

**Market Maintenance:
Cotton, Power and Poverty in Egypt, Turkey and Abroad**

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Nineteenth century civilization was not destroyed by wars ... but by the market.
Karl Polanyi (1944)

*The apparent triumph of the market ... in the late twentieth century will be a powerful stimulus ...
to the easier achievement of international security.*
Barry Buzan (1991)

The Insecure Ground of Post-Cold War Security

For more than twenty years, a social experiment unprecedented in history has been in progress: market reform on a global scale. Especially since the end of the Cold War, and with particular reference to its ostensible capacity to bring peace to the world, the market has been argued as the ground for building global security. This experiment with its consequences of violent social transformation in the Third World, has revealed some remarkable facts -- we do not know how markets work, and how exactly they contribute to peace, let alone what the term global market means in practice.¹ Since the beginning of their experimentation, neo-liberal market constructions have been failing spectacularly. Yet everywhere in the third world the same techno-science engineers build them anew and sow the seeds of circular crises in the global south.

During when the early indications of economics crises began to be felt, almost without exception the negative outcomes of market reforms have been regarded as the short-term problems of transition economies. When crises endured, neo-liberal market engineers adopted their plans to a more liberal-radical application. Ever since, catastrophic statistics have become a commonplace circulating reference, and even a somewhat banal and commonplace introduction of many critical books and articles: This large percent of world population is earning less than one dollar a day, where as that tiny percent of world population is earning more than a grand an hour, the richest five percent gets this, the poorest five gets that.

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¹ 1993 Nobel Laureate in Economics Douglass North summarized this point perhaps better than anyone else: "It is a peculiar fact that the literature on economics...contains so little discussion of the central institution that underlies neo-classical economics - the market." Cited in Callon, M., 1998, p.1. For primary source please see North, D.C. 1977.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellite states renewed and strengthened the fascination with the idea of the market. It was commonly argued that the market was mostly responsible for the wellbeing of the West and that the emulation of this experiment by the peoples of the underdeveloped world would not only ensure development but also global security. It is the sustenance of poverty, for neo-liberals, that fosters insecurity not only for the third but also for other worlds, and for this point, one has to give them credit.

Yet other parts of the story of (under)development were forgotten as fast as the market tools of (under)development were deployed in Post-Cold War geographies. During the entire Cold War, mistrust of the market was the Capitalist West's hegemonic approach to conditions of poverty. It was the United States who formed the International Coffee Organization, a global cartel that aimed at increasing coffee prices and keeping them at a high level (Bates, 1997). Interestingly, it was the largest coffee importer of the world who brought together the largest coffee producers of the world so that they can increase their prices. This would then allow the producing countries to increase their foreign exchange earnings and then at least partially share the revenue with coffee farmers who were increasingly allying with socialist and communist social movements. In the days of Cold War, the market was a threat to global peace. In 1989, right after the collapse of the U.S.S.R., International Coffee Organization was dissolved as soon as the U.S. withdrew its support. Only in a few weeks, coffee prices collapsed. Since then the new experts of the post Cold War developments expect the market to help farmers sustain production and survive.

One wonders why the market construction plan, which was believed to be a blueprint of development by many learned people, does not work? The two answers commonly used in the last decade, (the plan was not applied well and the state dragged its feet) have been exhausted. Recently new answers are being invented: in the case of Turkey, farmers themselves were identified as the main problem, whereas in Egypt, it was Bin Laden who was argued to be responsible for the new crisis.²

² See Egyptian Prime Minister Atef Abeid's speech summarized in BTE, 2002, p. 38.

Crises, new ones:

Turkey and Egypt, once the polar opposites of the Cold War in the Third World, have been regarded as “buffer states between security complexes” (Buzan, 1991). Moreover, they were among the first states in the world to initiate market reforms in the 1980s. The international financial institutions have since described the results as a “remarkable success” in Egypt and an “undoubted success” in Turkey (IMF, 1998; World Bank, 1988). Turkish economy was praised by the Economist as “something of a miracle” (The Economist, 1996, p.8) and the IMF characterized Egypt’s economy as “an achievement that has few parallels.”³

Turkey, in particular, has been one of the two largest recipients of World Bank structural adjustment loans, which were used to foster free market reforms. It has received over one-third of the Bank’s all policy-based lending in the 1980s (Onis, 1998). Egypt, on the other hand, as the largest Arab economy, has been considered a pioneer of free market reforms. Since signing the peace agreement with Israel, it has been the second largest recipient of American foreign aid in the world and ranked as the world’s fourth most successful case of privatization (IMF, 1998). Moreover in the last twenty years Egypt has been the largest recipient of foreign aid in the Third World.⁴ (Blauer, 2002, p.41)

Since becoming the playground of neo-liberal experts in the second half of the 1980s, both countries have undergone severe economic crises. Yet, none of the previous crises were as devastating as the ones Egypt and Turkey are presently experiencing. The crisis in Turkey has been the worst of its modern history. In 2001, within a week the Turkish Lira lost almost fifty percent of its value. Those who had invested in the domestic currency, lost one third of their savings overnight. Approximately one million workers, just about five percent of the total working population, lost their jobs and working class income was halved in real terms from the last year. Inflation jumped over eighty one percent and the GDP shrunk 9.4 percent (Finansal Forum, 2002). This performance was, for sure, something of a miracle.

The crisis in Egypt followed the steps of economic decline in Turkey. The Egyptian Pound was devaluated and lost half of its value in the last two years. In the black market, it has reached a record level of 0.2 USD, an indication of an even worse decline. Although unemployment rate was announced at eight percent, the real rate is accepted at twenty five percent, a figure which has few parallels in the world. (BTE, 2002, p.62)

Following the recognition of crises in a banal performance of stunned disbelief, international financial institutions’ experts rushed into their rooms in five star hotels in Istanbul and Cairo -this move seems to be the practical entry point of almost all experiments of neo-liberal reform, and pledged billions of dollars in order to save the

3 cited in Dana, L. P. 2000, p. 79.

4 According to the same source, Egypt received twenty five billion USD through USAID, which distributed the money as follows: 6.7 billion dollars went to commodity imports, 5.9 billion to physical infrastructure, 4.5 billion to services such as family planning and agricultural development, 3.3 billion to technical assistance and cash transfer, four billion to food aid.

face of the two crown princes of neo-liberal times. Being saved would require the two countries to allocate at least half of their GDPs to debt management in the next two decades.

If We Only Didn't Have So Many Peasants

During the early months of the crisis in Turkey, an economics book entitled *Köylüler Ne Zaman Manşet Olur* (When Peasants Become the Headline), written by Istanbul University professor, Mehmet Altan, surprisingly became a bestseller. In his introduction, Altan wrote, "Turkey blinded itself so as to see its problems: The strongest structural impediment preventing us from developing is peasantry and agriculture." (Altan, 2001, p.7) These words have been welcomed by many who were looking for a reason to explain the new crises. In the most popular debate show of the country, *Siyaset Meydanı*, the issue was discussed with the participation of techno-science experts, including Altan. The president of the Union of the Chambers of Agriculture, who was desperately trying to dispute the claims blaming farmers, was looked down upon during the entire program by various experts from different clans of info-knowledge production, and at times by implicitly ridiculing his non-Istanbul accent.

In a few months, farmers were singled out as the main reason for the economic crisis. The report written by four economists for Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Organization (TUSIAD) echoed similar claims: populist policies have created a sector which had become impossible to bear. They have to be replaced by free market policies which would in turn set the prices right, especially in what they call the agricultural sector. This position was effectively ignoring two decades of free market reforms.

A magical statistic arose just at a time when the farmers were being blamed the most. Many newspapers wrote that the monetary equivalence of the agricultural support given to cotton farmers only in 1993-1994 season amounted to eleven billion U.S. dollars, while at the same time the country was unable to even secure a credit of 2 billion dollars from the IMF, urgently needed for management of the enormous debt. It was argued that farmers had not developed themselves and had become accustomed to being lazy. In short, they were unproductive. In fact, as the famous economist Altan claimed, it takes the Turkish peasant (always in singular) one year to sow and harvest the same amount of grain that Canadian girls (note that it is plural) sow and harvest in two days.⁵ What was to be done with the indolent peasant, who makes economies sluggish like himself?

These arguments can hardly be regarded as original in the Eastern Mediterranean. Farmer communities have always been thought of as dormant, unchanging and static. Volumes of social and historical research have sustained this position, helped create an urban bias, and presented the city as the dynamic opposite of static rural. Yet only during neo-liberal times starting from mid seventies has it become commonsensical to think that farmers can develop only if they are left alone, i.e. without the guidance and support of the city/state. While during both colonial and developmentalist periods, the state was identified as the

⁵ Cited in Akman, 2001, p.83.

main agent of development in the countryside. What has remained unchanged is the presence of urban experts, and their constant focus on the countryside (cf. Mitchell, 2002).

Since the 1980s, rural Egypt and Turkey have become playgrounds of neo-liberal experts because of the relative political weakness of farming communities. It was not a scientific choice, but a political outcome: Third World farmers have historically been politically the most underrepresented class.⁶ The neo-liberal experts organized various fact-finding missions in the national bureaus of statistics. Armed with the magical tools of statistics, they then located the problems and for the most part, without consulting even a single farmer.

Interestingly enough, the solutions to the problems of the countryside in almost all parts of the third world were formulated along the same lines: the state had intervened too much, with the result of upsetting the balances of a working free market. The public enterprises were not efficient. They had to be sold. The government had to be rolled back to its main functions, that is to oversee a well working market and to provide the market with necessary institutional environment to ensure its balances. Flexibility and adaptation to changing conditions were praised in almost all recipes of economic take off. Paradoxically, these approaches offered the same set of policies in a quite inflexible way, and were advised and forced to be applied across the board, whether in Egypt or Turkey. Wasn't it the then Chief Economist of World Bank Lawrence Summers, who said in 1991, "Spread the truth, the laws of economics are like the laws of engineering. One set of laws works everywhere."⁷

The neo-liberal recipe for the largest single sector of the world, agriculture, was the following: stop the manipulation of input prices by the government, such as fertilizers, pesticides and seeds; make all factors of production a commodity in the free market; abolish the declaration of floor prices; let the banks set their own interest rates in order to ensure a free credit market; discontinue government manipulation of agricultural cooperatives, and make them a part of the free market; open the domestic market to the world so as to ensure a competitive environment and efficiency in production and marketing.

According to Bates (1981), -the most important theorist of the Third World agricultural reforms, these policy choices were derived from common sense, the evidence of history,

6 The support the EU farmers get from the government is usually an outcome of their political struggle. An article printed in International Herald Tribune is a good example of this: "Greek farmers threatened to further cripple the country's road network with tractor blockades Tuesday after failing to reach a deal over cotton subsidies with the socialist government. The government has said it would subsidize cotton farmers for up to 1.1 million tons of cotton, the EU quota for Greece. Farmers' unions say this will lead to lower subsidies than initially agreed upon because the total production is expected to exceed the quote. Hundreds of tractors have blocked the country's main highway from Athens to Thessaloniki for the past five days. Over the weekend, hundreds of drivers had to use long detours to avoid blockades set up mainly in northern Greece." International Herald Tribune, Wednesday April 10, 2002, p.9.

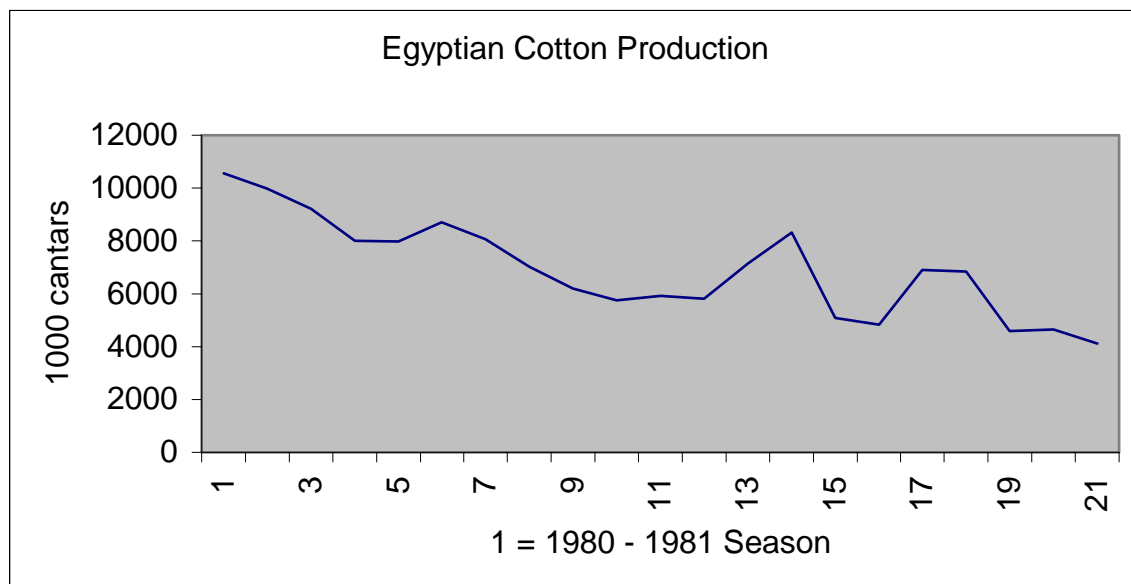
7 Cited in Keegan, 1992, p.109.

and economic doctrine.⁸ Hence, it was expected that once deregulation became the norm and private enterprise the form, farmers and traders would move towards the market, which would in turn promise an increase both in agricultural exports and economic growth.

It has been more than twenty years since the economic recipes of neo-liberal experts have come to guide the policy circles in the third world. We are now in a position to better observe the outcomes of these experiments. Contrary to neo-liberal expectations, recent scholarship has shown that rather than moving towards the market, farmers tended towards increased self-provisioning and protection from neo-liberal policies, once economies took successful steps towards free market reforms (Mitchell, 1998; Abdel Aal and Saad, 1999; Bush, 1999; Gibbon, 1999).

Egypt was believed to be a potential agricultural export giant, had the country reformed its agriculture. Yet, the more free market policies were adopted, the more farmers stopped producing cotton. It was believed that the comparative advantage of Egyptian cotton would create incentives for farmers to produce more. Since the crop has been Egypt's second most important source of foreign exchange revenue after petroleum and the best of the extra long and long cottons of the world. The decrease in the area of cotton production was phenomenal, and last year it was one third of the size it has reached in 1900. Table 1 summarizes the advent of cotton production since the implementation of neo-liberal free market reforms in Egypt.

Figure 1



⁸ He was the first political scientist development expert of the Bank. His country reports, if accepted to be applied by the country, were considered as a condition for further structural adjustment lending by the World Bank (Bates, 1997, p. xiv).

Another clear sign of the failure of these reforms becomes visible when one considers the level of violence they introduced to the post Cold War world. The more free market reforms are implemented, the more violence and socio-economic insecurity they seem to produce. For example in Egypt, since the implementation of free market reforms, an average of twenty five farmers have been killed and 150 farmers have been permanently crippled each year as the direct result of clashes free market policies in land incited (LCHR, 1999). In Turkey, many farmers have recently stopped producing and have increasingly begun to move to capitals, which has resulted in devastating consequences for thousands

Tragic episodes of violence were also occurring in counties like India, where more than 250 cotton farmers committed suicide by drinking the pesticides the World Bank had helped them buy in 1998 (Parthasarathy, 1998)..

The Cotton Farmers. They Did It.

I was carrying out my dissertation research in a cotton producing village I call Pamukkoy 150 kilometers east of Izmir, the major port city of Turkey, when the public debate around the crisis and farmers was launched. During an interview with the director of Agricultural Bank's provincial branch, he said: "Now, you know better than I do. You are doing research," and continued with a quite expressive self confidence:

"... but let me explain to you the situation: Now, the state gave these men, (farmers) more that 120 million dollars in 1993. I was still in the agricultural bank then. I gave it myself. What happened to this money? No Money. We had to find more international credit to continue our service, the government delayed sending the money we paid to the cotton farmer. Why do we face such a big problem? Because they say we have to support farmers. Since 1993, this debt cost the government eleven billion dollars. We are lucky. We had to face this crisis three or four years ago."

Only a week later, my father disclosed his explanation of the crisis over a family dinner: "So it turns out that your peasants are the main problem," as if he had not grown up in a village, and continued, "they really cost the government billions of dollars." Within a few days, I realized that almost everyone around me was referring to the billions farmers got from the government. Another friend, a banker working for a private company, said: "we have to follow what America did. They have the best system. What we do is to support farmers to get their votes. And now we try to understand why we had this crisis!"

It was amazing to observe how these anti-rural sentiments were spreading like a discursive epidemic. In a few weeks, it became very difficult to come across a few sound objections in the mainstream media, which disseminated discursive tropes such as *the farmer* was not productive, *he* became addicted to government support, *he* was lazy, *he* didn't work, yet always managed to survive thanks to populism.

TUSIAD also joined the discussion with its recent report (TUSIAD, 2000). The text, after locating the problems of agricultural support policies with reference to an ideal free market context, focused on the skewed distribution of income in agricultural sector. It

argued that richer farmers have been getting more support from the government and this was upsetting the income equality of the country. The president of Aegean Farmers Association, who himself owns the largest farm of the Tuna region, located close to where I did my fieldwork, criticized TUSIAD and said to me:

“The income inequality in the industry is three times worse than that of the Agriculture. And are they now really concerned with inequality? Then they should first do something about themselves. But, of course, they wouldn’t do that. They want us to produce cheaper cotton so that they can decrease their costs, and they want us, I mean farmers, to produce cheaper wheat, so that they do not have to increase the wages, so that their workers can survive. I called them and told them exactly what I have told you. They apologized and formed a working group. They invited me to attend their meetings.”

The Eleven Billion Dollar Peasant

In the 1993-1994 cotton season, the world price of 1 kilogram (kg.) lint cotton quoted by Cotton Outlook was 9,000 Turkish Liras. The government, some of whose members owned textile factories, imposed an export tax of 3,000 Turkish Liras per kilo of cotton, in order to provide the local spinning mills with cheap lint. This measure decreased the price of cotton to almost 6,000 TL/kg, thus transferring the difference to domestic textile sector. If farmers were not prevented from exporting their cotton, they would earn at least 3,000 TL per kilo more.

Obviously, 6,000 TL was not enough for cotton farmers to generate the necessary capital for the next year’s cotton season. As a result, just to ensure their survival, the government decided to pay a deficiency payment of approximately 3,000 TL/kg back to farmers. The Agricultural Bank was ordered to make the payment, yet months after farmers had sold their produce. This is the story of 128 million dollars paid to the farmers. In reality, the government did not support cotton farmers, but textile industrialists, and this situation has not changed since the early 1980s. Between 1980 and 1995 the government imposed an average of 43.73 cents per kilo export tax on cotton. It was the farmers who generated the majority of the capital necessary for building up the fifth largest textile industry of the world, yet they were accused of being lazy and unproductive.

How could one account for the amount reaching to eleven billion dollars, which, if correct, would mean giving roughly 22,000 USD to each cotton producing family? Such an annual subsidy would lead to a radical change in the whole relations of production and exchange of cotton.

The amount distributed to cotton farmers by the Agricultural Bank was regarded as a loan given to the bank by the government with a record interest rate of 128 percent. This rate has already increased the debt to 7.7 billion dollars in 1998, even though the Agricultural Bank had already paid back 712 million to the government in 1997 (Yükseler, 1999. p.12-13). The “free market” interest rate of dollar was around 7 percent, yet it was boosted to compensate for the Bank’s deficit from default loans given to non-farmers (Oyan, nd.). This budget “make-up” was also helping the government explain its own budget deficits.

It was announced in 1998 that agricultural supports have taken 10,24 percent of the GDP. Yet, the actual support was more or less one percent of the GDP, as shown next year by *Sayıştay* – The State Accounting Bureau, and that it was almost half of the OECD average support ratio (Ibid, p.6). Moreover, by means of taxing exports, the government had only given cotton farmers what it has taken back in advance. It was not farmers but industrialists who were being subsidized.

The Lazy Peasant

How did “lazy” Turkish cotton growers do in terms of yields? I have asked this question to the same Agricultural Bank director who had accused farmers of being lazy. He said, “I went to America once, and saw farms. They are very developed. They do everything with machines. Their yield is phenomenal. I have told you, we have to reconsider our policies.” I realized during my fieldwork that such an a priori acceptance of inferiority was quite common among many, who are in one way or another related to cotton farmers, but, who do not live in a village. A large cotton farm owner, who had been the president of the town’s mercantile exchange for more that thirty years answered the same question as follows:

“You know my family is the first family who grew cotton here in the region. I went to America. Their yield is wonderful. They get 550 to 600 kilos from each donum⁹. When we get 400 now in Turkey, we feel lucky. I think the soil has become old now. We used so much fertilizer. Cotton has been grown for fifty years in this region. The land has become exhausted.”

When one hears the same thing many times, one starts to take it for granted. Had I not double-checked the figures, I would have believed that Anatolian farmers were in fact less productive than their U.S. counterparts. Yet, in the last decade, the average yield of Anatolian producers has been 1150 kg of lint cotton per hectare, and in 2000 the yield reached a record level of 1314 kg, which in the same year made Turkish farmers the most productive in the world. The US farmers’ and agro-business’ average cotton yield in the same decade was 750 kg, whereas the world average was 565 kg.¹⁰

Moreover, Turkish farmers tend to sow cotton even in salinated soil as long as the soil has minimum requirements for cotton cultivation. In the Tuna region where I did my fieldwork for instance, small producers who own highly salinated land, continue to grow cotton as long as the monetary cost is less than what they can earn by selling it, even though they can only achieve 600 kg of lint per hectare, half of the country average. In the US, it is not economical to grow cotton on salinated soil. Therefore if one disregards the production in salinated soil, the average yield jumps to 1785 kg in Tuna, which is two times more than the US yield, and three times more than that of the world average.

⁹ One donum is 1,000 square meters, 0.1 hectare and 0.247 acre.

¹⁰ The figures are taken from the USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service website. Please see www.usda.gov. International Cotton Advisory Committee publishes the same statistics, available at www.icac.org.

Altan's much acclaimed book proposed solving Turkey's large economic crisis with a small policy change: increasing the average size of land holding. This would, according to him, both increase the yield and decrease the cost of agricultural production in Turkey. I asked a large landowner, whose land size is larger than the total amount of land that the 250 farmers own in the village I did my fieldwork, whether large farmers are doing better in terms of yields and costs. He demurred for a short while and then told me, while his computer was starting up, that being honest was very important for him, and that other landowners would answer the same question in a different way. While frequently touching the computer screen in front of him with his index finger, he said:

“I can show you the whole cost. You know, I am an agricultural engineer. I have been entering all factors of cost for six years. I arranged a worksheet in excel, so whenever I enter the amount in Turkish Liras, the program converts the amount to US dollar, so that I can control the currency fluctuations. Here you see? We (referring to large landowners) are spending cash for everything. Here is what I have spent. It is too much, no? And here is my yield. Yes, it is very low. As a rule we can say that, compared to small farms, large farms spend twenty percent more money and get twenty percent less yield.”

He downloaded all the worksheets he had carefully prepared to a floppy diskette. I thought that his twin twenty percents did not sound quite convincing while I watched him hibernate his computer. I went back to the village and checked his figures with those I had gathered in the village. He was almost right about the difference between the cost of large and small farmers. His production cost for the last year was fourteen percent more than the cost of Pamukkoy farmers who hold less than twenty donums; his yield was thirty percent less than the same population.

It was quite a puzzling outcome. I decided to inquire on the relationship between yield, cost and land size. I had to spend almost a week trying to establish the necessary contacts in order to get the figures for the whole Tuna region. I used the previous year's applications made to Tarım İlçe Müdürlüğü, the local branch of the Ministry of Agriculture, filed by 4855 farmers in order to receive deficiency payment from the government. During an interview with him, the director of the branch poked the blank computer screen with his finger and said, “here you see all cotton farmers, the size of the land on which they grow cotton and their yield. Now we do everything with computers.”

I was quite happy to get the data, but felt perplexed, and even sorry, when I came across a positive relationship between the land size and productivity in my own computers' analysis. Indeed the figures said in their positivist language that large landowners had better yields. While difficult to admit, these findings supported Altan's claims, yet I was still not convinced. This discovery marked one of the most difficult days of my fieldwork.

I called Mr. Öztürk, the honest large landowner who had explained me his “twenty percents theory”, to discuss the issue with him. He was also perplexed: “So it seems that either I am a bad farmer or there is something wrong with these numbers,” he told me while looking at the data next day when I met him in his office. He browsed through the

names -I was not allowed to show the database to others- then found his name on the list and showed me the average yield he got. It was 115 kg. more than what he really harvested. He said:

“You know, if your farm is more than 400 donums the state regards your income as real income, not an agricultural earning. So you have to pay income taxes. Moreover, you have to pay your workers’ insurance and so forth and so on. So what we do is this: we register our land under different people’s names. Check your data base and you will only see five large land owners who registered more than 400 donums here in Tuna. Others are invisible.”

That explained half of the story. The actual average land holding then should be more than what the government statistics would show. Yet this was not explaining the difference between the small farmers’ yield and the yield of big farms.

-It is easy. Look what I do. I cannot use all of the land that I own. Because you know, we have relationships with other farmers who are close to us. My uncle used to have tenants. What do you call it? There was a word for it.

-Share-cropping.

-Yes. I have agreements with my tenants. I get 120 – 150 kg of cotton as rent every year from each donum depending on the quality of the soil. Then I register it on my own account, because it is my cotton anyway. So I got, for example, 300 kg. from my own land. I also add to this figure the amount I got from farmers. My yield becomes more than 350 kg per donum. So when we fill the applications for price support, on paper we look as if we have more yield. But you know it is not possible to file in more than 500 kg yield per donum. Look at the list. If you have for example nine, or I don’t know, seven entries in a row with a yield around 500, you can be sure that it is the farm of a large landowner registered on different names, either under family members or men working for them. Do you understand? Our tenants get less. But in reality they produce more, and spend less.

After our meeting I returned home and tried to locate the families of large landowners and take them out of the official statistics to calculate the difference. I had observed the process by which farmers applied for deficiency payment. I had indeed filed for the family, which I have been living and working with for the last four months. We had to do a considerable amount of paperwork for securing a deficiency payment. This procedure was proposed by World Bank experts together with the Ministry of Agriculture in order to contain what they have called the informal economy. Farmers would hand in all the necessary documents, which summarized their land size, production and other personal information such as birth dates and number of children, to the local branch of the Ministry. The files were then processed in order of delivery and entered into the database.

I realized that for someone familiar with the region, it was rather easy to locate all the landowners. Even I managed to find half of them just by browsing through the data. I realized that there were sharp and sustained increases in yield. Table 1 is an example of the way large farmers divide their land and file in higher yields. Here we see how Murat Savucak manages to divide 3473 donums of land he farms with two of his brothers. The

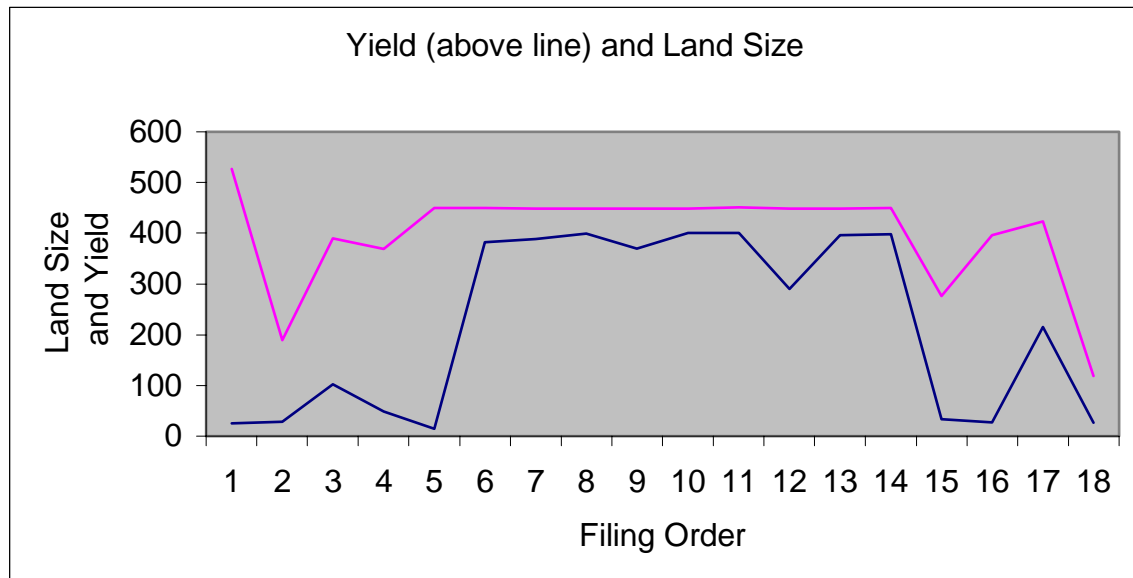
entries five to fourteen can easily be detected since their land size never exceeds 400 donums and their yield is curiously stable and high.

Table 1:

Filing Order	First Name	Family Name	Donum	Yield
1	Mehmet	Kısa	25	526
2	Fatma	Kolcu	28	189
3	Mustafa	Kısa	102	390
4	Osman	Kısa	48	369
5	Umut	Selim	15	450
6	Aysel	Selim	382	450
7	Hale	Tahsin	389	449
8	Nagihan	Savucak	399	449
9	Muhsin	Savucak	370	449
10	Selime	Savucak	400	449
11	Veli	Savucak	400	451
12	Mustafa Ali	Savucak	290	449
13	İhsan	Savucak	396	449
14	Murat	Savucak	398	450
15	Serdar	Kurtoğlu	34	276
16	Musa	Atsız	27	396
17	Salim	Dinler	215	423
18	Mehmet	Yokuş	26	119

A descriptive analysis/picturing makes it even more visible. In table 2 it is possible to observe a sustained increase in land size and almost stable high yields around 450 kg per donum. Looking at these numbers, one can easily argue that large landowners are indeed better farmers than smaller ones, which would contribute to the misrepresentation of the actual performances.

Table 2:



In the next two weeks, I went over the database with four different farmers who live in the provincial town and know the region well. With quite few exceptions, they managed to locate the large landowners, even though some of their land was registered under names different than the land holding family's name, such as Selim, Tahsin and Savucak in Table 1.

After locating the landowners and working on the database, it became possible to rearrange the data and come up with a different politics of representation. It turned out that large landowners had an average of 394 kg per donum, whereas the whole data shows that the average yield was 375 kg. Their yield seemed to be nineteen kg. more than the average, an information which could be used easily to make the point that large farms have been more productive than the smaller ones, whereas the reverse is true.

After making the calculations, I went to the village coffeehouse and came across a friend, Süleyman Amca, a cotton farmer who owns twenty two donums. We talked about how large landowners seem to be more productive if one takes government numbers seriously. He then asked me jokingly, whether my computer knows why small farmers' cost is less than that of large landowners. He didn't listen to my obvious answer and went on explaining:

- You know my land. It is like my eye. I look after it as if it is my eye. I check the crop everyday. I sow it by myself. I don't apply fertilizers everywhere. It is expensive anyway. I know the part which needs fertilizer. You saw me in the field. I look at the field. You know cotton. It is green. Sometimes you look at the field, and the color changes. So you know there is something wrong there. So

- you go, and either put more fertilizer, or I don't know what. You spray some pesticide. You got the point. I do everything by myself.
- But you employ workers to hoe and water the field for you.
 - Yes, but you see, I am always there. I can see what is going on. But think about Can Bey. He cannot take care of his fields by himself. He doesn't care, he makes money anyway. He has 900 donums. So he hires workers, usually the ones either he finds or he knows since he was a kid. They go to his fields and just do their job. You know Mehmet, he works for the Bey. One day I saw him. He was spraying the field. He doesn't care for the color change. He doesn't look at the field. Why should he? The owner or his engineer makes a decision to spray the whole field. So anyway, he was spraying the field. He stopped the tractor while the sprayer was on, and lighted a *Marlboro*. It took may be 10 seconds. All right. But he killed the soil. I mean, you cannot have good cotton from there any more. I mean, this is want happens. Big landowners loose. Workers or overseers also steal you know. The Bey buys fuel oil. And workers keep some of it for themselves. The landowner cannot know. There is one Bey who tries to catch everything. But he is going to go mad. Soon. It is impossible.”
 - Do you then think that those who have less than 5 donum, who do everything by themselves, have better yield then yourself?
 - Yes. Because they are poor farmers you know. All the money they have is from this small field. So, he gets more yield. He gets 500. I get 400. The Bey gets 300. Yes, write it like this.

After a few months, I did more research on the same topic and used the data the Union of Agricultural Sales Cooperatives gathered over the last six years from 200 cotton farmers whose land size was between 1200 and two donums. The results confirmed my previous findings. The larger land you have, the less you produce and the more you spend. It was obvious that increasing land size is not a solution to the current crisis. If Turkey had more large landowners, the average yield would be less and the cost of production would be significantly higher.

The Well-Supported Peasant

In 2001-2002, Anatolian cotton farmers were paid nine cents of deficiency payment for each kilogram of cotton they produced, and they received this amount well after they had invested all their cash in next year's crop. For the 2002-2003 season the government, as a part of the stand-by agreement signed with the IMF, decreased the price support to six cents per kg. In two years Anatolian cotton farmers will not receive any price support.

In the 2001–2002 cotton season, American cotton farmers whose produce is almost the same as those of their Anatolian counter parts, received an average of 34.04 cents per kg deficiency payment through Loan Deficiency Payment and Fair Act '99. This was three times more than the deficiency payment Anatolian farmers received for the same quality of cotton (ECD, 2002).

America is producing almost twenty five percent of cotton in the world. Since the U.S. cotton farmers have been heavily subsidized, they increase acreage each year, which in turn depresses cotton prices in other parts of the world. This leads to an increase in the

volume of American cotton stocks. So, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), aiming at keeping the level of stocks low, pays 164 cents for each kg. of cotton American farmers export.¹¹ This pushes some of the farmers of the third world to switch to other crops such as rice and grapes, which in turn has devastating consequences for those who have already been producing rice and grapes. Because of over-production, prices of alternative crops collapse. In 2000 - 2001 the price of rice in Egypt and grape in Turkey was almost half of what they were a year ago (Emerging Egypt, 2002, p.158).

Moreover, in order for American cotton to be sold abroad, USDA supports its producers by extending GSM credits to potential American cotton buyers. Any trader from the world can apply for a GSM credit, which can only be used to buy American cotton. If approved, the USDA then pays the money to the farmer and then receives the amount from the buyer in the next three years depending on the deal. These deals have quite unexpected consequences for countries with a depressed currency regime like Turkey. In 1998, traders, some of whom did not have anything to do with cotton business, (such as gas station owners) bought American Cotton by using GSMs, and then sold the cotton in the domestic market for less. Since the difference was less than the interest rate the USDA applies, buyers made easy profits, which in turn decreased domestic cotton prices. This way, USDA was killing two birds with one stone: on the one hand it finds customers for American farmers, and on the other hand it finds a way to market the old cotton of the stocks.

USDA supports do not end here. The introduction of Step 2 payments ensures American cotton growers to not to make less than the world price of cotton, by paying them the difference if the price they get is less than the world price. Moreover, farmers are also paid direct income support which is around two cents per kg. The American government also prevents any other country from selling cotton to the U.S. by applying eighty percent to thirty six percent import duty.¹²

Although the American delegates in the World Trade Organization push for what they call a liberal regime, the American government in the summer of 2002 passed a new farm bill which aims at sustaining agricultural subsidies and allocating 180 billion dollars for farm subsidies for the next 10 years. This is 70 billion dollars more that the previous decade, which includes a 40 billion dollars increase in subsidies for large grain and cotton farmers.¹³ This was done when at the same time the IMF and the World Bank are preaching that Egyptian and Turkish governments should wean farmers off any subsidy in order to deal with economic crises and manage an export oriented agricultural production.

11 Also see Schön, 2000.

12 American farmers also enjoy indirect support such as cheap oil. In the EU, the situation is not quite different. Price support Spanish and Greek farmers received from the EU budget was as much as the price of cotton itself in 2001.

13 New York Times, 03/05/2002, p.19. Every year the dollar amount of what American farmers get from the government is more than the sum of Egyptian Central Bank reserves.

The Marketing Director of the Union of Agricultural Sales Cooperatives in Turkey, after summarizing for me the agricultural policies of the U.S. and European Union, said to me:

“This is the world market. Americans do whatever they want, and then send the IMF here. This is why it is called a free market. They tell us that we have to be competitive and to achieve this we should not support our farmers. Then they support their farmers. I don’t understand. Then we put the blame on cotton farmers and accuse them for being the reason of the crisis. Oh yes, they got eleven billion! *Eshallah* (I hope), we will get it next year, so that we can all quit and retire. You know, the IMF never wanted the government to stop supporting sunflower farmers. They somehow forgot to write it down on the stand-by agreement. Yes, wheat, cotton and tobacco are the main problems, but not sunflower. Can it be because Americans are not producing it? I don’t know. It is the free market. We have it now.”

What is the Market?

“Nineteenth Century civilization has collapsed,” wrote Karl Polanyi in 1944. He attributed its collapse to the global expansion of the market and the destabilizing forces it unleashed. His pessimistic view was shared by structuralist development theories of the 1960s and 1970s: market failure was endemic to the world economy, so the state had a crucial role to play in correcting it. The debates of the 1980s, which rested on a renewed optimism about the market, reversed the terms of this argument, blaming the weaknesses of the market on the state. Yet for all the striking difference between them, these opposing views saw the market through the same lenses and treated it as a thing that has either negative or positive impact simply by virtue of its presence (Dilley, 1992; Hindess, 1986).

The study of markets is hardly a new topic in sciences. Political science, sociology, economics, anthropology, and various combinations of these disciplines approached markets in basically three ways: Deductionist Universalism, Institutionalism, and Phenomenology. The first approach is that of market universalists who believe that complex phenomena can be understood by unveiling the main and usually magical logic of their operation. Open any economics undergraduate text book and you will encounter a myriad of examples. According to market universalists, the market refers to any domain of economic interaction where prices are responsive to what they call supply and demand. Unless impeded by non-market forces, all markets emerge because of a natural inclination to *truck, barter and exchange*, and have a natural and spontaneous inclination to evolve into a perfect self-regulating one, in which resources are distributed efficiently, if not justly (De Soto, 1989; Balassa; 1986). Methodological aesthetics of approaching the market in this strand entails the drawing of pictures which combine demand, supply and price. However, as many have pointed out, this approach cannot come close to accounting for the historical and social conditions that create and sustain the conditions of possibility of such a market (e.g. Chaudhry, 1993; Leys, 1996).

Some of the institutionalists challenge Deductionist Universalism while others retain its main terms. There is agreement however that markets require an institutional structure

and that a spontaneous development of the market could be stalled by non-market factors such as the state. In this perspective, institutions directly effect economic outcomes and market agents use them to reach certain ends (Bates, 1989, 1997; North, 1990; Ensminger, 1992; Wade, 1988).

This approach brings the environment of markets into the analysis by retaining the central view of market universalists and encircling it with a universe of institutions: market practices are universal, yet they take place in particular institutional settings. This uneasy coming together of the universal and the particular falls short of providing an account of actual market practices, their emergence, and the non-institutional relations of power, which together inform how agents make a market. Moreover, the universalist idea of the market results in an analysis of institutions that suffers from a formalism which overlooks non-formal and informal relations of production and exchange.¹⁴

The last strand of research is phenomenological in the sense that it approaches its object of study by drawing on the practices and experiences of those who relate to it. These anthropological or ethnographically informed approaches to the market have created one of the longest debates in anthropology, namely the debate between formalists and substantivists. Political Science then jump on the bandwagon in late 1970s.¹⁵

Taking their inspiration from Polanyi (1957), substantivists argued that the study of markets in non-Western contexts required the study of local relations of exchange which were *embedded* in various socio-cultural settings, whereas in the West the market had become *disembedded* (Arensberg 1957; Chayanov, 1966; Dalton 1971; Fried, 1979; Halperin and Dow 1977; Kaplan, 1968; Sahlins, 1972). Formalists, on the other hand, borrowed a framework from conventional economics and applied it to the non-West under the assumption that when it comes to economics, individuals in all social contexts behave in similar ways (Belshaw, 1965; Bohannan and Dalton, 1965; Burling 1968; Epstein, 1968; LeClair and Schneider, 1968; Salisbury, 1962; Schneider, 1974).

Interestingly enough, these debates subsided in the late 1970s exactly when neo-liberal free market reform was beginning to be implemented throughout the world. By the late 1990s, for many in neighboring disciplines and for some in anthropology, *the great transformation* was over.

In the 1980s and 1990s, however, a number of new inter-disciplinary approaches to the market challenged both the terms of the formalist-substantivist debate and the main arguments of market universalists and the institutionalists. These developments also

14 Another way of thinking about the market is the way commodity chain studies approach it. But these approaches to trade networks in a global context, like that of Gereffi and Kowzeniewicz (1994), neither present an account of these networks from the vantage point of their agents, nor describes the nature of local power struggles which are carried out within and outside the chains of production and exchange. Furthermore as Callon argues, the idea of the network in this approach links the agents with an a priori identity endowed with a set of fixed and stable preferences to a rigid structure within which the framework of individual actions are situated (Callon 1998, p.8).

15 See the debate between Popkin 1979 and Scott 1976. For a critique of both positions see Mitchell, 1990.

provided new theoretical openings in field research.¹⁶ Opening-up the black box of markets revealed that it was no more than a blank space, occupied by a diversity of changing social relations both in the West and non-West (Tribe, 1981). It was argued that the assumed characteristics of markets which facilitated economic analysis--such as information or rationality--were highly relative and contextual and that, for instance, it was very difficult not only for market agents but also for social scientists to acquire information (Dilley, 1992, p.5; Alexander and Alexander, 1991) Hence, Gudeman (1986) argued that many existing analyses, drawing on formal economic models, continually reproduce and discover their own assumptions in actual market relations.

Looking through the above described lenses what would one see in an actual world market? It was argued that agricultural markets have been among the best examples of a working free market not only by all market universalists and some of the institutionalists, but also by a few cotton traders I have met in Turkey and Egypt. One of them, a very successful trader indeed, who had a B.A. degree in economics said to me:

“You know what a market is. There are two lines. One is the demand, the other is the supply. When they meet, you have the price. This is called the real price. For example I buy cotton from farmers. So I am the supply line... no, I am the demand. I buy cotton from farmers and sell it to factories or other traders ... So I am both of them. I am both demand and supply. But the farmer is only the supply, no demand. Whatever. The most important thing is this: A market is a place where supply and demand come together and create the price. It is called the real price. But of course this is Turkish real price. There is also a world price. It is a different story, but its logic is the same, the price is determined by supply and demand, in Turkey or abroad.”

How is it possible to think about a situation in which a successful trader claims that he *is* a line, representing an immanent desire to demand and supply? Is this a form of false consciousness, an ideological maneuver or a (mis)representation of how things really are?

The Markets of Cottons

Raw cotton is a fiber, food and feed crop. Approximately two thirds of the harvested crop is composed of the seed, which is processed to separate its three products, oil, meal and hulls. Cottonseed oil is a major component of oil industries. For example in Turkey, cottonseed oil composes twenty percent of the total vegetable oil used, in Egypt it is up to eighty percent. In the United States cottonseed oil is used extensively in the production of snack foods. Cotton meal and hulls are used as animal fodder and fertilizer.

The remaining part of raw cotton is called the lint and is extensively used in diverse ways, from the production of yarn to the production of money, especially in the U.S. According to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, seventy five percent of US paper

¹⁶ Abolafia, 1996; Agrawal, 1999; Appadurai, 1986, 1996; Attwood, 1997; Bourdieu, 1998; Callon, 1998; Elyachar, 1999; Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1990; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Granovetter 1985; Gupta, 1998; Koptiuch, 1999; Mintz, 1985; Mitchell, 1998; Thomas, 1991; Wells, 1996.

currency is made up of cotton.¹⁷ In 1997 alone, 30,551 bales of cotton was used to print new denominations.¹⁸

Farmers from ten countries produce approximately eighty four percent of the world cotton. In the 2001/2002 season, world cotton supply reached 166,114,000 bales and 28,852,000 bales of cotton were exported. In other words seventeen percent of the total cotton production was used in a location other than its original site of production. Thus, the world cotton market refers to this tiny portion of the total cotton trade in the world.

Turkey has always been one of the major cotton producers in the world. After the abolishment of import-substitution-industrialization policies and the introduction of free market reforms in the early 1980s, the domestic demand of cotton significantly increased. Since 1986, Turkey has been a net cotton importer and in 2001, it was the fifth largest cotton importer in the world.

Although the usage of the words “Turkish cotton production figures” produces the effect of the existence of a unitary domestic market, the real marketing practices is far from being unitary. Since the early 1950s, the grading of cotton has been made at regional level. There are two major cotton grades in Turkey, the Aegean and Southeastern. Although farmers of the Southeastern region, who are predominantly Kurdish, argue that the difference relies on an arbitrary division of grading, and that the main motivation is favoring the Aegean cotton produced by Turkish farmers, the current grading pattern is still kept intact. Because of this reason, the domestic cotton market of Turkey is divided into two locations whose cottons cannot cross the invisible borders of standardization. It is forbidden to transport Southeastern cotton to the west in order to be sold to the cotton mills of the Aegean region.

While it is true that in general, Aegean cotton is one of the highest quality products not only in Turkey but also in the world, it is inaccurate to deduce that the quality of a cotton bale from the Southeast is necessarily lower than that coming from the Aegean. Aegean farmers strongly oppose the “importation” of the Eastern cotton to the west. Farmers from the East strongly oppose the grading of cotton with reference to the place of origin. The Turkish government still keeps the regional separation intact and announces subsidy amounts on this basis. What is usually referred to as the “domestic market” then is a misleading category, and one has to talk about domestic markets, even within one national economy.

When one considers what is meant by cotton, the picture of the economy grows more complicated. Without translating the vague term “cotton” to a measurable constant, such as St. 1/White or St. 2/White, it is simply not possible to exchange cotton. Moreover these standards are usually contested and challenged in almost all rounds of exchange.

¹⁷ U.S. National Cotton Council website. www.econcentral.com/money/htm

¹⁸ One bale is 480 pounds. One bale of cotton can make 1,217 men’s T-shirts, 3,085 diapers, 1,256 pillowcases, 4,321 women socks and 3,557 men’s socks.

It is not only the presence of invisible borders of markets and the unstableness of the object of exchange that complicate what is referred to as the market. A variety of problems arise, even if one assumes that there are no internal divisions of the market and that what is being exchanged is stable, i.e., just cotton. To illustrate this point, let's consider the voyage of cotton and the conditions of its production and exchange in Turkey. In order not to complicate the picture, very much like an economist, let's assume that once cotton is produced, it is sold to a merchant. In this transaction, the buyer is the merchant, the seller is the farmer and the commodity is seed cotton, or St 1/Kutlu.

In this transaction, the market seems to center around two agents, -farmer and merchant, and a product -cotton. Yet, there are more agents than immediately visible in this market. Time plays one of the major roles. A vast majority of cotton farmers always sell their products in September and occasionally in November. They cannot store their harvest and wait until they have a chance to sell their product in May, June and July, when the price is always higher.

There are several reasons for this lack of choice. Firstly, cotton farmers borrow either from the Agricultural Bank or from informal cash networks sustained by cotton merchants. Especially since the free market in agricultural credit was introduced, it became almost impossible to secure loans by formal means. A cotton farmer from Pamukkoy explained the rationale of this:

“It is silly. The bank wants us to have money, in order to give us credit. Why do I need money if I already have it? They give money to those who already have it. Then private banks send to the village all these paperwork. They arrive in big yellow envelopes. You know all mail comes to the coffeehouse. So everybody sees it. Others learn that there is a problem. They talk about you. Then if you marry your son with this money, everybody knows that it is because of this yellow envelope. But when you have the money from the merchant, it is easier. They don't send you anything. You go, make the deal, and get the money. No body knows.”

These informal bankers, who are a recent unintended consequence of neo-liberal reforms, usually apply quite high interest rates, usually at least five percent higher than actual bank rates and manage to buy their clients' cotton for less. Moreover, when it comes to buying the cotton from the indebted farmer, it is not uncommon for them to overweigh the produce and downgrade the ginning out-turn of the cotton.

Secondly, farmers need cash to begin investing in the next year's production cycle. For example they need to send around twenty percent of the next year's per diems to the agricultural laborers in advance, so that they can be sure that they will have enough workers to pick the next year's cotton. This point is especially important because if it rains before the harvest, the price of cotton shrinks to its two thirds. As a result, many farmers need to arrange next year's “gang,” as cotton pickers are called, in advance.

Law plays a major role in creating the conditions for maintaining a network of relations and exchange. Law guarantees, to a certain extent, the success of what Callon calls

entanglement and disentanglement, and thus makes possible the transfer of ownership. (Callon, 1998) All markets rely on juridical, administrative systems and tools, which govern the conduct of sellers and buyers. The institutionalization of private property, without which selling and buying is impossible, has the greatest impact on the capacities of agents of a market. Without this framework it is simply not possible for the two lines of demand and supply to intersect with one other.

When these lines do intersect, we are taught by neo-classical economics, the price is set, yet there is neither a global nor a regional price of cotton that represents the monetary equivalence of a bale of cotton in an *actual* market in an *actual* place. Instead, what exists are indices. For example Liverpool A Index, which is commonly accepted as the global price of Grade A cotton, is produced by a mathematical calculation. It is the mean of the lowest prices of the grade A cotton in different local markets plus the cost of transporting it to Liverpool, although not even a kilo of lint cotton arrives in Liverpool.

Market specialists and economists, then, are also a constitutive part of markets. They define and analyze markets, calculate prices and become instrumental in shaping it. Hence, markets become visible in the technical pictures drawn by these specialists. Without mapping the market, it is not possible to talk about it, at least for the majority of specialists.

For example, four economists wrote a report on the efficiency of agricultural markets in Turkey, which was published by the Agricultural Economics Research Institute (founded by the World Bank and Turkish Government). The director of the institute, also an economist, was the organizer of Turkey's First Cotton and Textiles Symposium in 1998. By referring to a still unpublished report of four economists, she said in the symposium that she was "totally against the subsidies given to Turkish farmers because they were upsetting the balance of the market." She strengthened her position by constantly referring to the authoritative report replete with diagrams and illustrations. According to this text, subsidies were preventing the natural price from emerging. Furthermore, the inefficiency of the cotton market, a black shaded rectangular space between the lines of demand and supply, would enlarge if the government continues to support farmers. The problem could be solved by "letting the market work effectively" (Bayaner 1998, her speech).

The very report she was referring to measures the inefficiency of the market by dividing it into two: Aegean and South Eastern, thus contributing to the construction of the political difference. (Schmitz et. al, 1999, p. 106) The text also defines a supply curve, which represents a hypothetical farmer's desire to produce cotton. According to this curve, the farmer would choose to produce less cotton if he realizes that the prices are going down. If the price reaches the shut-down price, the farmer can choose to (actually, in the model he should choose) switch to another commodity. The second curve in the model represents a hypothetical buyer who has a natural tendency to buy more cotton when the prices go down. If the prices go up to a certain point, he can switch to a different commodity or at least stop buying cotton.

However, an analysis of Turkish cotton price and production in the last thirty years displays no meaningful relationship between the two. In fact, Turkish farmers continued to grow cotton even though the prices seemed to be declining. One would expect from these models to predict at least a minor decline in the area of production in 1995, when one year ago the government applied a \$0.5 per kg. export tax on cotton. In just a month, the price declined from 160,000 TL down to 100,000 TL in the Aegean region. In the next year, the area sown increased by 29,000 hectares.

The situation is not quite different for those who buy cotton from farmers. To be able to buy cotton, a merchant has to sustain his trade links. It is these networks of exchange that provide him with the capacity to make profitable contracts. One trader in the Tuna region explained this situation to me while at the same time pointing to a farmer just entering to the warehouse we were sitting in:

-You see him. Last year, he asked money from me to marry his son. I gave him what he needed and signed a contract with him. Now the price of cotton is lower than the contract because of the devaluation. So he borrowed the money almost for free, and I am buying his cotton for more money. But you see, if I don't do this, everybody will know. You have to keep the peasants around you all the time. You don't know them. You work ten years to build relationships, but it takes one minute to loose all the people you have. They have no mercy.

-But you don't do this all the time, right?

-Of course not. Occasionally I pay more just to feel better and sometimes I pay more, because I know that he will go back to the village and talk about me. I have to make profit too, because if we don't exist, farmers cannot sell their produce. Traders are the most important link.

When the transaction between the trader I was interviewing and the farmer just entering the warehouse was carried out a few days after our meeting, there were more than two agents at play: it was September and the farmer could no longer wait. The price, already known by the two parties, was calculated by market specialists. The cotton, which was to be exchanged, was already graded and thus reproduced as a technical constant by standardization experts. The buyer's main motivation was to sustain his trade network. The seller's main objective was to sell his produce as soon as possible so that he could tell the village farmers he was debt-free. The EU and US government subsidies were preventing the farmer from making more money and thus making it impossible for him to offer meat to his guests at his son's wedding. The Turkish government's willingness to meet IMF demands to secure more credit was preventing the farmer from getting more subsidy and thus sell his cotton for less. Neo-liberal economy experts were writing reports on the lives of farmers and their "active role" in the emergence of the new crisis. And finally, the researcher, whose presence made the farmer, (who knew the researcher from the village), leave the warehouse and thereby delaying the payment of his debt for at least a day. Perhaps he was thinking about whether the American, as I was called in the village, would tell others in the coffeehouse what he had possibly learned from the trader about him.

The act of buying and selling is the outcome of political contestations waged outside of the place of exchange. The price summarizes the outcome of the exchange in a particular instance. It is market specialists' and economists' job to gather the prices, run statistical analyses and make up indices which produce the market price. In the future rounds of exchange, this calculated price will serve as a vantage point in the making of the markets. So it is not a vague notion of demand or supply which makes the price, but the outcome of these webs of dynamic relations of power, which transcend local, regional, and scientific boundaries. Yet the experts of the World Bank see them as constructs such as bridges, whose construction laws work everywhere. Indeed they do, yet as long as their maintenance is carried out by economists and market specialists. The study of markets, then, is not essentially different from studying power. The point of entry to understanding them is hidden in the infamous Foucauldian question: "What means are available to us today if we seek to conduct a non-economic analysis of power?" (Foucault, 1980, p.89)

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