysis of this divide constitutes the central problematic of this study.

Within this scope, this chapter aims to critically analyze the related political economic and post-developmental understandings of the agrarian/peasant question. This analysis is going to be based on the theoretical framework formulated in relation to the concept of development in the previous chapter as *contemporary Marxism*, that is to say *Marxism as a critical theory of society*. Within this framework, the central question that this chapter deals with can be formulated as follows: *What is the agrarian/peasant question of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, or is there any?* In the following pages, I will try to provide an answer to this question through an analysis of the theoretical implications and consequences of the neoliberal restructuring of agrifood relations for the agrarian/peasant question conceptualization. I argue that those theoretical consequences and implications of the neoliberal restructuring processes, which have been dominating the field at the global level almost for the last four decades, can be found, though implicit, in the aforementioned divide that characterizes the contemporary agrarian/peasant question literature.

At the expense of repetition, it should be stressed that the theoretical reorientation of the literature has been based mainly on the critique of agrarian political economy, which, for the most part, is dominated by certain forms of Marxism. At the center of the critique of agrarian political economy, and thereby Marxism, has been the reconsideration of the concept of development; and I argue that the theoretical and intellectual sources of this reconsideration process have been provided mainly by post-developmentalism. That is why in the third chapter I have provided a critical review of the characteristic features of post-developmentalism. However, as I have pointed out in the second chapter, the theoretical tendencies characteristic of critical agrifood studies are not apparent at first sight. Rather, the related literature has been predominantly characterized by product/commodity-based and/or issue-based analysis of the neoliberal restructuring of agrifood relations. That is, it is not possible to say that the theoretical implications of the analyses of the neoliberal restructuring processes are adequately questioned both in political economic and post-developmental approaches. Still, however, I argue, it is possible to trace and observe those theoretical implications in the contemporary agrarian/peasant question debate



that has been reinvigorated especially since the mid-2000s onwards. In that sense, the central task of this chapter is to make the implicit theoretical tendencies characterizing the divide between political economic and post-developmental conceptions explicit. To put it differently, this study and this chapter in particular can be seen as a tentative attempt to answer the need of a theoretical discussion in the related literature on agrifood relations.

In this regard, this chapter is organized in four sections. Following this introductory part, in the second section, I will outline the main features of the shift from peasant studies to critical agrifood studies particularly in relation to the post-developmental turn in the agrarian/peasant question formulations. In parallel to the discussion of post-developmentalism in the previous chapter, I will argue that there are three distinctive features of the post-developmental reformulations of the agrarian/peasant question:

- (1) in opposition to the political economic conceptions that are, arguably, best represented by the *petty commodity production* debate, reformulation of the agrarian/peasant question first and foremost as a question of *politics of knowledge*, i.e. as a question of the relationship between power and knowledge;
- (2) based on this reformulation a radical critique of political economic as well as liberal understandings with the accusation of complicity in the war waged by capitalist modernity and developmentalism against difference, other subjectivities and doings in agrifood relations;
- (3) based on these two features, a call for revaluing “peasant agriculture” as opposed to “corporate agriculture” and/or “industrial model of agriculture” through a reformulation of *peasantry* as a political subject against the capitalist agrifood system.

In that section, I will try to show that these three characteristic features of the post-developmental agrarian/peasant question conceptions can be observed in the following areas, which can also be seen as the manifestations of the shift from peasant studies to critical agrifood studies: *historical and intellectual context*; major *theoretical assumptions*; prevailing *methodological strategies*; prominent

*problematics*, and main *political propositions*. In other words, the second section will provide the scope and the content of the divide between political economic and post-developmental formulations with respect to the agrarian/peasant question debate.

After providing the outlines of the post-developmental turn in the agrarian/peasant question debate, in the third section, I will argue that though they have made significant contributions to our understanding of the capitalist agrifood system in their own ways, neither post-developmental nor political economic conceptualizations can provide us an adequate framework with respect to the critical analysis of the capitalist agrifood system both in analytical and political terms. To put the matter in line with the reformulation of the impasse of the development debate in the previous chapter, this study argues the following: while political economic conceptions of the agrarian/peasant question limit our understanding of capitalist agrifood system and our imagination of its beyond by seemingly bringing its capitalist features to the fore, the post-developmental conceptions limit our understanding and imagination, at best, by devaluing and trivializing, and, at worst, by ignoring the centrality of the capitalist social relations in the trajectories of agrifood relations. Contrary to both ends of the divide, which can also be seen as the *impasse of the agrarian/peasant question literature*, and based on the reformulation of Marxism as a critical theory of society provided in the third chapter as opposed to Marxisms that reduce Marx's work to the standpoint of political economy, I will argue that reconceptualization of the contemporary form of the agrarian/peasant question as the *agrifood question of capitalism* that is understood *as a food regime itself* can provide us a way beyond the contemporary divide between political economic and post-developmental frameworks.

Finally, in the fourth concluding section, I will provide a summary of the arguments with a particular focus on possible contributions of the reformulation of capitalism as a food regime and/or food regime as capitalist food regime that is achieved through the critical analysis of the divide between political economic and post-developmental approaches characterizing the contemporary agrarian/peasant question literature.

#### **4.2. The Post- Turn in the Agrarian/Peasant Question: Post-Developmentalist vs. Political Economic Understandings**

In this section, I will outline the basic features of the post-developmental turn in the agrarian/peasant question debate in comparison to the political economic formulations. To that aim this section is organized in two parts. The task of the first subsection is to expose the three characteristic features of the post-developmental reformulation of the agrarian/peasant question, particularly in relation to its critique of mainstream liberal approaches that champion the industrial model of agriculture and capitalist agrifood relations. As it is mentioned above these three features are the followings: (1) shifting the debate from the field of political economy to politics of knowledge, and thereby reformulating the agrarian/peasant question predominantly as a question of knowledge; (2) based on this shift in focus, a radical critique of agrarian political economy as well as mainstream approaches with the accusation of complicity in the abstraction and obliteration processes of differences, other subjectivities and practices in the sphere of agriculture and food that is performed by capitalist modernity; (3) on this ground, reformulation of peasantry as a political subject, and thereby a call for revaluing practices of peasant agriculture as an alternative to the capitalist agrifood system, based on their qualitative differences from the industrial model of agriculture.

It is possible to argue that the students of critical agrifood studies (hereafter, CAFS) have shifted the debate from the field of *political economy* to the field of *politics of knowledge* mainly through the critique of mainstream conceptions of and solutions offered to the contemporary dilemmas and problems of capitalist agrifood relations. In this regard, the debates on three major agrifood related problems, which can also be seen as parts of the contradictions of the contemporary agrifood system, have played a particular role: *hunger and poverty*, *diet-related health problems*, and *environmental problems*, especially climate change. After providing brief information on these three problems in the following subsection, I will argue that it is mainly through the critique of the reductionist character of mainstream agrifood knowledge manifested in the way these problems, the list of which can easily be extended, are conceived that the students of CAFS have brought the question of knowledge to the fore.

Based on this discussion, in the second subsection, I will portray the implications of this shift from political economy to politics of knowledge in the broader field of CAFS for the agrarian/peasant question in details. It is important to note that this shift of focus in the related literature occurred in a period that is characterized by significant changes in terms of both the socio-historical circumstances and the intellectual context. To make sense of the extend of the changes in capitalist social relations during this period, the following list of widely debated ‘transitions’ might be helpful: from the context of “Cold War” and *imperialism* to the so-called era of *globalization*, which is also debated in terms of a transition from *nation-state* to *transnational state*; from *Keynesianism* to *neoliberalism*; from *industrial society* to a supposedly qualitatively different form of society that is labeled differently in accordance with the theoretical standpoint taken like *post-industrial society*, *media society*, *network society*, *society of the spectacle*, etc.; from *Fordism* to *post-Fordism*; from *import-substitution-based industrialization* to *export-led industrialization*, and so on. The extensive debates in social sciences on the validity and the content of these ‘transitions’, the list of which can be extended, have found their corollary in the field of politics, arguably, as a debate on the shift from *class politics* that is manifested in socialism, anti-imperialism and national liberation movements of the era to the *new social movements* that is particularly manifested in the form of *identity politics*.

The critical point here is that the changes in the social and the historical circumstances went together with a shift in the intellectual context, which is predominantly characterized by the *post-* turn in social theory. In terms of the focus of this study, it is important to note that the corollary of the *post-* turn in the intellectual context was the retreat of Marxist understandings and problematizations of society, which is discussed in the previous chapter in terms of the so-called crisis of Marxism. It is within this historical and intellectual context that CAFS has emerged as another theoretical shift in the field of agrifood knowledge. Given these circumstances, and with the support of the *post-* turn in general and post-developmentalism in particular, I argue, the students of CAFS have carried their critique of mainstream approaches also to the critical ones, that is to say, to the agrarian political economy which is dominated by certain forms

of Marxism. In the second subsection, I will point out these criticisms through a discussion on the divide between political economic and post-developmental formulations of the agrarian/peasant question in terms of major theoretical assumptions, prevailing methodological strategies, main problematics, and prominent political propositions.

#### **4.2.1. Reformulation of the Agrarian/Peasant Question as a Question of Knowledge**

The last three decades have been characterized, among others, by an increase in public attention as well as scholarly interest on food-related issues and problems. The continuity of the problems of hunger and poverty, the increase of diet-related health problems at a compound rate, and environmental problems – climate change, *inter alia*, as one of the most serious threats to life on planet earth as we know it – are among the widely debated issues at the popular discourse (cf. Koç et. al., 2012: 4). It is worth briefly exploring the extent of these three problems to understand the growing attention on agrifood relations as well as the ground on which CAFS have risen.

According to estimates of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), as of 2017, “about 2.1 billion people are still living in poverty”, 700 million of which are considered as extremely poor, i.e. people living below the poverty line of US\$ 1.90 a day (FAO, 2017: 138). It is important to note that according to the World Bank (WB), as of 2010, 78% of the extremely poor were living in rural areas (FAO, 2017: 71). In other words, extreme poverty is mainly a rural problem. Moreover, it is estimated that in 2016, 815 million people on earth, approximately one out of nine, were undernourished, and while 98% of the undernourished people are living in “developing countries”, it should be mentioned that “50 percent of the hungry people are farming families”.<sup>77</sup> At this point, it is striking that between 1960 and 2015 agricultural production “more than tripled”, and contemporary food production at the world scale exceeds the minimum requirement of “daily energy supply” (DES) that is

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<sup>77</sup><http://www.thp.org/knowledge-center/know-your-world-facts-about-hunger-poverty/> (Last access: 02.01.2018)

around 1950 kilocalories per person according to FAO's calculations (FAO, 2017: 4, 85). In other words, *abundance of food* on the one hand, and *hunger* on the other can be seen as one of the characteristic features and dilemmas of the contemporary agrifood system (cf. Magdoff *et. al*, 2000).

In addition to undernourishment and chronic hunger, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight and obesity are also among the most important diet-related health problems. For instance, micronutrient deficiencies like iron deficiency, Vitamin A deficiency, iodine deficiency, and zinc deficiency affect more than 2 billion people (FAO, 2017: 80). Moreover, “increased consumption of foods that are high in energy, fats and added sugars or salt and inadequate intake of fruits, vegetables and dietary fibre” has resulted in the rapid increase of overweight and obesity problems (FAO: 2017: 80-81). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “worldwide obesity has nearly tripled since 1975” and in 2016 more than 1.9 billion people, who are 18 years and older, were overweight and 600 million of these were obese, while the number of overweight and obese children and adolescents aged 5-19 was 360 million in the same year.<sup>78</sup> It should also be noted that at the global level, according to the WHO (2009), “44 percent of adult diabetes cases, 23 percent of ischemic heart disease and 7 to 41 percent of certain cancers are attributable to overweight and obesity” (cited in FAO, 2017: 81). Micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity problems are all related with the ability of access to nutritious food. In that sense, in addition to the increasing diet-related health problems, another characteristic feature and contradiction of the contemporary agrifood system can be pointed out as the increasing *differentiation of diet* in terms of social inequalities based on class, gender, ethnicity, age, and the like (cf. Bellows, *et. al*, 2011; Bezner Kerr, 2012; McMichael, 2013).

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<sup>78</sup> <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs311/en/> (Last access: 02.01.2018)

Another important issue at the popular discourse as well as in the scholarly debates is climate change. For sure, environmental problems are not limited to climate change.<sup>79</sup> *Deforestation*, main driver of which is the agricultural production, *land degradation* and *soil depletion* mainly as a result of over usage of agricultural chemicals and industrial agriculture, *water scarcity* that is created mainly by over extraction of groundwater, *loss of biodiversity*, *salinization* of irrigated areas, increasing *pest resistance*, *nitrate pollution* of water bodies are among the most important environmental problems related to contemporary agrifood system (FAO, 2017; Moore, 2015; Weis, 2013; Schneider and McMichael, 2010). Climate change is particularly important since in addition to its expected and unknown consequences, it has the effect of magnifying all other environmental problems (FAO, 2017; Klein, 2014, Magdoff and Foster, 2011). Here are some “accelerating problems directly tied to climate change” (Magdoff and Foster, 2011: 13-16):

- Melting of the Arctic Ocean ice during the summer, which reduces the reflection of sunlight, thereby enhancing global warming.
- A rise in sea level that has averaged 1.7 millimeters (mm) per year since 1875, but which since 1993 has averaged 3 mm per year, or over an inch per decade, with the prospect that the rate will increase further.
- The rapid decrease of the world’s mountain glaciers, many of which – if business-as-usual greenhouse gas emissions continue – could largely be gone during this century.

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<sup>79</sup> Magdoff and Foster (2011: 12) mention that “*the environmental problem today is not reducible to a single issue no matter how large, but rather consists of a complex of problems*”. In relation to this point, according to them, the concept of “planetary boundaries” developed by Earth system scientists is particularly important. There are nine “critical boundaries/thresholds” identified, remaining within which “is considered essential to maintaining the relatively benign climate and environmental conditions that have existed during the last 12,000 years (the Holocene epoch)” (Magdoff and Foster, 2011: 13). These are the followings: (1) climate change; (2) ocean acidification; (3) stratospheric ozone depletion; (4) the biogeochemical flow boundary (the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles); (5) global freshwater use; (6) change in land use; (7) biodiversity loss, (8) atmospheric aerosol loading; and (9) chemical pollution (Magdoff and Foster, 2011: 12-13). It is important to note that “the sustainable boundaries in three of these systems – climate change, biodiversity, and human interference with the nitrogen cycle (part of the biogeochemical flow boundary) – have already been crossed, representing extreme rifts in the Earth system” (Magdoff and Foster, 2011: 13).

- Warming of the oceans, where some 90 percent of the heat added to the planet has accumulated.
- Devastating droughts, expanding possibly to 70 percent of the land area within several decades under business as usual.
- Warmer winter and summer temperatures that have already upset regional ecosystems.
- Negative effects on crop yields as average global temperature rises.
- Extinction of species due to rapid shifts in climate zones or “isotherms” – regions in which a given average temperature prevails and to which specific species are adapted.

Given these magnifying effects of climate change, it should be noted that “levels of anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs)”, which are the main sources of global warming and hence climate change, “are now at their highest in history” according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (Porter *et al.*, 2014; cited in FAO, 2017: 39). The critical point here is that agrifood relations are among the major sources of these emissions through land use, livestock production, soil and nutrient management and energy use in agricultural production as well as in processing, trade and consumption of food (FAO, 2017: 39-41). It is estimated that “the total amount of net GHG emissions from the food and agricultural sector would amount to 12.3 Gt [gigatonnes], or around 26 percent of total GHG emissions” (FAO, 2011, cited in FAO, 2017: 41). This means that agrifood system is the second major source of GHG emissions following energy sector. If we reconsider the increase in agricultural ‘productivity’ since the 1960s that is mentioned above, it can be said that this increase has been at the expense of the conditions that made agriculture itself possible at the very beginning. In other words, another characteristic feature of the contemporary agrifood relations is the question of sustainability, which can also be formulated as a contradiction between *productivity* and *sustainability*.

The increase in public attention on these agrifood related problems went together with changes in knowledge production at the scholarly level, which questions the



contemporary agrifood system, particularly in terms of its *sustainability* and *desirability*. In this regard, the last three decades have witnessed various proliferations, differentiations, shifts and ruptures in the field of agricultural and food knowledge, particularly in terms of the critique of the capitalist agrifood relations. As it is discussed in the second chapter, I argue that those changes and differentiations especially with respect to the critical approaches can be formulated as a shift from *peasant studies* to *critical agrifood studies*. One of the central features of CAFS has been the critique of mainstream approaches in terms of their reductionist knowledge production manifested particularly in their conceptions of and solutions offered to the problems of the capitalist agrifood system that are mentioned above, but not limited to them.<sup>80</sup> This point is especially important to understand the post-developmental reformulation of the agrarian/peasant question first and foremost as a question of knowledge, and hence briefly elaborated below.

The starting point of the students of CAFS has been the claim that mainstream understandings of the agrifood related problems and the solutions offered by them are themselves the very source of the problem (cf., McMichael, 2008, 2013; Rosset and Altieri, 2017; Weis, 2013, 2017). Accordingly, the two major inter-related critiques directed towards mainstream approaches can be pointed as the followings: *technicalization* of agricultural production through a reductionist and reified conception of productivity and efficiency; and *nutrification* of food, that is to say reduction of food mainly to calorie intake, which renders the historical, social, political, cultural and ecological aspects of food invisible. I have pointed out these criticisms in the second chapter in terms of the difficulties of thinking agrifood relations in social theoretical terms, and also with respect to the dilemma of intimacy and distance in our relation to food. There, I have mentioned that as food becomes more of a commodity, whose production takes place along the agrifood system that is globally organized; it also becomes a question of knowledge. In this regard, as I have pointed out in the second chapter, the call for a systematic analysis of agrifood

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<sup>80</sup> Please see the Table 2.2 provided in the second chapter for the characteristic features of critical agrifood studies.

relations through situating them within the context of capitalist *modernity*, and thereby within the related social theoretical discussions, has been the central feature of CAFS.

I argue that the reformulation of the agrarian/peasant question first and foremost as a question of knowledge should also be seen as a product of this call. This is so mainly because it is through the critique of mainstream approaches in terms of technicalization and nutrification of agrifood relations that the students of CAFS have reformulated the processes of capitalist development in agriculture as a war wage against difference, other subjectivities and doings; and those other subjectivities and doings, in turn, have been reconceptualized as the qualitative differences of *peasant agriculture* from *industrial model of agriculture* and capitalist agrifood relations writ large. In other words, reformulation of the problems of capitalist agrifood relations in the context of the relationship between power and knowledge through the critique of reductionist mainstream understandings has been realized in the form of a revaluation of peasant agriculture and practices as an alternative to capitalist agrifood system.

The central point here is that on the basis of this revaluation, the students of CAFS have carried the debate over the problems and contradictions of capitalist agrifood relations from the field of political economy to the field of politics of knowledge. For instance, van der Ploeg (2013), who is, arguably, the most important representative of the Chayanovian defense of peasants and peasant agriculture, argues that one the central contradictions that we are facing today is the one between “imperial science” and “peasant knowledge”. According to this approach, while imperial scientific knowledge “reduces agriculture to sheer application of scientific laws and seeks to standardize, predict, quantify, plan and control agriculture”; “peasant knowledge” is “artisanal” in character that is capable of confronting the “heterogeneous”, “capricious” and “unpredictable” character of agriculture, which imperial science tries to control through standardization and mechanization by way of introducing external inputs (Ploeg, 2013: 117, 49).

Another example can be given from the *agroecology perspective* that started to dominate critical circles especially since the late 2000s. Rosset and Altieri (2017) who

argue for a “political agroecology” in opposition to mainstream attempts that try to reduce agroecology to a simple technical tool supportive of industrial agriculture, discuss Ploeg’s point mentioned above, in relation to disputes and conflicts over “immaterial territories” as well as “material territories”. According to them, while conflict over material territories “refers to the struggle to access, control, use and shape, or configure, land and physical territory”; immaterial territories refer “to the terrain of ideas, of theoretical constructs” (Rosset and Altieri, 2017: 120). Their emphasis on the fact that “there are no contested material territories that are not associated with contestation over immaterial territories” is, arguably, emblematic of the reformulation of the problems and the contradictions of capitalist agrifood relations within the framework of politics of knowledge (Rosset and Altieri, 2017: 120). In this regard, contestation over immaterial territories includes “the formulation of and defense of concepts, theories, paradigms, and explanations” (Rosset and Altieri, 2017: 120). It is within this framework that they see agroecology not only as a struggle over the material territories and practices of agriculture, i.e. agroecology as *farming*, but also as a struggle over the space of agrifood knowledge that is dominated by mainstream reductionist approaches, i.e. agroecology as *framing*.

At this point it should be noted that feminist critiques have played a significant role, though they are usually underestimated, in the reformulation of agrifood relations within the context of politics of knowledge. Works of ecofeminists like Caroline Merchant, Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies, among others, have questioned the industrial model of agriculture especially in relation to patriarchy by highlighting the common ground of “reductionist science and the brute force technical domination of Nature with patriarchal forms of thought” and by pointing “to the similarities between the domination of Nature and the domination of women by men” (Rosset and Altieri, 2017: 59; cf., Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen, 2000; Mies and Shiva, 1993; Shiva, 1993). It is in this sense that ecofeminists have equated monocultural agricultural production on the basis of a “scientific mania” with “monocultures of the mind” (Barndt, 2008; cf., Shiva, 1993).

It is possible to provide more examples for the reformulation of the contradictions of capitalist agrifood relations at the level of politics of knowledge, and hence as questions and contradictions of epistemology. As it is the case in post-developmentalism in general, the central point here is that the students of CAFS have emphasized the constitutive role played by the reductionist mainstream knowledge in the social production and reproduction relations within the sphere of agriculture and food. In other words, they have foregrounded how those discourses of industrial agriculture are realized as a war waged against differences and other subjectivities and practices of which peasants are assumed to be the historical carriers. To understand this point, it is better to point out the ways that the reductionist character of mainstream ‘scientific’ knowledge production has been manifested in agricultural and food production. Since, this point has also been central in the extension of the critiques of mainstream liberal understandings to critical approaches like agrarian political economy; it is elaborated below in the next subsection, which analyzes the divide between political economic and post-developmentalalist understandings of the agrarian/peasant question.

#### **4.2.2. From *Petty Commodity Production* Conceptualizations to Post-Developmentalist *Peasantry* Formulations**

As it is discussed in the previous subsection, based on the critiques of mainstream approaches discussed above, the problems and contradictions of agrifood relations have been reconsidered in relation to the field of politics of knowledge. This reconsideration, I argue, has been followed by the reappraisal of “peasant agriculture” and related social practices as alternatives to the capitalist agrifood system. It is possible to say that the relationship between mainstream knowledge and (re)production processes is more intense in the sphere of agriculture and food than in other social settings. In this context, the students of CAFS have marked the mainstream agrifood knowledge as one of the main mechanisms in the war waged against different social relation patterns and practices existing within agrifood relations. In other words, in line with the general characteristic features of post-developmentalism discussed in the previous chapter, they have emphasized that mainstream agrifood

knowledge/discourse has played a crucial role in the constitution of social reality in the field of agriculture and food.

This constitutive role of the agrifood knowledge in production and reproduction relations is discussed in the literature usually in terms of the differences and contrasts between *peasant agriculture* and *industrial model of agriculture*. In this regard, forms of the realization of mainstream agrifood knowledge, characteristic feature of which has been the reduction of agricultural production process to a reified conception of productivity, in the agrifood relations can be pointed as follows (cf., Ploeg, 2013; Magdoff and Tokar, 2010):

- Chemicalization of agriculture (i.e., the industrial ‘solution’ to the problem of protecting and increasing the quality of the soil as well as the final product through increasing usage of agro-chemicals);
- Standardization of agricultural production processes and agricultural products, which increasingly turn into input to the food industry, in the name of ‘control’ and productivity;
- Mechanization and large-scale agricultural production processes, which go hand in hand with the claims on economies of scale;
- Attempts to develop high yielding varieties (e.g. the so-called Green Revolution, developments in the field of bio-technology and genetics, etc.);
- Extension of monoculture agriculture on the basis of the features mentioned above, and hence a significant loss of biodiversity;
- Extensive use of energy on the basis of fossil fuels;
- Dependence on external inputs and resources;
- Food production on the basis of agrifood chains that necessitate long distances both in physical and social terms;
- Attempts to eliminate the dependence of agrifood production on natural conditions and elements like the soil and the sun, and hence to make food production possible in the urban-industrial setting.

On the basis of the forms of its realization listed above, mainstream agrifood knowledge that is manifested in the industrial model of agriculture is described and criticized as a process which is socially exclusionary and depowering, and therefore as a process eliminating differences. One of the important points here is that this model not only expels peasants from the production processes of agrifood knowledge but also forces them to leave their lands. In this sense, the equivalent of the industrial agriculture model in the urban environment is, on the one hand, millions of people condemned to live under conditions of poverty in “slums”, and on the other hand, a serious reserve of cheap labor on a global scale (cf., Davis, 2007).

Within this context, the characteristic features of peasant agriculture that are highlighted in the literature in contradistinction to the mainstream agricultural sciences and the industrial model can be listed as follows (Ploeg, 2013; Magdoff and Tokar, 2010):

- Contrary to chemicals, natural methods of protection of the soil and product quality (e.g., manure, soil biology, mixed cropping, complementary intercropping, green fertilizers like clover, local repertoire for well-bred manure – Ploeg, 2013);
- Contrary to standardization, enhancement of product variety;
- Instead of mechanization dependence on human and animal labor;
- Contrary to large-scale and monoculture agriculture, the claim that small scale agriculture is much more successful in terms of both increasing productivity and fighting against the natural risks;
- Low energy usage and dependence;
- Agricultural production on the basis of local inputs and resources;
- Production and consumption relations within the scope of local and regional scale which shorten the physical as well as social distance between producers and consumers.

Based on the features listed above, it is claimed that peasant agriculture can be an alternative to the social and ecological problems created by the industrial model and

the capitalist agrifood system writ large. For example, peasants are seen as the main actors who can cool the planet against the global warming, and it is argued that peasant agriculture can solve the problems of migration and unemployment on the basis of intensive use of labor. In this sense, it is argued that peasant agriculture is inclusive and empowering as opposed to the model of industrial agriculture.

This contrast in the field of agriculture has been paralleled in the field of food, particularly in relation to the discussions on *food standards* and *food quality*, the content of which is shaped mainly by international standards and certificates that favor capitalist agrifood relations. At this point, the critical intervention of CAFS has been the following: food standards and food quality practices expressed as food security in policy making are mainly extensions of the mainstream liberal approaches, which reduce food to calorie intakes. Contrary to such an understanding, the students of CAFS have argued that food is a phenomenon that should be addressed together with its social, cultural, historical, political and ecological dimensions.

I think that the post-developmental turn and its three characteristic features in relation to the agrarian/peasant question have become clearer on the basis of the arguments mentioned above. In this context, critical agrifood studies have carried the discussions on the problems and contradictions of capitalist agrifood relations mentioned at the beginning of this section to a new level. Three main and widely-discussed problems were mentioned above: hunger and poverty, diet-related health and nutrition problems, and environmental issues, particularly climate change. These problems, which can be seen as the contemporary dilemmas and contradictions of the capitalist agrifood system, have begun to be discussed also as political contradictions through the shift of the debate from political economy to politics of knowledge. To put it differently, the reconsideration of those problems and contradictions within the context of the relationship between politics and knowledge went together with the debates on the social and political contradictions of capitalist agrifood relations. In this regard, the following contradictions that are widely debated are worth noting: *food security* vs. *food sovereignty*, *agro-industrial complex* vs. *agro-ecology*, *world/corporate*

*agriculture vs. peasant agriculture, food from nowhere vs. food from somewhere, and the like (cf., Borras et. al, 2008; McMichael, 2008, 2013).*

I argue that inasmuch as they reformulated the agrifood related problems also as social contradictions on the basis of the relationship between knowledge and power, post-developmental reformulations of the agrarian/peasant question have carried their criticisms of mainstream understandings to the ‘Marxist’ agrarian political economy based understandings especially from the mid-2000s onwards. Within the scope of this study, the divide between political economic and post-developmental understandings of the agrarian/peasant question can be traced in the following approaches:

- **Political economic understandings:** agrarian political economy (Bernstein, 2010, 2016, 2017; Brass, 2000; Byres, 2004), political economy of food (Fine et. al, 1996), value chain and commodity chain analyses, and, partially food regime analyses (McMichael, 2009, 2013, 2016, 2017).<sup>81</sup>
- **Post-developmental understandings:** Chayanovian defense of peasant agriculture (van der Ploeg, 2008, 2013); subsistence perspective and ecofeminism (Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen, 2000; Mies and Shiva, 1993; Shiva, 1993); actor-network theory based approaches (Bush and Juska, 1997; Goodman and Watts, 1997); and partially food regime analyses (McMichael, 2009, 2013, 2016, 2017).<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> It should be noted that one of the most important figures of political economic understandings is Henry Bernstein. This is so because while, on the one hand, Bernstein was one of the leading scholars in the petty commodity production debate of the 1970s and the 1980s, on the other he is also known for his polemics against the contemporary reformulations of the agrarian/peasant question that are presented here as parts of the post-developmental turn (cf., Bernstein, 2016, 2017).

<sup>82</sup> As it can be noticed the food regime framework appears both in political economic and post-developmental understandings. This is so mainly because I think that the food regime perspective, particularly the works of Philip D. McMichael (2009, 2014), has the merit of embodying the strengths of both ends of the divide characterizing the agrarian/peasant question literature. However, in order to expose this potential of the food regime conceptualization, I think, we need to foreground its *generic* character rather than its episodic aspects (cf., McMichael, 2009, 2013). It is on this ground and based



It should be noted that both political-economic and post-developmental understandings of the agrarian/peasant question signify a theoretical shift/rupture from mainstream liberal understandings of agrifood relations. While political economic understandings have shifted the debate from cultural/anthropological understandings of rural to the field of political economy of agriculture through situating the debate within the development and underdevelopment framework; post-developmental approaches have shifted the focus of analysis from political economy to politics of knowledge through situating the analysis of agrifood relations within the broader scope of capitalist *modernity* mainly by foregrounding the question of sustainability as well as desirability of the capitalist agrifood system. On this ground, I argue that the divide between political economic and post-developmental approaches can be observed in the shifts with respect to the following areas, which can also be seen as manifestations of the transition from peasant studies to critical agrifood studies: *historical and intellectual context*, *major theoretical assumptions*, *methodological strategies*, *prevailing problematic*, and *political propositions* (please see Table 4.1. below).<sup>83</sup>

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on McMichael's studies that I argue capitalism itself should be considered as a food regime. I will elaborate on this point in the next section.

<sup>83</sup> Here, a note should be taken with respect to the Table 4.1. As it is mentioned before in the second chapter I do not claim that the divide between political economic and post-developmental approaches are as sharp and as clear as they are presented throughout the study and summarized in the Table 4.1. However, I argue, it is possible to observe those shifts and controversies with respect to the areas mentioned in the Table 4.1 in the perspectives and approaches listed above. Moreover, it is also possible to trace those shifts and controversies in the practices and publications of the agrarian social movements like *food sovereignty*, *agroecology*, *slow food* and the like. Finally, I should mention that I have also benefited from my experiences in various academic and scholarly environments and occasions that I had the chance to be a part of, and from personal conversations with academic and intellectual figures who are interested in this subject.

**Table 4.1 The Post-Developmentalist Turn in Agrarian/Peasant Question Debate**

	Peasant Studies (late 1960s – late 1980s): Petty Commodity Production Conceptualizations	Critical Agrifood Studies (late 1980s onwards): Post-Developmentalist Peasantry Conceptualizations
<b>Historical Context</b>	Keynesianism “Cold War”, Imperialism Socialism, Anti-Imperialism, National Liberation Movements “Peasant Wars”	Neoliberalism Globalization New Social Movements, Identity Politics “Food Wars”
<b>Intellectual Context</b>	Modernity Developmentalism (Neo-)Marxism (as a response to development economics and modernization school)	Post- turn (e.g., post-structuralism, post-Marxism, post-Feminism, post-colonialism, post-modernity, etc.) Post-developmentalism Proliferation of Critical Studies (as a response to neoliberalism and Marxist agrarian political economy)
<b>Major Assumptions</b>	Class differentiation, i.e., decomposition of peasants/peasantry in class terms with differing interests Capitalism as a historically progressive social formation	Recomposition of peasants/peasantry as a political actor as opposed to corporate agriculture and capitalist agrifood system Capitalism and capitalist agriculture as a destructive process
<b>Methodological Strategies</b>	Structuralism Political economy Development Statistics Village monographies Objective research(er)	Subjectivism (Cultural Turn?) Politics of knowledge Radical critique of developmentalism Product/commodity-based fieldworks Participatory/active research(er)
<b>Major Problematics</b>	Production relations Development of the productive forces Transition to (ideal) capitalism (the question of rural development in the context of underdevelopment) Development of wage work in agriculture Objection to underdevelopment	Critique of production- and productivity-based understandings Critique of the idea of progress, capitalist destruction Revaluation of agricultural production processes and peasant practices based on their qualitative differences from capitalist relations Political significance of non-commodity relations Objection to development
<b>Political Propositions</b>	Differentiation of peasantry, petty commodity production Development based on national independence Delinking from the capitalist world system Class alliance	Peasantry as a political subject Autonomy, food sovereignty Delinking from the desire of economic development Class formation

As it is mentioned in the second chapter, the focus of peasant studies and agrarian political economy therein has been the analysis of agrarian structures of the so-called “third world” countries particularly in terms of the question of underdevelopment. Given the historical and the intellectual context mentioned at the beginning of this section, the critical point here is that the underlying theme in this focus has been the ‘obstacles’ in front of the capitalist development in agriculture. Contrary to political economic understandings, the starting point of the post-developmental reformulations of the agrarian/peasant question, I argue, has been the analysis of agrarian structures and relations in terms of their potentials of a post-developmental and/or post-capitalist transformation. That is to say, post-developmental approaches claimed that non-commodity and non-capitalist (in ‘ideal’ capitalist terms) aspects of agrifood relations should be conceived not as *obstacles* to capitalist development but as *potentials* and *opportunities* for the struggle against the capitalist development. It is on this ground that post-developmental agrarian/peasant question formulations have sharply criticized the political economic analyses of the social character of capitalism on the basis of the belief in the progressive character of the development of capitalism, which led to formulations like “backward capitalism” in relation to underdevelopment conceptualizations.

At the center of this criticism has been the underlying belief implicit in political economic critiques that transition to socialism necessitates a struggle against the “backward” aspects of capitalism in the first place. Contrary to such an understanding, the starting point of post-developmental understandings has been the reformulation of the social character of capitalism and capitalist agriculture as a destructive process in economic, social, cultural, ecological, and political terms. In this regard the principle concerns of agrarian political economy – like pre-capitalist agrarian changes, political and social character of agrarian change with respect to transitions to capitalism and the dynamics of agrarian change within capitalism with respect to the transcendence of capitalist social relations – have been reconsidered. This reconsideration, I argue, has been centered on the reinterpretation of those social and historical processes not as failed attempts of transition to ‘ideal’ capitalism, but as violent attacks on the

differences, subjectivities and other styles of doings of the peasantries of the non-Western world. Hence, if the central concern of political economic understandings was the proper development of capitalist social relations in agriculture (i.e. transition to and formation of ideal capitalism), with the post-developmental turn in the agrarian/peasant question debate, it has become the unsustainability and undesirability of the capitalist development in agriculture. On this ground, the students of the post-developmental turn have foregrounded new issues and concerns like the followings: agricultural knowledge and different farming practices; the question of ecology; gender inequalities; problematic character of food policies like food standards, food quality and food security; agrifood social movements and alternatives to capitalist agrifood system like food sovereignty, agroecology, agrarian citizenship, food democracy, right to food, slow food, etc.

It is on this ground that post-developmental understandings have shifted the focus of the agrifood politics from the concerns of anti-imperialism and transition to socialism to the concerns of anti-developmentalism and transition to post-capitalism. At the center of this shift has been the reformulation of peasantry as a political subject in contradistinction to political economic conceptions that consider peasants as anachronistic not only in social and political terms but also in theoretical terms. At this point, to understand the controversy between political economic and post-developmental understandings of the agrarian/peasant question better, a brief discussion on the petty commodity production formulations might be helpful. This is so because at the center of the PCP debate – which can be seen as the most developed form of agrarian political economy and as the best representative of the political economic conceptions of the agrarian/peasant question – has been the critique of the concept of peasant/ry itself.

In the first place, the concept of peasant/ry has been criticized by the PCP formulations in terms of its anachronistic character. For example, Henry Bernstein (2009: 13), a leading figure in the PCP debate, emphasizes that the analytical use of the concept of peasant should be historically limited to pre-capitalist social formations and the processes of transition to capitalism. In other words, in terms of the PCP problematic,

the concept of peasant does not have an analytical value in the analysis of capitalist social relations. Another important criticism directed towards the concept of peasant is that the essentialist tendencies observed in rural sociology are relocated into the agricultural/rural analysis through this concept. Accordingly, this point becomes evident in various normative features attributed to peasantry such as “solidarity”, “reciprocity”, “egalitarianism of the village”, “commitment to the values of a way of life based on household, community, kin, and locale” (Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 6; Bernstein, 2009: 12). Thus, the concept of peasant is generalized on the basis of an essential set of features attributed to the peasantry, and thereby peasantry is considered as having a unique inner integrity (cf., Bernstein and Byres, 2001: 6-7).

Another important criticism of the concept of peasant formulated within the PCP debate has been related to what Bernstein and Byres (2001) term as “peasant essentialism”. According to this critique, capitalist development processes, which occurred in different geographies and societies in different ways, not only resulted in the transformation of peasants into petty commodity producers, but also led to differentiation of petty commodity producers among themselves. To put it differently, commodification processes that shape the production and reproduction relations imply a differentiation process for petty commodity producers in *class* terms. Within this framework, it is not possible to talk about a general category of peasantry that experiences the destructive effects of capitalist development in the same way (cf., Bernstein, 2010). Rather, what needs to be done is an analysis of the differentiation of petty commodity producers in class terms, a process which is assumed to end up either as being a part of capitalist farmers or rural proletariat on the basis of the development of capitalism in agriculture (cf., Ecevit, 1999).

In connection with its emphasis on class differentiation and critique of the concept of peasantry, another original contribution of the PCP conceptualization is related to the theoretical questions it has directed to the analysis of capitalism. With respect to this point, the critical issue is the central position of the non-commodity household labor in agricultural production processes, which is the focus of the PCP conceptualization. As is known, in terms of Marxist theory, the conceptualization of capitalism is centered

on the category of wage labor. Ecevit's (2006-2014) definition of capitalism is noteworthy at this point: "Capitalism is the production of commodities by means of commodities within the conditions of free market and competition". The critical element of this definition is that commodities are produced by commodities. In other words, according to this definition, the trade of the final products as commodities, i.e. commercialization, is not sufficient for a Marxist conceptualization of capitalism. Rather, according to this understanding, the defining element of capitalism is the transformation of the creative work capacity of a person into the labor-power by being commodified in the form of wage labor.

Based on this, it is possible to say that the classical period of the Marxist agrarian/peasant question debate (Marx, Engels, Lenin and Kautsky) was shaped along with its prediction that a bipolar class structure would be formed on the basis of capitalist farming and rural proletariat through the development of capitalism in agriculture (Aydın, 1986a, 1986b; Ecevit, 1999). In other words, the tendency that is going to mark the agricultural relations following the transition to capitalism was seen as the commodification of the organization of production, including labor power. This theoretical expectation, however, has been both realized and also not realized in the historical process (cf., Ecevit, 1999). The capitalist development in agriculture connected rural social relations to capitalist markets by commodification of (re)production relations, and thereby situated agrifood relations within the long-term processes such as commodification, commercialization, urbanization, industrialization and proletarianization. In this sense, Marxist theoretical expectation has been realized. However, instead of wage labor form, which is at the center of the Marxist conceptualizations of capitalism, the element dominating the agricultural production process remains non-commodity household labor. This leaves us with a theoretical problem: If the conceptualization of capitalism is based on commodified labor in the form of wage labor, how could we theoretically explain the social relations, in which non-commodity household labor is a common form?<sup>84</sup> By focusing on this theoretical

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<sup>84</sup> In addition to the petty commodity production in agriculture, the informal sector in the urban environment, which is based on the non-commodity character of household labor, and mostly non-

question, topics that dominate the research agenda of PCP analysis, according to Ecevit (1999: 3-4), can be listed as follows:

- The conditions of *existence* of petty commodity production enterprises reproduced under capitalism by their own commodity and non-commodity relations; i.e. the survival or differentiation and dispossession conditions of petty commodity production;
- The conditions within which the *surplus* is produced in PCP;
- The question of *functionality* of PCP for capitalism, and the different ways of *appropriation* of surplus-labor produced in the context of PCP;<sup>85</sup>
- The possibility of a non-exploitative relation between PCP and capitalist social relations (Gibbon and Neocosmos, 1985);
- The possibility of independence of PCP from capitalist social relations (Chayanov, 1966).

Thus far, I have briefly elaborated on the main aspects and arguments of the petty commodity production conceptualization and its critiques of the concept of peasantry that dominated the critical circles at least till the late 1980s. I argue that at the center of the post-developmental turn in the agrarian/peasant question debate and its reformulation of peasantry as a political subject has been the critique of such an understanding, which, arguably, has been the best representative of political economic understandings of the agrarian/peasant question. To put it differently, based on its three distinguishing features mentioned above post-developmental approaches have carried their criticisms of mainstream liberal understandings to agrarian political economy and its understanding of the agrarian/peasant question epitomized in the PCP formulations.

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commodity domestic/women labor, have also brought serious criticisms of the conceptualization of capitalism based on wage labor (Ecevit, 2006-2014).

<sup>85</sup> The approaches that focus on this point are mainly the followings (Ecevit, 1999: 4): unequal exchange (Emmanuel, 1972; Amin, 1975); petty commodity producers as disguised wage labor (Banaji, 1977); colonial mode of production (Alavi, 1975); petty commodity producers as wage-labor equivalents (Bernstein, 1977).

On the basis of these three characteristic elements and the reconsideration of the concept of development, it is claimed that the Marxist approaches based on political economy have not been able to overcome the problems of the approaches they criticize, although they emerged on the basis of the criticisms towards the modernization school and developmentalist approaches. Accordingly, Marxist approaches, as in the mainstream approaches, saw the problem as a problem of capitalist development and the obstacles that block its progress. In other words, although Marxist analyses have dealt with the question of development in relation to the question of underdevelopment, capitalist development is regarded, sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly, as a progressive process in terms of its economic, political and social consequences. However, in terms of the post-developmental agrarian/peasant question formulations, capitalist development is nothing but the destruction of different subjectivities and practices. In other words, according to these schools, capitalism in general and capitalist development in agriculture in particular are destructive processes and cannot be seen as progress.

Another criticism directed in connection with this point can be expressed as follows: An analysis centered on capitalist development and capital reduces the historical course of capitalism to the relationship between industrial capital and industrial proletariat by reading the history of capitalism through the laws of motion of capital. According to this critique, reduction of the analysis of capitalist social relations to the laws of motion of capital, and thereby to the history of industry and financialization, has also enhanced the reduction of social contradictions of capitalism to the analysis of working class that is conceptualized in a narrower sense almost solely limited to the factory level. In this context, the questioning of agricultural/rural relations has turned into an analysis of the barriers to capitalist development in political economic approaches. The political expression of these theoretical orientations emerges as an understanding of the category of peasantry that is led by the working class and expected to be dissolved in favor of the working class. In other words, the relationship between capitalist/commodity and non-capitalist/non-commodity (when compared to the ideal forms of capitalism) forms and relations are analyzed in political approaches



mainly in terms of the development of forces of production and in a capital/commodity-centric way.

It is within this framework that contrary to the major theoretical assumption and thesis of political economic understandings, that is class differentiation, post-developmental approaches reformulated the issue as the constitution of peasantry as a political actor/subject as opposed to corporate/industrial agriculture and capitalist agrifood system. To put it differently, with the help of methodological strategies provided mainly by subjectivism, politics of knowledge, radical critique of developmentalism and participatory/active research, post-developmental reformulations of the agrarian/peasant question have been centered on the conceptualization of the political character of peasants and peasant agriculture in relation to the capitalist agrifood relations.

Within this framework, I argue, post-developmental understandings have set to work to criticize the major problematics of agrarian political economy. In this regard, contrary to analyses of agricultural production relations on the basis of a reified conception of agricultural productivity, they have centered their analysis on the critique of production- and productivity-based conceptions of agriculture. Contrary to analyses of development of forces of production on the basis of a sacritized and trans-historically conceived labor; they have highlighted the destructive character of capitalist development and hence placed the idea of progress at the center of their criticisms. Contrary to search for development of wage labor in agriculture, they have emphasized the political significance of non-commodity/subsistence relations. Instead of problematizing underdevelopment; they have argued that we should object to development itself. On this ground, they have shifted the political propositions and the terms of the political debate from *differentiation of peasantry* to *peasantry as a political subject*, from *development on the basis of national independence* to discussions on *autonomy* on the basis of *food sovereignty*. In short, by shifting the terrain of the agrarian/peasant question from political economy to politics of knowledge, post-developmental understandings have reformulated the central question as *delinking from the desire of (economic) development itself*, rather than

delinking from the capitalist world system in order to complete the development process.

In this subsection, I have provided the outlines of the post-developmental turn in the agrarian/peasant question debate. With respect to this divide, I argue that although they have made significant contributions to our understanding of the capitalist agrifood system in their own ways; neither post-developmental nor political economic conceptualizations can provide us an adequate framework with respect to the critical analysis of the capitalist agrifood system both in analytical and political terms. To put the matter in line with the reformulation of the impasse of the development debate in the previous chapter, this study argues the following: while political economic conceptions of the agrarian/peasant question limit our understanding of capitalist agrifood system and our imagination of its beyond by seemingly bringing its capitalist features to the fore, the post-developmental conceptions limit our understanding and imagination, at best, by devaluing and trivializing, and, at worst, by ignoring the centrality of the capitalist social relations in the trajectories of agrifood relations. Contrary to both ends of the divide, which can also be seen as the *impasse of the agrarian/peasant question literature*, and based on the reformulation of Marxism as a critical theory of society provided in the third chapter as opposed to Marxisms that reduce Marx's work to the standpoint of political economy, I argue that reconceptualization of the contemporary form of the agrarian/peasant question as the *agrifood question of capitalism* that is understood as *a food regime itself* can provide us a way beyond the contemporary divide between political economic and post-developmental frameworks. This point is elaborated in the next section.

#### **4.3. Capitalism Itself as a Food Regime and its Agrifood Question**

In this section, I will argue that capitalist food regime has two inter-related defining features that have become apparent especially with the neoliberal restructuring of agrifood relations: (1) *primitive accumulation* understood not only as a historical process in the social constitution of capitalism, but also as the mode of existence of capital as a social relation, and as the principle mechanism and strategy in its

reproduction; and (2) the dissociation of rurality, agriculture and food both in historical and theoretical-analytical terms, which, to a certain extent, can also be seen as a part and a product of the processes of primitive accumulation. In relation to this point, it can be said that the conceptualization of capitalism itself as a food regime can be seen partly as the product and theoretical implication of the neoliberal era.

However, the central point here is that this study conceives the neoliberal period that is usually conceived in terms of neoliberal/corporate food regime *not* as a qualitatively different era and/or stage in the trajectory of agrifood relations, but as a *difference in unity* within the movement of the contradictions of capitalism that is itself a food regime. To put it differently, conceptualization of food regime as capitalist food regime can also be seen as an attempt to dissociate the concept of food regime from its current formulations in which it is used predominantly as a concept of and a tool for periodization. It is within this framework that the contemporary tendencies and trends that are pointed out in the second chapter are conceptualized here as the forms and the processes of *direct penetration of capital to agrifood relations*, that is to say as the contemporary forms of the movement of the contradictions of capitalism itself as a food regime. In other words, the neoliberal restructuring processes are conceptualized in this study as *discontinuity* only in and through the *continuity* of the contradictions of the capitalist food regime.

As it is discussed in the previous chapter the distinguishing feature of capitalism has been the reduction of human subjectivities and social relations – including human-non-human relations – to the value and surplus-value production. In its broadest sense possible, primitive accumulation is understood in this study as the name of this reduction process, which includes not only transformation of human subjectivities and labor into labor-power that is commodified in the wage form, but also subordination and subsumption of non-capitalist *and* non-commodity relations and spheres to the valorization processes of capital.<sup>86</sup> At this point, it should be noted that, the history of

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<sup>86</sup> This understanding of primitive accumulation is based predominantly on Bonefeld (2014, please see especially the fourth chapter), and also on Federici (2004) and Özuğurlu (2003).

the self-valorization process of capital through ‘economic’ force and violence, that is to say the extended reproduction process of capital, is also the history of ‘non-economic’ force and violence, the subject of which, throughout the history of capitalism, has usually been *women, people of colors* (including the indigenous communities), and the *nature* itself. I argue that agricultural and food production, whose organic and living nature have always been a problem for capital, which, simply put, favors the dead over the living, should also be conceived from the standpoint of primitive accumulation, which is nothing but the constitution process of alienated labor that is discussed in the previous chapter in the sphere of agrifood production. It is within this framework that I argue the neoliberal restructuring processes should be conceived as part of the primitive accumulation process in agrifood relations, which goes hand in hand with the dissociation of the historical and social links between rural, agriculture and food. In this regard, the following aspects of the neoliberal restructuring process can be seen as the contemporary forms of primitive accumulation:

- Globalization processes of agrifood relations on the basis of neoliberalism: basically, the re-regulation of international money and commodity circulations in a way to open up markets of the South to the multinational agrifood corporations.
- Neoliberal restructuring of the patterns of the relationship between the nation-state and small producers: basically through privatizations, de-functionalization of producer organizations and agricultural unions, and restructuring of agrifood policies and subsidy mechanisms in favor of penetration of capital to agrifood relations.
- The emergence of a new international division of labor: in which, on the basis of cheap labor and cheap nature, the global South has shifted its crop design towards labor intensive products like fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Privatization processes in agricultural research.
- Intensification of commodification processes in relation to seeds and genetic materials, particularly in the form of intellectual property rights – which, in

addition to the technological developments mentioned below, has significant implications in terms of the (previously) organic (i.e., nature-dependent) character of agriculture and food.

- The increasing financialization of agrifood relations, which was especially reflected in the rapid increase of food prices in 2008.
- The expansion of the processes of contract farming.
- The increasing role of women labor in agriculture, in parallel to the diversification processes of household labor towards non-agricultural income (i.e. “feminization of agriculture”).

Within the context of neoliberalism, we have also witnessed significant developments in relation to the dissociation of the social and historical as well as the conceptual and analytical ties among rurality, agriculture and food. In this regard, the following processes can be seen as part of this aspect of the capitalist food regime, *modus operandi* of which is the separation of food from agriculture and rurality in social, ecological, cultural, political and economic terms:

- The rise of transnational agro-input and agri-food corporations, and their increasing hegemony over the upstream (e.g., provision of machinery and other inputs) and downstream (e.g., processing, packaging, circulation, marketing, and consumption processes) relations of agricultural production.
- The changing technological infrastructure of agrifood production: particularly through the developments in areas such as technologies of transportation and storage, biotechnology, substitution, and the recent developments in terms of digitalization of agriculture (e.g., “smart agriculture”).
- The development of super/hyper-markets as significant actors in the agrifood system, and thereby the increasing role of commercial capital over the production and consumption relations of food.
- The changing food culture in line with the capital accumulation processes.

In combination with the dissociation of the historical and social links between rural, agriculture and food – particularly through food industry, corporate farming and the

contemporary developments in the technologies of agrifood production like substitution, biotechnology, and digitalization – the immediate implication of this understanding of primitive accumulation, I argue, is the need to reformulate the theoretical as well as the political content of the agrarian/peasant question on the basis of *class formation* through *class struggle*, i.e., *class in struggle*. That is to say, contrary to the traditional/orthodox Marxist accounts of agrarian political economy, which conceived the matter mainly as a question of *class alliance* assuming the already existing and constituted classes on the basis of property relations, this study argues that the issue at hand should be seen rather as class formation on the basis of class struggle. In other words, contrary to the political economic formulations that are best represented with respect to the agrarian/peasant question by the petty commodity production debate, I argue that peasants have, indeed, emerged in our era as a political subject *in and against* the capitalist food regime and its neoliberal form.

At first sight, this emphasis on the subjectivity and the political character of the peasants may appear similar to the post-developmental peasant conceptualizations. In fact, in parallel to my point in the third chapter with respect to post-developmentalism in general, it can be said that the post-developmental reformulations of the agrarian/peasant question are much truer to the spirit of Marx's total project underlying his works. That is to say, their main endeavor is also dismantling the apparently objective and rational categories of political economy and thereby dismantling the presentation of capitalist social relations as the best of all possible worlds. More importantly, the underlying political content of this post-developmental endeavor has, arguably, been the relentless search for alternative ways and struggles that would lead to transcendence of capitalist social relations, which was also the core of Marx's total project.

However, the reformulation of the agrarian/peasant question on the basis of concepts like *capitalist food regime*, *primitive accumulation*, *class formation* and *class struggle* is also a radical critique of the post-developmental understandings. This is so mainly because, although these approaches also consider peasantry as a political subject, I argue that at the center of this politicization process has been the processes of direct

penetration of capital to agrifood relations, which should be seen as part of the attempts to reduce other subjectivities and doings to value and surplus-value production. That is to say, contrary to post-developmental approaches, the political character and subjectivity of peasants cannot be based on their supposedly already existing cultural and/or ethical traits that are assumed to be arising from some unique *internal* qualities with respect to the power-knowledge nexus that *externally* surrounds them. Rather, I argue that the political character of peasantry emerges *in and against* the capitalist food regime, that is to say there is nothing ‘old’ about the constitution of peasants as political subjects.

The central point here is that class formation processes in agrifood relations both inform and are informed by the defining features of the capitalist food regime. At this point, it is important to note that the two defining features of the capitalist food regime mentioned above both operate as the reduction process of *production-time* (and/or *ecological/bio-geological time*) to *value-time* (and/or *capital’s turnover time*) – the difference between the two has been the immediate result of the organic character of agrifood products and production process that denotes a radical deviation from a typical industrial production process, in which the production time and value time usually overlap (cf., Mann and Dickinson, 1978; Lewontin 2000; Lewidow, 2003). In other words, I argue that the two defining features of capitalist food regime are the principal processes that further the reduction of production time to value time in agrifood production, which cannot be conceived solely as a technical process and problem. Rather, I argue that it should be seen as the process of class formation on the basis of the constitution of alienated labor, and the political character of peasantry is both informing and informed by this process.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

I would like to end this chapter with a brief discussion on the possible contributions of this reformulation of capitalism as a food regime achieved through the critical analysis of the divide between political economic and post-developmental approaches characterizing the contemporary agrarian/peasant question literature. Briefly put, I

argue that the reformulation of capitalism itself as a food regime based on its two defining features has two main contributions. The first one is theoretical and analytical, and the second one is political in relation to the contemporary politics of agrifood relations.

First, by reformulating the agrarian/peasant question as the agrifood question of capital through situating the debate within the context of capitalist food regime and class struggle/formation, this study, on the one hand, argues against the post-developmental approaches that class analysis is still the central matter in theoretical and analytical terms. On the other hand, contrary to the political economic approaches, this study argues that the differentiation process of peasants on the basis of petty commodity production relations is not simply a process of the elimination of peasantry, which renders the concept of peasant anachronistic both in analytical and social terms; but rather it is also the process of their class formation. The critical point here is that class in this study is understood mainly as a concept of contradiction rather than a simple tool for classification on the basis of property relations. To put it differently, on the one hand, I argue that the political character of peasantry has nothing to do with some unique and/or distinguished qualities of which peasants are assumed to be the historical carriers as it is usually understood in post-developmental accounts; and on the other hand, I argue, peasants are not predestined to disappear in the process of differentiation as it is usually understood in political economic accounts. Peasants neither constitute an eternal class, nor do they constitute a social category that can never become a class. In that sense, since the class formation process of peasants cannot be assumed on an *a priori* ground, and thereby since it requires detailed concrete analysis based on the new insights that emerge out of this discussion, this study has the potential to open up new discussions and new research areas and questions through bringing the strengths of both post-developmental and political economic understandings together into a new framework.

In close connection to this point, the second possible contribution of this framework is related to the contemporary politics of agrifood relations. The divide between post-developmental and political economic approaches in the related literature is,



arguably, reflected at the level of politics as a divide between *moral/ethical/cultural* (i.e., post-developmental) critique of capitalist agrifood relations on the one hand, and *objective/structural/scientific* (i.e., political economic) critique on the other. While in the former case, the question of subjectivity and agency is conceived predominantly on moral/ethical and cultural grounds and thereby searched mainly *outside* of capitalist social relations, in the latter case the question of subjectivity and agency loses its political content, arguably, in the never-ending process of differentiation *inside* of capitalist social relations. In other words, this study argues, while the neglect of the centrality of capitalist social relations results in, for post-developmental approaches, a framework that is analytically weak but politically powerful, the way capitalist social relations are understood in political economic approaches results in an analytically powerful but politically impotent framework. The reformulation of the agrarian/peasant question that is provided in the following pages on the basis of Marxism understood as a critical theory of society has arguably the potential to provide a framework that is a moral and an objective critique of the capitalist food regime at one and the same time.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

In this final and concluding chapter, I will summarize the arguments formulated and discussed throughout the previous chapters with a particular focus on possible contributions of this study to the related literatures and debates. Another task of this chapter is to elaborate on the limitations of the study, particularly in terms of its arguments that are in need of further development, and hence which can also be seen as suggestions for possible future studies.

The starting point of this study has been the commonly observed fact that the critical literature on agrifood relations went through various proliferations and differentiations since the late 1980s. One of the contributions of this study might be seen as its argument that those proliferation and differentiation processes should be conceived as manifestations of a radical reorientation among the critical circles in theoretical terms. There have been two major factors influential on this theoretical reorientation in the field of agrifood knowledge. The first is related to the socio-historical context that is characterized by the neoliberal reorganization of capitalist social relations and agrifood relations therein. The second is related to the intellectual context, in which the course of social theory has been shaped by the *post-* turn that is reflected in the divide between modernity and postmodernity. On this ground, I have argued that the underlying theoretical current in the reorientation of the literature has been post-developmentalism, which can be observed particularly in the contemporary formulations of the agrarian/peasant question in relation to the critique of the neoliberal restructuring of agrifood relations.

However, this theoretical reorientation in the literature is not apparent at first sight. The main reason for the tacit character of the theoretical shifts and ruptures is the fact that the related literature has been dominated, at least till the late 2000s, mainly by product- and/or commodity-based case/field studies. It should be noted that those studies have been highly significant and helpful in exposing the neoliberal restructuring processes as well as in deciphering the deepening social and environmental problems of the capitalist agrifood system. Still, it is not easy to say that theoretical implications and consequences of the changing socio-historical and intellectual contexts for the agrifood knowledge are questioned adequately. With regards to this point, one of the leading motivation of this study has been the claim that the problem we are facing with respect to the agrifood knowledge is not a quantitative one, that is to say the lack of sufficient number of studies on agrifood relations, but rather a qualitative one, that is the lack of an adequate effort to theorize the differentiation processes in agrifood relations as well as in the related literature, especially with respect to the agrarian/peasant question. On this ground one of the central tasks of this study has been to make the implicit theoretical tendencies characterizing the last three decades of the literature explicit.

To that aim, in the second chapter, I have analyzed the differentiation and proliferation processes in the literature in terms of transitions at three inter-related levels. First, I have focused on the main features of the widely debated transition from *rural sociology* to *sociology of agriculture and food* at the sub-disciplinary level. Second, I have argued that this disciplinary transition should be seen as a part of the broader shift in the literature, which I have formulated as a transition from *peasant studies* to *critical agrifood studies*. The central problematic of the study has been based on this shift from peasant studies to critical agrifood studies with respect to the interrogations of the capitalist character of agrifood relations as well as the social character of capitalism itself. In this regard, I have argued that the ground to see the rise of critical agrifood studies as a theoretical rupture from peasant studies lies in the post-developmental turn that is manifested particularly in the contemporary debates on the social and the political character of peasantry with respect to the capitalist agrifood system.

It should be noted that the social and the political character of peasantry constitutes the core of the agrarian/peasant question, which is understood throughout the study as the social, political, economic, cultural and environmental specificities of capitalist agrifood relations within the general course of capitalist development, as well as the theoretical implications of those specificities with regards to debates on transition to capitalism, its social character and its transcendence. Here, the term *specificity* is understood mainly as *non-commodity* forms and relations that have played a central role in production as well as reproduction relations of the widespread form of agricultural producers, which have been conceived through various concepts like *smallholder*, *small producer*, *peasant*, *family farmer*, *peasant household*, and *petty commodity producer*. In this sense, the third transition is formulated as a shift from *political economic petty commodity production formulations* to *post-developmental* *peasantry formulations* that is briefly mentioned in the second chapter and analyzed in the fourth chapter as the main problematic of this study.

These shifts characterizing the literature mentioned above are discussed in the first chapter with a particular focus on the position of agrifood relations within the general course of social theory as well as analyses of capitalist social relations. As it is commonly observed by the students of critical agrifood studies, not only mainstream liberal understandings and orthodox-modernity based schools of sociology, but also a considerable portion of critical understandings of capitalism have consigned agriculture and food relations to the margins of social theory as well as social thought. This marginalization has occurred mainly through schematic understandings of the processes of transition to capitalism on the basis of essentialist conceptions of the distinctions between rural-urban, agriculture-industry, nature-culture, human-non-human, traditional-modern, and the like, in which the second terms have been privileged against the first ones predominantly in the name of ‘progress’ that is particularly manifested in conceptualizations of modernization and development. Moreover, as it is discussed in detail in the second chapter, mainstream rural sociology, which, in fact, emerged as a critique of classical sociology, could do no more than reproducing the problems of the modernist and developmentalist understandings, since

it simply reversed the dichotomies mentioned above without questioning the theoretical ground they were formulated in the first place.

I have argued that both peasant studies of the period between the late-1960s and the late-1980s, and critical agrifood studies that has been dominating critical circles since the late-1980s onwards should be seen as significant attempts to put an end to the marginal position of agrifood relations in social theoretical terms. So far as this point is concerned, the critical intervention of peasant studies has been shifting the debate to the sphere of *political economy* mainly through situating the agrifood relations and the debates on the aforementioned dichotomies within the course of capitalist development and underdevelopment. It is with the development of peasant studies and the emergence of sociology of agriculture – which quickly turned into sociology of agriculture and food – within the context of peasant studies that agrifood relations have started to occupy a more central position with regards to the interrogations of capitalist social relations.

In this regard, the rise of critical agrifood studies, according to this study, signifies another turning point in the literature mainly because it has shifted the focus of the debate from political economy to the sphere of *politics of knowledge*. The critical intervention of critical agrifood studies has been to situate the interrogations of the capitalist character of agrifood relations within the broader context of capitalist *modernity* and hence within the broader scope of social theory that is characterized by the divide between modernity and postmodernity. Backed by the *post-* turn in social theory and post-developmentalism in particular, the students of critical agrifood studies have carried the criticisms formulated against mainstream liberal understandings as well as modernist schools of sociology to Marxism-led agrarian political economy that dominated critical circles till the late 1980s. They have done so mainly through bringing the question of *sustainability* as well as *desirability* of the capitalist agrifood system to the fore. In other words, in addition to mainstream approaches, critical political economic understandings, of which Marxism has been the main intellectual source, have also become the target of critical agrifood studies in its criticisms. It is on this ground that critical agrifood studies extended the debate on

agrifood relations to the broader scope of social theory, and opened up new questions in terms of social thought as well.

Another possible contribution of this study might be seen as its argument that the theoretical reorientation of the critical literature on agrifood relations has been centered, to a great extent, on the reconsideration and radical critique of the concept of development mainly through the theoretical insights provided by post-developmentalism. With this claim the third chapter is devoted to an analysis of post-developmentalism in accordance with the central problematic of this study. As it is discussed there in detail, post-developmentalism, on the basis of its three distinguishing features, implies a rejection of development both as a concept and as a socio-historical ideal. The first and the most important feature of the post-developmental critique is its reformulation of development as a question of the relationship between knowledge and power. At the center of this reformulation has been the critique of mainstream liberal understandings, which consider development predominantly as a progressive historical process that can be measured in terms of technical and/or socio-economic performances; and Marxism, which, according to post-developmental critique, shares the same theoretical fallacies with developmentalist frameworks being reflected especially in its understanding of underdevelopment that still embodies the idea of development as a socio-historical goal despite its critical content.

Contrary to those approaches, post-developmental critics have set to work to formulate development as a particular cast of mind, as a paradigm and/or discursive formation; and, thereby, they have placed the *rationality of development* and/or *developmentalist rationality* as the central target of their criticisms. Reformulation of development as a particular form of rationality, and hence as a question of knowledge went together with the critique of development as a mostly violent process of abstraction and obliteration of social as well as ecological differences, which is discussed in the third chapter as the second distinguishing feature of post-developmentalism. This is so mainly because, according to post-developmental approaches, developmentalist rationality as a Western and/or Euro-Atlantic construct

has been imposed upon the non-Western world in an authoritarian and technocratic way. By positing the core of development as Westernization, the students of post-developmentalism, while being aware of their differences, highlighted the continuity between the colonial period and the development era.

It is in this sense that the corollary to the critical stance of post-developmentalism regarding the established 'scientific' knowledge has been a renewed interest in local communities and the so-called vernacular worlds with a particular focus on their differences and other styles of doings in terms of knowledge, culture and economy. On this ground, the third characteristic feature of post-developmentalism has been the call for a revaluation of other subjectivities and doings with regards to which developmentalist rationality has been intolerant in social, political and theoretical terms. In short, post-developmental critique has reformulated the central issue as the struggle for "alternatives to development", contrary to a search for "development alternatives" that are assumed to be "better developments".

The constitutive claim regarding the problematic of this study has been that the proliferation of the literature on the agrarian/peasant question since the mid-2000s onwards has occurred on the post-developmental theoretical ground, characteristics of which are mentioned above. This turn in the agrarian/peasant question formulations led to a divide in the literature between political economic and post-developmental understandings, which can also be seen as a corollary to the divide in the broader field of development. As it is discussed in the fourth chapter, the characteristic features of post-developmental agrarian/peasant question formulations can also be pointed out at three inter-related levels in parallel to the three distinguishing features of post-developmentalism.

First, in opposition to political economic understandings that are best represented by the petty commodity production conceptualizations, the focus of the debate has been shifted to the field of politics of knowledge by reformulating the agrarian/peasant question first and foremost as a question of the relationship between knowledge and power. Second, this reformulation has provided the ground to carry the critiques of

mainstream understandings to agrarian political economy in terms of complicity in the war waged against difference and other subjectivities by capitalist modernity. Third, based on these criticisms, post-developmental accounts of the agrarian/peasant question have put a significant effort in revaluing practices of peasant agriculture as an alternative to the capitalist agrifood system based on their qualitative differences from the industrial model of agriculture.

On this ground, post-developmental understandings of the agrarian/peasant question have reformulated the central issue in the sphere of agriculture as the struggle for alternatives to industrial model of agriculture on the basis of a reformulation of peasantry as a political subject – political character of which emerges mainly from the supposedly unique and immanent qualities that peasants are assumed to be the historical carriers. In short, the focus of analysis has shifted from the question of rural development in the context of underdevelopment (i.e. proper development of capitalist relations in agriculture) to the question of transcendence of developmental rationality through a revaluation of differences, subjectivities and practices of peasants against the capitalist agrifood system.

With this claim on the post-developmental turn in the agrarian/peasant question, another contribution of this study, I argue, is its analysis of the related literature on the basis of the divide between political economic and post-developmental understandings. I have argued that this divide in the literature can be observed in the shifts, which can also be seen as parts of the transition from peasant studies to critical agrifood studies, in the following areas: *historical and intellectual contexts*, major *theoretical assumptions*, prevailing *methodological strategies*, *problematics* highlighted, and predominant *political propositions*.

As it is mentioned throughout the study, the shift from political economic petty commodity production formulations to post-developmental peasantry conceptualizations occurred in a historical context that is characterized by significant changes in terms of the form of capitalist social relations. In order to understand the extent of these changes it is helpful to mention some of the ‘transitions’ widely



identified by the critical circles: from *Keynesianism* to *neoliberalism*, from *imperialism* in the context of the “Cold War” to *globalization*, from oppositions on the basis of *national liberation movements*, *anti-imperialism* and *socialism* to *new social movements*, from *class politics* to *identity politics*, from *peasant wars* to *food wars*, and the like. In parallel to the socio-historical changes, we have also witnessed significant shifts in the intellectual context like: from *modernity* to *post-modernity*, from *developmentalism* to *post-developmentalism*, from *(neo-)Marxism* that emerged as a response to development economics and modernization school to proliferation of *agrifood studies* as a response to neoliberalism and Marxist agrarian political economy.

For the aims of this study, the critical point in relation to those changes in terms of historical and intellectual contexts is the retreat of Marxism both as a theoretical apparatus and as a political movement. It is within this context of the so-called crisis of Marxism that critical agrifood studies emerged and the post-developmental turn in the agrarian/peasant question carried the criticisms of mainstream approaches to Marxism-led agrarian political economy. With regards to theoretical assumptions, Marxism-based political economic understandings have been criticized mainly in terms of reproducing the theoretical fallacies of modernist schools of thought through reducing the agrarian/peasant question to the obstacles in front of the development of capitalism in agriculture. In this regard, according to post-developmental peasant formulations, although Marxist analysis of agrifood relations is based on the critique of developmentalist understandings, the underlying theoretical as well as political motive of these analyses has been the assumption that capitalist development implies a progress in economic, political and social terms.

One of the most significant indicator of this assumption has been the conception of non-commodity and non-capitalist aspects of the agrarian relations as *obstacles* to capitalist development, if not backwardness. It is important here to note that the mostly explicit assumption that led to attribution of a positive content to capitalist development was that it would be followed by socialism predominantly on the basis of the development of forces of production. In relation to this point, one of the main

targets of post-developmental formulations has been the claim on the differentiation of peasantry in class terms either towards rural proletariat or capitalist farmer; a process which, according to agrarian political economy, renders the concept of peasant(ry) anachronistic in social as well as political terms. Contrary to those understandings based on the thesis (if not a desire) of the disappearance of peasantry through development of capitalism, post-developmental accounts have argued that capitalist development is nothing but a destructive process in which non-commodity and non-capitalist aspects of agrarian/peasant relations should be seen not as obstacles but as *potentials* for a post-developmental and/or post-capitalist transformation. It is in this sense that post-developmental accounts have shifted the theoretical focus of the agrarian/peasant question from *class differentiation* (i.e., decomposition of peasantry in class terms with differing interests) to re-composition of *peasantry as a political subject* as opposed to corporate/industrial model of agriculture and to the capitalist agrifood system writ large.

Within this framework, I argue, post-developmental understandings have set to work to criticize the major problematics of agrarian political economy. In this regard, contrary to analyses of agricultural production relations on the basis of a reified conception of agricultural productivity, they have centered their analysis on the critique of production- and productivity-based conceptions of agriculture. Contrary to analyses of development of forces of production on the basis of a sacritized and trans-historically conceived labor; they have highlighted the destructive character of capitalist development and hence placed the idea of progress at the center of their criticisms. Contrary to search for development of wage labor in agriculture, they have emphasized the social as well as political significance of non-commodity subsistence relations. Instead of problematizing underdevelopment; they have argued that we should object to development itself.

On this ground, they have shifted the political propositions and the terms of the political debate from *differentiation of peasantry* to *peasantry as a political subject*, from development on the basis of national independence to discussions on autonomy on the basis of food sovereignty. The underlying methodological strategies in these

shifts have been provided mainly by subjectivism, politics of knowledge, product/commodity-based fieldworks, radical critique of developmentalism and participatory/active research(er) understandings; contrary to methodological strategies characterizing political economic approaches like structuralism, political economy, development statistics, village monographies and understandings of objective research(er). In short, by shifting the terrain of the agrarian/peasant question from political economy to politics of knowledge, post-developmental understandings have reformulated the central question as delinking from the desire of (economic) development itself, rather than delinking from the capitalist world system in order to complete the development process.

I have argued that this divide in the contemporary agrarian/peasant question literature between political economic and post-developmental understandings should be seen as an impasse, which can also be seen as a corollary to the impasse of the development debate. Despite their significant contributions in their own ways to our understanding of the capitalist agrifood system, this study argues, both political economic and post-developmental understandings share a common limitation that is manifested particularly in their understandings of the contradictions and the problems of capitalist social relations and the agrifood system. In this regard, this study claims the following: while political economic conceptions of the agrarian/peasant question limit our understanding of the capitalist agrifood system and our imagination of alternatives by the way they are foregrounding capitalist social relations, post-developmental frameworks limit our understanding and imagination by devaluing the centrality of capitalist social relations in the trajectories of agrifood relations mainly through conceptualizing the contradictions and the problems of the capitalist agrifood system at the level of politics of knowledge and thereby at the level of epistemology.

One of the main causes of this common limitation can be identified as their problematic understandings of Marxism, which reduce Marx's works to the standpoint of political economy. With respect to this point, contrary to both schools of thought, I have argued that Marxism cannot be seen as a form of, be it critical and/or radical, political economy. Based on the call for an open Marxism that was influential especially during

the 1990s and the studies of figures like Simon Clarke and Werner Bonefeld, I have argued that the works of Marx and Marxism should be seen rather as a critical theory of society. On this ground, the main contribution of this study might be seen as its attempt to bring Marxism back in to the development debate and to reformulate the capitalist agrifood system and the agrarian/peasant question within this framework. In this regard, the main endeavor of this study has been to carry the theoretical insights of Marxism as a critical theory of society to the development literature as well as to the agrarian/peasant question debate through reformulating the agrarian/peasant question as the agrifood question of capitalism that is understood as a food regime itself.

As it is discussed in detail in the third chapter, the theoretical foundation of Marxism understood as a critical theory of society lies mainly in the conception of the so-called “early” and “late” Marx as a totality. Consideration of the early studies of Marx especially in relation to alienation and alienated labor, and his late studies on commodity fetishism, value-form and capital as parts of a total critical project implies first and foremost the following: the *differentia specifica* of capitalism is the appearance of human subjectivities in the form of qualities of things, and social relations in the form of thing-like structures on the basis of the contradictory social relationship between capital and wage-labor. In this regard, what makes Marx’s early and late studies a totality is their intellectual and political core, that is his relentless critique of presentation of capitalist social relations as the best of all possible worlds through rationalization and/or naturalization of them, and his relentless attempt to establish a ground that will lead to transcendence of the capitalist system rather than its further development.

On this ground, in contradistinction to political economic conceptions of Marxism, which reduce it to labor theory of value, I have argued that Marxism understood as a critical theory of society is based rather on Marx’s theory of alienated labor that is developed further in his analysis of capital, value, commodity fetishism and theory of surplus value. It is important to note that alienation here implies not alienation from some innate essence, but from constituting social relations. In close connection to this

point, I have argued that Marxism is a critical theory of social constitution and/or form of labor as the source of this alienation, rather than a framework centered on the analysis of property relations. One of the central merits of such an understanding of Marxism is its attempt to explain production relations on the basis of their social constitution, rather than explaining social relations on the basis of production relations through assigning an ontological primacy to trans-historically conceived labor as it is the case in political economic conceptions of Marxism. In other words, I have argued that Marx's analysis of social production relations is not based on an ontological primacy of production relations and a trans-historically conceived labor, but on exposing why economic categories appear as objective constraints and external to social relations in capitalism. It is in this sense that Marxism understood as a critical theory of society places at the center of its criticisms the *irrational rationality* and/or *objective irrationality* of capitalist social relations of (re)production, in order to expose and foreground its social and subjective character.

The implication of this framework for the *post-* critiques of Marxism is the following: the theoretical fallacies attributed to Marxism as a supposedly sophisticated representative of the modernist social thought have their roots not only in the theoretical inadequacies of orthodox and/or traditional interpretations of Marxism, but also and more importantly in capitalist social relations themselves. In relation to this point, I have argued the followings: it is not that Marxism has an essentialist conception of production relations, but production relations explain the irrational rationality of capitalist social relations; it is not that Marxism has a reductionist conception of production relations on the basis of a sacritized and trans-historically conceived labor, but it is capital as a social relation that reduces everything to value and surplus-value production; it is not that Marxism has a teleological understanding of history, but it is capital that presents itself as the culmination of the progressive journey of the human kind and as the most developed form of human societies; it is not that Marxism has a structural determinist understanding of social relations, but it is through capitalist social relations that human qualities and subjectivities appear as the qualities of things, and hence as objective and structural constraints.

Within this framework, I have claimed that post-developmentalism in general, and the agrarian/peasant question formulations on that ground are much truer to the spirit of Marx's critical project. This is so mainly because, as that of Marx's, at the center of their criticisms lies also the apparently objective, natural and/or rational categories of political economy, and their main endeavor, too, is dismantling the presentation of capitalist social relations as the best of all possible worlds. Moreover, the political content of the post-developmental formulations has also been centered on the relentless search for alternative ways and struggles that would lead to transcendence of capitalism. However, I have argued that their main problem lies in their attempts to overcome the *social* contradictions and the problems of capitalism through some *epistemological* interventions and corrections. This problem is manifested in their devaluation, if not a total neglect, of the centrality of the contradictory relationship between capital and wage-labor. With this claim, contrary to post-developmentalism, I have formulated development as nothing but *capitalist development* in the third chapter, and in the fourth chapter I have analyzed the theoretical implications of this reformulation within the framework of Marxism as a critical theory of society for the agrarian/peasant question conceptualization.

The conclusions that derive from the reformulation of development as capitalist development in relation to the post-developmental critique have been formulated as follows: (1) the problems of developmentalist rationality arise not from a supposedly Western/Euro-Atlantic rationality and/or episteme, but from the irrational rationality and/or objective irrationality of capitalism; (2) the "hidden agenda" of development has not been "Westernization" as post-developmental critics argue, but it has been capitalization and this agenda has never been hidden; (3) the intolerance of development to "other subjectivities and doings" (i.e. the question of difference), and the related problematic character of the developmentalist knowledge production have their roots not in reason and/or science as such or in Western rationality, but in the alienated character of the social form of labor in capitalism; (4) development is contradictory from the outset, since its social presupposition has been the contradictory relation between capital and wage labor; and, hence, finally (5) the task of "slaying the

development monster” cannot be accomplished unless the capital wage-labor relation is targeted, which simply means that the search for “alternatives to development” outside of development, can do nothing more than the reproduction of the ‘monster’ itself.

Based on these theoretical insights provided by Marxism as a critical theory of society, in the fourth chapter, I have argued that reformulating the agrarian/peasant question as the agrifood question of capital on the basis of a conception of capitalism itself as a food regime can provide us a way out of the impasse of the agrarian/peasant question literature. This reformulation can also be seen as a product of the thinking process on the theoretical implications of the neoliberal era for the capitalist agrifood system and the contemporary form of the agrarian/peasant question through a critical analysis of the divide between political economic and post-developmental understandings. Although this reformulation can be seen as a product of the neoliberal era, as it is discussed in the fourth chapter, reformulation of capitalism itself as a food regime and/or the concept of food regime as capitalist food regime is also an attempt to dissociate the concept of food regime from its current usages as a concept and a tool for periodization. In this regard, the neoliberal restructuring of agrifood relations is conceived here not as a qualitatively different stage in the trajectory of agrifood relations, but as a difference in unity within the movement of the contradictions of capitalism. In other words, the neoliberal/corporate food regime is conceptualized in this study as discontinuity only in and through the continuity of the contradictions of the capitalist food regime. Within this framework, I have argued that the widely identified and debated contemporary trends and tendencies characterizing capitalist agrifood relations should be seen as the processes of penetration of capital to agrifood relations within the capitalist food regime.

I have pointed out the main characteristic features of the capitalist food regime at two inter-related levels: (1) primitive accumulation understood not only as a historical process in the social constitution of capitalism, but also as the mode of existence of capital as a social relation and as the principle mechanism and strategy in its reproduction; (2) the dissociation of the ties between rurality, agriculture and food both

in theoretical-analytical and social-historical terms, particularly through the food industry, corporate farming and the contemporary developments in the technologies of agrifood production like substitution, biotechnology, and digitalization.

In its broadest sense, primitive accumulation is understood in this study as the name of the reduction process of human subjectivities and social relations (including human-nonhuman relations) to value and surplus-value production. It is important to note that this process, in addition to the transformation of human labor into labor-power that is commoditized in the wage form, includes subordination and subsumption of non-capitalist and non-commodity relations and spheres to the valorization process of capital. I have argued that agrifood relations and production, whose organic and living nature have always posed significant problems to capital that privileges the dead over the living, should also be conceived within this understanding of primitive accumulation. In this regard, the neoliberal reorganization of agrifood relations has been a significant part of this primitive accumulation, which is nothing but the constitution of alienated labor in the sphere of agrifood production. Within this framework, I have pointed out the following aspects of the neoliberal restructuring process as the contemporary forms of primitive accumulation:

- Globalization processes of agrifood relations on the basis of neoliberalism: basically, the re-regulation of international money and commodity circulations in a way to open up markets of the South to the multinational agrifood corporations.
- Neoliberal restructuring of the patterns of the relationship between the nation-state and small producers: basically through privatizations, de-functionalization of producer organizations and agricultural unions, and restructuring of agrifood policies and subsidy mechanisms in favor of penetration of capital to agrifood relations.
- The emergence of a new international division of labor: in which, on the basis of cheap labor and cheap nature, the global South has shifted its crop design towards labor intensive products like fresh fruit and vegetables.



- Privatization processes in agricultural research.
- Intensification of commodification processes in relation to seeds and genetic materials, particularly in the form of intellectual property rights – which, in addition to the technological developments mentioned below, has significant implications in terms of the (previously) organic (i.e., nature-dependent) character of agriculture and food.
- The increasing financialization of agrifood relations, which was especially reflected in the rapid increase of food prices in 2008.
- The expansion of the processes of contract farming.
- The increasing role of women labor in agriculture, in parallel to the diversification processes of household labor towards non-agricultural income (i.e. “feminization of agriculture”).

In parallel to those processes we have witnessed significant developments in relation to the dissociation of the social and historical as well as the conceptual and analytical ties among rurality, agriculture and food. In this regard, I have pointed out the following processes as part of this aspect of the capitalist food regime, *modus operandi* of which is the separation of food from agriculture and rurality in social, ecological, cultural, political and economic terms:

- The rise of transnational agro-input and agri-food corporations, and their increasing hegemony over the upstream (e.g., provision of machinery and other inputs) and downstream (e.g., processing, packaging, circulation, marketing, and consumption processes) relations of agricultural production.
- The changing technological infrastructure of agrifood production: particularly through the developments in areas such as technologies of transportation and storage, biotechnology, substitution, and the recent developments in terms of digitalization of agriculture (e.g., “smart agriculture”).
- The development of super/hyper-markets as significant actors in the agrifood system, and thereby the increasing role of commercial capital over the production and consumption relations of food.

- The changing food culture in line with the capital accumulation processes.

The implication of such an understanding of capitalist food regime with its two defining features mentioned above, I think, is the need to reformulate the theoretical as well as the political content of the agrarian/peasant question on the basis of *class formation* through *class struggle*, which simply means an understanding of class as *class in struggle*. On this ground, contrary to the traditional/orthodox Marxist accounts of agrarian political economy that conceived the matter mainly in terms of class alliance between supposedly already existing and constituted classes on the basis of property relations, I have argued that the issue at hand should be seen rather as class formation within the context of class struggle. Within this framework, this study claims the following: peasants should be seen as a political subject emerged *in and against* the capitalist food regime and this process especially became apparent in the neoliberal era.

Although, this emphasis on the political subjectivity of peasantry appears similar to the post-developmental understandings, I have argued that reformulation of the agrarian/peasant question on the basis of concepts like capitalist food regime, primitive accumulation and class formation/struggle is a radical critique not only of political economic but also of post-developmental understandings. Although post-developmental approaches also emphasize the political character of peasantry, contrary to them, at the center of this politicization, according to this study, has been the processes of direct penetration of capital to agrifood relations, which have been the forms of reduction of other subjectivities and doings to value and surplus value production. To put it differently, I have argued that the political character and subjectivity of peasants cannot be based on their supposedly already existing cultural and/or ethical traits that are assumed to be arising from some unique internal qualities with respect to the power-knowledge nexus that externally surrounds them. Contrary to such an understanding, I have claimed that the political character of peasantry emerges in and against the capitalist food regime, and this simply implies that there is nothing romantic and/or old about the class formation processes of peasants.

As it is pointed out in the fourth chapter, I think that there are two possible major contributions of this reformulation of capitalism itself as a food regime that is achieved mainly through the analysis of the divide between political economic and post-developmental understandings of the agrarian/peasant question within the context of neoliberal restructuring of agrifood relations. The first is a theoretical and analytical one. By reformulating the agrarian/peasant question as the agrifood question of capital through situating the debate within the context of capitalist food regime and class struggle/formation, this study, on the one hand, argues against the post-developmental approaches that class analysis is still the central matter in theoretical and analytical terms. On the other hand, contrary to the political economic approaches, this study argues that the differentiation process of peasants on the basis of petty commodity production relations is not simply a process of the elimination of peasantry, which renders the concept of peasant anachronistic both in analytical and social terms; but rather it is also the process of their class formation.

The critical point here is that class in this study is understood mainly as a concept of contradiction rather than a simple tool for classification on the basis of property relations. To put it differently, on the one hand, I argue that the political character of peasantry has nothing to do with some unique and/or distinguished qualities of which peasants are assumed to be the historical carriers as it is usually understood in post-developmental accounts; and on the other hand, I argue, peasants are not predestined to disappear in the process of differentiation as it is usually understood in political economic accounts. Peasants neither constitute an eternal class, nor do they constitute a social category that can never become a class. In that sense, since the class formation process of peasants cannot be assumed on an *a priori* ground, and thereby since it requires detailed concrete analysis based on the new insights that emerge out of this discussion, this study has the potential to open up new discussions and new research areas and questions by bringing the strengths of both post-developmental and political economic understandings together into a new framework.

In close connection to this point, the second possible contribution of this framework is related to the contemporary politics of agrifood relations. The divide between post-

developmentalist and political economic approaches in the related literature is reflected at the level of politics as a divide between *moral/ethical/cultural* (i.e., post-developmental) critique of capitalist agrifood relations on the one hand, and *objective/structural/scientific* (i.e., political economic) critique on the other. While in the former case, the question of subjectivity and agency is conceived predominantly on moral/ethical and cultural grounds and thereby searched mainly *outside* of capitalist social relations, in the latter case the question of subjectivity and agency loses its political content in the never-ending process of differentiation *inside* of capitalist social relations. On this ground, while the neglect of the centrality of capitalist social relations results in, for post-developmental approaches, a framework that is analytically weak but politically powerful, the way capitalist social relations are understood in political economic approaches results in an analytically powerful but politically impotent framework. The reformulation of the agrarian/peasant question that is provided throughout the previous chapters on the basis of Marxism understood as a critical theory of society has arguably the potential to provide a framework that is a moral and an objective critique of the capitalist food regime at one and the same time.

Thus far I have summarized the main arguments of this study formulated in the previous chapters with a particular focus on their possible contributions to the related literatures and debates. I would like to end this chapter with a brief elaboration on the limitations of the study. The first limitation is related to the development debate. As it is mentioned in the third chapter the development debate is considered here in accordance with the divide characterizing the contemporary agrarian/peasant question literature between political economic and post-developmental understandings. In this regard, the scope and the content of the discussion on the concept of development have been limited to the central problematic of this study. That is to say a detailed and comparative analysis of critical approaches on development, which vary significantly among themselves, are not elaborated here.

Moreover, since the focus of this study has been the post-developmental turn, political economic understandings of development and underdevelopment have been

analyzed throughout the study particularly in relation to their post-developmental critiques. It should also be noted that rather than a detailed analysis of post-developmentalism in terms of its intellectual and political sources, and its broader scope, the discussion has been focused on its characteristic features that have been influential on the post-developmental formulations of the agrarian/peasant question. With respect to this point, one of the most significant limitations of this study has been the insufficient consideration of feminist approaches, which, arguably, have played a pioneering role in the critiques of development as a question of the relationship between knowledge and power.

The second major limitation of this study is related to the agrarian/peasant question debate. The classical period of the agrarian/peasant question that is characterized mainly by the works of Marx, Engels, Kautsky, Lenin and Chayanov are not analyzed here. There is the need to reconsider those classical works with the help of the theoretical insights provided by this study on the basis of the reformulation of the agrarian/peasant question within the framework of Marxism as a critical theory of society. Moreover, given the central problematic and the scope of the study, I did not elaborate on the differentiations that are significant in theoretical terms within agrarian political economy and post-developmental understandings.

Finally, although a theoretical framework has been tried to be developed with regards to the capitalist food regime and its agrifood question on the basis of class struggle/formation, the conceptual and analytical tools of class formation processes of peasants should be developed through detailed concrete analysis on the basis of the struggles against capitalist agrifood relations as well as through further studies on the tendencies and characteristic features of the capitalist food regime. I believe and hope that the framework developed throughout the study and its main arguments have the capacity to overcome these limitations in further studies.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: CURRICULUM VITAE

#### PERSONAL

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#### ACADEMIC AND EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

- 2018** **Ph.D.**, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University (Thesis Title: *Capitalist Food Regime and the Agrifood Problem: A Critique of Political Economic and Post-Developmentalist Understandings of the Agrarian/Peasant Question*, Supervisor: Professor Mehmet C. Ecevit).
- 2014 – 2015** **Visiting Non-Degree PhD Student**, Department of Development Sociology, Cornell University, Supervisor: Professor Philip D. McMichael.
- 2008** **M.Sc.**, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University (Thesis Title: *Globalization*,

*Transnationalization, and Imperialism: Evaluation of Sociology of Agriculture and Food in the Case of Turkey*, Supervisor: Professor Mehmet C. Ecevit).

**2004** **B.Sc.**, Department of Business Administration, Middle East Technical University.

**2004** **Minor** in History of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Middle East Technical University.

### **AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION**

- Social Theory, Development Studies
- Rural Sociology, Sociology of Food and Agriculture
- Social Classes and Social Movements, Political Economy

### **EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

**2016 – 2017** **Research Assistant**, Department of Sociology, Yüzüncü Yıl University, Van, Turkey

**2006 – 2016** **Research Assistant**, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

**2014** **Field Researcher**, Development Workshop Cooperative, Ankara, Turkey.

**2012** **Field Researcher**, Development Workshop Cooperative, Ankara, Turkey.

**2011** **Field Researcher**, Development Workshop Cooperative, Ankara, Turkey.

**2006** **Field Researcher**, Department of Economics, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

- 2017** **Teaching Assistant**, Course: SOC 204 Rural Sociology, Lecturer: Professor Ayşe Gündüz Hoşgör, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University.
- 2006 – 2014** **Teaching Assistant**, Course: SOC 204 Rural Sociology, Lecturer: Professor Mehmet C. Ecevit, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University.
- 2009 – 2011** **Teaching Assistant**, Course: SOC 631 Current Issues in Social Theory, Lecturer: Professor Mehmet C. Ecevit, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University.
- 2006 – 2008** **Teaching Assistant**, Course: SOC 131 Introduction to Anthropology, Lecturer: Assistant Professor Aykan Erdemir, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University.

## **RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

- 2014 – 2016** **Project Assistant**, “Contemporary Developments in Social Theory: The Case of Feminist Standpoint Theory”, Project Coordinator: Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ecevit, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University.
- 2014** **Field Research Team Member**, “Fundamental Research on Seasonal Agricultural Workers, Children of Seasonal Agricultural Workers, Labor Contractors and Land Owners in Hazelnut Production in Western Blacksea Region”, Project Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Kuvvet Lordoğlu, Project Coordinator: Ertan Karabıyık, Institution: Development Workshop.
- 2012 – 2013** **Project Assistant**, “The Social Character of Capitalism”, Project Coordinator: Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ecevit, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University.

- 2012** **Field Research Team Member**, “Policy interventions in relation to children (6-14 age group) effected by the seasonal agricultural migration”, Project Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ayşe Gündüz Hoşgör, Project Coordinator: Ertan Karabıyık, Institution: Development Workshop.
- 2011** **Field Research Team Member**, “NABUCCO Gas Pipeline Project Ankara-Ardahan Section Social Baseline Study”, Financed by DOKAY Environmental Engineering and Consulting Ltd. Co., and conducted by Development Workshop Cooperative.
- 2008 – 2010** **Project Assistant**, “Voyage to Academy: The Development of Sociology in Turkey”, Project Coordinator: Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ecevit Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University.
- 2006 – 2008** **Project Assistant**, “Agrifood Workshop”, Project Coordinator: Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ecevit, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University.
- 2006** **Field Research Team Member**, “Informal Employment in the Process of Trade Liberalization”, Coordinator: Assist. Prof. Dr. Dürdane Şirin Saraçoğlu, Department of Economics, Middle East Technical University.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS**

- 2014 – 2015** **Research Fellowship**, The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBİTAK), International Research Fellowship Programme (2214-A).

## **PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENTS**

- Since March 2018 Middle East Technical University Alumni Organization
- Since February 2017 Sociological Association
- Since October 2016 Rural Research Network



## **PUBLICATIONS (IN TURKISH)**

### **Chapters in Edited Volumes**

- 2017** “From Rural Sociology to Sociology of Food and Agriculture: Everything has changed! Everything has remained the same!”, in Aynur Özügürlü *et. al* (eds), *Akademide Yolculuk: Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ecevit’e Armağan*, Ankara: Notabene Yayınları, pp. 331-361.
- 2016** “Child, are you out of your mind?: Neoliberalism, Devaluation and Anti-HES Movements, The Case of Fındıklı” (co-authored with Zeynep Ceren Eren; in Sinan Erensu, Erdem Evrem and Cemil Aksu (eds.), *Sudan Sebepler*, İletişim Publications, pp. 313-338.
- 2011** “Capitalism, Underdevelopment, and Globalization: Agrarian Classes I”, in Mehmet C. Ecevit and Fatime Güneş (eds.) *Toplumsal Tabakalaşma ve Eşitsizlik (Social Stratification and Inequality)*, Eskişehir: Anadolu University Press, pp. 44-68.
- 2011** “Capitalism, Underdevelopment, and Globalization: Agrarian Classes II”, in Mehmet C. Ecevit and Fatime Güneş (eds.) *Toplumsal Tabakalaşma ve Eşitsizlik (Social Stratification and Inequality)*, Eskişehir: Anadolu University Press, pp. 70-96.
- 2010** “The Relationship between Petty Commodity Production and Landownership in Contemporary Capitalist Agriculture” (co-authored with Kübra Gökdemir), Sonay Bayramoğlu Özügürlü (ed.), *Toprak Mülkiyeti Sempozyum Bildirileri (Landownership Symposium Papers)*, Ankara: Memleket Press, pp. 188-203.
- 2007** “Conceptualization of State in Sociology of Agriculture and Food: Transnational State vs. National State” (co-authored with Aynur Özügürlü), in TMMOB Ziraat Mühendisleri Odası, *Seçim Sürecinde Tarım Sektörü (Agricultural Sector in the Election Period)*, Ankara: TMMOB Press, pp. 99-104.

### **Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles**

- 2017** “Commoditization and Globalization of Food”, *Çalışma Ortamı*, 154: 25-26.

- 2009** “From Rural Sociology to Sociology of Agriculture and Food: Some Considerations on Relations between Agriculture, Food, and Peasantry” (co-authored with Mehmet C. Ecevit and Nadide Karkıner), *Mülkiye*, No. 263, pp. 41-62.

### **Other Journal Articles**

- 2017** “The Labour of the Rural”, (co-authored with Elif Uyar and Zeynep Ceren Eren) *Ayrıntı*, Vol. 20, pp. 36-45.
- 2009** “Seasonal Agricultural Workers: Forced Members of Labor Intensive Agricultural Production” (co-authored with Özgür Çetinkaya), *doğudan*, No. 12, pp. 48-65.

### **CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

#### **International**

- 2016** “The Development of Sociology in Turkey: Some Reflections on the Century-Long Experience”, *International Workshop: Learning Across the South, The Past and Future of Sociology in Turkey and South Africa*, 7-9 December, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey.
- 2012** “Local Resistance as a Global Challenge: The Case of Anti-HES Struggle and Water Right in Turkey” (with Zeynep Ceren Eren), *XIII World Congress of Rural Sociology*, International Rural Sociology Association, 29 July – 4 August, Lisbon, Portugal.
- 2010** “Transformation of Turkish Agricultural Relations in Turkey after 1980: The Case of Çukurova” (with Özgür Çetinkaya and Zeynep Ceren Eren), *XVII ISA World Congress of Sociology*, 11-17 July, Gothenburg, Sweden.

#### **National (in Turkish)**

- 2018** “Where is rural? What is Rurality? The Debates on Transition from Rural Sociology to Sociology of Agriculture and Food”, Rural Research Network, *Rural Knowledge: Differentiations, Experiences and New Searches in Rural Knowledge Workshop*, 28 April, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

- 2017** “The Post-Developmentalist Turn in the Agrarian/Peasant Question Debate: The Rise and Contours of Critical Agrifood Studies”, Turkish Social Sciences Association (TSBD), *15th National Social Science Congress*, 29 November – 1 December, METU, Ankara, Turkey.
- 2016** “From Peasant Studies to Critical Agrifood Studies: A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Agrarian/Peasant Question Debates, *Rural Research Network: Symposium on New Perspectives in Rural Studies*, 8 October, Boğaziçi University, İstanbul.
- 2009** “The Relationship between Petty Commodity Production and Landownership in Contemporary Capitalist Agriculture” (with Kübra Gökdemir), *Toprak Mülkiyeti Sempozyumu*, 17-19 December, Ankara, Turkey.
- 2007** “Conceptualization of State in Sociology of Agriculture and Food: Transnational State vs. National State” (with Aynur Özügürü), *Tarım Haftası 2007: Seçim Sürecinde Tarım Sektörü Sempozyumu*, TMMOB, 11-12 January, Ankara, Turkey.

## **EDITORIAL EXPERIENCE**

**2017** **Co-Editor**, *Akademide Yolculuk: Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ecevit’e Armağan*, Ankara: Notabene Yayınları.

**2007-2010** **Editorial Board Member**, *doğudan*,

(*doğudan – perspectives from the east* – was a critical bimonthly Turkish journal published between the period of 2007-2010 by a collective then-named *East Conference*. The articles published in *doğudan* were mainly aiming to problematize both the anti-democratic social relations in the Middle Eastern region and also the Euro-centric understandings regarding Middle Eastern societies)

## **LANGUAGE SKILLS**

**Turkish** Mother Language

**English** Fluent

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## APPENDIX B: TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

### KAPİTALİST GIDA REJİMİ VE TARIM-GIDA SORUNU: TARIM/KYL SORUNUNDA EKONOMİ-POLİTİK VE POST- KALKINMACI YAKLAŞIMLARIN BİR ELEŞTİRİSİ

Tarım/kyl sorununun gncel biimine ynelik kavramsal bir deęerlendirme olan bu alıřma, ilgili yaklařımların ve tartıřmaların sosyal kuramın geniř kapsamı ierisindeki konumları bakımından eleřtirel bir analizini amalamaktadır. Tarım/kyl sorunu ile alıřma boyunca kastedilen en geniř anlamıyla řudur: kapitalizme geiř ve kapitalizmin toplumsal karakterine ynelik tartıřmalar ile kapitalizm karřıtı mcadeleler ierisindeki yeri ve nemi baęlamında, tarım-gıda iliřkilerinin genel olarak kapitalist geliřmeden farklılařan toplumsal, politik, ekolojik, kltrel ve ekonomik zgnlkleri ve esas olarak da bu zgnlklerin kapitalizm zmlmeleri baęlamındaki kuramsal sonuları.

Bu geniř kapsam ierisinde, 19. Yzyıl sonu ve 20. Yzyıl bařlarındaki klasik tarım/kyl sorunu tartıřmaları (Marx, Engels, Kautsky ve Lenin) dıřarıda tutulacak olursa, ilgili literatrde iki ana tarihsel ve kuramsal uęraktan bahsetmek mmkndr. Bunlardan ilki 1960'ların sonlarından 1980'lerin sonlarına kadar eleřtirel evrelere hâkim olan *kyllk alıřmaları* ve bu kapsamda deęerlendirebileceęimizi dřndęm *kk meta retimi* tartıřmalarıdır. Geliřme/kalkınma ve az-geliřmiřlik tartıřmaları ierisinde řekillenen kyllk alıřmalarını ve kk meta retimi (KM) kavramsallařtırmasını, tarım-kır-gıda iliřkilerinin anaakım sosyoloji ve kır sosyolojisi ile karřılařtırıldıęında nemli bir kırılma olarak grmenin olanaęı bu literatrn gndeme getirdięi sorunsallardır. Genel olarak ifade edecek olursak, kyllk alıřmaları ve KM tartıřmaları, tarım-gıda iliřkilerini kapitalist geliřme baęlamına yerleřtirerek esas olarak iki ana sorunsalı gndeme getirmiřtir: tarımsal iliřkiler ve

yapıların kapitalist karakteri ve buna paralel olarak da kapitalizmin kendisinin toplumsal karakteri.

İkinci ana tarihsel ve kuramsal uğrak ise tarım-gıda ilişkilerinin neoliberalizm temelinde yeniden şekillendiği bağlamda ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu bağlamda bu çalışma, 1980'lerin sonlarından bugüne uzanan süreçte tarım-gıda bilgisinde gözlenen çeşitlenmelerin ve farklılaşmaların *eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmaları*nın yükselişi olarak tariflenebileceğini ve eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarının, tarım-köylü sorunu kavramsallaştırmaları bakımından ikinci bir tarihsel kırılma anı olarak işaretlenebileceğini iddia etmektedir. Eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarının kritik kuramsal müdahalesi, tarım-gıda ilişkilerinin analizini kapitalist-modernite bağlamına yerleştirerek tartışmayı ekonomi-politik alanından bilgi ve siyaset ilişkisi bağlamına taşıması olmuştur. Köylülük çalışmalarından eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarına doğru yaşanan bu geçişin sosyal kuram bağlamında ve tarım/köylü sorunu odağında incelenmesi bu çalışmanın geniş kapsamını ve ilgili literatürünü oluşturmaktadır.

Bu kapsamda çalışmanın temel iddialarından bir diğeri ise şudur: eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarını, tarım/köylü sorunu kavramsallaştırması bakımından köylülük çalışmaları ile kıyaslandığında ikinci bir kırılma anı olarak işaretlememizi olanaklı kılan, bu çalışmalara rengini veren kuramsal yönelim olarak post-kalkınmacılıktır. Çalışmanın giriş ve sonuç kısımlarının yanı sıra üç ana bölümü boyunca takip ettiğim temel sorunsal da tarım/köylü sorunu formülasyonlarında gözlenen post-kalkınmacı dönüşle alakalıdır. Tarım/köylü sorunu alanındaki post-kalkınmacı dönüş güncel literatürde ekonomi-politik ve post-kalkınmacı yaklaşımlar arasındaki bir yarılma olarak da görülebilir. Ekonomi-politik ve post-yaklaşımlar arasında gözlenen ve *tarihsel ve entelektüel bağlam*, öne çıkan temel *kuramsal varsayımlar*, *metodolojik stratejiler*, *sorunsallar* ve *politik önermeler* düzeylerinde izini sürebileceğimiz bu yarılmanın kuramsal analizi çalışmanın temel sorunsalını oluşturmaktadır.

Tarım/köylü sorunu odağında gözlenen ekonomi-politik ve post-kalkınmacı yaklaşımlar arasındaki kuramsal yarılmaya ilişkin tezin temel önermesi ise şu şekilde ifade edilebilir: Ekonomi-politik temelli geleneksel Marksist yaklaşımlar (bir siyasal

iktisat biçimi olarak Marksizm) kapitalist üretim biçiminin karakteristik özelliklerini ele alış biçimlerine bağlı olarak tarım-gıda ilişkilerinin analizini ve alternatif arayışlarımızı sınırlandırırken, post-kalkıncı yaklaşımlar ise kapitalist üretim biçimini ve ona has toplumsal çelişkileri analizlerinde ikincilleştirdikleri oranda tarım-gıda ilişkilerine yönelik anlayışımızı ve alternatif arayışlarımızı sınırlandırmaktadır. Diğer bir ifade ile, tarım/köylü sorunu tartışmalarında bahsi geçen kuramsal yarıma, ilgili literatür bakımından kuramsal ve politik bir açmaz olarak kendisini göstermektedir. Marksizmi, ekonomi-politik alanına indirgeyen yaklaşımlara karşı, eleştirel bir toplum çözümlemesi olarak ele alan bu çalışma, bu çerçevede içerisinde kapitalizmin kendisini bir gıda rejimi olarak kavramsallaştırmayı hedeflemekte ve bu yolla ekonomi-politik ve post-kalkıncı yaklaşımların güçlü yanlarını bir araya getirerek bu açmazı aşabileceğimizi savunmaktadır. Bu çerçevede, takip eden alt başlıklarda detaylandırılacak olan bu tez, köylülüğün, tarım-gıda ilişkilerinde gözlenen neoliberal yeniden yapılandırma süreçleri bağlamında, kapitalist gıda ilişkileri içerisinde ve ona karşı olarak şekillenen politik özneleşme sürecini sınıf oluşumu temelinde kavramsallaştırılmayı önermektedir.

### **Köylülük Çalışmaları ve Küçük Meta Üretimi Kavramsallaştırması Bağlamında Tarım/Köylü Sorunu<sup>87</sup>**

Tarım, kır ve gıda ilişkilerinin analizine yönelik köylülük çalışmaları ve küçük meta üretimi ile birlikte gelen müdahale birkaç açıdan dikkate değerdir. Birincisi, 1960'ların sonlarından 1980'lerin ilk yarısına kadar tarım/kır çözümlemelerine temel kuramsal yönelimini vermiş olan “azgelişmişlik” tartışmaları zemininde yükselen köylülük çalışmaları ve KMÜ sorunsalı, 20. yüzyılın ilk yarısında Kuzey Amerika ve Avrupa’da kurumsallaşmış olan geleneksel kır sosyolojisinin gelişim çizgisi bakımından bir kırılma anına işaret eder (cf., Buttel, 2001). Bu iddianın temel dayanağı *kır-kent*, *tarım-sanayi*, *doğa-kültür*, *geleneksel-modern*, *azgelişmiş-gelişmiş* gibi ikiliklerin özcü eğilimler temelinde analiz edilmesine bu tartışmalar içinden yöneltilen eleştirilerdir

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<sup>87</sup> Burada ve takip eden alt başlıkta yer verilen görüşleri tez yazım sürecinde teze ilişkin olarak çeşitli fırsatlar ve vesileler aracılığıyla tartışma imkânı bulduğumu belirtmeliyim (Bakınız: Büke, 2017a). Ayrıca bakınız: Büke (2016, 2017b, 2018).

(cf., Buttel ve Newby, 1980; Aydın, 1986a, 1986b). Bu açıdan, tarım/kır çözümlemelerine KMÜ sorunsalı odağında gelen müdahale, kır sosyolojisinin yanı sıra, *ortodoks-modernite temelli*<sup>88</sup> klasik sosyolojinin gelişim süreci bakımından da önemlidir.

Sosyoloji disiplinin kurucu tartışmaları, kuramsal/politik pozisyon alışlara bağlı olarak *sanayi toplumuna geçiş, modernleşme, kapitalizme geçiş* gibi farklı biçimlerde kavramsallaştırılan, kent ve sanayi odaklı toplumsal ilişkilerin gelişimi etrafında şekillenmiştir (Giddens, 2012). Bu tartışmalarda, gerek tarımsal/kırsal ilişkilerin kendisi gerekse de bu ilişkilerin sanayi/kent odaklı toplumsal yapıların gelişimindeki yeri ve önemi marjinal bir yer tutmuştur. Kapitalizme geçişle birlikte, özellikle erken kapitalistleşen (‘gelişmiş’) ülkelerde tarımla uğraşan kırsal nüfusun yerini büyük oranda sanayi ve hizmetler sektöründe çalışan kentli bir nüfusa bıraktığı elbette bir vakıadır.<sup>89</sup> Ne var ki sorun, bu olgunun anaakım toplumsal düşünce ve sosyoloji okulları tarafından kuramsallaştırılmasında gözlenen özcü eğilimlerdir. Burada özcülüğü *kır-kent, tarım-sanayi, doğa-kültür, beden-akıl, insan olmayan-insan* gibi ayrımların birbirine dışsal ve verili ikilikler şeklinde kavranması ve esas olarak da bu ikilikler temelinde kentin kıra, sanayinin tarıma üstün tutulduğu ilerlemeci/evrimci bir tarih okuması olarak ele alıyorum. Bu çerçevede, tarımsal/kırsal ilişkiler, ‘geleneksel’ ya da feodal toplumun kalıntısı ve ‘gerilik’ işareti olarak görüldükleri oranda, anlamlı bir analiz nesnesi olmaktan çıkmış ve modern/kapitalist toplum çözümlemesinde

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<sup>88</sup> “Ortodoks modernite” kavramını Ecevit’in (2016) sosyal kuramın gelişim çizgisine yönelik yaptığı ayrımlar temelinde kullanıyorum. Buna göre, sosyal kuramın gelişim sürecinde ana kuramsal uğraklar şunlardır: *ortodoks modernite, güncel/çağdaş modernite* (sosyal kuramın modernist varsayımlarının içerden eleştirisi, esas olarak da Marksizm ve Feminizm okulları), *postmodernite* (modernitenin reddi) ve modernite-postmodernite ayrımının ötesine geçme çabası olarak *ilişkisel sosyoloji* (Ecevit, 2016). Bu uğraklar içerisinde *ortodoks modernite* kavramını, Ecevit (2016), rasyonalite, özcülük, belirlemecilik, evrenselcilik, indirgemecilik gibi kuramsal varsayımlar temelinde hareket eden yaklaşımların şemsiye ismi olarak kullanmaktadır. Sosyal kuramın gelişimine ilişkin bu yorum bağlamında, çalışmamın genel kuramsal çerçevesi ise, modernite temelli yaklaşımların içeriden eleştirisinin ana okullarından birisi olan Marksizmin güncel tartışmaları ekseninde konumlanmaktadır.

<sup>89</sup> Dünya ölçeğinde bakılacak olursa, kentli nüfus kır nüfusunu ilk defa 2007 gibi oldukça yeni bir tarihte geçebilmiştir (United Nations, 2014). 2016 yılı itibariyle kentli nüfusun toplam nüfusa oranı yüzde 54,5 olarak gerçekleşirken bu oranın 2030 yılında yüzde 60 olacağı tahmin edilmektedir (United Nations, 2016).



işgal ettikleri konum itibarıyla de marjinalleşmiştir (cf., Smith, 2011: 16-17; Federici, 2004; Buttel ve Newby, 1980).

Kır sosyolojisinin kurumsallaşma sürecini biçimlendiren temel unsurlardan biri de, ortodoks modernite-temelli sosyolojinin evrimci/ilerlemeci tarih okumasına duyulan tepki olmuştur. Kır *toplumsal iş bölümü* ve *uzmanlaşma* gibi kavramlar temelinde, kentin tarih öncesi olarak gören sosyoloji geleneklerine karşı, kırın kentsel ilişkiler tarafından yeniden biçimlendirilen modern bir kategori olduğu savı, kır sosyolojisinin gelişiminde başat bir rol oynamıştır (Smith, 2011: 15-16). Ne var ki kırsal ilişkilerin anlamlı bir analiz nesnesi olduğuna yönelik kır sosyolojisinden gelen bu savunuyu, kır-kent ikiliğinin özcü kavranışını, bu sefer kırı önceleyerek sürdüren ve çoğunlukla da kır güzelliklerine varan bir çerçevede gerçekleştirmiş görünmektedir (Buttel ve Newby, 1980). Bu çerçevede, kent ve sanayi merkezli ilişkilerin yarattığı ‘olumsuzlukların’, kıra içsel ‘olumlu’ özellikler temelinde aşılabileceğine ve modern bir “kırsal uygarlığın” yaratılabileceğine yönelik inanç, kır sosyolojisinin politik içeriğine de yön vermiş görünmektedir (cf., Smith, 2011: 24-25).<sup>90</sup> Kır sosyolojisinin araştırma gündemlerinin de, 1970’lere kadar bu politik içerik temelinde şekillendiği söylenebilir. Bir yandan kırsal ilişkilere *özcü* bir çerçeve içerisinde atfedilen kültürel ve toplumsal özelliklerin araştırılması, öte yandan kapitalist karakteri sorgu dışı bırakılarak teknik gelişmelere indirgenen ‘modernleşme’ sürecinin kırsal alana yayılma süreçlerinin analizi, disiplinin temel araştırma konuları olmuştur (Bonanno, 1989; Buttel, 2001; Buttel ve Newby, 1980).

Bu bağlamda, 1970’lerle birlikte, kırsal ilişkilerin tarımsal üretim ve bu üretimin kapitalizm içerisindeki yeri ekseninde analiz edilmeye başlanması, kır sosyolojisinin yukarıda ana hatlarıyla belirtilen içeriğinden de bir kopuş anlamına gelmiştir. Küçük

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<sup>90</sup> Kır ve kente atfedilen ‘olumlu’ ve ‘olumsuz’ özelliklerin belirlenmesinde, Tönnies’in cemaat (gemeinschaft) ve cemiyet (gesellschaft) kavramlarını, kır ve kent ayrımını açıklamak üzere kullanan Sorokin ve Zimmerman’ın 1929 tarihli *Kır ve Kent Sosyolojisinin İlkeleri* (Principles of Rural-Urban Sociology) çalışması belirleyici bir rol oynamıştır (Buttel ve Newby, 1980: 6). Bu çerçevede kır *güzellik, düzen, basitlik, dinginlik, taban demokrasisi* gibi özellikler temelinde tanımlanırken, kente ise *çirkinlik, kaos, yorgunluk, zorunluluk ve çekişme* gibi özellikler atfedilmiştir (Buttel ve Newby, 1980: 6). Bu noktada, kır ve kente atfedilen bu özelliklerin şekillenmesinde, kapitalist ilişkilerin ‘düzenliliğine’, döneme damgasını vuran işçi sınıfı hareketlerinden ve sosyalizmden gelen tehditin rolü de ayrıca vurgulanmalıdır.

meta üretimi kavramsallaştırmasının da içinde konumlandığı, azgelişmişlik tartışmaları ile birlikte şekillenen bu kopuş, disiplin düzeyinde ifadesini, 1982 yılında Uluslararası Sosyoloji Derneği bünyesinde kurulan *Tarım Sosyolojisi* Araştırma Komitesi'nde bulmuştur (Bonanno, 1989). Kır sosyolojisinin sosyal bilimler alanındaki kuramsal gelişmelere kapalı yapısına ve yeterli açıklamalar getirilmeksizin kır kavramına *açıklayıcı* bir güç atfedilmesine yönelik eleştiriler, tarım sosyolojisine giden süreç bakımından belirleyici olmuştur (Buttel ve Newby, 1980; Buttel, 2001). *Kır* yerine *tarım* ifadesinin seçilmesi ya da tarım sosyolojisinin çoğunlukla *tarım ekonomi-politiği* ile eş anlamlı kullanılması, analizin merkezine üretim ilişkilerinin yerleşmesinin göstergesi olması bakımından da ayrıca anlamlıdır (cf., Buttel 2001).

Bu bağlamda, bir yönüyle de “modernleşme okuluna” tepki olarak gelişen tarım sosyolojisinin, kır sosyolojisinden kuram düzeyinde farklılaşan özelliklerini Bonanno (1989: ix-x) şu şekilde sıralamaktadır: (1) toplumsal bağlamdan kopuk kır kavramsallaştırmaları yerine, gıdanın üretim ve dolaşımının bütünlüğü temelinde tarım/kır kavramsallaştırması; (2) kır sosyolojisine hâkim olan mantıksal pozitivizm ve amprisizm eleştirisine odaklanarak kuramsal kaynakların Neo-Marksizm, Neo-Weberyenizm, eleştirel kuram, tarihsel sosyoloji ve bilgi sosyolojisi gibi alanlar temelinde çeşitlenmesi. Bu çerçevede, 1970’lerden 1980’lerin sonlarına kadar tarım sosyolojisinin araştırma gündemi de şu konular etrafında şekillenmiştir: gelişmiş kapitalist ülkelerin tarımsal yapıları; ulus-devlet odağında tarım politikaları; tarımsal emek; bölgesel eşitsizlikler; artan makine ve kimyasal kullanımı başta olmak üzere tarım ve teknoloji ilişkisinin sorgusuna dayalı tarımsal ekoloji (Buttel ve Newby, 1980: 15).

Disiplin düzeyinde kır sosyolojisinden tarım sosyolojisine geçiş süreci olarak görülebilecek olan 1970’leri, tartışmayı “Üçüncü Dünya” ülkelerinin tarımsal yapılarına genişleterek daha geniş bir kapsam ve politik bağlam içine yerleştiren *köylülük çalışmalarının* yükselişi olarak da görmek mümkündür (cf., Bernstein ve Byres, 2001). *Köylü ekonomisi, köylü tarımı, köylü toplumu* gibi kavramlar temelinde ‘azgelişmiş’ ülkelerin tarımsal yapılarına ve köylülük ve siyaset ilişkisine yönelen bu ilginin zemininde, 1960’lar ve 1970’lerin ilk yarısına damgasını vuran ve tabanının

büyük çoğunluğu ‘köylülerden’ oluşan ulusal kurtuluş hareketleri ve anti-emperyalist mücadeleler yer almıştır (Bernstein ve Byres, 2001: 3). Bu politik bağlam içerisinde *kapitalizme geçiş, burjuva demokrasisi koşullarında sınıf mücadelesi ve sosyalizme geçiş* gibi alanlarda ‘köylülüğün’ rolüne ilişkin klasik Marksizme, başta Maoizm olmak üzere çeşitli okullarından yöneltilen eleştiriler, köylü kavramına da yeni bir canlılık kazandırmıştır (Bernstein ve Byres, 2001: 3). Köylülük çalışmalarının yükselişinde bir diğer önemli unsur ise, az gelişmişlik tartışmalarının merkezinde yer alan kapitalist gelişme sorunu olmuştur. Kapitalist gelişmenin esas olarak nüfusun çoğunluğu ‘köylülerden’ oluşan ülkelerde güçlüklerle karşılaşarak oluştuğu ve kapitalist gelişmeden beklenenin aksine ‘köylülüğün’ bu ülkelerde varlığını sürdürüyor olması, köylü kavramına yönelik ilgiyi de arttırmıştır (Bernstein ve Byres, 2001: 1-5).<sup>91</sup> Bu temelde, ilgili yazın bakımından 1970’lerin, kapitalizm bağlamında “köylülüğün toplumsal yapısı”, “köylülük ve siyaset ilişkisi” ve “köylü tarımının doğası ve mantığı” üzerine yürütülen tartışmalarla şekillendiği söylenebilir (Bernstein ve Byres, 2001).

Burada kısaca değindiğim tarım sosyolojisi ve köylülük çalışmalarının yükselişi, kapitalist ilişkilerin bütünlüğünden soyutlanmış bir kır kavramsallaştırmasından ve kırsal ilişkilerin analizinde gözlenen özcü eğilimlerden uzaklaşma bakımından değerlidir. KMÜ tartışmaları da bu genel bağlam içerisinde gündeme gelmiştir. Ne var ki KMÜ sorunsalının çıkış noktası, tarım sosyolojisi ve köylülük çalışmalarının kır sosyolojisinde gözlenen kuramsal sorunları, *aile tarımı*, *küçük ölçekli tarım* ya da *köylü tarımı* gibi kavramlar odağında yeniden ürettiğine yönelik iddiasıdır. KMÜ kavramsallaştırmasının, bu iddianın da zemininde yatan kurucu savı ise şudur: Tarımda kapitalist gelişmeyle birlikte tarımsal üreticiler, üretim ve yeniden üretim süreçlerini metalaşma eğilimleri içerisinde gerçekleştirmeye başlamışlar ve küçük meta üreticilerine dönüşmüşlerdir (cf., Bernstein, 1986, 2009; Ecevit, 1999; Aydın, 1986a, 1986b). Ecevit’in (1999: 4) ifadesiyle, “küçük meta üretiminin üretim ilişkileri,

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<sup>91</sup> Köylü kavramına akademik düzeyde popülerlik kazandıran bir başka önemli etki ise, Eric Wolf (1966, 1969), Barrington Moore Jr. (1966) ve A.V. Chayanov (1966 [1925]) gibi isimlerin, toplum, siyaset ve tarım çözümlemelerinin merkezine köylü kavramını taşıyan çalışmalarından gelmiştir (Bernstein ve Byres, 2001: 4).

egemen kapitalist üretim tarzının üretim ilişkileri tarafından *tanımlanmaktadır*” (Ecevit, 1999: 4). Diğer bir ifadeyle, küçük meta üreticileri, her ne kadar metalaşmamış aile emeği temelinde geçimlik ve meta üretimi yapıyor olsalar da, gerek üretim gerekse de yeniden üretim süreçleri bakımından varlıklarını sürdürmeleri metalaşma örüntüleri içerisinde olanaklıdır (Ecevit, 1999). Bu açıdan, KMÜ sorunsalının özgün katkısı, ‘gelişmiş’ kapitalist ülkelerin tarımsal yapılarına odaklanan tarım sosyolojisi alanında öne çıkan *aile çiftçiliği* ile ‘azgelişmiş’ ülkelere odaklanan tartışmaların merkezinde yer alan *köylülük* kavramına getirdiği eleştiriler olarak görülebilir.

Köylü kavramına yöneltelen eleştirilerin başında kavramın anakronik özelliği gelir. Örneğin, KMÜ tartışmalarının önde gelen isimlerinden Henry Bernstein (2009: 13), köylü kavramının analitik kullanımının tarihsel olarak kapitalizm öncesi ve kapitalizme geçiş süreçleri ile sınırlandırılması gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır. Başka türlü söyleyecek olursak, KMÜ sorunsalı açısından, kapitalist toplumsal ilişkilerin analizinde köylü kavramı analitik bir değer taşımamaktadır. Köylü kavramına yöneltelen bir diğer önemli eleştiri ise, kır sosyolojisinde gözlenen özcü eğilimlerin bu kavram aracılığıyla tarım/kır çözümlemelerine yeniden taşındığına yöneliktir. Bu nokta, köylülüğe atfedilen “dayanışmacılık”, “karşılıklılık”, “(köy) topluluğunun eşitlikçiliği”, “ailenin, akrabaların, yörenin ve topluluğun yaşama biçiminin değerlerine bağlılık” gibi çeşitli normatif özelliklerde belirginlik kazanmaktadır (Bernstein ve Byres, 2001: 6; Bernstein, 2009: 12). Böylece, köylü kavramı köylülüğe atfedilen özsel bir takım özellikler temelinde genellenerek kendine has bir içsel bütünlük olarak kurulmuş olur (cf., Bernstein ve Byres, 2001: 6-7). KMÜ tartışmalarının bir diğer önemli eleştirisi de, Bernstein ve Byres’ın (2001) “köylü özcülüğü” olarak adlandırdığı bu eğilimle bağlantılıdır. Buna göre, farklı coğrafya ve toplumlarda farklı biçimlerde yaşanan tarımda kapitalist gelişme süreci, köylüleri küçük meta üreticilerine dönüştürmekle kalmaz, küçük meta üreticilerini de kendi içinde farklılaşmaya uğratar. Diğer bir ifadeyle, üretim ve yeniden üretim ilişkilerine yön veren metalaşma süreçleri, küçük meta üreticileri bakımından bir sınıfsal farklılaşma süreci olarak ifadesini bulmaktadır. Bu çerçevede, kapitalist üretim

ilişkileri tarafından yıkıma uğratılan genel bir köylüler sınıfından bahsetmek mümkün değildir (Bernstein, 2009: 13). Daha ziyade yapılması gereken, kendisi kapitalist gelişmenin ürünü olan küçük meta üreticilerinin, *kapitalist çiftçilik* ve *ücretli emek* (kır proletaryası) konumları başta olmak üzere tarımda kapitalizmin gelişimiyle birlikte uğradığı sınıfsal farklılaşmasının analizidir (Ecevit, 1999).

Sınıfsal farklılaşma vurgusu ve köylülük kavramına yönelttiği eleştirilerle bağlantılı olarak, KMÜ kavramsallaştırmasının bir diğer özgün katkısı, kapitalizm çözümlemelerine yönelttiği kuramsal sorulardır. Burada kritik nokta ise, KMÜ kavramsallaştırmasının odağında yer alan *metalaşmamış hane emeğinin* tarımsal üretim süreçlerindeki merkezi konumudur. Bilindiği üzere, Marksist kuram açısından kapitalizm kavramsallaştırmasının temelinde *ücretli emek* kategorisi yatmaktadır. Ecevit'in (2006-2014) kapitalizm tanımı bu noktada dikkate değerdir: “Kapitalizm serbest piyasa ve rekabet koşullarında metalar aracılığıyla meta üretimidir”. Bu tanımın kritik unsuru, üretilen metaların *metalar aracılığıyla üretilmesidir*. Bir başka deyişle, bu tanıma göre, nihai ürünlerin meta olarak alınıp satılması, yani ticarileşmesi, kapitalizm kavramsallaştırılması için yeterli değildir. Kapitalizmin tanımlayıcı unsuru, insanın yaratıcı çalışma kapasitesinin ücretli emek formunda metalaşarak emek gücüne dönüşmesidir.

Bu temelde, Marksist tarım/köylü sorunu tartışmalarının klasik döneminin (Marks, Engels, Lenin ve Kautsky), tarımda kapitalizmin gelişimiyle birlikte kapitalist çiftçilik ve kır proletaryası temelinde iki kutuplu bir sınıf yapısının oluşacağı öngörüsü ekseninde şekillendiğini söylemek mümkündür (Aydın, 1986a, 1986b; Ecevit, 1999). Diğer bir ifadeyle, kapitalizme geçişle birlikte tarımsal ilişkilere damgasını vuracak olan eğilim, emek gücü de dâhil olmak üzere üretim örgütlenmesinin metalaşması olarak görülmüştür. Ne var ki bu kuramsal beklenti, tarihsel süreç içerisinde hem *gerçekleşmiş* hem de *gerçekleşmemiştir* (cf., Ecevit, 1999). Tarımda kapitalist gelişme, tarımsal üretim sürecini geçimlik yapısından çıkartıp kırsal toplumsal ilişkileri kapitalist piyasalara bağlayan *metalaşma*, *ticarileşme*, *kentleşme*, *sanayileşme* ve *proleterleşme* gibi uzun erimli süreçler içerisine çekmiştir. Bu anlamıyla Marksist

kuramsal öngörü gerçekleşmiştir.<sup>92</sup> Ancak, kapitalizm kavramsallaştırmasının merkezinde yer alan ücretli emek formunun aksine, tarımsal üretim sürecine hâkim olan unsur, metalaşmamış hane emeği olarak kalmıştır.<sup>93</sup> Bu durum bizi kuramsal bir sorunla baş başa bırakmaktadır: *Kapitalizm kavramsallaştırması ücretli emek formunda metalaşmış emek üzerine kurulu ise, metalaşmamış hane emeğinin yaygın form olduğu toplumsal ilişkilerin kuramsal açıklaması nasıl yapılacaktır?* Bu kuramsal soru odağında, KMÜ analizlerinin araştırma gündemine hâkim olan konular şunlar olmuştur (Ecevit, 1999: 3-4):

- Küçük meta üretimi işletmelerinin kendi meta ve meta-dışı ilişkileriyle kapitalizm altında yeniden üretilen *varlık* koşulları; yani küçük meta üretiminin yaşama ve varlığını sürdürme ya da farklılaşma ve mülksüzleşme koşulları;
- Küçük meta üretiminde *artığın* yaratılma koşulları;
- Küçük meta üretiminin kapitalizm için ne derece *işlevsel* olduğu ve küçük meta üretimine ait artık-emeğe kapitalist ilişkiler içinde *el koymanın* farklı biçim ve koşulları;<sup>94</sup>
- Küçük meta üretimi ile kapitalist ilişkiler arasında sömürücü olmayan bir yapının var olma olasılığı (Gibbon ve Neocosmos, 1985);
- Küçük meta üretiminin kapitalist ilişkilerden bağımsız olma olasılığı (Chayanov, 1966).

Buraya kadar yürüttüğümüz tartışmayı toparlayacak olursak, hem genel olarak sosyal kuramın hem de kapitalizm analizlerinin gelişiminde 1970'lere kadar marjinal bir yer

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<sup>92</sup> Örneğin, Türkiye'de, 1920'lerde yüzde 80'ler civarında olan kır nüfusunun toplam nüfusa oranı, günümüzde yüzde 10'un altına düşmüş görünmektedir. Yalnız, burada büyükşehir sayılan illerde köyleri mahallelere dönüştüren 6360 Sayılı Büyükşehir Yasası'nın etkisi unutulmamalıdır. Yine de, bu yasanın yürürlüğe girmesinden önce de bu oran yüzde 20'ler düzeyine gerilemişti (Oral, 2013: 446).

<sup>93</sup> Tarımda küçük meta üretiminin yanı sıra, ev içi kadın emeğinin metalaşmamış karakteri ve yine çoğunlukla metalaşmamış hane emeği üzerine kurulu kent ortamındaki enformel sektör, ücretli emek üzerine kurulu kapitalizm kavramsallaştırmasına yönelik ciddi eleştirileri de beraberinde getirmiştir (Ecevit, 2006-2014).

<sup>94</sup> Bu konu odağında ortaya çıkan yaklaşımlar temel olarak şunlardır (Ecevit, 1999: 4): eşitsiz mübadele (Emmanuel, 1972; Amin, 1975); gizli ücretli emekçiler olarak küçük meta üreticileri (Banaji, 1977); sömürgeci üretim tarzı (Alavi, 1975); ücretli emek eşdeğeri olarak küçük meta üreticileri (Bernstein, 1977).

tutmuş olan tarım/kır çözümlemeleri, KMÜ sorunsalı etrafında dönen tartışmalarla birlikte daha merkezi bir yer edinmeye başlamıştır. Tarım/kır ilişkilerinin kapitalizm bağlamındaki önemi, neoliberal dönemde ivme ve derinlik kazanan metalaşma süreçleriyle birlikte başka biçimlerde daha da belirgin hale gelmiştir. Özellikle gıda ilişkilerinin 1990’lardan günümüze uzanan metalaşma süreçleriyle birlikte, tarım/kır çözümlemelerinde üretim ilişkilerini esas alan KMÜ odaklı tartışmalardan gıdanın dolaşımı odağında yürütülen tartışmalara genişleyen kapsam, ilgili yazında bir başka kırılma anı olarak değerlendirilebilir. Disipliner düzeyde 1990’ların başlarında, kır sosyolojisinden tarım ve gıda sosyolojisine geçiş olarak da görülebilecek olan bu süreç, kuramsal eğilimler, metodolojik stratejiler, araştırma gündemleri ve politik önermeler gibi farklı düzeylerde bir çeşitlenme ve farklılaşma süreci olarak yaşanmıştır (cf. Buttel, 2001).

### **Eleştirel Tarım-Gıda Çalışmalarının Yükselişi ve Tarım/Köylü Sorununda Post-Kalkınmacı Dönüş**

Tarım-gıda ilişkilerine sermaye nüfuzunun değişen biçim ve içeriğine paralel olarak, 1980’lerin sonlarından itibaren öne çıkan temel unsurlardan biri, uzunca bir süre esasen yerel ve geçimlik bir olgu olarak varlığını sürdüren gıda ilişkilerinde gözlenen metalaşma süreçleri oldu. Bu bağlamda, tarım-gıda ilişkilerinde metalaşma süreçlerine hız ve derinlik katan gelişmeler şu şekilde sıralanabilir (EBA, 2006-2008; Büke ve Gökdemir, 2010; Büke, 2016):

- Neoliberalizm temelinde şekillenen tarım-gıda ilişkilerinin küreselleşme süreçleri.
- Ulus-devlet ve küçük üreticiler arasındaki ilişki kalıplarının neoliberalizm temelinde yeniden yapılanması.
- Ucuz emek temelinde Güney ülkelerinin ağırlıklı olarak yaş meyve-sebze üretimine doğru geçiş yaptığı yeni uluslararası iş bölümünün oluşumu.

- Özellikle biyoteknoloji ve ikamecilik<sup>95</sup> alanında yaşanan gelişmelere bağlı olarak tarımsal üretim ve gıda üretiminde gözlenen değişim, dönüşüm dinamikleri.
- Tarımsal üretimin öncesini ve sonrasını takip eden süreçlerde çok-uluslu tarım-gıda şirketlerinin artan hâkimiyeti.
- Gıda kültürünün sermaye birikim süreçlerine paralel olarak değişen yapısı.
- Tarım-gıda sistemi içerisinde süper/hiper-marketler aracılığıyla ticaret sermayesinin artan önemi.
- Tarımsal araştırma süreçlerinin özelleştirilerek tarım ve gıdanın organik karakterinin özel mülkiyetin konusu haline gelmesi.
- Sözleşmeli çiftçilik süreçlerinin yaygınlaşması.
- Finansallaşma süreçleri.

Sermayenin tarım-gıda ilişkilerine nüfuz etme biçimleri olarak ortaya çıkan bu gelişmelerin insan ve çevre sağlığı, etnik ve cinsiyete dayalı toplumsal eşitsizlikler ve sınıfsal ilişkiler bakımından doğurduğu sonuçlar ise, ilgili yazındaki tartışmaların merkezine oturdu.

Gıdanın yukarıda sıralanan gelişmeler doğrultusunda metalaşma süreçleri, bir yandan tarım ve kır odaklı analizlere yönelik önemli eleştirileri beraberinde getirdi, öte yandan meta formunun “mistik özelliklerine” (Marks, 1997: 81) bürünen gıdanın kendisini de bir bilgi konusuna dönüştürdü. Örneğin, tarım-gıda sosyolojisi alanında ders kitabı niteliğindeki güncel çalışmalara bakıldığında, tartışmaların, yaşamsal ve kültürel bir öneme ve içeriğe sahip ve hemen her an yanı başımızda bulunan gıda ile aramızda giderek artan fiziksel ve zihinsel mesafenin vurgulanmasıyla başladığını görmek mümkündür (bkz. Clapp, 2012; Carolan, 2012; Koç vd, 2012). Gıdanın metalaşma süreçlerine paralel olarak artan bu mesafenin fiziksel yanı oldukça çarpıcıdır. Örneğin Clapp (2012: 2), Kuzey Amerika ve Avrupa’da tüketilen ortalama bir tabak yemeğin hazırlığı için gereken gıda ürünlerinin, nihai tüketimden önce yaklaşık 2500 kilometre

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<sup>95</sup> İkamecilik, nihai ürün olarak kullanılan tarımsal ürünlerin sanayi girdilerine dönüşmesini ve organik girdiler yerine sentetik girdilerin kullanımına geçiş sürecini ifade etmektedir (Ecevit, 2006: 2).



yol kat ettiğini belirtmektedir. Diğer bir ifadeyle, hemen her anımızda bize eşlik eden gıdanın üretim, dolaşım ve tüketim ilişkilerinde yaşanan küreselleşme süreçleri gıdayı nihai tüketicisine giderek uzak ve yabancı bir olgu haline getirmektedir. Bu bağlamda, tükettiğimiz gıdalar ile aramızdaki zihinsel mesafe de en az fiziksel olan kadar dikkat çekicidir. Tükettiğimiz gıdalar hakkında kapsamlı bir fikre sahip olmak günümüzde ciddi bir zaman ve enerji gerektirmektedir, tabii şayet tüketebilecek gelir ve koşullara sahipsek. Burada söz konusu olan, gerek üretim ve dağıtım süreçleri gerekse de ekonomik, toplumsal, kültürel, siyasal ve ekolojik sonuçları bakımından gıdayla girdiğimiz ilişkide karşı karşıya kaldığımız yabancılaşmadır. İlgili yazında tarım-gıda sosyolojisine genişleyen kapsamı ve kuramsal farklılaşmaları da söz konusu mesafeyi kapatmaya yönelik yanıt arayışları olarak değerlendirmek mümkündür.

Bu çerçevede, tarım-gıda sosyolojisinde göze çarpan temel eğilim, araştırma konuları ve ilgi alanları bakımından gıda odağında yaşanan çeşitlenmedir. Disipliner düzeyde ifade edecek olursak, 1980'lerin sonlarına kadar tarım bilimleri, beslenme ve kalkınma/gelişme iktisadı gibi alt-disiplinlerin konusu olan tarım-gıda ilişkileri, 1990'larda tarımda belirginlik kazanan neoliberalleşmeyle birlikte gıda mühendisliğinden biyoloji/genetik alanına, sağlık bilimlerinden çevre bilimine, iktisat-işletme gibi alanlardan kimyaya uzanan çok sayıda disiplinin temel tartışma alanlarından birisi haline gelmiştir (Koç vd., 2012: xii). Tarım-gıda sosyolojisi, bu alanlardaki tartışmaları da içererek, daha ziyade tarımsal üretim odağında gerçekleştirilen analizleri gıda ilişkileri ekseninde çeşitlendirerek genişletmiştir. Bu çeşitlenmeyi tematik farklılaşmalarda da görmek mümkündür. 1980'lere kadar daha ziyade besin değeri, gelir kaynağı, siyaset aracı ve gelişme sorunu olarak ele alınan tarım ve gıda ilişkileri, ekonomik ve siyasal süreçlerin yanı sıra, toplumsal kimliğin ve bedenin oluşumu, toplumsal cinsiyet inşasındaki yeri, kültürel içeriği, zevk, kaygı ve korku kaynağı olarak bireysel ve toplumsal yaşamlarımızda oynadığı roller bakımından da sorunsallaştırılmaya başlanmıştır (Koç, vd., 2012: 4-5).

Tarım-gıda sosyolojisinin ortaya çıkış sürecini, bir önceki bölümde ele aldığımız köylülük çalışmalarına benzer bir şekilde, kapitalizm çözümlemeleri bağlamında eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarının yükselişi olarak ele almak da mümkündür.

1990’ların sonlarına doğru olgunluğuna erişen güncel literatürü, barındırdığı önemli farklılıklara rağmen, *eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmaları* başlığı altında toplayabilmenin olanağı birbirleriyle ilişkili üç düzeyde tespit edilebilir.

Birincisi, bu çalışmaların anaakım çözümlemelerde gözlemlenen uzmanlaşma/şeyleşme eğilimine karşı bütüncül bir analizi merkeze alıyor olmasıdır. “Endüstriyel tarım modeli”, “tarım-gıda sistemi”, “gıda rejimi”, “meta zincirleri” gibi kavramların giderek artan önemi, bu noktaya işaret etmesi bakımından önemlidir. Eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarının ikinci karakteristik özelliği, nasıl kavramsallaştırılırsa kavramsallaştırılsın, mevcut tarım-gıda sisteminin insan sağlığı, iklimsel ve çevresel etkileri ve yarattığı toplumsal eşitsizlikler göz önünde bulundurulduğunda sürdürülemez olduğuna yönelik uzlaşısıdır. Diğer bir ifadeyle, eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarının kuramsal ve politik içeriğine yön veren temel nokta, kapitalist tarım-gıda sisteminin radikal bir eleştirisidir. İlk ikisiyle bağlantılı olarak, üçüncü karakteristik özelliği ise, tarım-gıda ilişkilerindeki problemleri teknik/teknolojik sorunlara ya da piyasa ilişkilerinin yeterince yerleşmemiş olmasına bağlayan ve anaakım (liberal) çalışmalara damgasını vuran indirgemeci eğilimlerin eleştirisi olmasıdır. Bu açıdan, eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmaları, tarım-gıda ilişkilerini “kapitalist modernite” ile ilişkisi temelinde sorunsallaştırmaya bir çağrı olarak da okunabilir.

Eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarının üzerinde yükseldiği bu üç ana eksen, 1960-1980 arası KMÜ tartışmalarını da içeren köylülük çalışmaları ile benzerlik taşır. Ne var ki bu tezin temel iddialarından birisi, eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarının yükselişinin kuramsal bir kırılma zemininde gerçekleştiğidir. Bu kırılmada etkili olan temel unsurlar ise, tarım-gıda ilişkilerinin neoliberal yeniden yapılandırılmasının yanı sıra, sosyal bilimlerde gözlenen *post-* dönüşür. Bu bölümün giriş kısmında da ifade edildiği üzere bu kırılmanın *tarihsel ve entelektüel bağlam, temel varsayımlar, metodolojik stratejiler, öne çıkan sorunsallar ve politik önermeler* bağlamında detaylı ve eleştirel bir analizi doktora çalışmamın da geniş kapsamını oluşturmaktadır.

1980'lerle birlikte belirginlik kazanan *post-* dönüşle birlikte (Waters, 1996), toplum çözümlemesine yönelik ilginin “genelden özele, bütünden tekile, tarihsel genellikten konjonktüre, belirlenimden kazaiye, belirlilikten göreliliğe, tutarlılıktan eklektizme, ilişkiselden farka, sınıf ve statüden kimliklere, olgulardan metinlere” doğru kaydığı bir vakıadır (Özügürlü, 2002: 29). Kır sosyolojisinden tarım-gıda sosyolojisine genişleyen kapsam içerisinde gözlemlenen kuramsal çeşitlenme ve farklılaşma süreci de, bu kuramsal bağlam içerisinde gerçekleşmiştir. Burada kritik nokta ise, muhtemelen tarım/kır çözümlemelerinde Marksizmin etkisinin, kent ve sanayi odaklı sınıf tartışmalarının aksine 1970'ler ve 1980'ler gibi geç bir tarihte gelmiş olması nedeniyle, *post-* dönüşün sınıf tartışmalarında gözlenen yıkıcı etkisinin, tarım/kır tartışmalarında aynı ölçüde geçerli olmamasıdır. Örneğin, alanın önde gelen isimlerinden Frederick H. Buttel (2001: 176) bu konuya ilişkin şu tespiti yapmaktadır: *"tarım sosyolojisi ve ekonomi-politiği, 1990'lardaki kalkınma (gelişme) sosyolojisinin aksine, postmodernitenin kalkınma çalışmalarında (Arturo Escobar ve Wolfgang Sachs'la birlikte anılan postmodernist post-kalkınmacılık gibi) ve Avrupa çevre sosyolojisinin bazı kesimlerinde (örneğin bkz. Eder, 1996; MacNaghten and Urry 1998) yaygınlaşan daha siyasetleştirici biçimlerinden kaçınabilmiştir"*.

Bu bağlamda, ilgili yazın bakımından 1990'ların daha ziyade tarım-gıda ilişkilerinde yaşanan neoliberalleşme süreçlerinin küreselleşme tartışmaları ekseninde sorunsallaştırılması ile şekillendiği söylenebilir.<sup>96</sup> Ne var ki bu süreç, her ne kadar tarım sosyolojisi ve ekonomi-politiği postmodernitenin siyasetleştirici biçimlerinden kaçınabilmiş olsa da, KMÜ sorunsalının merkezinde yer alan üretim ilişkileri analizinden erken bir uzaklaşma anlamına gelmiştir. Bu noktada, gıda ilişkileri odağında yeniden şekillenen ilgili yazının KMÜ tartışmalarından farklılaşan özelliklerini Ecevit (2006: 341-342) şu şekilde sıralamaktadır: “(a) devletle ilgili politikalar yerine sermaye birikiminin ulus-ötesi karakteri, (b) tarım politikaları yerine tarım-gıda politikaları; (c) tarımsal ilişkilerin sürmesi yerine tarımın sanayileşmesi; (d) üretim ilişkileri yerine ürün işleme, pazarlama ve dağıtım” süreçleri (Ecevit, 2006:

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<sup>96</sup> Tarım-gıda sosyolojisinin küreselleşme tartışmaları içerisindeki konumunun eleştirel bir incelemesi için bkz. Büke (2008).

341-342). Bu açıdan, 1980’lerin sonlarından 2000’lerin ortalarına kadar uzanan dönemde, gıdanın dolaşımı odağında yürütülen tartışmalarla 1980’lerin ortalarına kadar KMÜ sorunsalı odağında yürütülen tarım/köylü sorunu tartışmaları arasında önemli bir kuramsal kopukluk olduğu söylenebilir (bkz. Büke, 2008).

2000’li yılların ikinci yarısından itibaren ise tarım/köylü sorununa yönelik canlanan bir ilgiden bahsetmek mümkündür.<sup>97</sup> Bu noktada, kapitalist tarım-gıda sistemine karşı başta *La Via Campesina* (“Köylü Yolu”) hareketi olmak üzere tarımsal üreticilerden gelen tepkiler, bir yandan köylü kavramını yeniden gündeme taşıırken, diğer yandan kapitalizme alternatif arayışına kuramsal alanda da yeni bir ivme kazandırmıştır. Bu çerçevede, 1980’lerin ortalarına kadar, kapitalizmin toplumsal karakteri ve kapitalizmi aşma mücadelesi bağlamında, bir önceki bölümde ele aldığımız, köylülük çalışmalarına damgasını vuran konular yeniden ele alınmaya başlanmıştır. Ne var ki bu çalışmanın iddiası, yeniden canlanan tarım/köylü sorunu tartışmalarına hâkim kuramsal yönelimini veren temel unsurun yukarıda değindiğimiz *post-* dönüş olduğudur. Diğer bir ifadeyle, ilgili yazında, sosyal bilimlerde gözlenen *post-* dönüşün etkisi daha ziyade 2000’li yılların ortalarından itibaren tekrar canlanan tarım/köylü sorunu tartışmalarında ortaya çıkmıştır.

Modernitenin, özelde de Marksizmin radikal eleştirisi ile şekillenen *post-* dönüşün tarım-gıda tartışmalarındaki biçimi ekonomi-politik temelli çözümlemelerinin eleştirisi olarak gerçekleşmiştir. Bu bakımdan özellikle KMÜ sorunsalına yönelik temel eleştiri, sorunu kapitalist gelişmenin önündeki engellere indirgediği oranda, geçimlik tarımsal ilişkileri ve küçük meta üreticilerini bir “gerilik” unsuru olarak gören gelişmeci/kalkınmacı perspektiflerin sınırlarını aşamamış olmak şeklinde özetlenebilir. Buradan yola çıkarak, kapitalizm eleştirisi bağlamında tarım-gıda analizlerindeki güncel eğilimlere damgasını vuran kuramsal yönelimin *post-*

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<sup>97</sup> Tarım/köylü sorununa ilişkin güncel tartışmalar için bkz. Akram-Lodhi ve Kay (2010a, 2010b), Araghi (2009, 2000), Bernstein (2016, 2014), Friedmann (2016), Magdoff vd. (2000), McMichael (2016, 2014).

*kalkınmacılık* temelli yaklaşımlar olduğu iddia edilebilir.<sup>98</sup> Bir başka ifadeyle, güncel tarım/köylü sorunu tartışmalarına hâkim olan eğilimin, Marksist ekonomi-politiğe dayalı çözümlemelere önemli eleştiriler getiren ve kalkınma kavramının radikal eleştirisi temelinde yükselen yaklaşımlar olduğu söylenebilir. Bu çerçevede, eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarının köylülük çalışmaları kapsamında ve KMÜ sorunsalı odağında yürütülen tarım/kır çözümlemelerine yönelik temel eleştirileri şu şekilde özetlenebilir:

- 1980’lerin sonlarına kadar tarım/kır çözümlemelerine rengini veren ve kuramsal yönelimini esas olarak Marksizmden alan ekonomi-politik çözümlemeler, modernleşmeci yaklaşımlara itiraz temelinde yükselmiş olsa da, modernist okullara özgü kuramsal sorunlardan kurtulamamıştır. Bunun en temel göstergesi, tarım/kır çözümlemelerinin kapitalist gelişme sorunu odağında ele alınmış olmasıdır.
- Köylülük çalışmaları kapsamında küçük meta üretimi tartışmaları, analiz düzeyi ve birimi bakımından ulus-devlet ve tarım/kır çözümlemeleri ile sınırlı kalmış, bu bağlamda yapısalcılığın metodolojik kısıtlarından da kurtulamamıştır.
- Üretim ilişkileri, üretici güçlerin gelişimi, tarımda ücretli emeğin oluşumu gibi sorunsallar temelinde yapılan analizler, kapitalist toplumsal ilişkilerin eleştirisinden ziyade kapitalist gelişmeye olan inancın muhafazası temelinde azgelişmişliğe yöneltilen eleştiriler olarak kalmıştır. Bu temelde, köylülük ve tarımsal/kırsal ilişkiler, modernleşmeci yaklaşımlara benzer bir şekilde, sermaye-merkezli analiz edilmiş ve esas olarak da “gerilik” unsurları olarak kavramsallaştırılmıştır.

Bu eleştirilere karşılık, eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarında öne çıkan *post-kalkınmacı* kuramsal yönelimler ve temel vurgular ise, şu şekilde sıralanabilir:

- Kapitalist tarım-gıda sisteminin analizi, ekonomi-politik alanından öte ve önce, bilgi ve siyaset ilişkisine dair bir tartışmadır. Zira tarım/kır çözümlemelerinin

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<sup>98</sup> Esas olarak kalkınma sosyolojisi alanında 1990’larda ortaya çıkan post-kalkınmacılık kavramının öncüleri için bkz. Sachs (1992), Escobar (1995), Rahnama ve Bawtree (1997).

bağlamını oluşturan *kalkınma sorunu*, ekonomik/teknik bir süreç olmaktan çok, belirli bir düşünme ve bilgi üretme biçimine ilişkin bir sorundur. Gelişme/kalkınma kavramı, dolayısıyla, esas olarak bir söylemsel inşa, paradigma ve bir mit olarak yeniden ele alınmalıdır. Bu çerçevede, tarım-gıda ilişkilerinin analizi, kalkınma kavramına içkin olan modernist kuramsal yanılgıların (evrenselcilik, özcülük, rasyonalizm, indirgemecilik, belirlemecilik, teleoloji, vb.) eleştirisi temelinde yapılmalıdır. Aksi takdirde, bu ilişkilerin yeniden üretilmesi kaçınılmazdır.

- Tarım-gıda ilişkileri, ulus-devlet ve tarım/kır odağının ötesinde, sermaye birikim süreçlerinin ulus-ötesi karakteri ve bu süreci şekillendiren Avrupa-merkezci modernleşmeci/batılılaşmacı bilgi üretim pratiklerinin eleştirisi zemininde analiz edilmelidir.
- Özellikle küresel ısınma ve iklim değişikliği gibi alanlarda gözlenen çevre tahribatının ulaştığı boyutlar da dikkate alındığında, tarımın sanayileşmesi, üretici güçlerin gelişimi ve tarımda ücretli emeğin oluşumu gibi sorunsallar yeniden gözden geçirilmelidir. Bu bağlamda, moderniteye dayalı ilerleme fikrinin bir uzantısı olarak da görülebilecek olan üretkenlik anlayışı terk edilerek, tarımsal üretim ve köylü pratiklerinin kapitalizme alternatif oluşturma bağlamında taşıdığı politik önem ön plana çıkartılmalıdır. Bu açıdan, köylülük bir gerilik unsuru olarak değil, bu süreç içerisinde yeniden şekillenen politik bir özne olarak analizlere dâhil edilmelidir.

Burada sıralanan kuramsal eğilim ve vurguların ilgili yazındaki farklı pozisyonların zenginliğini yansıttığını iddia etmiyorum. Dahası, bu eğilim ve vurguların burada ifade edilmiş keskinlikte ilgili yazında bulunmasının güç olduğunu da eklemeliyim. Bunun başlıca nedeni, eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarının kuramsal tartışmalardan ziyade ürün odaklı ampirik çalışmalarla karakterize olmasıdır. Diğer bir ifadeyle, 2000’li yılların ortalarından itibaren tarım/köylü sorununa ilişkin güncel tartışmalarda yeniden bir canlanmadan bahsetmek mümkün olsa da, tarım-gıda ilişkilerinde gözlenen neoliberal yeniden yapılanmaya dair analizlerin kuramsal sonuçları itibariyle yeterince sorgulandığını söylemek güçtür. Bu açıdan, eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarında daha

ziyade örtük olarak var olduğunu düşündüğüm bu eğilim ve vurguların burada bu keskinlikte ifade edilmesi, eksikliği hissedilen kuramsal bir tartışmaya çağrı olarak da görülebilir.

Yukarıda sıralanan ve eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarına kuramsal ve politik yönelimini veren vurgular ve önermeler, tarım-gıda çözümlemelerinde *ekonomi-politik temelli yaklaşımlar* ile *post-kalkıncı yaklaşımlar* arasındaki bir yarımla olarak da görülebilir. Ekonomi-politik temelli güncel yaklaşımlara örnek olarak şunlar verilebilir: meta ve değer zincirleri analizleri (Barndt, 2008; Bonanno vd., 1994; Friedland, 1984; Neilson ve Pritchard, 2009); tarım ekonomi politikası (Bernstein, 2009), gıdanın ekonomi-politikası (Fine, 1994). Tarım-gıda analizlerinde post-kalkıncı kuramsal yönelimin izlerini ise şu yaklaşımlarda görmek mümkündür: güncel Chayanovcu yaklaşımlar (van der Ploeg, 2013); geçimlik yaklaşımı (Miess ve Bennholdt-Thomsen, 2000); aktör-ağ yaklaşımı temelli tarım-gıda sistemi analizleri (Busch ve Juska, 1997; Goodman ve Watts, 1997); gıda rejimi analizleri (McMichael, 2013), ekolojik yaklaşımlar (Rosset ve Altieri, 2017) ve eko-feminizm (Mies ve Bennholdt-Thomsen, 2000; Mies ve Shiva, 2014; Shiva, 2015).

Ekonomi-politik temelli yaklaşımlar ile post-kalkıncı yaklaşımlar arasında ana hatları yukarıda sıralanan bu yarımlanın kuramsal analizi bu çalışmanın temel sorunsalıdır. Bu yarımlanın analizi bağlamında bu tezin yanıt aradığı temel soru ise şu şekilde ifade edilebilir: 21. yüzyılın tarım/köylü sorunu nedir? Takip eden alt başlıkta bu soru odağında tezin kuramsal çerçevesi ve temel savları özetlenmektedir.

### **Bir Gıda Rejimi Olarak Kapitalizm ve Tarım-Gıda Sorunu**

Eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarının üzerinde yükseldiği kuramsal zemini ve Marksist tarım ekonomi-politiğine yönelttiği eleştirilerin kapsamını ve derinliğini anlamak bakımından dönemin tarihsel ve entelektüel bağlamını Marksizm odağında kısaca tartışmak faydalı olacaktır. Gerek Marksist gerekse de Marksist olmayan çevrelerin 1980'ler ve 1990'ları Marksizmin krizi olarak tarif etmekte ortaklaştığı söylenebilir. Marksizmin kendisini kuramsal olarak bir daha kurtaramadığı iddia edilen krizine

neden olarak yaygın bir şekilde işaret edilen noktalar ana hatları ile şunlardır: sosyalizmin gerilemesi ve Sovyet Bloğunun dağılması; neoliberalizmin yükselişi ve sosyalist ve sosyal demokrat partilerin neoliberal küreselleşme süreçlerine adaptasyonu; Marksizmin diğer kavramsal araçlarının yanı sıra özellikle “azgelişmişlik” kavramının geçerliliğinin sorgulanmasına neden olan “Doğu Asya Kaplanlarının” yükselişi (cf., Bonefeld, et. al, 1992; Booth, 1994; Buttel, 2001).

Marksizme yöneltilen bu eleştirilerin boyutunu anlamak bakımından 1980'ler ve 1990'ların sosyal kuram ve kapitalizm çözümlemeleri bakımından niteliksel bir değişim geçirdiğimiz yönündeki savlar tarafından şekillendiğini hatırlamak gerekir. Niteliksel olarak farklı bir evreye ve/veya topluma geçtiğimiz yönündeki bu savların kapsamını sergilemesi bakımından listesi uzatılabilecek olan şu kavramlar oldukça çarpıcıdır: *postmodern toplum*, *medya toplumu*, *simülasyon toplumu*, *ağ toplumu*, *bilgi toplumu*, *post-endüstriyel toplum*, *küresel toplum*, vb. (cf., Bell, 1973; Castells, 1996; Harvey, 1999; Held ve McGrew, 2003; Jameson, 1991, 1998; Lyotard, 1984). Her biri esasında farklı bir toplum çözümlemesi öneren bu kavramlar etrafında yürütülen tartışmalarda ortaklaşılan nokta ise Marksist kuramın merkezinde yer alan *sınıf* kavramının kuramsal, analitik ve politik olarak artık bir öneminin kalmadığına yönelik iddia olmuştur.

Marksizme yöneltilen eleştiriler, tarihsel ve toplumsal değişimi ele alış biçimi ile de sınırlı kalmamıştır. Bu noktada yeni bir topluma ve toplumsal evreye geçtiğimize yönelik iddiaların sosyal kuram bakımından *post-* dönüş ile şekillenen bir entelektüel bağlam içerisinde dile getirildiğini vurgulamak gerekir. Marksizmi kuramsal ve politik olarak savunmacı bir pozisyona iten en güçlü eleştirilerin de *post-modernizm*, *post-yapısalcılık*, *post-Marksizm*, *post-feminizm*, *post-kolonyalizm* ve *post-kalkınmacılık* gibi *post-* okullardan geldiği söylenebilir. Genel olarak ifade edecek olursak, *post-* kuramlar, Marksizmi modernleşmecî düşünce okullarının sofistike bir biçimi olarak yeniden konumlandırmış ve modernite temelli yaklaşımların, *evrenselcilik*, *rasyonalite* ve *özcülük* gibi kuramsal yanılgi ve hatalarını yeniden üretmekle eleştirmişlerdir. Kısacası eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmaları, Marksizmin kuramsal ve politik olarak geriye çekildiği, “arkaik” ve “modası geçmiş” olarak görüldüğü bir



tarihsel ve entelektüel bağlam içinde ortaya çıkmıştır ve kuramsal yönelimleri de bu bağlam içerisinde şekillenmiştir (cf., Bonefeld vd, 1992a).

Bu tarihsel ve entelektüel bağlam içerisinde, eleştirel tarım-gıda çalışmalarının temsilcileri genel olarak *post-* dönüşten ve özel olarak da post-kalkınmacılıktan güç alarak anaakım liberal ve modernleşmeci anlayışlara yönelttikleri eleştirileri Marksizmin belirli türlerinin hâkim olduğu tarım ekonomi-politiğine de taşımışlardır. Tezin, tarım/köylü sorunu tartışmalarında özellikle 2000’li yılların ortalarında belirginlik kazanan ekonomi-politik temelli yaklaşımlardan post-kalkınmacı yaklaşımlara doğru bir geçiş yaşandığı iddiasının zemini de bu noktadır. Başka türlü söyleyecek olursak, ilgili literatürde gözlenen kuramsal yeniden yapılanma büyük ölçüde *kalkınma* kavramının yeniden ele alınması üzerinden gerçekleşmiştir. Kalkınma kavramı, bir yandan tarım-gıda ilişkilerinin analizi ile kapitalizm çözümlemeleri arasında bir dolayım imkânı sunmuş, diğer yandan bu dolayımın sosyal kuramın modernite-postmodernite ikiliği ile şekillenen güncel seyri bağlamında kurulmasına olanak tanımıştır.

Bu çerçevede post-kalkınmacı kuramsal yönelimin tarım/köylü sorunu kavramsallaştırması bakımından en temel etkisi tartışmanın ekonomi-politik alanından bilgi ve siyaset ilişkisi bağlamına taşınması olmuştur. Bu kapsamda, tezin üçüncü bölümünde detaylıca tartışılan post-kalkınmacılığın genel karakteristik özelliklerine paralel olarak, post-kalkınmacı tarım/köylü sorunu kavramsallaştırmalarının ayırt edici üç özelliğinden bahsedilebilir:

(1) En gelişkin biçimini küçük meta üretimi kavramsallaştırmalarında bulan tarım ekonomi-politiğine karşıt olarak tarım/köylü sorununu, kapitalist modernite bağlamına yerleştirerek bilgi ve siyaset ilişkisi bağlamında yeniden tarif etme;

(2) Bu temelde anaakım ve liberal yaklaşımların yanı sıra ekonomi-politik temelli eleştirel yaklaşımların da kapitalist-modernite eliyle yürütülen

farklılıkların, öznelliklerin ve farklı eyleme biçim ve pratiklerin soyutlanması ve yok edilmesi süreçlerinde suç ortağı olarak radikal eleştirisi;

(3) Bu iki özellik temelinde *köylülük* kategorisini kapitalist tarım-gıda sistemine karşı politik bir özne olarak yeniden kavramsallaştırma ve bu yolla “köylü tarımını”, “şirket tarımı” ve/veya “endüstriyel tarım modeli” karşısında yeniden değerli kılmaya dönük bir çağrı.

Bu üç karakteristik unsur temelinde, ekonomi-politik temelli Marksist yaklaşımların, her ne kadar modernleşmeci okulun ve kalkınmacı yaklaşımların eleştirisi temelinde ortaya çıkmış olsalar da eleştirdikleri yaklaşımların sorunlarından kurtulamadıkları iddia edilmektedir. Buna göre, Marksist yaklaşımlar da anaakım yaklaşımlarda olduğu gibi sorunu kapitalist gelişme ve onun önündeki engeller sorunu olarak görmüşlerdir. Diğer bir ifadeyle, Marksist çözümlemeler her ne kadar gelişmişlik sorununu azgelişmişlik sorunu ile ilişkisi temelinde ele almış olsa da kapitalist gelişmenin ekonomik, politik ve toplumsal sonuçları itibariyle olumlu bir süreç olduğu konusunda yer yer açıktan, yer yer zımni bir kabulle hareket etmişlerdir. Oysa post-kalkınmacı tarım/köylü sorunu formülasyonları açısından kapitalist gelişme farklı öznelliklerin ve pratiklerin yıkımından başka bir şey değildir. Başka türlü söyleyecek olursak bu okullara göre genel olarak kapitalizm ve özelde de tarımda kapitalist gelişme yıkıcı bir süreçtir, bir ilerleme olarak görülemez.

Bu noktayla bağlantılı olarak dile getirilen bir diğeri eleştiri ise şu şekilde ifade edilebilir: Kapitalist gelişme merkezli ve sermaye odaklı analiz, kapitalizmin tarihini sermayenin hareket yasaları üzerinden okuyarak kapitalizmin tarihsel seyrini sanayi sermayesi ve sanayi proletaryası arasındaki ilişkiye indirgemıştır. Kapitalizm çözümlemelerinin, sermayenin hareket yasalarına ve buradan da sanayinin ve finansallaşmanın tarihine indirgenmesi, toplumsal çözümleme bakımından karşılığını ise kapitalizmin toplumsal çelişkilerinin dar anlamıyla (fabrika birimiyle sınırlı) ele alınan işçi sınıfı çözümlemelerine indirgenmesinde bulmuştur. Bu kapsamda, tarımsal/kırsal ilişkilerin sorgulanması, ekonomi-politik temelli yaklaşımlarda esas olarak kapitalist gelişmenin önündeki engellerin analizleri olarak yer bulabilmiştir. Bu

kuramsal yönelimlerin politik ifadesi ise işçi sınıfının öncülüğünde ve işçi sınıfı lehine çözülmesi beklenen bir köylülük kategorisi anlayışında ortaya çıkmaktadır. Diğer bir ifade ile, kapitalist olan ile ‘ideal’ formuyla karşılaştırıldığında kapitalist olmayan arasındaki ilişkiler, başka türlü söyleyecek olursak meta ilişkileri ile meta-dışı ilişkiler arasındaki ilişkilerin çözümlenmesi bu yaklaşımlarda esas olarak da üretici güçlerin gelişimi kavramı odağında sermaye ve meta merkezli ele alınmıştır.

Bu çalışma, yukarıda sıralanan eleştiriler temelinde, post-kalkıncı yaklaşımların, ekonomi-politik çerçevesi içerisinde rasyonel ve/veya doğal görünen kategorilerin toplumsal ve politik bağlamını sorguladıkları oranda Marx’ın çalışmaların ruhuna daha yakın olduğunu düşünmektedir. Bu noktaya bağlantılı olarak tezin, kuramsal çerçeve bakımından kritik önermesi şudur: Marksizm bir ekonomi-politik biçimi olarak değil eleştirel bir toplum çözümlemesi olarak ele alınmalıdır (cf., Bonefeld, 2014; Clarke, 1992). Bu çerçeve içerisinde kapitalist toplumsal ilişkilerin tanımlayıcı unsuru, insan ve insan-olmayan ilişkisini de kapsayacak şekilde toplumsal ilişkilerin ve öznelliklerin değer ve artı-değer üretimine indirgenmesidir. Bu anlamıyla Marksizm, üretim ilişkileri temelinde toplumsal ilişkileri analiz eden bir politik iktisat biçimi değil, üretim ve yeniden üretim ilişkilerinin toplumsal ve politik karakterini açığa çıkartmayı hedefleyen eleştirel bir toplum çözümlemesidir (Bonefeld, 2014). Diğer bir ifadeyle, yukarıda kısaca yer verilen Marksizmin krizine yönelik iddialar bakımından bu tezin temel önermesi şudur: krizde olan Marksizm değil Marx’ın çalışmalarını ekonomi-politik alanına indirgeyen Marksizmin belirli bir yorumudur (cf., Bonefeld, *et. al.*, 1992a).

Bu kavramsal çerçevenin olanağı ise geleneksel Marksist yaklaşımlarda gözlenen “erken Marx” – “geç Marx” ayrımının reddedilerek Marx’ın çalışmalarının birbirinden ayrılmaz bir bütünlük taşıdığına yönelik iddiadır (Clarke, 1992). Diğer bir ifadeyle, geleneksel Marksist okulların “romantik” olarak görüp yadsıdığı ve “yabancılaşma” ve “yabancılaşmış emek” kavramları üzerine kurulu Marx’ın erken dönem çalışmaları ile yine geleneksel okullarca romantizmden kurtulup “bilimsel” bir statüye kavuştuğu düşünülen ve “sermaye”, “değer” ve “meta fetişizmi” odaklı Marx’ın geç dönem çalışmaları arasında bir kopuş değil süreklilik söz konusudur. Bu çerçevede Marx’ın

çalışmaları, ekonomi-politiğin eleştirel bir biçimi değil, bizatihi ekonomi-politiğin kendisinin eleştirisi ve reddidir.

Bu çalışma, detayları çalışmanın üçüncü bölümünde tartışılan eleştirel bir toplum kuramı olarak Marksizm çerçevesinde, güncel tarım/köylü sorununu bir gıda rejimi olarak kapitalizmin tarım-gıda sorunu olarak yeniden ele almanın yukarıda kısaca belirtilen güncel literatürdeki açmazı aşmamıza olanak sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir. Kapitalizmin kendisini bir gıda rejimi olarak görmek, gıda rejimi kavramını yeniden düşünmeye bir çağrı olarak da görülebilir. Gıda rejimi kavramı literatürde esas olarak tarım-gıda ilişkilerinin tarihsel dönemlemesine yönelik olarak kullanılmaktadır (cf., McMichael, 2009, 2013; McMichael ve Friedmann, 1989). Bu çerçevede *Birinci Gıda Rejimi*, 19. Yüzyıl son çeyreğinden başlayıp Birinci Dünya Savaşına uzanan süreçte İngiltere hegemonyasında ve sömürgecilik temelinde şekillenen tarım-gıda ilişkilerine; *İkinci Gıda Rejimi* ise İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonlarından 1970'lerin ortalarına kadar olan süreçte ABD hegemonyasında ve kalkınmacılık temelinde şekillenen tarım-gıda ilişkilerine gönderme yapmaktadır. Güncel tartışmalar daha ziyade yaygın olarak *neoliberal/şirket-temelli gıda rejimi* olarak adlandırılan ve 1980'lerden günümüze uzanan süreçte ulusötesi tarım-gıda şirketlerinin hegemonyasında neoliberalizm temelinde şekillenen tarım-gıda ilişkilerinin analizi bağlamında *Üçüncü Gıda Rejimi* üzerine dönmektedir (cf., Bernstein, 2016; Friedmann, 2005, 2016; McMichael, 2013, 2016).

Bu çalışma gıda rejimi kavramını tarım-gıda ilişkilerinin dönemlenmesine yönelik katkılarını da dikkate alarak kapitalist gıda rejimi olarak dolayısıyla da kapitalizmin kendisini bir gıda rejimi olarak kavramsallaştırmayı önermektedir. Gıda rejimi kavramını *kapitalist* gıda rejimi olarak ele almak ilk bakışta basit bir müdahale olarak görünmekle birlikte, bu yeniden kavramsallaştırma çabasının, bu çalışmanın üçüncü bölümünde eleştirel bir toplum çözümlemesi olarak tartışılan güncel Marksizm anlayışı temelinde tarım/köylü sorunu kavramsallaştırması bakımından önemli kuramsal sonuçları olduğu düşünülmektedir. Karakteristik eğilimi insan-insan, insan-doğa, insan-insan olmayan ilişkilerini ve bu ilişkisellik içerisinde şekillenen öznellikleri (artı-)değer üretimine indirgeme çabası olan kapitalist gıda rejiminin

birbiriyle bağlantılı iki karakteristik unsuru şunlardır: (1) yalnızca kapitalizmin tarihsel kuruluş süreci olarak değil sermayenin var olma ve eyleme biçimi ve bir toplumsal ilişki olarak yeniden üretiminde temel bir süreç ve strateji olarak ilkel birikim;<sup>99</sup> (2) tarım-gıda-kır arasındaki bağların ve ilişki örüntülerinin – özellikle gıda sanayi, şirket tarımı ve tarım-gıda üretimindeki teknolojik gelişmeler eliyle – gerek tarihsel gerekse kuramsal/analitik olarak kırılması ve gıdanın kır ve tarımdan kopartılması.<sup>100</sup>

İlkel birikim kavramı bu çalışmada en geniş anlamıyla, toplumsal ilişkilerin ve insan öznelliklerinin değer ve artı-değer üretimine indirgenme sürecine gönderme yapmak amacıyla kullanılmaktadır (cf., Bonefeld, 2014; Federici, 2004; Özuğurlu, 2003). Bu anlamıyla ilkel birikim süreci yalnızca insan öznelliklerinin ve emeğinin ücret formunda metalaşan emek-gücüne indirgenmesini değil, aynı zamanda kapitalist olmayan ve meta-dışı ilişkilerin ve alanların sermayenin değerlenme sürecine tabiiyet süreçlerini de içermektedir. Başka türlü ifade edecek olursak, sermayenin ‘ekonomik’ zor eliyle yürüyen genişlemiş ölçekte yeniden üretiminin tarihi, aynı zamanda daha ziyade *kadınların*, yerli toplulukları da kapsayacak şekilde *beyaz olmayanların* ve *doğanın* maruz kaldığı ekonomi-dışı zorun da tarihidir. Organik ve yaşayan karakteri, sermayenin önünde her daim bir sorun teşkil etmiş olan tarım ve gıda üretiminin de ilkel birikimin bu ele alınışı kapsamında değerlendirilmesi gerektiğini düşünmekteyim. Bu çerçevede, bu çalışma, tarım-gıda ilişkilerinin neoliberal yeniden

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<sup>99</sup> Neoliberal süreçte ilkel birikim kapsamında değerlendirebilecek süreçler şu şekilde sıralanabilir: tarım-gıda ilişkilerinin neoliberalizm temelinde küreselleşme süreçleri – esas olarak da uluslararası para ve meta dolaşımının çok-uluslu tarım-gıda şirketlerinin özellikle Güney ülkelerinin piyasalarına girişini kolaylaştıracak şekilde yeniden düzenlenmesi; ulus-devlet ve küçük üreticiler arasındaki ilişki örüntülerinin neoliberal yeniden yapılandırılma süreçleri – esas olarak da özelleştirmeler, üretici örgütlerinin ve birliklerinin işlevsizleştirilmesi, tarım-gıda politikalarının ve tarımsal destek mekanizmalarının sermaye nüfuzunun önünü açacak şekilde yeniden düzenlenmesi; “ucuz emek” ve “ucuz çevre” temelinde şekillenen ve Güney ülkelerinin emek-yoğun yaş meyve ve sebze üretimine doğru geçiş yaptığı yeni bir uluslararası iş bölümünün ortaya çıkması; tarımsal araştırma süreçlerinin özelleştirilmesi; fikri mülkiyet hakları temelinde tohum ve genetik materyallerin metalaşma süreçleri.

<sup>100</sup> Tarım-kır-gıda arasındaki tarihsel ve toplumsal bağların kırılması temelinde öne çıkan gelişmeler ise ana hatları ile şunlardır: tarım-gıda üretiminin teknolojik alt yapısında meydana gelen gelişmeler – ikamecilik, biyoteknoloji ve dijitalleşme alanlarında yaşanan gelişmelerin yanı sıra tarımsal üretimin toprak ve güneşten bağımsızlaştırılmasına yönelik adımlar; tarımsal üretimin ileri ve geri bağlantılarında çok-uluslu tarım-gıda şirketlerinin artan hâkimiyeti; süper-marketlerin ortaya çıkışı; gıda kültürünün sermaye birikim süreçleri temelinde yeniden şekillenmesi.

yapılandırma süreçlerinin ilkel birikim kapsamında ele alınması gerektiğini savunmaktadır.

Tarım-gıda-kır arasındaki tarihsel ve toplumsal bağların özellikle gıda sanayisi, şirket tarımı ve tarım-gıda üretimine yönelik teknolojik gelişmelerle kırılması ile birlikte düşünülmesi gereken ilkel birikim sürecinin bu ele alınış biçimi, tarım/köylü sorunu kavramsallaştırması açısından önemli kuramsal sonuçlar doğurmaktadır. Bunlardan en önemlisi tarım/köylü sorununun kuramsal ve politik içeriğinin, *sınıf mücadelesi* bağlamında *sınıf oluşumu*, yani *mücadele sınıf* kavramı odağında yeniden düşünülmesidir. Bu açıdan, analizlerini daha ziyade hali hazırda oluşmuş sınıfları varsayan *sınıf ittifakı* anlayışı üzerine kuran tarım ekonomi-politiği alanındaki geleneksel/ortodoks Marksist yaklaşımların tersine, bu çalışma, sorunun sınıf mücadelesi temelinde sınıf oluşumu olarak görülmesi gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Diğer bir ifadeyle, en iyi örneklerini küçük meta üretimi tartışmalarında veren ekonomi-politik temelli yaklaşımlara karşıt bir biçimde, köylülerin günümüzde kapitalist gıda rejimi ve onun neoliberal biçiminin *içinde ve ona karşı* politik bir özne olarak tarih sahnesine çıktığını söyleyebileceğimizi düşünüyorum.

Köylülüğün öznelliğine ve siyasi karakterine yapılan bu vurgu, ilk bakışta, post-kalkınmacı köylülük kavramsallaştırmaları ile benzer görünebilir. Tezin üçüncü bölümünde post-kalkınmacıya ilişkin yürütülen tartışmaya paralel bir şekilde, post-kalkınmacı tarım/köylü sorunu anlayışlarının Marx'ın çalışmalarına yön veren ve onlara bir bütünlük kazandıran ruha daha yakın olduğu söylenebilir. Bundan kastım şudur: post-kalkınmacı kuramsal yönelimin temel hedefi de ekonomi-politiğin nesnel ve rasyonel görünen kategorilerinin toplumsal ve politik içeriğini açığa çıkartmak ve bu temelde de kapitalist ilişkilerin olası tüm dünyaların en iyisi olarak sunulmasını eleştirmektir. Daha da önemlisi, post-kalkınmacı yaklaşımların bu kuramsal çabalarının altında yatan siyasal içerik de Marx'ın çalışmalarında olduğu gibi kapitalist toplumsal ilişkilerin aşılması doğrultusunda sürekli bir alternatif yollar ve mücadele pratikleri aramak olmuştur.

Ancak tarım/köylü sorununun, kapitalist gıda rejimi, ilkel birikim, sınıf oluşumu ve sınıf mücadelesi kavramları temelinde yeniden düşünülmesi, post-kalkınmacı anlayışların da radikal bir eleştirisi olarak görülmelidir. Her ne kadar bu anlayışlar da köylülüğü siyasi bir özne olarak tanımlıyor olsalar da, bu çalışma, köylülüğün politikleşme sürecinin merkezine, “öteki” öznellikleri, eylem ve pratikleri değer ve artı-değer üretimine indirgeme çabalarının bir parçası olarak görülmesi gereken kapitalizmin tarım-gıda ilişkilerine doğrudan nüfuz etme biçim ve süreçlerini koymaktadır. Diğer bir deyişle, post-kalkınmacı çözümlerlerde gözlenebileceği gibi, köylülerin siyasi karakterleri ve öznellikleri, onları dışsal olarak saran bir iktidar-bilgi ağı karşısında bir takım özgün içsel özelliklerden beslenen kültürel ve etik niteliklere dayandırılmaz. Tersine, köylülüğün siyasi karakteri kapitalist gıda rejiminin içerisinde ve ona karşı doğmaktadır ve bu bağlamda köylülerin siyasi özneler olarak belirmesinde geçmişe ait hiçbir şey yoktur.

Burada yapmak istediğim temel vurgu, tarım-gıda ilişkileri bağlamındaki sınıf oluşumu sürecinin bir yandan kapitalist gıda rejimini şekillendirdiği diğer yandan onun tarafından şekillendirildiğine yöneliktir. Bu noktada şunu belirtmekte fayda var: kapitalist gıda rejiminin yukarıda belirttiğimiz iki önemli özelliği de, üretim zamanının (ve/veya ekolojik/bio-jeolojik zamanın) değer-zamana (ya da sermayenin çevrim zamanına) indirgenme süreci olarak işlemektedir. Tarımsal üretimde görülen üretim zamanı ile değer zamanı arasındaki bu fark, tipik bir sanayi üretimi sürecinden radikal bir farklılık olarak da görülebilecek olan tarım-gıda ürünleri ve üretim sürecinin organik karakterinin bir sonucudur. Diğer bir deyişle, yukarıda ana hatları ile değinilen kapitalist gıda rejiminin iki temel unsuru, tarım-gıda ilişkilerinde sermayenin üretim-zamanını değer-zamanına indirgenme çabaları olarak da görülebilir. Buradaki kritik nokta ise bu çabaların, salt teknik bir süreç veya sorun olarak değil, bir yandan köylülüğün sınıf mücadeleleri ile şekillendirilen ve öte yandan bu sınıf oluşum süreçlerini şekillendiren toplumsal bir ilişki olarak görülmesine yönelik vurgudur.

Tezin dördüncü bölümünde detaylıca yürütülen bu tartışmalar temelinde kapitalizmin kendisini bir gıda rejimi olarak ele almanın ve tarım/köylü sorununu bu çerçevede yeniden düşünmenin ilgili literatüre birisi kuramsal diğeri politik olmak üzere iki temel

katkısı olduğunu düşünüyorum. Birincisi, tarım/köylü sorununu, kapitalist gıda rejimi ve sınıf oluşumu /mücadelesi bağlamına yerleştirerek sermayenin tarım-gıda sorunu olarak yeniden ele alan bu çalışma, post-kalkınmacı yaklaşımlara karşıt olarak sınıf analizinin kuramsal ve analitik olarak hala temel analiz biçimi olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Öte yandan, bu ele alış biçimi, ekonomi-politik temelli yaklaşımlara karşıt olarak, köylülüğün küçük meta üretimi ilişkileri içerisindeki farklılaşma süreçlerinin köylülük kavramını analitik ve toplumsal açılardan anakronistik kılan köylülüğün çözülmesi ve yok olması süreci olarak değil, köylülüğün sınıf oluşumu süreci olarak görülmesi gerektiğini iddia etmektedir. Burada kritik nokta bu çalışmada sınıf kavramının, mülkiyet ilişkileri temelinde basit bir sınıflandırma/tasnif aracı olarak değil, çelişki düzeyine ait bir kavram olarak ele alınmış olmasıdır (cf. Bonefeld, 2014). Başka türlü söyleyecek olursak, bu çalışma, bir yandan, post-kalkınmacı yaklaşımlarda, özellikle de “otonomi” üzerinden yürütülen tartışmalarda ele alındığı gibi, köylülüğün politik karakterinin köylülerin tarihsel taşıyıcıları olarak görüldüğü bir takım özgün nitelikler üzerine kurulamayacağını iddia ederken; öte yandan ekonomi-politik temelli yaklaşımlarda ele alındığı biçimiyle köylülüğün farklılaşma temelinde yok olmaya yazgılı bir kategori olmadığını iddia etmektedir. Köylüler, ne ezeli-ebedi bir sınıfa ne de asla sınıf olamayacak bir toplumsal kategoriye aittirler. Bu çerçevede, köylülüğün sınıf oluşum süreçleri *a priori* bir zeminde önsel olarak varsayılamayacağından ve bu süreçlerin analizi detaylı tarihsel ve toplumsal çalışmalar gerektirdiğinden, bu çalışmanın, burada dile getirilen görüşler temelinde post-kalkınmacı ve ekonomi-politik temelli yaklaşımların güçlü yanlarını bir araya getirerek yeni tartışmalar açma ve yeni araştırma gündemleri ve sorular üretme potansiyeline sahip olduğu düşünülmektedir.

Bu çalışmanın ikinci olası katkısı ise güncel tarım-gıda siyasetiyle alakalıdır. Literatürdeki ekonomi-politik ve post-kalkınmacı yaklaşımlar arasındaki yarıma, siyasal düzlemde, kapitalist tarım-gıda sisteminin moral/ahlaki/kültürel (post-kalkınmacı) eleştirisi ile nesnel/yapısal/bilimsel (ekonomi-politik) eleştirisi arasındaki yarıma olarak izlenebilir. Birincisinde, özne ve faillik arayışı esas olarak moral/etik ve kültürel bir zeminde ve dolayısıyla da *kapitalist toplumsal ilişkilerin dışında*



yürütülürken; ikincisinde ise özne ve faillik sorgusu, *kapitalist toplumsal ilişkilerin içinde* gerçekleşen farklılaşma vurgusunda önemini ve politik karakterini yitirmektedir. Diğer bir ifadeyle, kapitalist toplumsal ilişkilerin merkeziliği post-kalkıncı yaklaşımlarda ikincilleştirildiği oranda politik olarak güçlü analitik olarak zayıf bir çerçeve ortaya çıkartmakta iken, ekonomi-politik temelli yaklaşımlarda ise kapitalist ilişkilerin ele alınış biçimi analitik olarak güçlü fakat politik olarak zayıf bir analiz çerçevesi doğurmaktadır. Bu çalışmada eleştirel bir toplum kuramı olarak Marksizm anlayışı üzerine kurulan ve tezin ilgili bölümlerinde detayları ile tartışılan tarım/köylü sorunu anlayışının ise kapitalist gıda rejimini aynı anda hem moral hem de nesnel olarak eleştirmeye imkân tanıyan bir çerçeve sunduğu düşünülmektedir.

## APPENDIX C: TEZ İZİN FORMU / THESIS PERMISSION FORM

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Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Marine Sciences

☐

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**TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English) :** CAPITALIST FOOD REGIME AND THE AGRIFOOD PROBLEM: A CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMIC AND POST-DEVELOPMENTALIST UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE AGRARIAN/PEASANT QUESTION

.

**TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE:** Yüksek Lisans / Master

☐

Doktora / PhD

☒

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