



# Chasing Coffee: A New Research Agenda in Turkey

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## Abstract

This article is a call for a new research agenda: a socio-economic analysis of coffee in Turkey. To contextualize the importance and relevance of this effort, it first provides a critical assessment of the literature on coffee in Turkey by focusing on its two main manifestations: historical and sociological constellations. We show how earlier critical engagement with coffee as a commodity and a research subject helped scholars revise and go beyond the existing scholarship. We then claim a similar transformative prospect exists for political-economic manifestations of coffee today. We justify our claim by suggesting six potential research areas with relevant research questions and potentially enriching outcomes.

**Keywords** Coffee · Turkey · Public space · Work · Youth · Globalization · Economic development · Fair trade

Commodity chain analyses to unpack social relations built around commodities in question have been widely used in social sciences. Sidney Mintz's pioneering work on sugar (Mintz 1986) and Wallerstein's proposed framework to apply this approach to other commodities and in larger units of analyses (Wallerstein 2004) are widely known. Coffee is one of such key commodities and, as Wierling suggests, it provides opportunities for a transnational history of societies without assuming the existence of a transnational society (Wierling 2016, 10). Agreeing with Wierling, we argue that coffee allows us to surpass the strict boundaries imposed by nation-centered history, and enables us to problematize the commodity as a mediator of social relations. In fact, it is not only relevant as a useful mediator in a historical context to revise history but also to reflect on current issues sociologically.

A closer look at the literature on coffee reveals its value as a sociological problematic. It has helped scholars decipher a wide variety of topics from colonialism (Kamola 2007;

Peláez 1976; Seleti 1987; Temel 2002) to changing farming practices (Agergaard et al. 2009; Sick 2008) and taste and sociality (Manzo 2010, 2015), from various forms of consumerism (Fridell 2007; Lauri and Backstrom 2019; Zander and Hamm 2010) and the rise of working class cultures (Schivelbusch 1993; Topik 2009), from gentrification (Donner and Loh 2019; Laniyonu 2018; Papachristos et al. 2011) to gender inequality (Lyon 2008; Terstappen et al. 2013), from climate change effects on agriculture (Eakin et al. 2005; Gillison et al. 2004) to international trade (Bacon 2010; Johnson 2010; Macdonald 2007; Rettberg 2010) and other forms of socio-political change (Habermas 1991; Kırılı 2009b).

The vibrancy of literature on coffee in the world is also reflected in Turkey. We will first identify the formation and development of scholarly interest on coffee in Turkey<sup>1</sup> since the early 1990s. Focusing on its accomplishments and weaknesses we intend to make a case for relevance of a social scientific research around this particular commodity in Turkey. We will then rely on this background to make a case for our call for a socio-economic analysis of coffee today.

The rise of scholarly interest in coffee in Turkey was surely connected to the rise of cultural turn in social sciences across the academic world. Arisen in the 1980s and established in the 1990s, the cultural turn enabled scholars to look for alternative perspectives as well as subjects to alter formerly hegemonic perspectives

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<sup>1</sup> We use Turkey to designate not the strict boundaries of the nation state today, but the wider region, especially when we discuss historical studies on the Ottoman Empire.

(Sewell Jr. 2005). However, in Turkey, it also coincided with coffee's changing presence in everyday life. Before the start of the new millennia coffee was synonymous with Turkish coffee—it was cooked and consumed in traditional ways and contexts. In the 1980s, large scale retail coffee distribution emerged in Turkey, and in the 1990s it is followed by large scale international companies (Yenal 2015, ss. 103–104). After the 2000s, Turkey experienced the flooding of coffee into the market especially in two forms: first instant coffee entered the market (colloquially known as *neskafe* in Turkey because of the powerful Nescafe brand owned by Nestlé), and second, coffee shop chains opened across the country becoming ubiquitous. More recently we observe the arrival of a third wave of coffee consumption, with rising numbers of local, boutique, and gourmet coffee shops.<sup>2</sup>

We have three reasons to scrutinize the scholarly interest emerged in this context. First, coffee has bolstered revisionist perspectives of the recent Ottoman Turkish history, altering its focus from diplomatic structures to everyday life of the masses. Second, coffee scholarship helped question the recent articulation of Turkey in the global economic system after the 1990s. It has been used extensively to understand and explain changing consumption patterns and class structures of the globalizing Turkey. Our third reason, which is the central purpose for this article, is that coffee now offers significant opportunities to address current socio-economic issues of Turkey with a specific focus on work and employment.

Corresponding to these three reasons, we will make three arguments in this article. We will first argue that in this short period the scholarly interest in coffee manifested itself in two main ways: a well-established historical constellation and an emerging, yet comparatively smaller, sociological constellation. Though these two constellations are still highly relevant the second one has potential for major development, as we will demonstrate below. We argue that coffee now presents a new and promising research agenda that requires a third approach with different theoretical and political concerns. We call this the socio-economic constellation.

In the remainder of this piece, we will first historicize and contextualize the two existing constellations with special focus on their contribution to contemporary Turkish scholarship. We will show how coffee enabled scholars to ask innovative and alternative questions that transformed the existing approaches of sociological inquiry in Turkey. We will

conclude by articulating a new constellation of academic studies on coffee by identifying six foci of research.

## Historical Constellation

Coffee was first the organizing themes in the sub-disciplines of political modernization/political sociology/social history in Turkey. Concepts like public sphere, public opinion, and governmentality were employed to discuss the larger role of the social life built around this commodity in a radically changing context since the eighteenth century. Among others, Habermas and Foucault were central figures of this rise as it was across the world in the 1980s and 1990s. Large-scale sociological and political changes were analyzed using coffee, thus we call this the historical constellation. To better understand the role of coffee in socio-historical studies, one needs to pay a closer attention to the context of burgeoning literature on coffee in the early 1990s.

The historiography of the 1990s was characterized and complicated by a range of simultaneous developments from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the first wave of globalization, the decline of welfare regimes across the world to entrenched incorporation of the then-called Third World to the international political and economic system. Changes worldwide manifested itself in the Turkish historiography and social sciences with the rising interest in new topics as well as novel theoretical and methodological approaches. The debates that had dominated the preceding era such as the presence/absence of private property, the sufficiency of institutions and bureaucratic infra/structures of modern state etc. to explain the so-called transition from traditional to modern were deemed insufficient (Özbek 2004).

The interest on coffee as a sociological subject emerged in this context for a more nuanced approach primarily thanks to Jürgen Habermas' influential *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. It was not necessarily its first appearance in German in 1962, but the translation to English in 1989 made a formidable impact (Yaşar 2005, 242). One reason for this was the Anglo-American orientation of Turkish academia, especially its internationally engaged wing. Another reason was the simultaneity of the translated volume with the above-mentioned turbulent era: Habermas' work enabled scholars to question the characteristics of public sphere in the Ottoman Empire and assess whether and the extent to which it was critical in the history of Ottoman Empire and Turkey.

Coffeehouses in Ottoman Empire, most notably in Istanbul, became a key focus of scholarly interest as they were not only major social gathering spots but also public spaces forming political identities (Kömeçoğlu 2009; Sajdi 2008). Works by Yaşar scrutinized the socialization opportunities provided by coffee consumption in relation to the tension between space and power (Yaşar 2009) while Kırılı interrogated the same new spaces of

<sup>2</sup> In addition to these reasons we also believe Turkey presents a particularly interesting case as it has witnessed the three stages of changing coffee consumption patterns in a very short time frame. Referring to changing patterns of consumption in three stages is a rather new characterization and are roughly categorized as (1) the mass marketization of coffee (in the form of low quality coffee packaged and sold in bulk), (2) the differentiation of coffee taste and the emergence of pleasure as a goal (in the form of alternative brewing techniques and the introduction of espresso bars), (3) the wine-ification of coffee (in the form of rising interest in the craftsmanship of coffee making and consumption). For a brief discussion, see, (McIntyre 2017).

socialization in the context of social control and the rise of public opinion (Kırlı 2000).

In that sense, coffee and spaces of its consumption were places of opinion making and manifestations of larger-scale social change. As Kırlı argues in his pioneering study: “Capturing the coffeehouse in this framework provides us with an opportunity to observe the structure and dynamics of the larger society in which it was situated. It may serve as an example to understand social relations and as a medium to get a glimpse of ‘what is happening to a whole category of social life’” (Kırlı 2000: 3). Elsewhere, Kırlı invites us to visit coffee houses dispersed across the city in the mid-nineteenth century Ottoman capital if we want to learn the fate of promoted or dismissed bureaucrats, recent developments in distant territories, or the state of trade in the Mediterranean (Kırlı 2009a, 99).

Habermas’ framework was countered by a Foucauldian framework of governmentality. Assigning a more critical role to modernization and its various manifestations in schools, hospitals, courts as well as public places, studies inspired by Foucault invited us to reexamine coffeehouses as spaces where power and public opinion are formed, negotiated, and controlled. Especially works by (Kırlı 2009b) and (Yaşar 2003) highlighted this aspect as coffee became a central element of a larger literature.

The common point of these opposing views was to locate coffee and social life built around it as an emerging space for larger socio-political change. Any discussion on the economics of coffee and coffeehouses were largely absent.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, individual meanings associated with coffee consumption in the world of coffee did not constitute as major concerns either. This phenomenon can partially be explained by the limited access to data, but it was largely motivated by the intellectual atmosphere of the time and methodological approaches it entailed. Coffee and its worlds were seen valuable in proposing an alternative narrative to then hegemonic grand narratives of transformation of the Ottoman-Turkish history since the eighteenth century.

Remaining as a strong field of study in the late Ottoman early Turkish history, coffee houses lost its charm in later periods. They were no longer main contours of public opinion formation, hence vital targets of contentious sites of social control and surveillance. It was put aside, if not completely replaced,<sup>4</sup> by new public spheres emerged such as the media (print media until the late 1990s, TV since the 1990s and social media especially since the 2010s). Finally, social and public life built around coffee houses changed in character significantly especially with its rise after the 2000s.

<sup>3</sup> We prefer saying largely absent as there are no studies addressing the economics of coffee trade directly, however various studies make passing comments on the rising role of commercial value of coffee trade as an instrument of livelihood which caused to the softening of Ottoman Empire’s stance vis-à-vis coffee trade, traders, and consumers. See, (Gregoire and Georgeon 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Discussions on the nexus of coffee and the politics of public sphere continued to exist in studies on the early Republican period, partially because of its declining yet continuing significance in political-public life. For some examples, see, (Deniş 2011; Öztürk 2006; Safi 2018).

In this emerging context, coffee yielded the way for the second and emerging constellation: sociological constellation. As the political significance of coffee consumption’s spatial manifestations declined, its sociological significance went up. A new series of studies focusing on consumerism and consumption culture problematized the “coffee culture” pursuant to the globalization of Turkey’s economy. In the next section, we discuss the formation, main characteristics and shortcomings of this constellation.

## Sociological Constellation

The second constellation, which we call the sociological constellation, entails rescaling interest on the consumption of coffee at the meso-level with more emphasis on the “culture of coffee,” a phrase used extensively in the literature. Works in this constellation highlighted the larger cultural change exemplified by the changing coffee culture. Interest in larger socio-political processes faded in the background, if not completely disappeared. With the influx of these wide range of contemporary social theories into domestic debates, scholars developed interest in coffee as a must-element of the mass culture, and scrutinized the everyday lives of it. A process started in the late 1990s and early 2000s in Europe and the world has found itself room in a rather fast fashion in Turkey and coffee became largely present in various forms in Turkey. We have also seen the emergence of new scholarly interest and thus the sociological constellation in the second half of the 2000s, but thoroughly after 2010. The interest in Ottoman coffeehouses, which was still prevalent, was quickly accompanied by the everyday lives of coffee.

The wider context of these studies is almost always Turkey’s encounter with globalization. With a critical but not so much nuanced understanding of globalization as a process and project, these studies rushed to gauge the effects of globalization as consumerism on Turkish society (Akarçay 2012; Baş and Samsunlu 2015; Kaptan 2013; Yurdum 2018) and the emergence of new areas of commodification (Korkman 2015).<sup>5</sup> Focus on coffee chains, which have mushroomed since Starbucks’s entry to the Turkish market in 2003,<sup>6</sup> has constituted the backbone of these

<sup>5</sup> Korkman’s creative work focuses on not coffee but fortune-telling, a popular practice highly gendered and commodified with the rise of coffee in the early 2000s. Relying on Comaroff and Comaroff’s work on the commodification of occult (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999), she discusses the contours and contradictions of secularist cultural politics in Turkey. For another study on fortune-telling as a folkloric element and outside the coffee shops see (Büyükökutan 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Starbucks may have entered the Turkish market later than many other European countries, yet its penetration has been much deeper as has its socio-cultural impact been transformative. According to Statista database, as of January 2019, with 470 locations Turkey is second to the UK (1030 locations) in Europe. Turkey may be a distant second but her second place is secured as the third on the list, France, only has 175 locations. More strikingly, Starbucks’ expansion in Turkey has not come to a peak point as it continues to expand in the Turkish market.

studies (Çakı and Kızıltepe 2017; Özgen and Karabacak 2013; Richer 2010). Bourdieu, who is a frequent point of reference in many studies on consumption and everyday life in the world, has ironically failed to make himself a room in this constellation in Turkey.<sup>7</sup> Despite rising interest on the everyday social lives of coffee in Turkey, it is still far behind the historical constellation, hence the name emerging.

Social life built around coffee opened room for assessing wide ranging topics from gender equality to taste, consumption culture to use(s) of space. Even though any one of these subjects can be discussed in the context of larger-theoretical questions discussed above, a closer look at the literature on coffee in Turkey reveals a different picture. Two key characteristics emerge: (1) the absence of an analysis of the larger political change akin to the first constellation; (2) focus on present and recent past. Unlike the historical constellation, which discussed coffee almost and always in terms of its implications in the context of larger-political change, this constellation perceived and assessed coffee in a different, if not entirely apolitical, fashion. The second characteristic, the focus on present, may easily be perceived as a matter of convenience, but we interpret that as a reaction to the society-wide articulation of Turkey to the dominant global socio-economic regime, effects of which have been experienced on a deeper level following the 2001 crisis. In that sense, the interest was political with an entirely different scale than the studies on Ottoman modernization. This time the dominant focus was mass culture.

Even though the focus on mass culture is a necessary and highly fruitful area, it also reveals a rather one-dimensional approach to the study of coffee and social life in Turkey suppressing, if not disallowing, more penetrating research questions. The organization of space and contours of socialization are among two such fields. The organization of space and socialization refers to the varying purposes of uses of coffee shops by individuals, especially by the youth. Stripped of its political significance, coffee shops are now described as third places (Oldenburg 1999) or semi-public places (Felton 2012; Yurdum 2018) where individuals congregate not to discuss and engage with political agenda of the time but to kill time, flirt, interact with each other and/or even to exploit the free wi-fi. Depending on the type of coffee one likes, these places are also spaces of performing one's identity, form and express habitus.

The emergence of different “coffee cultures” intrigued scholars to identify the components of these cultures and distinguish different sociological elements in the world. Lefebvre and Bourdieu emerged as key theoretical sources of inspiration worldwide, however received very little to no attention in Turkey, at least thus far. Globally, scholars relied on Lefebvre focused exclusively on the organization of space as well as the

place of coffee shops in the larger urban context.<sup>8</sup> Bourdieu, with its strong theoretical attention to distinction based on taste, influenced scholars to identify different habitus across class. Even though we call for a third constellation, we also argue that the theoretical weakness troubling the second constellation offers a range of opportunities for the socio-cultural and everyday studies of coffee.

Perhaps the only exception to this mass culture-oriented approach comes from gender studies. This is exciting for many reasons, because unlike many studies on gender in Turkey, which often use the word synonymously with women and women's issues, works on gender and coffee approach the subject mostly from the context of masculinity (Arık 2009; Bingül 2004; Dermen 2007; Özkök 2019). The access of women to public sphere through coffee shops has always been a key component of theoretical debates and a major point of critique of Habermas (Fraser 1992). However, recent studies on coffee consumption raised *kahvehane* (the previously hegemonic space of coffee consumption and still a prevalent spatial phenomenon) masculinity as a legitimate field of study. Apart from this, such studies also went beyond the coffee boom after the 2000s and brought conventional and continuing ways of consuming coffee to the agenda of the everyday constellation.

Such studies may have helped expand the horizon of studies beyond the post-2000 coffee boom under Turkey's larger process of articulation to the neoliberal globalization. However, its narrow optic stuck with the consumerism arrested the constellation to expand into arguably more productive and creative areas. The theoretical weakness of these studies, unlike the solid theoretical background of the studies in the first constellation, caused an emergence of a very potent but hitherto underdeveloped literature. Though not our main goal in this article, we would like to invite scholars to a more nuanced study of coffee as it manifests itself in extremely prevalent social spaces across Turkey.

## Socio-Economic Constellation

We argue that these constellations are still valid, and more research is required to achieve critical mass to make more comprehensive assessments of certain eras and contexts in Turkey. A theoretical room for improvement is readily available especially for the second constellation. However, we also argue that coffee today presents a more immediate, rich, and promising research agenda in Turkey: the political economy of coffee. What makes this more important is the fact that it has hitherto been neglected, if not completely dismissed. In this section, we will identify the reasons why we believe this is such an exciting area, we will propose certain research questions a road map for designing

<sup>7</sup> Çakı and Kızıltepe's work is an exception to this: (Çakı and Kızıltepe 2017).

<sup>8</sup> Ironically, Kaptan's, a Turkish scholar, analysis of Starbucks as a three-in-one location (coffee shop/workplace, a store and a museum) relies on Lefebvre's theory of space but does not discuss Turkey. See, (Kaptan 2013).

research to interested scholars. We will do so in the context of two recent developments: i) the shopping mall boom, and ii) the university boom.

### Coffee Shops as Workplaces

Shopping malls (*Alisveris Merkezi* or shortly AVM from now on) are one of the trademarks of Turkey's post-2001 economic expansion. Once a rarity even in the largest cities like Istanbul, AVMs quickly became the epicenter of urban social and economic lives across the country (Alemdaroğlu 2017; Erkip 2003; Sanli and Townshend 2018).<sup>9</sup> The number of AVMs, according to GYODER,<sup>10</sup> rose from 145 in 2007 to 453 in 2019.<sup>11</sup> Since coffee shops are the must-elements of all malls as social gathering places, this boom automatically generated space for coffee economy.

Employing largely young entrants to the labor market, coffee shops in AVMs became a must-locus of scrutinizing the post-2001 labor regime in Turkey. Originally seen by employees as transitional jobs, coffee shop work later became a long-term employment option if not a life-long one. Because of limited existing research on pay and benefits in Turkey, we rely on our preliminary research and suggest that these are entry-level paying jobs with limited to no access to benefits other than basic coverage provided by the government through Social Security Administration.

The post-2002 university boom constitute the other end of the coffee shop boom as one of the effects of the post-2001 economic expansion in Turkey has been the exponential rise of higher education enrollment. The number of students skyrocketed from around 1.65 million in 2001–2002 academic year to 7.74 million in 2018–2019 academic year (YÖK Veri Atlası). This corresponds to a 4,7 times increase in the number of enrollment at a time when Turkish population grew only 1,26 times (from 65 million in 2001 to 82 million in 2018, TÜİK). This tectonic shift had immense effects on the culture, socio-economic status and expectations of the youth.

The rise of coffee houses in every form and shape<sup>12</sup> accompanied the rise of *a la Turca* college towns<sup>13</sup> flooded with

<sup>9</sup> Alemdaroğlu in particular discusses the rise of shopping malls as a sign and symbol of spatial segregation vis-à-vis other spatial developments. See, (Alemdaroğlu 2017)

<sup>10</sup> Gayrimenkul ve Gayrimenkul Yatırım Ortaklığı Derneği.

<sup>11</sup> <http://gyodergosterge.com/detay/avm>

<sup>12</sup> We differentiate three types of coffee houses: (1) transnational chains like Starbucks, Gloria Jeans, Caffè Nero and Caribou, (2) domestic chains like Kahve Dünyası, Osmanlı Kahvecisi and Cafè Crown (Yıldız Holding's failed coffee chain initiative), and (3) locally and/or individually owned mom and pop shops.

<sup>13</sup> A short list may include the sudden growth of Görükle neighborhood near-by Bursa Uludağ University from a small village in the early 2000s to its unofficial population today of 80.000 reached in 2019. Similarly, the formation of Altınşehir district from scratch nearby Adıyaman University (founded in 2006) to a city of its own with an approximate population of 10.000 residents presents another example.

students. Coffee houses have not only played a major role as natural gathering spots for university students, hence the opportunity for more research on sociological lives of coffee, but also presented employment opportunities to college students, hence the opportunity for socio-economic studies.

This opportunity is further highlighted by the rising importance of youth un/employment as a global concern. Cited by Guy Standing as one of the most central—and dangerous—component of the precariat (Standing 2014) youth and the ways in which their mis/articulation to the labor market emerge as a vital social concern. Coffee shops, as major employers in the sector especially for temporary employment, also appear as a locus of first encounter with the labor-market. The varying modes of student employment and expectations of young employees from economy and their work experience bear immense potential. In this context, scholars can study young workers' experience of work, their expectations from the labor market and contours of labor regime in the context of mass unemployment.<sup>14</sup>

### Coffee Shop Work Spatially Differentiated

Big cities may still dominate the scene in terms of absolute numbers of coffee shops, however medium and small cities are also benefiting from the boom proportionate to their size. This offers an opportunity to study changing work practices across space. The variation across large, medium and small size cities may be less visible in coffee shops in AVMs because of the nationally standard minimum wage law.<sup>15</sup> Thus, one may expect less differentiation of employment systems in AVMs in cities of different sizes, however, a valid research question can be posed to determine the penetration of informal work to AVMs especially in the current period of financial stress.

A better place to assess spatial differentiation is the universities' hinterland. The above-mentioned growth of university enrollment took place in two major forms: (i) the rise in capacity of the already existing universities in large and medium size cities, and (ii) the establishment of new universities after 2006 in every city across the country regardless of their size. Coffee shops, without exception, followed every single one of these novel campuses, thus offering a promising comparative research agenda for spatial differentiations of employment models in Turkey. Such studies can make a valid contribution as sociological studies on spatial differentiation of employment models and systems are in their infancy to say the best.

<sup>14</sup> We are currently conducting a research on this very subject problematizing the work experiences of college students at coffee shops and scrutinize the dynamics of the phenomenon of student-workers.

<sup>15</sup> There are no regional minimum wage policies in Turkey, and AVMs are more regulated than traditional marketplaces and mom and pop coffee shops.

Studies undertaking this mission and simultaneously focusing on the youth are even rarer.<sup>16</sup>

Not only cities' changing size and work "culture" but also the size and types of establishments (we discussed three types of establishments above and depending on a city's potential their ability to attract all three of them, especially in international chains such as Starbucks declines) play a role in determining employment structure. Finally, the impact of these universities on the local labor market, particularly in small cities, is another potentially fruitful research subject as the influx of readily available and highly skilled labor-force changes local labor market conditions and workers' expectations.

### Coffee Shop Work Managerially Differentiated

As we briefly discussed in footnote 13, coffee shops and employers illustrate a wide-ranging character from international operators such as giants like Starbucks and Café Nero to local chains such as Kahve Dünyası and Osmanlı Kahvecisi to local and individually owned and operated small shops. The divergence of managerial strategies within these local and individually owned and operated small shops may also present extremely intriguing research opportunities. One may question the difference even among individually owned and operated ones the third wave of coffee houses (chic and craft oriented) operate quite differently than the ones congregating nearby college campuses or similar socially crowded places. The differences of "coffee experience" advertised are different (hence an exciting topic for the second constellation) but our preliminary research illustrates that they reveal a largely varying degree of employment strategies as well. This allows us comparing differing employment models in businesses with different sizes.

However, exciting the variation within the individually owned coffee shops may be, the truly exciting research topic is the difference between international and local chains, especially under the current conditions of prolonged financial distress. Thus, a key question can be: How international and local coffee chains differentiate from one another in terms of managerial strategies? These differences may prove significant in case of a prolonged employment status. Hence another valid research question may be posed as: do young people hold on to their supposedly temporary jobs longer than expected as the labor market opportunities for young workers are limited? If

<sup>16</sup> Gamze Yücesan-Özdemir's work may be cited as one of the main exceptions even though such comparison is not its main goal. In this book, Yücesan-Özdemir compares employment practices and work experiences in call centers, another sub-sector eager to employ college students, across seven cities. Two of these cities are major ones while the remaining five are medium sized and/or small cities. Yücesan-Özdemir's qualitative work paints the differences of experience of and expectations from call center jobs in changing urban contexts. See, (Yücesan-Özdemir 2014)

so, how does this play out with different managerial strategies of international and domestic chains?

### Gender Dynamics of Coffee Shop Employment

Another promising research area emerges with the rise of the third wave of coffee shops. Encoding coffee consumption as a very particular coffee culture, these places ironically reclaimed masculine aspects of coffee consumption of earlier periods without making such connections. Being a barista, in this new generation of coffee shops, has increasingly been associated with men as female baristas are pushed out of the labor market as it reminds us the gender dynamics of professional cooking craft. This is a particularly popular topic worldwide (Brones 2016; Chen 2016; Tauches 2016) and our preliminary research suggests a similar trend taking over in Turkey's craft coffee shops as well.<sup>17</sup>

A master's thesis from 2010 reveals that this dynamic existed even before the rise of third wave coffee shops and prevalent across coffee chains also in varying degrees (Richer 2010). In his study on major chains in Turkey, Richer found that work at coffee shops provided women a space for visibility in a country characterized by low labor-participation rates but it also reproduced gender roles and norms especially through defining their labor through corporate branding practices. Besides, gender, Richer argues, plays a key role in determining job allocations, promotions and similar work specific decisions.

In an industry (food service) that has been dominated by men, coffee industry with its relatively even gender ratio both created a space for opportunity and brought new forms of differentiation based on gender. This presents an opportunity for research questioning the changing dynamics of gender in the labor market. It also allows us to think this in relation to youth, as they are vastly over-represented in the industry.

### Fair Trade, Ethical Trade or Else?

The absence of any serious interest on how coffee is sourced presents another opportunity to identify the habitus of Turkish coffee consumers. The lack of any interest in fair-trade is particularly puzzling especially given the fact that two major coffee chains (Caffe Nero and Caribou) offering various fair-trade options to their customers. Addressing the same issue, if not the same clientele, Starbucks recently introduced a rather vague concept of Ethical Trade with sub-issues such as farmer support and responsible production. According to the brief bio on the company's website the former initiative covers credit support to coffee farmers worldwide, while the latter prioritizes economic

<sup>17</sup> We are in the process of designing a research project on masculinities associated with the third wave coffee consumption in Turkey.

accountability, transparency and environmental leadership. As vague as these concepts are, they present no specific initiative to Turkey or how coffee is sourced into Turkey.

More importantly, none of the initiatives are marketed to the end consumer in Turkish market which poses a potentially very intriguing question: Even though the ways in which coffee is sourced (fair-trade or otherwise) is an integral part of any public discourse on coffee in the world, how and why there is virtually no public discussion about it in Turkey? This absence becomes even stranger as some versions of fair-trade coffee is sold and bought in Turkey by the above-mentioned coffee chains. However, they do not even promote it as part of their marketing strategy. Researchers can further contextualize the habitus of Turkish consumers, who perceive themselves as highly ethics-conscious by a recent study conducted by IPSOS (Speed 2019).<sup>18</sup> The gap between the patterns coffee consumption, where it is highly easy and convenient to follow the “ethical” consumption principles, and consumer’s claim to be ethically-conscious offers an intriguing research agenda.

From a comparative perspective, one may also pose a question comparing the prevalence of the ethics of coffee consumption in Euro-America and absence of such attitudes (or quite limited nature of it to the third-generation craft coffee shops in big cities and wealthier zip codes). The depth of international literature on this subject can potentially be very helpful in crafting research questions and designing research projects.<sup>19</sup>

### What Happened to Turkish Coffee?

This same process has also changed the status of Turkish coffee as the rise of other forms of coffee consumption has not rendered Turkish coffee irrelevant but forced it to adapt to new conditions. The sixth and final potential research area we will propose is the contours of Turkish coffee consumption. This requires extra attention as Turkish coffee beans or the way beans are roasted have largely remained the same, however the presentation of the commodity has evolved significantly. Companies focusing on Turkish coffee put more emphasis on branding and slight changes in cooking practices. Product differentiation efforts have been centered around taste and the construction of that taste through social classes. Formerly local brands with limited outreach such as Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi expanded its operation and framed its brand around traditional codes as the purveyor of the original traditional Turkish coffee. Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi brand now dominates shelves in major retailers in

Turkey and presents itself as the genuine representative of the Turkish coffee abroad. Focusing entirely on production and distribution, Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi opened no retailers and coffee houses/shops.

On the other end of the spectrum, we have witnessed the rise of high-end Turkish coffee consumption promoted and represented the best by brands such as Selamlıque. Despite their common reference to its traditional roots, Selamlıque diverges from Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi as it promotes its product not only as high-end but also as a life-style choice. In Selamlıque’s concept coffee consumption is a privilege and targets not a larger but more elite group of consumers. Its altered engagement with historical roots is presented in an almost extravagant way in its corporately owned and operated shops.

The survival of Turkish coffee against the differentiation of coffee consumption, therefore, has not been without paradigmatic changes. A socio-economic analysis of this change, we believe, offers us great opportunities to assess the linkage between changing consumption patterns and class positions in the context of expanding Turkish coffee market.

### Conclusion

We had two main goals in this article: 1) establishing the contours of the existing literature on coffee in Turkey, and 2) proposing a potentially very rich sub-field and justify our invitation to scholars of various fields. To accomplish our first goal, we contextualized the rise and expansion of scholarly interest in coffee. We identified two constellations, which we called historical and sociological, discussed their strength and potential weaknesses. We argued that the sociological constellation, vis-à-vis the historical constellation, had more room for development once its theoretical inadequacies are addressed.

With regard to our second and more central goal, we tried to make case for a need for political-economy oriented studies on coffee in Turkey today. This will help us better understand the post-2001 economic transformation of Turkey with a specific focus on its labor market implications especially for the youth. More importantly, the emphasis on youth and their misarticulation to the labor market does not trouble Turkey alone, on the contrary, it is a mere reflection of a global trend where capitalism fails to generate opportunities for this segment of the population. Therefore, interest in coffee will not only allow scholars to inquire a problem deeply troubling Turkey but also help them understand and contextualize its dynamics in a comparative perspective. In that sense, once again coffee as a commodity would act like the bridge between research agendas across the world.

We put forward six research fields and posed relevant research questions to help operationalizing research. This number can easily go up—and it should—as the world of work is

<sup>18</sup> According to this report, 46% of consumers in Turkey care about companies complying with ethical rules, and 36% purchase ethically appropriate goods. See, (Speed 2019, 40)

<sup>19</sup> Fair trade in coffee is a highly popular topic in the world. For some examples, see, (Bacon 2010; Fridell 2007; Lyon 2008; Macdonald 2007; Sick 2008; Terstappen et al. 2013).

complicated by a range of related issues. We hope this article will bring the political economy of coffee to the forefront of academic studies and challenge its hitherto neglected status.

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