

THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ON RURAL WOMEN'S WORK:
THE CASE OF S.S. GÖNEN MERKEZ HASANBEY TUZAKÇI
AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATIVE

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AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATIVE**

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ON RURAL WOMEN’S WORK: THE CASE OF S.S. GÖNEN MERKEZ HASANBEY TUZAKÇI AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATIVE

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This thesis addresses the issue of gender equality in the broadest sense. Taking the example of women's cooperatives as a rural development initiative, it aims to analyze the challenges women (and men) face living and working in rural areas (both on and off the farm). The goal is to identify firsthand the social, economic, and cultural barriers to equality between women and men. Therefore, this thesis sought to hear how a specific group of women represents themselves in a particular location. That is, to listen to women themselves talk about the inequalities and adversities they experience, their responses to them, their struggles, and their coping efforts. Based on the notion that potentially rural development initiatives can enhance gender equality, I discuss the impact of development projects on the relative status and empowerment of rural women in Turkey from a gender and women's perspective. Mainly, I examine the impact of development projects implemented within the context of restructuring agriculture and rural areas. The lives and work of women who are members of this cooperative are examined in terms of evolving gender relations at the micro level under the influence of more extensive global forces.

Keywords: Gender, rural, workforce, women, development

ÖZ

KALKINMA PROJELERİNİN KIRSALDA KADIN EMEĞİNİN ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ: S.S. GÖNEN MERKEZ HASANBEY TUZAKÇI TARIMSAL KALKINMA KOOPERATİFİ ÖRNEĞİ

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Yüksek Lisans, Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları Bölümü

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Bu tez, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği konusunu en geniş anlamıyla ele almaktadır. Bir kırsal kalkınma girişimi olarak kadın kooperatifleri örneğinden yola çıkarak, kadınların (ve erkeklerin) kırsal alanlarda (hem çiftlikte hem de çiftlik dışında) yaşarken ve çalışırken karşılaştıkları zorlukları analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Amaç, kadınlar ve erkekler arasındaki eşitliğin önündeki sosyal, ekonomik ve kültürel engelleri ilk elden tespit etmektir. Bu nedenle, bu tez belirli bir kadın grubunun belirli bir yerde kendilerini nasıl temsil ettiklerini duymayı hedeflemektedir. Yani, kadınların yaşadıkları eşitsizlikleri ve olumsuzlukları, bunlara verdikleri tepkileri, mücadeleleri ve başa çıkma çabaları hakkında konuşmalarını dinlemeyi amaçlamıştır. Potansiyel olarak kırsal kalkınma girişimlerinin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini geliştirebileceği düşüncesine dayanarak, kalkınma projelerinin Türkiye'deki kırsal kadınların görece statüsü ve güçlendirilmesi üzerindeki etkisini toplumsal cinsiyet ve kadın perspektifinden tartıştım. Temel olarak, tarımın ve kırsal alanların yeniden yapılandırılması bağlamında uygulanan kalkınma projelerinin etkisini inceledim. Bu kooperatifin üyesi olan kadınların yaşamları ve çalışmaları, daha kapsamlı küresel güçlerin etkisi altında mikro düzeyde gelişen toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkileri açısından incelenmektedir. Bu araştırma kadınlara, toplumsal cinsiyete ve

hane halkına odaklanmaktadır. Hanenin iç dinamiklerini ortaya çıkarmak, güç mücadeleleri ve eşitsizlikleri, haneyi şekillendiren dış süreçleri analiz etmek kadar önemlidir. Haneye odaklanmak, ekonomiyi toplumsal bağlamı içinde konumlandırarak kadınların tabiiyetini şekillendiren çoklu kesişen sosyal, kültürel ve ekonomik güç süreçlerini anlamamızı sağlar. Yani, böyle bir analiz, kadınların maddi ve maddi olmayan faaliyetlerini ve gündelik hayatta genellikle görünmez olan ve göz ardı edilen emeği görmemizi sağlar. Etnografik bir çalışmada, kırsal kesimdeki kadınların gündelik deneyimlerini nasıl yorumladıklarını ve bunları daha büyük ataerkil yapılarla nasıl ilişkilendirdiklerini keşfetmeyi amaçladım.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın, kırsal, kalkınma, cinsiyet, işgücü



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I would like to start with the social context in which my subjectivity is constructed, considering that the researcher is part of the social world they are researching and believing that reflexivity, which involves perceiving the self through perceiving the other, reflects the researcher's own subjective position and practices.

I was born and raised in the capital city as the only child. It would not be wrong to say that I grew up with a single mother as my father's profession caused him to spend eight months of the year, sometimes more, abroad. Capitalism's "preparing the man for the next day" or "woman provides favorable conditions so that the man can work" was also valid for our household. Since my mother's labor force was "cheaper" than my father's, the man's duty in our household was to ensure the family's financial well-being. To summarize this situation, I can give the example of a birthday card I wrote to my mother in the 4th grade of primary school: "Thank you for being both my mother and my father."

To further elaborate, throughout my life, I have witnessed from my close female relatives that they usually seek their sisters' support when needed, as many women prefer. In addition, I have encountered this pattern in the rural areas of Balıkesir during my visits to my father's family and relatives. In this sense, I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to grow up spending much time with my mother, grandmother, aunts, and other relatives. Although my father and mother had similar worldviews and lifestyles, there were severe differences between my mother's and my father's sides in how they perceived and lived life, perhaps due to sectarian differences. My father's family was a very conservative and religious town family. Even with religious differences, I believe that women tend to stick together in various ways when it comes to solidarity.

Contrary to women's submissiveness and invisibility, which is emphasized a lot in this thesis, I was brought up being told to speak up, not to submit, and to stand up for myself in every wrong situation. I was young when I realized I did not want my turn to come. That must be why, when I was still a child, during our visits to my father's hometown of Balıkesir Gönen and the surrounding villages, I was struck by the place of women in society, their silence, and the lack of any rewards for their hard work. When I asked my questions too loudly, even though I was a child, I could feel the strange nervousness under the smiles of the men in the café, and I would hesitate. One of my first questions to my mother, who planted the first seeds of feminism in me, was, "Why do all the women work with animals and in the fields while the men sit in the café?". Later, this question evolved into "How do they earn money when women do all the work?" In the next step, I learned that women do not even have any social security for all this labor, and I started to realize their invisible labor and how much gender can exploit a woman when it intersects with social, cultural, and economic conditions.

My aim in writing this thesis is to show, to some extent, the micro world of rural women and the inequalities in the world they experience. This micro world may be regarded as insignificant; however, from my viewpoint, they play a significant role in the creation of the macro world and inequalities, and to further scrutinize their interrelations is essential to address the tendency to incorporate peripheral women into wage labor and “deepening feminization of poverty all over the world” (UN, 1999, as cited in Dunaway2001, 4). In addition to the unpaid work of rural women, another realm of inequalities, this thesis addresses the rural women’s workforce. It aimed to explore the feminization of poverty in rural areas of a peripheral country in the light of their own life stories and experiences.

One of the main reasons I chose this topic for my thesis, and even why I decided to approach it with an ethnographic method, is that I have spent much time in the rural areas of this region since I was a child. Therefore, my observations, feelings, and experiences about rural women's labor have a more subjective side, and my thoughts, feelings, and experiences will add value to this study from a feminist perspective. I believe that the fact that I have had the chance to observe the experiences of other

women in Balıkesir Gönen for a long time, voluntarily or involuntarily, along with my own experiences, and that I have not been gazing at this issue from the outside as a cyclops because I have grown up among these women, have contributed to this ethnographic study and close observation I have conducted for my thesis. Somehow, from an early age, I was aware of how invisible rural women's labor was, with feelings that I could not make sense of at first, sometimes saddening and sometimes angering. I started to justify these feelings as I grew up, read, and learned. To make a long story short, I can point to this issue as one of the most significant factors that led me to enter METU Gender and Women's Studies.

METU's women-gender studies program has been a cornerstone for me in exploring how my individual subjectivity is socially constructed and in realizing that my personal concerns about gender disparities are common structural issues of the 21st-century world. The gender-women studies program has contributed significantly to my understanding and conceptualization of how my subjectivity is formed by the intersection of the social world I was born into, my economic, social, and cultural capital, and my gender through scientific perspectives and methods.

For instance, on the one hand, I grasped the significance of universal human experiences such as human rights. On the other hand, I understood the importance of challenging claims of universal truths, which themselves are rooted in particular social and historical contexts. A challenging yet meaningful approach for me has been to avoid adhering to either universalism or relativism and, furthermore, to struggle against falling into these dichotomies. I believe that, through dichotomous ways of thinking, it is possible to polarize the social world and establish one of these categories as the truth, obscuring the workings of power in social life and casting certain social practices as superior/natural/normal. For example, the dichotomous and hierarchical social construction of biological differences between women and men allows specific experiences to be considered as "natural" experiences or part of the "essence" of women (certain roles are attributed to women). Therefore, I turned to reflexivity-based interpretive and critical ethnography to avoid dividing the rich and dynamic world into fixed, frozen, and impermeable categories. Instead of squeezing the relationship between development and women into a dichotomy of

whether development is beneficial or harmful to women's status, I aimed to discuss it through an ethnography that shows the richness of diverse particular life stories. So, in this thesis, I avoided binary oppositions/dichotomous logic; first, I did not reduce the subject into a theoretical yes-no question. That is because I consider the experience of each woman I interviewed as influential; the voice of each woman is essential.

Believing that social experience and representation are not mutually exclusive and that language is crucial in reflecting the diversity of actual life, I endeavored to conduct an ethnography where women represent themselves in their own languages as much as possible. In this thesis, which is, in a sense, the transformation of my ethnography into text, I tried not to stifle the voices of women as a researcher. Furthermore, I believe that the language of those women experiencing poverty and gender inequality, often overlooked by statistics, may offer more relevant tools than the familiar policy-program language for the analysis of the social and cultural world. Moreover, their narratives may offer insights into understanding and describing the relationality between global discourses and local realities.

My approach to addressing the problems I deal with in all sections of this thesis has been to avoid dichotomous thinking and adopt "relationality" as my fundamental conceptual tool. For instance, in my analyses, I emphasized the relationality between categories or processes and the permeability of their boundaries rather than subscribing to dichotomous perspectives that separate economic factors affecting women's status from cultural factors, individual from collective, and local from global. Therefore, in my theoretical framework, I attempted to understand and explain the relationship between rural women and development by drawing on both Marxist/conflictual and modernist/culturalist approaches, following the perspective of Ayşe Gündüz-Hoşgör (2001) and Valentine V. Moghaddam (1990). Notably, I utilized the Marxist approach, specifically the world-system/dependency school, by reading it through Wilma Dunaway's (2001) feminist perspective or through her revised interpretation.

By benefiting from Dunaway's understanding of world-system theory, I endeavored to understand and explain how the world-system approach can be related to a

feminist perspective, how the capitalist restructuring of women's everyday lives happens in tandem with the other transformations that occur in the world and how the structural transformations in the world economic system of the 20th century are associated with the lives of rural women in a specific developing country or region. Dunaway's (2001) work offered me detailed answers to these questions. Her analysis of the world system aided me in understanding and analyzing how a peasant woman's life in Gönen is linked to global capitalism. In other words, within the theoretical framework of the thesis, I thoroughly incorporated her arguments, demonstrating how individuals or communities are interconnected with global economic structures and processes through the commodity chains. Dunaway demonstrates that commodity chains reproduce a basic system, allowing for the endless accumulation of capital. Commodity chains are global mechanisms that enable the unjust distribution of surplus between central and peripheral countries at the macro level. However, before this injustice, commodity chain mechanisms were exploiting maximum surplus from underpaid and unpaid labor. To move away from disregarding women and gender in commodity chain analyses, we need to question how and by whom surplus value is produced at each node of the commodity chain networks. To do this, we must walk through the household doors. Behind these doors, we find forgotten women, women who work longer hours than men to contribute to surplus value. Therefore, what we need is to "re-embed commodity chains in the everyday lives of laborer households at every node in the chain" (Dunaway 2001, pp. 11-13). Following these lines of thought, I aimed to understand and explain the daily lives of rural women in Gönen and their households. This is also an effort to discover the interconnections between the global and the local.

For that purpose, before examining the economic impacts of the cooperative in the case study, I wanted to describe the current economic situation of local women in detail. Findings from my field research indicated that poverty was experienced both individually and collectively among rural women of Gönen. Additionally, similar sufferings caused by poverty were experienced at the local scale, just like those experienced by many women in different places of the world along the capitalist production system. It won't be wrong to say that the feminization of poverty commonly experienced at the global scale is also relevant for the rural women of the

Gönen district. Therefore, I focused on poverty as a social problem that most clearly demonstrates how class and culture, religion, morality, and health dimensions are interrelated. Poverty draws our attention to complex processes where many social problems, the responses of communities to those problems, and power relations are produced, co-exist, and interact. It also illustrates the ambiguity of boundaries between various aspects of life.

Another dichotomy I problematize in this thesis is highlighted by Kaaber (2005) between meeting the daily practical needs of poor women and the larger agenda of change. She argues that the daily struggles of women for survival and broader structural transformations are not mutually exclusive but rather relational processes. In some contexts, they may overlap and support each other. Drawing from Kaaber's (2005) argument, we can consider that, like other interventions, new-generation cooperatives can simply serve as different entry points to larger change projects and have the potential for social transformation. However, this is contingent upon context. If this potential is to be realized, interventions are contingent on each context, commitment, and capacity. In other words, how needs are addressed can be as critical as addressing which needs to bring about broader structural transformations (Kaaber, 2005,4718).

This thesis has been valuable for me in many ways. Every little crumb is very important for women in rural areas, where every condition becomes complex, and the feminization of poverty is perhaps the strongest. In every story I have listened to, I have seen that as poverty increases, the burden on women's shoulders increases and that women are being doubly burdened in order to keep both their children and themselves on the surface of the water. The burden of patriarchal structures on these women living on the edge of starvation as cheap labor in rural areas requires them to sacrifice themselves for their families, especially for their children. As a student of Gender and Women's Studies, I had the opportunity to see vivid examples of every course, notion, and teaching I have taken in this field of research. For example, I came across an example of agricultural companies and factories around Balıkesir increasingly employing cheap labor exclusively among women by the stereotype that 'women are more selfless, work without rebellion, complaint, and cleanliness.'

To sum up, this academically fulfilling research challenged me emotionally as a woman, as a feminist, as a wife, and as an individual who has not lost touch with the countryside. I hope that I can convey all of these feelings to the readers of this thesis using a feminist perspective and method. Recognizing that struggle is long-term, especially in a developing country, considering the cultural, social, economic, and historical context, I emphasized how meaningful it is for everyone to sweep the crumbs and tiny drops of change before their door.

My perspective on this subject, which I have always been interested in, was further deepened when my relative, Belma, and women from rural areas of Balıkesir organized together to establish a rural women's cooperative. One of the first projects of this cooperative, the Pioneer Women Farmer Raising/Training Project, is one of the pioneer projects in the rural areas of Balıkesir, which received a grant from the European Union (EU) IPARD fund. I can emphasize that the inspiration for this thesis is that a relative of mine left her relatively “comfortable” city life in Ankara and moved to rural Balıkesir and worked very hard to realize this project despite all kinds of obstacles, such as social norms, existing cultural values, and patriarchal structures at first. Besides the external obstacles within the cooperative, due to the reasons mentioned above, the husbands of the member women did not allow their wives to participate in these projects. This was another struggle this cooperative faced, and the project required significant effort to overcome. During these difficult times, I can argue that people’s approach to the cooperative has changed slowly and slightly, as the financial benefits of the grant to be received under the project from the international organizations have drawn people’s attention more than the original purpose. The role of these women cooperative in the life of women, men, and children and regarding the change in power relations within the family became apparent from outside observation. For instance, it would not be wrong to say that the number of women of all ages who are critical of men’s authority in the household is increasing. I have conducted an ethnographic study on this cooperative with questions such as to what extent changes in women’s participation in out-of-the-household production induce changes in traditional gender roles in these power relations, to what extent and whether the change is long-term or temporary, and whether it has the potential to lead significant structural changes in the long run.

1.1. Methodology

My research features close ethnography, an ethnographic approach that pays attention to shared social and cultural experiences and conversations but that also reaches into the individual level, taking note of the ways women draw on traditional resources, structures, and relations to constitute their everyday lives, to process changing socio-economic conditions in terms of gender relations, difficult life experiences, and to cope with different forms of subordination.

In this sense, I aim to make an ethnography based on hermeneutic/interpretivism and reflexivity approaches. This approach emphasizes understanding through interpretative phenomenon. Interpretive ethnography application of the hermeneutic approach to ethnography mainly focuses on the uniqueness of each human group, life experiences, the connection between meaning and action, and the values, principles, or norms that motivate any human action. All these are the parts of understanding the process from the interpretive perspective.

The interpretive approach emphasizes that understanding can be employed to comprehend each human group or culture in its particular historical context. In this respect, it sees humans as holistic entities with desires, values, and beliefs. Moreover, hermeneutic epistemology and methodology reveal that human beings are not only rational knowing subjects but also have feelings and intentions. In order to understand people's life experiences, all factors that motivate their actions must also be considered.

As my research study deals with power dynamics in gender relations and personal experiences, it takes into consideration all cognitive capacities of the human being, for instance, the effects of feelings. In addition, all these individual psychological processes are instrumental in producing and shaping cultural beliefs and values. For that reason, shared collective traditions are formed by mutually influencing the individual and society. In this sense, it is meaningful to make participatory observations focusing on life stories to gain information about collectivities based on individual stories. Thus, by observing the unique processes of the social environment

triggered by social events, one can gain information on how these particular versions of perception about gender roles/relations gradually become accepted shared versions of society. According to this definition, observing personal life stories, including unique processes such as perceiving, expressing, and telling in the actual world, sheds light on our understanding of the relationship between the personal and the collective, significantly how rural women comprehend their own experiences and how they relate it to collective patriarchal structures and actions against subordination. I conducted fieldwork between 2020-2023, mainly based on participant observation and relying on the appropriate type of interview for a given social context. Since I started the Gender and Women's Studies master's program, whenever I have the opportunity, I had one-on-one or group-based conversations with rural women, whether they were cooperative members or not, on gender-related issues. I conducted open-ended, conversational interviews and participant observation with the cooperative members. In addition, I organized more formal and semi-structured or structured interviews with cooperative founders and directors. I concentrated on communities in and around the Gönen region to conduct basic ethnography. Since my father's side is from Balıkesir/Gönen, and my relative is the co-founder of the cooperative, I met with and interviewed the women I could reach through my family connections. After completing observations and dozens of conversations and initial interviews, I have decided to conduct close ethnography and focus my thesis on seven female cooperative members; as a women's studies student, I have been working on this project within the scope of my previous courses. In the last two years, I have conducted ethnographic studies based on interviews and focus groups with women occasionally. I have selectively attended some formal and informal community organizations' meetings, rituals, commemorative ceremonies, birth and funeral ceremonies, and weddings. I have joined these gatherings as often as I could. After gatherings and meetings, I have tried to participate in the informal conversations of those who attended the meetings.

In some cases, I asked for assistance in the recording and transcription of some events about the local people's understanding of traditional family, gender relations, and gender roles. In addition to participant observations and informal interviews, I have also conducted semi-structured interviews with the current administration of the

organization. For the research, I have concentrated on the stories of several women I have chosen as striking. I have examined their life stories and activities in detail with the "tick description" method.

Following Hoşgör's path, one can argue that women in Turkey are not a homogenous category, just like a class. In addition, gender/women are differentiated by class, region, ethnicity, and education. The intersection of all these categories shapes whether women benefit or harm from development and how much they benefit from or suffer from it. Moghadam (1990) suggests that the relationship between gender and development and the related discussions of women's wage labor in developing countries will continue to be a subject of interest. Therefore, we need more specific explanations (case studies and comparative research) on the conditions under which women's participation in wage labor is an improvement or a deterioration in women's position. When we consider the context in Turkey, we can see the number of studies on the relationship between development and rural women's work development's waged labor; I aim and hope that this research contributes to such a goal.

1.2. Theoretical Framework and the Present State of Scholarship to the Topic

Over the last several decades, various social science disciplines have discussed the impact of globalization and neo-liberal politics, precisely the structural adjustment policies on the population of developing and "Third World" countries, including Turkey. Parallel with these discussions, the gender-specific effect of development focusing on poverty, household survival strategies, structural adjustment policies, women's work, and women's empowerment has been getting more attention. It is considered that at the macro level, these policies, programs, and processes focus on meeting the needs of global capitalism; they have multidimensional and cumulative gender-specific impacts on class, community, and households at the meso level (Lingham, 2005). When the effects of these policies on women are examined, one can see a polarization/binary opposition. On the one hand, a view sees development as a panacea for women, the 'magic bullet'. On the other hand, some opinions do not see any positive aspects of these policies and programs (Kabeer, 2001). In the most

general sense, this study aims to avoid such binary opposition to explore what development programs and projects achieved and failed to achieve in the lives of rural women in Turkey through their narratives, stories, opinions, interpretations, and anecdotes.

The structural adjustment policies (SAP) implemented in developing countries, as part of the accelerating neoliberal policies in the 1980s and 1990s as part of the IMF and the World Bank loan conditions, led to the transformation of the agricultural sector in Turkey (Yaman, 2020). For almost half a century, the adverse effects of this rural transformation on women's subordination have been discussed in various socio-economic and cultural contexts (Him and Hoşgör, 2017). Until the 2000s, Turkey was one of the seven self-sustaining countries for many years, and in this regard, the agricultural sector was an important area for women's employment (Yaman, 2020). Hence, due to the fact that the rural population occupies a crucial share of the Turkish population, women's employment was also higher than that of the total population during this period (Yaman, 2020). In addition, it could be argued that in Turkey, as in other developing countries, gender inequality in the agricultural sector continues. For instance, while women provide substantial amounts of unpaid labor to production, the transformation of household crops is usually controlled by the men in the household. Although there are some essential studies in Turkey, there is a general lack of studies on rural women's labor market participation, especially on "women's integration into exploitative off-farm work" (Him & Hoşgör, 2017, p. 25) and the impact of development projects on rural women's negotiating power in the household. Hoşgör and Smits, in their study on the role of regional differences, have shown that women with different socio-economic statuses in other regions of Turkey have different attitudes towards gender roles and freedom or 'autonomy' (2006). Therefore, I believe that more case studies are required in various social, economic, and cultural contexts to understand better the effects of development projects on women's lives and status in Turkey.

Following this line of thought, I aimed to explore, from a gender-women perspective, the impact of development projects on the relative status of rural women and the empowerment of rural women in Turkey. Specifically, I examined the impact of the

development projects implemented within the framework of neoliberal policies on the work and livelihood of rural women in the Balıkesir/Gönen region, one of the very first development projects funded by the EU (IPARD). As a case with this sense, I explored S.S. Gönen Merkez Hasanbey Tuzakçı Agricultural Development Cooperative, which was established in 2013 in Gönen and benefited from European Union development project funds to “empower” rural women. In addition, I focused further on the lives and work of women who are members of this cooperative, both in the household and the public sphere. My main question is how female members of the S.S. Gönen Merkez Hasanbey Tuzakçı Agricultural Development Cooperative have been affected in their lives on and off the farm, in the household, and in the public sphere after joining the cooperative. Focusing on this specific case, I reviewed the following questions concerning my research question:

- How are these development projects implemented at a particular local level?
- Have these projects positively contributed to the employment and empowerment of rural women?
- How do these affect women's lives and gender inequalities?
- How does paid employment affect the negotiating power of rural women in the household?
- Whether these projects cause any structural change in patriarchal structures, gender relations, and the household?
- Whether these policies and projects contribute to changing power relations in public and private spaces and helping women be relieved from various forms of subordination.

Although I believe in the dominant role of capitalism and relations of production in gender inequalities and the subordination of women, as far as I am concerned, the explanations that neglect either production relations or cultural dimensions alone are insufficient to understand women's social position and gender experience. Therefore, more than economic class analysis is needed to understand the multi-level intersecting power relations in women's experience, especially in cases where women are oppressed. In this study, I examined the impact of development projects on the social position of women. I treated two interconnected approaches: Marxist

approaches, which focus on production relations and conceptualize women as laborers in the labor force, and feminist approaches, which problematize the patriarchal system in which men oppress women. Consequently, I followed such a path/perspective in my study, as a theoretical perspective that conceptualizes capitalism and patriarchy in interrelation is necessary. Considering that capitalism and patriarchy are interwoven, they affect, shape, reproduce, and reinforce each other's structures and relations. From this vantage point, I can understand and explain the impact of development projects on women's subordination or autonomy. In other words, the "capitalist structure and hierarchical sexual structuring of society" (Eisenstein, 1977, p. 3) should be problematized in their particular relational context. Thus, in this study, I took Marxist and feminist analyses as interrelated approaches and exploitation and oppression since they are neither opposite nor the same concepts. In this sense, in order to explore how Marxist production relations and the patriarchal system go hand in hand, I have drawn on Wilma Dunaway's perspective that analyzes how the late 20th capitalist world system constructed "a modern form of patriarchal relations in which women experience social reality very different from men via semi-proletarian household," a synthesis of ideas from Marxist and feminist approaches that internally critiques the world system approach in "The Double Register of History: Situating the Forgotten Women and Her Household in Capitalist Commodity Chains" in which she presents a synthesis of Marxist and feminist ideas (Dunaway, 2001). Similarly, I followed an approach that focuses on the intersections between theoretical perspectives in women-gender and development literature to better understand the status of rural women in Turkey. In this sense, I made the most of and draw attention to the relevant points of Hoşgör's perspective in her article "Convergence Between Theoretical Perspectives in Women-Gender and Development Literature Regarding Women's Economic Status in the Middle East" (Hoşgör, 2021).

Hoşgör points out that in recent decades, the awareness of the different effects of development on women and men has increased (2001). Regarding this, "whether development improves the relative status of women in 'Third world' countries, social scientists focus on the women-gender and development literature and both positive and negative effects of development on women (Hoşgör, 2001, p. 112). In the

women and development literature, these studies have generally been classified in both models. The first model includes three approaches: one is associated with Western Liberal feminism and modernization, Women in Development (WID); second, women and Development (WAD), which can be seen as a feminist-Marxist approach; third, gender and Development (GAD), socialist-feminist perspective, theoretical approaches (Rathgeber 1990 as cited in Hoşgör 2001, p. 212).

Hoşgör also argues that the WID approach does not address the existing gender structure. This approach assumes that development leads to female liberation by increasing women's participation in social and economic life. This approach focuses on the relationship between modernity and tradition and, hence, cultural themes as factors of social change that women are part of, such as value orientation and religious and 'lay' ideologies (Hoşgör, 2001). On the other hand, WAD, as a Feminist-Marxist approach, focuses on women's economic roles and class divisions. "Finally, GAD represents the socialist-feminist approach, which involves a detailed review of the intersection of household and public structures to discover 'why women have been systematically assigned to inferior and secondary roles (Rathgeber, 1990 as cited in Hoşgör 2001, p. 112) According to Valentine M. Moghadam, the central conundrum in WID research remains whether economic development helps or harms many women in developing countries (Moghadam, 1990). She argues that the goal of "integrating women in development" has been attacked by some feminist researchers of Latin America, Asia, and Africa (Moghadam, 1990, p.11). In consonance with her perspective, two different feminist approaches are evident in the analysis of the development and women-gender relationship; one group argues that women have integrated into development projects, even though these developments are to the disadvantage of many -as a source of cheap and expandable labor (Elson & Pearson et al., 1981, as cited in Moghadam, 1990). "Another group argues that development, especially modernization of a capitalistic kind, has everywhere reduced the economic status of women, resulting in marginalization and impoverishment (Ward, 1984; Sen and Grown, 1987 as cited in Moghadam, 1990, p.11)

Tiano describes three approaches among WID researchers in the second model: the integration approach, the marginalization, and the exploitation approach (Tiano,

1987). According to Hoşgör, integration corresponds to WID, marginalization, and exploitation of Marxist-Feminist (WAD) and socialist-feminist (GAD) approaches in this classification. (Hoşgör, 2001). By this view, the integration thesis has many assumptions in common with modernization theory based on neoclassical economics. From this perspective, development enables women's participation in public life and, therefore, their integration into the modern labor market, as it will expand the job opportunities for women in industry and related services (Tiano 1987, as cited in Moghadam, 1990).

"The marginalization thesis, the most influential early theory of women-in-development, and compatible with dependency theory, holds that capitalist development isolated women from production and political control" (Tiano 1987, as cited in Moghadam, 1990, p.11). As stated by this approach, in precapitalist societies, women's participation in out-of-home production from household production, that is, the transition of the social output from the household to the modern work and factory, occurred with capitalist modernization. In the capitalist development process, while men were drawn to wage labor, women were confined to the domestic area, either subsistence activities in the household or in the informal sector. The marginalization perspective emphasizes in capitalist development that the reproduction of the role of women prevents women from being involved in economic production. Unlike the marginalization thesis, the exploitation approach assumes that capitalist development makes women central to and engaged in industrial production as cheap and easily expandable labor, especially in developing countries. Still, that involvement is more harmful than beneficial. The exploitation thesis is consistent with the Marxist feminist analysis of women in capitalist society (Tiano 1987 as cited in Moghadam 1990, p.11).

Hoşgör suggests that this classification can be grouped into two main groups: modernist and Marxist/conflictual perspectives. She stresses that modernization studies focus on cultural values while explaining the position of women in development. For instance, they draw attention to modern and traditional values that influence women's social position. The strength of this perspective is that they attach great importance to culture. However, the modernization approach does not pay

attention to production relations and social and structural variables and neglects them. The Marxist/conflictual perspective, which explains the position of women in capitalist production relations, can be classified into three categories: Marginalization (emphasizing the wage labor transformation of early capitalism and the social and economic marginalization of women in this process); Exploitation (emphasizes women's participation in the gender-segregated labor market, i.e., capitalist production as a cheap labor store); Finally, they concentrate on analyzing the crucial effects of Dependency School and world system approach (the world economy and the new international division of labor) on women's position. Accordingly, when there is import-substitution industrialization, women are marginalized without capitalist development. On the other hand, when there is export-led industrialization, they are included in economic production (Hoşgör, 2001).

Hoşgör emphasized that none of these approaches alone provide a complete analysis for understanding the status of women in development. It is necessary to take advantage of both of these perspectives, especially to explain the oppression of Muslim women in the Middle East due to the factors affecting both the patriarchal system and the capitalist system (Hoşgör, 2001). Hoşgör points out that it is not possible to understand the status of women in Middle Eastern societies without taking into account the political ideology of Islam. Women and development studies emphasize the impact of religion's political ideology on women's position in the Middle East. Women in Middle Eastern countries are affected not only by "classical patriarchy" but also by what Moghadam (1993) calls 'Islamic' patriarchy, which refers to cultural norms reinforced by the political ideology of Islam (Hoşgör, 2001, 124).

Pointing out how the structure of pre-industrial relations and women's preexisting positions in their communities change the impact of developments on women's status, Moghadam suggests precapitalist ideologies, patriarchal kinship arrangements, and Islamic family law, an essential factor on women's status in the Middle East (Moghadam, 1990). "In this region, patriarchal family structures remain strong in rural areas where women, though unveiled, are controlled (Keddie, 1989, as cited in Moghadam 1990, p. 17).

With concrete examples from Ottoman society, Hoşgör shows how patriarchy in these two forms interact with each other and go hand in hand with the oppression of women. Furthermore, Hoşgör demonstrates with different examples in the context of Ottoman and modern Turkey that social status operates in the interrelation between Weberian notions, such as 'family honor' and 'prestige' and Marxist class division notions on the oppression of women in Turkey (Kandiyoti, 1991). In other words, she points out that cultural and material factors coexist, are interconnected, and shape women's lives and work. Hence, patriarchy is a culturally and materially based phenomenon (ibid).

Hoşgör highlights the only factor affecting women's status is not the cultural factor, although it is imperative. She also points out all divergences, including class divisions among women in Turkey (Hoşgör, 2001). For example, in harmony with the principles of the Dependency School, when we look at the exploitation of women in Turkey as in all peripheral countries, we can say that upper-class women benefit from development more than working-class and peasant women or that lower-class women are exploited more. Hoşgör underlines that the economic position of women in Turkey is heavily dependent on urban/rural and class positions/status. Educated professional women have high-status jobs in white-collar occupations, probably due to government policies of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Hoşgör, 2001). In addition to social and economic state policies, transformation of industrial strategies, and migration, women in Turkey have switched from unpaid work in rural areas to an urban informal economy for the last thirty or forty years (informal mobile or home-based economic unit) (Hoşgör, 2001). Urban women primarily work in the labor-intensive industry, with much lower wages than men in significantly 'unskilled' positions.

To summarize, Hoşgör argues that Marxist/conflict theories better explain specific forms of subordination of women in a particular historical context -the process of capitalist development (Hoşgör, 2001). However, these notions are overemphasized when conflict theories treat cultural and political ideology as mere reflections of production relations. Similarly, she suggests that not only culture and ideologies but also this increasing segregation of women and social stratification should be

considered to analyze women's work. To explain the relationship between women and development, Marxist and modernist approaches should be used together.

Wilma A. Dunaway problematizes that the world system (WS) perspective does not pay enough attention to women, even though they are quite successful in explaining the capitalist world system of production. Dunaway proposes a synthesis of Marxist and feminist perspectives to analyze how capitalism operates by producing gender inequalities and relying on the household, especially on women (Dunaway, 2001). Dunaway, in her study "The Double Register of History: Situating the Forgotten Women and Her Household in Capitalist Commodity Chains," shows that while the World-Systems Theory (WS) has provided crucial insights into the workings of global capitalism and class exploitation, it has neglected the suppression and exploitation of females when analyzing issues central to women's lives (Dunaway, 2001, pp. 1-5).

Dunaway underscores that while his analysis discusses problems of inequality, exploitation, and labor, there is little room for injustices arising from gender differences. She stresses that even though women's unpaid labor is the primary mechanism for sustaining the household, World-system analysts have long ignored the household and gender inequalities. WS authors underutilized Wallerstein's ground-breaking analysis of the household and continued exploring the household as if it were a genderless entity without using the terms women and gender equality (Wallerstein, 1995). In their study of commodity chains, WS analysts assumed that women did not exist in any node or network of this complex mechanism. While this approach has successfully analyzed the global transformations of the late 20th century, it has failed to adequately examine the impact of these transformations on women's gender. It has neglected women's issues and gender inequality until recently (Dunaway, 2001). Moreover, while WS analysts have laid a substantial foundation on the external processes that shape the household, they have neglected internal household dynamics, the actual dimensions of household reorganization; they have failed to explain the internal structure of the household and how power, goods, and resources are unequally distributed within the household, which this perspective eventually admitted (Wallerstein & Martin, 1979;202 as cited in Dunaway, 2001).

According to Dunaway, whether they realize it or not, this "gender blindness" gives a political message: we do not need to know and speak about women's lives. Against this, Dunaway urges us to rethink the world-system conceptualization of capitalism, especially the notions of the household, semi-proletariat, and commodity chain, synthesizing them with the ideas of radical feminism. For her, in this way, we can both liberate household and gender disparities issues from the periphery of the WS research agenda and praxis, and we can direct attention to major global trends of gender inequalities at the end of the 20th century (Dunaway, 2001, p.5). Dunaway underlines that, first of all, we must stop depicting the household as an "ungendered monolith." In order to do this, we need to properly analyze the extent to which capitalism exploits the nonwage labor of women. This inquiry can only begin by understanding the household's internal inequities and pooling strategies.

Drawing on Wallerstein's conceptual framework, Dunaway argues that the "semi-proletarian household", which is the "dominant mode" in the world today, is a mechanism set up by the capitalist world system to meet the increasing demands of workers for compensation, which according to Wallerstein means that some members of the household, who are engaging in wage-labor activities are reduced below the reproduction level of the household (Wallerstein, 1995, pp. 5-6). In this sense, the household can be considered as a unit for "income pooling for purposes of reproduction" (ibid). In this way, within capitalist production, wage workers in semi-proletarian households can assume that other forms of compensatory income can compensate for low real wages. Consequently, the semi-proletarian household finds low real wages more acceptable as they can compensate for the low real wages with more self-exploitation (Smith and Wallerstein 1992, p.15-16 as cited in Dunaway 2001, p.7). Smith and Wallerstein argue, "To subsidize the low and unstable wages of its members, the household pools four types of nonwage income: market sales, rent, transfer payments, and subsistence" (Smith & Wallerstein, 1992, as cited in Dunaway 2001, p.7). According to Wallerstein, most of the world's households meet only the minimum of their survival needs from wages (Wallerstein, 1983, as cited in Dunaway, 2001).

To explore household transformation, Dunaway first draws our attention to the pivotal thesis of the world-system model, the issue of "unpaid" and "nonwage" labor

(Smith et al., 1984; as cited in Dunaway 2001, p.7). While WS analysts use the household as an "*income pooling*" unit, i.e., the accumulation of money and items with a market price, Dunaway instead considers the household as a "*resource pooling*" unit to encompass all sorts of women's economic and non-material activities that are not captured by the list of four types of "nonwage income" in the World-Systems approach. She underlines those the world systems' "nonwage income" list excludes most women's activities. Households are not only units of production and consumption but also engage in resource-allocation, decision-making, reproduction, and economic enterprise, and sometimes produce market commodities, transmit cultural and ethnic heritage, and support or organize anti-systemic resistance. Dunaway also emphasizes that households pool many non-material resources, not only material things (Dunaway, 2001, p.8). For instance, women first and foremost bring to the household their bodies that reproduce human life; they feed babies, and they are the object of sexual gratification. It is women who provide the household with care-giving or specialized eco-medical resources. (Mies & Bennhold-Thomsen et al., 1988, as cited in Dunaway, 2001).

Dunaway suggests that in addition to the semi-proletarian household, another notion developed by world systems valuable analysis for analyzing the exploitation of women and gender inequality is the commodity chain because commodity chains are critical mechanisms of unequal exchanges. They are the chains of the capitalist world system because they emanate from the system; they connect different local world economies; they trap and exploit the entire population without excluding any household. A single commodity chain often exploits several types of waged and nonwaged labor. "The uneven exchange of these commodities between nations... constitutes the very essences of global inequality" (Korzeniewicz and Martin, 1994, as cited in Dunaway, 2002, p.9). Dunaway argues that the commodity chain concept is the most promising notion to integrate women and the household into world-system analysis (Dunaway, 2002).

Dunaway points out that world-systems theorists emphasized the inequitable division of surplus between core and periphery countries. However, long before this usurpation, the commodity chain structured the maximum exploitation of underpaid

and unpaid labor (primarily women). Therefore, to ask how and by whom this surplus is generated (at every node, network, and level of the commodity production chain), we need to turn to the household and ask the following questions:

- To what extent does the commodity chain shift material, political, social, and ecological costs onto households and women? To what extent do lower network households and women in commodity chain networks subsidize higher network households, workers, and consumers? To what extent does the commodity chain structure gender inequality within and between households encompassing all labor?
- The commodity chain is unequal; the distribution of the means of production (also of natural resources) is unequal not only between the nodes of the commodity chain but also within a single node. If we look at it from this perspective, we can make visible the fundamental patterns of inequality that characterize the capitalist process that permeates every aspect of social life.

Dunaway problematizes the world-system approach's view of the commodity chain as a mechanical process by which marketable goods are produced within a spatial network, emphasizing that the economy is embedded in the social structure. Nevertheless, world-system theorists, in explaining the economy through the commodity chain, have abstracted the process of commodity production from its social context (Polonyi, 1957, as cited in Dunaway, 2001). For Dunaway, this mechanistic perspective masks the unequal exchanges within households that permeate everyday life in world system analyses. Therefore, she suggests that we reinsert each and every knot of the commodity chain into the everyday life of working households. We may argue that commodity chains are, first and foremost, interconnected processes, interconnected networks of direct or indirect exploitation of human and natural resources in which a small number of people profit. Hence, just as capitalist oppression is not monolithic, resistance to it is not. Every knot of the commodity chain production process, and therefore the household that contributes labor and resources to it, is a microcosm of the structural inequities of the capitalist world system. Men become agents both for capital and themselves by intimidating and bending women into submission (Salleh, 1994, as cited in Dunaway, 2001). In

sum, women and girls contribute more labor power to household survival than men (Mies et al., 1988, as cited in Dunaway, 2001). Referring to Wallerstein's argument that commodity chains create and transform household structures that allow low-wage workers to survive, Dunaway argues that to demonstrate women's invisible labor, we must ask: How, then, does the commodity chain transform and reshape the household? How do the household and women support the production process through nonwage input (Dunaway, 2001)?

In this debate, Dunaway insistently emphasizes that commodity chain research should not only focus on the material dimensions of commodity but also should have an agenda to document the exploitation of the semi-proletarianized household in order to understand that in the capitalist production process commodity chains create and structure the household so that low paid workers can survive. Thus, she suggests rethinking the relationship between the semi-proletarianized household and commodity chains regarding gender-women. Therefore, Dunaway insistently emphasizes the reality that "every node of every commodity chain is embedded in the gendered relations of household" (Dunaway, 2001, p.11).

According to Dunaway, as capitalism expanded and integrated new parts of the world, it adopted two types of dialectical recruitment. Some members of the household (primarily men) became proletarianized as wage labor, producing capitalist commodities, but "women's labor concentrated into semi-proletarianized activities that are only partially remunerated" (Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1987 as cited in Dunaway, 2001, p.13). She adds that women's entry into the commodity chain took three forms: first, wage labor; historically, women have been wage laborers since the beginning of capitalism (Dunaway, 1995). In the late 20th century, women's entry into the commodity chain followed two trends. In the core, women worked outside the home as wage laborers. In the peripheral regions, women increasingly joined the wage labor force (Ward, 1999, as cited in Dunaway, 1995). However, for poor women, this was often in the form of low-paid or nonwage direct input (for example, industrial homework). Historically, women have participated in piece-rate labor through the cotton industry. With their household-based labor, they produced market commodities or informal sector inputs for export. However, their

labor typically remained “socially invisible”, and they received below-market prices for their contribution to production (Mies, 1982, as cited in Dunaway, 2001, p.13).

In the peripheral regions, women in the 20th century provided industrial homework and other household-based inputs into commodity chains, including collecting ecological resources and recyclables from the trash. In addition to direct wage and nonwage inputs, women supported commodity chains through several forms of invisible labor and hardships provided to the households. Dunaway underscores that the capitalist mode of production led to a new gendered division of labor (a new sexual division of labor) and that this shift continues in today's capitalist world system. Consequently, the world system transforms women into the last link in a chain of exploitation enabled by their unpaid labor, the reproduction of the workforce, and unrewarded subsidization of male-dominated labor (Mies et al., 1988, as cited in Dunaway, 2001).

Dunaway shows the hidden inputs of women and households into capitalist commodity chains. In other words, she shows the different ways households and women subsidize commodity chains: The first is women's sexual and reproductive capacity, the biological reality of women's lives—mothers support (subsidize) capitalism by giving birth to successive generations of laborers. While capitalism depends on women's contribution to the reproduction of laborers, it externalizes the production of this labor out of the economic sphere. Thus, capitalism devalues women's childrearing as a nuance (Dunaway, 2001). Second, households are sites where women perform unpaid labor for family members engaged in paid labor. In this way, women contribute to lowering production costs, subsidizing the capitalist production process along the entire commodity chain. It, therefore, contributes to lower consumption prices and higher profits.

Women do "*shadow work*" outside of the wage labor within formal capitalist structures in order to produce the necessities of family survival (von-Werlhof, 1985, as cited in Dunaway, 2001, p.16). The point is that what women produce in the household is not simply use-value but labor-power (or labor-force), a commodity. It is through this unpaid labor of women that their husbands are able to sell their labor "for free" ("free" wage laborer in the labor market) (i.e., their husbands are able to

work for low wages because the women/household feed and care for them so that they can survive and produce labor to work the next day.

The owners of capital benefit from this because they do not have to spend money on reproducing the labor that will work in this production, thus reducing production costs). Hence, Dunaway underlines that the productivity/efficiency of the housewife is the prerequisite/precondition for the productivity of male wage labor. The nuclear family, organized and protected by the state, is a social factory where labor is produced as a commodity. Therefore, the housewife and her labor cannot be excluded from the production of surplus value. On the contrary, the housewife and her labor are the basis for starting profit production, the foundation of the capitalist accumulation process (Mies, 1986, as cited in Dunaway, 2001). Dunaway argues that this is why the world system has historically parasitically nurtured an army of nonwage workers responsible for producing the necessary conditions for wage workers (von Werlhof, 1980, as cited in Dunaway, 2001). This army of nonwage-laborers comprises women (Emery et al., 1986). During the 20th century, as the world economy experienced intense globalization, poor households were pressured to expand their means and become more self-exploiting (Nelson & Smith, 1999), thus increasing household nonwage activity (Smith and Wallerstein 1992, p.9, as cited in Dunaway 2001, p.16).

According to Dunaway, a third way women provide hidden inputs into commodity chains is by subsidizing the commodity chain in which their household is located. The inputs of a woman/household in one commodity chain node/network can subsidize the commodity chain node elsewhere. In effect, commodity chains structure a network in which workers and consumers at the higher node exploit workers and consumers at the lower node (Dunaway, 2001). Thus, for example, consumer women at the end of the commodity chain in the center can minimize their household hardship by exploiting the low-paid, unpaid laborers in the periphery, who drive prices down through hidden commodity inputs (Dunaway, 2001). This relationship is set up in such a way that women in the periphery are objectively connected to first-world women through commodity chains. It is like the two sides of a coin, where actors on both sides of the coin, who do not know each other at all, are connected by commodity chains.

In contrast, women in the South need to learn what they produce and for whom they produce it; the Western housewife is unaware of the conditions under which the commodity she buys is produced, women's labor, and wages. She is only interested in getting as cheap as possible (Mies, 1986, as cited in Dunaway 2001). Therefore, capitalism externalizes the costs it does not want to bear onto the semi-proletarianized household. By absorbing these costs, the semi-proletarianized household supports commodity chains and capitalist production processes.

To sum up, Dunaway again draws attention to the fact that capitalism places the burden of reproduction of labor-power, subsidizes wage-earners on women, and shifts increasing costs and health and ecological risks onto women and girls. It also externalizes the negative aspects of cultural change and degradation onto women. The capitalist production system of the world system is "a modern form of patriarchal relations in which women experience a social reality very different from their brothers in capital or labor" (Salleh, 1994, as cited in Dunaway, 2001, p.19). Consequently, Dunaway shows that men and women in the periphery do not experience exclusion and poverty in the same way and to the same degree (Dunaway, 2001). With all these analyses, Dunaway criticizes and perhaps complements the world system approach, drawing our attention to the inequalities arising from gender differences within the household. Gender, like class, is also a variable that affects exploitation in the capitalist world system. Therefore, if we are to understand the workings of the household, we have to recognize that there are two classes of people: first, those who are doubly exploited, and second, those who both exploit and are exploited. To treat all peripheral households as if they experience inequality in the same way as if gender differences do not exist is to neglect the worst effects of the world system. Because women experience double resource inequality outside and inside the home, capitalism increases female subordination both inside and outside the household because the world's women disproportionately feel poverty (Smith et al., 1988, as cited in Dunaway 2001). According to Dunaway, the modern world system has restructured gender in forms that allow it to absorb the most surpluses from households to benefit capitalist production.

As a result, Dunaway draws our attention to the fact that gender issues are marginalized, as is the structural position of women within the world system.

Ultimately, women and girls make up the majority of the world's poor and live in semi-proletarianized households. Dunaway urges us to grasp that there are two imperatives for capitalism to survive: the reproductive capacity of the ecosystem to provide natural resources and the reproductive capacity of women as workers and consumers to make the system more profitable. These two facts are convincing enough to put women and households at the center of world-system analysis and research agendas. She underlines that Gender "is not just another variable to be analyzed but is an integral component of the world-system evolution" (Dunaway, 2001, p.23). Moreover, focusing on gender tells us how cultural values are being eroded by capital; it provides new theoretical insights into how macro and micro processes are related, subtle ways of resistance to oppression, and factors shaping group consciousness (Day and Hall 1991, as cited in Dunaway 2001).

Following her way of thinking, the concepts of semi-proletarianized household and commodity chain can be employed to integrate women's vantage points into world-system analysis. Furthermore, as Dunaway suggests, such research "can be utilized to merge macrostructural trends with micro level, where we may discover the everyday lives on which the complex global system feeds" (Dunaway, 2001, p.23). Therefore, Dunaway's world-system perspective has given me insights into this study to understand the particular everyday experience and story of each woman at the micro level in the context of the global world system at the macro level. Women in Turkey, just like class, are not a homogenous category. In addition, gender/women are differentiated by class, region, ethnicity, and education. The intersection of all these categories shapes whether women benefit or harm from development and how much they benefit or suffer. Moghadam suggests that the relationship between women/gender – development and the related discussion of women's wage employment in developing countries will continue. Therefore, this context may need specific explanations (case studies and comparative research) on the conditions under which women's labor participation may be an improvement or a deterioration in women's position. I hope this research contributes to such a goal.

Although I believe in the dominant role of capitalism and relations of production in gender inequalities and the subordination of women, as far as I am concerned, the

explanations that neglect either production relations or cultural dimensions alone are insufficient to understand women's social position and gender experience. Therefore, I believe that economic class analysis alone will not be sufficient to understand the multi-level intersecting power relations in women's experience, especially in cases where women are oppressed. In this study, I examined the impact of development projects on the social position of women. I treated two interconnected approaches: Marxist approaches, which focus on production relations and conceptualize women as laborers in the labor force, and feminist approaches, which problematize the patriarchal system in which men oppress women. Consequently, I followed such a path/perspective in my study, as a theoretical perspective that conceptualizes capitalism and patriarchy in interrelation is necessary. Considering that capitalism and patriarchy are interwoven, they affect, shape, reproduce, and reinforce each other's structures and relations. From this vantage point, I can understand and explain the impact of development projects on women's subordination or autonomy. In other words, the "capitalist structure and hierarchical sexual structuring of society" (Eisenstein, 1977, p.6) should be problematized in their particular relational context. Thus, in this study, I took Marxist and feminist analyses as interrelated approaches, as well as exploitation and oppression, since they are neither opposite nor the same concepts.

Similarly, I followed an approach that focuses on the intersections between theoretical perspectives in women-gender and development literature to better understand the status of rural women in Turkey. In this sense, I made the most of and draw attention to the relevant points of Hoşgör's perspective in her article "Convergence Between Theoretical Perspectives in Women-Gender and Development Literature Regarding Women's Economic Status in the Middle East" (Hoşgör, 2021).

CHAPTER 2

CASE STUDY

2.1. Introduction

The acceleration of globalization and the increasing spread of neoliberalism have led to economic, social, and cultural changes worldwide. There were significant changes in agricultural labor relations worldwide during the 1980s and 1990s as well (Collins, 1995). Mechanization, market changes, globalization of the supply and distribution chains, industrialization of agriculture, increasing migration to cities, and proletarianization of the farmer households were among such underlying changes. As a result, agro-industrial firms increasingly employ women in the workforce for work previously carried out by men (ibid). However, as Dunaway demonstrates, if scholarly studies on agriculture are analyzed, terms like woman or female are only recently seen. There has been relatively limited discussion of gender differences between agricultural laborers and households in academic publications; historically, even though a large portion of the agricultural labor force has been composed of women, even discussions on topics such as plantations or peasant households have often ignored women or gender disparities (Dunaway, 2001).

In this thesis, I have focused on cooperatives that I perceive as potential agents for empowering women, improving gender equality, and reducing poverty. These cooperatives can be considered development initiatives motivated by agricultural and rural restructuring and structural adjustment policy (SAP) reforms in some respects. By focusing on cooperatives, I explored the gendered construction of farming, the off-farming industry, and the gendered control over resources. Derya Nizam's inspiring work, "New Generation Cooperatives: Community, Belonging, and Placidness," compiles research examining cooperatives worldwide from a new perspective. This study provides perspective and insight into the historical

development or revitalization processes of cooperatives in Turkey (Nizam, 2021). Building on this study, I conducted an ethnographic case study investigating the effects of the Gönen Merkez Tuzakçı Hasanbey Villages Women Cooperative on the status and empowerment of women. Nizam points out that academic research on cooperatives is limited globally and in Turkey. Similar to gender inequalities within rural households, the subject of the revival of "new generation cooperatives" has received less academic attention than it deserves. According to Nizam, it is a promising sign that NGOs, activist groups, and even specific segments of the public are beginning to explore cooperatives in the context of a "social economy" or "solidarity economies" (Nizam, 2021, p.9).

Following this line, I have conducted an ethnographic study from a gender-women perspective on one of Turkey's new-generation cooperatives. Following Nizam's caution against falling into the dichotomy of whether these cooperatives reproduce or transform the capitalist system, in other words, trying to avoid the pitfalls of restricting an empirically rich world into a narrow discussion, I aimed to understand and analyze the social reality primarily through the narratives of women who experience it firsthand. Without a doubt, this ethnographic study only exhausts some cooperatives and the experiences of all rural women in the region. Still, it seeks to open ways of seeing a relatively less popular field in the academy from a gender-women perspective.

To systematize the fieldwork research questions and transform results into text at a particular abstraction, I utilized Moghadam's (1999) scale and questions: Moghadam suggests a list of categories for measuring the impact of macroeconomic policies on women or the social effects on women's status. These categories include:

- Political expression
- Work mobility
- Family formation, duration, and size
- Education
- Health and well-being
- Cultural expression

While these categories provide a particular convenience for classification in academic research, I acknowledge that they intersect in women's narratives, much like they are interwoven in their life experiences. Therefore, in presenting the fieldwork data in this section, I aim to stay as authentic as possible to how women see and express themselves.



CHAPTER 3

S.S. GÖNEN MERKEZ HASANBEY TUZAKÇI AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATIVE

3.1. About Gönen

Gönen is a district of Balıkesir province located in the Southern Marmara part of the Marmara Region in Turkey. It is bordered by Manyas district to the east, Bandırma district to the northeast, Biga and Yenice districts to the west, the Marmara Sea and Erdek Gulf to the north, and Balya to the south. As of the 2020 census, the population is 74,871 people. The economy of Gönen district is predominantly based on agricultural production. Many businesses consist of food companies processing cereals and livestock products. Another economic activity of the district is health tourism around the thermal springs.



Figure 1. Balıkesir Province Map

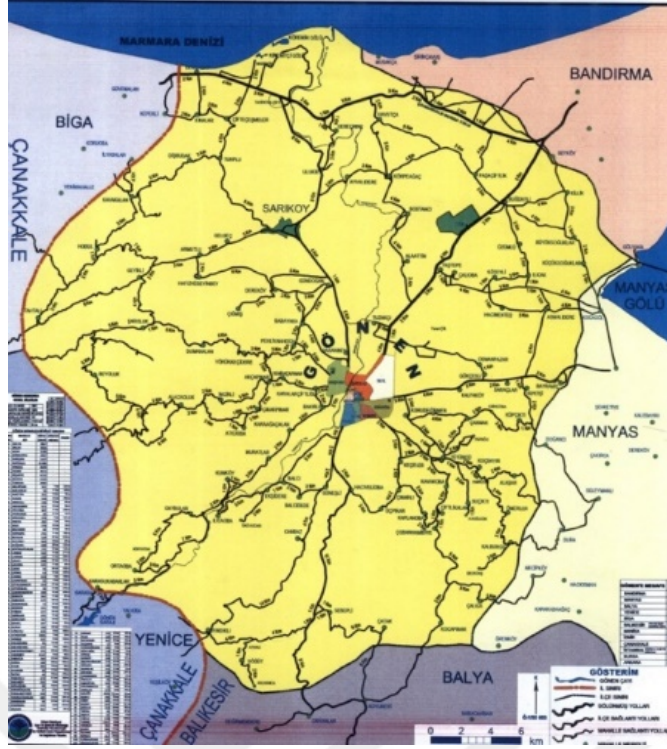


Figure 2. Gönen District Map

3.2. Establishment Story of the Cooperative; Struggle for Establishment

The Agricultural Development Cooperative of Gönen-Tuzakçı-Hasanbey was founded by seven women on May 27, 2013, under the applicable cooperative laws. The cooperative reached 15 members in 2014. Over time, the number of members increased, reaching 68 women members by the end of 2023. An additional 100 women who are not formally cooperative members contribute to the cooperative activities by marketing the needle lace products they produce. The cooperative's center is located in Gönen District of Balıkesir Province. All member women reside in Gönen District and the surrounding rural areas. They belong to low-income groups, engaging in small-scale agricultural production or animal husbandry. Some members also work as temporary laborers in local factories. In addition, to supplement their income, some members produce needle lace and sell it individually in the local market. The cooperative was established to provide economic, social, and cultural support to women with these essential characteristics.

Below are the summary profiles of the seven founding members in 2013.

Table 1. S.S. Gönen-Tuzakçı-Hasanbey Agricultural Development Cooperative
Founding Members

Name Surname	Age	Education	SSI	Marital Status	Residence
Belma	55-60	Bachelors	Yes	Married	District
Huriye	70-75	Primary School	No	Married	Village
Nevriye	55-60	Primary School	No	Married	Village
Narin	55-60	Primary School	No	Married	Village
Müesser	70-75	Primary School	No	Married	Village
Nadire	55-60	Primary School	No	Married	Village
Melek	50-55	Primary School	No	Married	Village

Belma pioneered the establishment of the cooperative. She is the only founding member with urban living experience and a higher education. Born in Ankara in 1965, she spent most of her educational and working life in Ankara. When establishing the cooperative, she needed to gain experience in the cooperative's field of activity. Before establishing the cooperative, she had moved to Bandırma district of Balıkesir province for a couple of years after getting married. She later returned to Ankara after giving birth to her daughter. Facing challenging economic conditions, she started looking for work at 38. Belma describes those days, and the development process of the cooperative idea as follows:

I was 40 when I started searching for a paid job in Ankara. I was facing economic difficulties as my daughter had just started school. I was exploring available job opportunities, but my chances could have been higher due to my age. During this time, the Cultural Affairs Directorate of Hacettepe University offered me an external teaching position. Although the pay was not high, it provided me some relief from my longstanding despair. I started teaching at the university two days a week and also volunteered for social responsibility projects.

I began supporting mother-child projects, especially in the impoverished outskirts of Ankara. As a volunteer mother in a project, we developed in the Çiçin Altındağ Community Center, I assumed the task of empowering women and children in the neighborhood. Meanwhile, I continued participating in voluntary work by preparing other voluntary projects. However, after a while, I realized that any project that was not economically sustainable had no lasting impact. Through my job and voluntary projects, I observed that being part of an activity that makes an economic contribution

also endows women with status in society. However, doing this in a big city was very challenging. During my project works, I had previously encountered EU funds. I started examining projects where I could support myself and other women over a certain age with no chance of employment with the grants obtained through these funds. Nevertheless, all my efforts showed that achieving this in a big city would not be easy.

In her search, Belma went to Gönen to visit her husband's family. During this visit, she came across a market where women were selling needle lace, and she spoke with the women selling them. She realized that needle lace was a significant part of women's lives in this region. Upon further inquiry, she found Professor Dr. Aysel Soysaldı's¹ Article, 'Gönen Needle Lace and Lace Market,'² Which explains the importance of needle lace for women in Gönen:

Lace craft is a technique of decorating objects with embroidery or embellished needle knitting. Needle lace goes beyond a refined and elegant appearance, reaching the level of three-dimensional plastic art. In the Turkish lifestyle, the dowry chest, prepared by mothers for their daughters, is a significant part of the wedding tradition. Due to the skill required in needle lace, it occupies a significant place in preparing dowry items.

In Balıkesir, Gönen, women from the region sell their lace craft every Tuesday at the local lace market. The most sought-after and best-selling products in this market are needle lace items. A lace festival is organized in the district, and in the past, even needle lace competitions were held during these festivals. While lace crafted in the district in the 20th century was knitted with silk thread, synthetic thread is mainly used today. Needle lace is used to produce clothing accessories and home textile products. Besides agriculture, the region's other significant source of income, thermal tourism also provides marketing opportunities for needle lace craftsmanship.

Belma noticed that all the women she spoke to at the market had similar complaints. The merchants bought the lace at a meager price and sold the collected items in big cities at much higher prices. Consequently, women needed to make more from this business. Women reluctantly accepted this situation to make ends meet or, in their words, 'to cover market expenses.

¹ Prof. Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli Üniversitesi, Sanat ve Tasarım Fakültesi, Tekstil Tasarımı Bölümü Öğretim Üyesi.

² Soysaldı, A. (2020). Gönen İğne Oyları ve Oya Pazarı. Folklor Akademik Dergisi. Cilt:3, Sayı: 4, 159 – 172.

In search of ways to ensure women receive their deserved income from this production, Belma visited the Provincial Agriculture Director. She learned there was no women's cooperative in Gönen and no institutional structure related to needle lace production and marketing. The Director expressed willingness to support if she initiated such an organization. Belma continued her story:

After a few days of meetings there, I returned to Ankara but could not make much progress remotely. I frequently traveled to Gönen, but I was not making any headway. In an environment dominated by men, political relationships, and lace traders, an outsider, a woman, especially a blonde woman from the outside, was not given the right to exist. Wherever I went, rumors saying, 'This woman will deceive your husbands and daughters, manipulate them, and victimize them,' were reaching before me. These rumors also influenced the Provincial Agriculture Director and the then-district governor. This issue became more of a matter of honor than economic empowerment for me. Breaking their prejudices about an outsider woman, proving to them that women can do this, meant a beginning for many things to change and, in this sense, the realization of many dreams.

Despite her obstacles, Belma was determined and moved from Ankara to Gönen. To meet the legal requirement of finding seven founding partners to establish the cooperative, she began visiting the villages in Gönen. Belma, who had to navigate this entire process alone, shared the barriers she endured, her experiences, and how she coped with these challenges:

I rolled up my sleeves, and after examining the Cooperative Establishment Regulation, I moved to Gönen and started to search for seven founding partners to transform this effort into a more institutional structure. However, since my goal and target audience were clear this time, I started from the villages. Visiting a few villages daily, I explained what a cooperative is and why we must establish one. Throughout this process, once again, I observed that women and girls are unpaid labor, especially in rural areas. Men earn their income through farming or animal husbandry. They allocate some of their income to household needs and the rest to their expenses (cigarettes, alcohol) and social security payments.

On the other hand, women, in addition to their work at home, in the field, and the barn for the household, children, and maybe finally for themselves, have to perform another income-generating work, however small it may be. For them, the only way to do this is to make and sell needle lace. I tried to convince them to join the cooperative by explaining that the cooperative would be helpful for them in marketing their lacework.

Although she had experience in civil society work while living in Ankara, Belma had yet to gain experience with agricultural cooperatives before starting this process. She was also unfamiliar with the region and the local culture. Her knowledge of the area is limited to her connections with her in-laws. Her knowledge of agriculture could have been more extensive. Despite these barriers, she convinced six other women to establish the cooperative through her determination and tenacity. However, more than bringing these seven founders together was needed to overcome the obstacles. Belma describes the ensuing process:

In four or five months, I could only bring together seven people to establish the cooperative. However, these women couldn't find the capital required to establish the cooperative. We had a meeting with the Gönen Municipality and received a positive response. Finally, as founding members, we went to the notary and completed the paperwork for the establishment. Later, when we went to the Municipality to get the notary fee as agreed previously, we learned that they would not provide support. That was due to the pressure from a 'male' Municipality Council member, who engaged in needle lace trade in the district. The Municipality backed out of its promised support. Unable to get support from the Municipality, I paid the notary fee and other expenses with my credit card. Finally, we established our cooperative on May 27, 2013.

Founding partner Huriye expresses the challenges during the establishment phase as follows:

We decided to establish a cooperative and decided with three women. Then, we tried to establish a cooperative, but it was not easy to establish a cooperative without getting help from anywhere.

Seeking to find support to generate income for the cooperative, Belma applied to the Pre-Accession Assistance Instrument Rural Development Program, an assistance program developed within the European Union Harmonization Laws framework. Thus, the Umay Farm Project came to life. The project was developed in collaboration with the S.S. Gönen-Tuzakçı-Hasanbey Agricultural Development Cooperative, Balıkesir Provincial Directorate of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, Bandırma Sheep Research Institute Directorate, Balıkesir Directorate of Labor and Employment Agency-Turkish Employment Agency, Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality, Ministry of National Education, Balıkesir Provincial Directorate of

National Education, and Umay Farm Animals Protection and Development San. Tic. Ltd. Şti., a small sheep farm, was established with the IPARD's assistance. IPARD's assistance is justified as follows:

The Umay Farm project supports the cooperative as mentioned above in accordance with the European Union's aim to support the preparation for compliance and the development of policies for implementing and managing the Common Agricultural Policy, Rural Development Policy, and related policies.

It became the first project in the region supported by EU funds, and production started with 50 breeding sheep. At the beginning of the project, the cooperative's members performed shepherding and sheep care. The same year, 21 hectares of land were leased from the municipality. Of the land, 10 hectares were planted with fodder crops and 11 hectares with wheat, harvesting 60 tons. Next year, they engaged in aromatic plant cultivation with the income generated from the sale of the wheat harvest. They initiated the "Festival in the Fields" project in collaboration with Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality and the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture. They planted echinacea, thyme, and sage. They sold echinacea and sage to the OTACI company. They sold the oil they extracted from thyme and used the remaining pulp as a feed supplement. They invested the income generated to increase the number of sheep.

As the cooperative started to generate income, the social security registration of five female members was completed. Some members earned income from lamb sales, while others from wheat and straw sales. The needle crafts of the women were marketed through the cooperative. Employing good agricultural practices, watermelon, tomatoes, and Gönen eggplants were cultivated, and the income generated was shared among the producers. The cooperative encountered more challenges in marketing than in production. Belma explains these problems and challenges:

We need facilities to deliver our products for direct market sales. Local slaughterhouses buy the lambs we breed. We also market vegetables in our immediate surroundings. We give the whole lamb. Merchants keep the base

price low. While they buy the meat for 150 liras per kilogram from us, they sell it for 450 liras. Although we sell at a cost of slightly above, they can make a high profit because they can package and sell according to the standards of large markets.

Boutique and traditional family farming are encouraged in many parts of the world. Traditional products are required to be produced using traditional methods. However, when we applied to the District Agriculture Directorate to get a registration number as a cooperative, they handed us a list of materials we would never use and do not need. Despite stating that we would not use them and produce crops using traditional and natural methods, they said, 'Buy these, let us see, and then you don't have to use them later.' We cannot enter the marketing chain since we have not obtained a registration number. Although we are the producers, we become the lowest earners in the chain.

Motivated by the support provided by IPARD, under the leadership of Belma, the members of the cooperative also received training support from the German Cooperative Association. Three founding women members went to Antalya for a five-day training seminar on cooperative management. These kinds of support paved the way for Belma and the Cooperative. Belma describes this process:

I learned that cooperative partners would receive a five-day training on cooperative management and responsibilities at a five-star hotel in Antalya. I immediately tried to get three of our founding partners into the program, and we were accepted. These three women, who had never been outside Gönen in their lives and had only completed primary school, received training and a vacation. At the same time, we had a chance to meet and talk with other cooperative women from many other cities in Turkey. Things began to change when we returned, at least within ourselves and our motivation. We learned that women cooperatives in other cities had gone through the same difficult conditions. Our EU project began attracting the attention of some institutions as it was the first approved women's project in our region. This success showed that we could start working on the next project.

One of the primary objectives of the cooperative is to provide sustainable income for women. For this purpose, 25 women suitable for livestock husbandry were provided 15-25 sheep and a ram through a grant from the World Food Organization. In cooperation with İŞ-KUR, women members received support certificates, opening the door for them to engage in small-scale livestock farming. With the Pioneer Women Farmer Project, 25 small family businesses were established. Three hundred fifty-five women applied for the project, even though the project's participant

capacity was limited to 25 women. Of these applicants, 25 women were selected based on their priority regarding income support and the availability of places to keep the animals. Belma describes the difficulties they faced in determining the women who would receive support:

For example, there was a woman from the Gebeçınar village. She said, "I'm 60 years old, and I still go to someone else's field to pick parsley. My hands and back don't hold in rainy weather. I have no insurance. If you give me three or five sheep, I will herd them to grazing fields in front of me. If it rains, I'll just sit by my stove at home." We listened to many such painful stories, but the budget was limited. Therefore, the selection was very painful.

The selected women received six months of training to get their certificates. Their insurance was arranged during the training, and they received compensation for each day they attended the training. Additionally, the Applied Farmer School project was started, and the women in the project received training on sheep farming from international instructors. Starting with 375 sheep and 25 rams, the project reached eight hundred sheep by the end of 2023. Belma describes this process:

This project was prepared by the S.S. Gönen Merkez Tuzakçı Hasanbey Agricultural Development Cooperative in 2016 and presented to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The project protocol was signed by the Directorate General of Livestock, Bandırma Sheep Breeding Research Institute, Provincial Directorate of Agriculture, Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality, Umay Farm, and S.S. Gönen Merkez Tuzakçı Hasanbey Agricultural Development Cooperative.

As part of the Pioneer Women Farmer Project, previously unemployed women farmers from 15 villages affiliated with our cooperative were selected to receive certification training to raise geographically indicated Balıkesir lamb and oven stock. They participated in a 6-month practical training on the cooperative farm after the certification training. The FAO-funded project received additional support from Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality's Rural Services Department, which provided roughage. Starting as 25 small family enterprises, we aim to continue with 35-40 family enterprises within five years. Each year, more pioneer women farmers are trained to increase the agricultural and livestock activities of women farmers and achieve their economic empowerment.

Another project developed and implemented by the cooperative is the Heirloom Seed Project. Within this project, the production of local Kazak bean seeds was carried

out. The seeds that were produced were sent to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry for examination to ensure correct production. A portion of the beans produced using good agricultural practices was distributed to families in need. During the pandemic, 400 kg of beans were donated to the "Leave If You Can, Take If You Need" project by Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality to provide food for families in need. By 2019, the cooperative had members from 26 different villages, creating new challenges that needed to be addressed due to growth. Belma talks about these new challenges and the solutions brought by growth:

Due to the continued worsening of economic conditions, I rolled up my sleeves to create main activities instead of side activities for the members, significantly to develop a project that would include women who cannot commute from distant rural neighborhoods. Because even if they commute two days a week, they have to pay around 100-150 lira only for transportation costs. Therefore, we started developing more micro-scale local projects. To create a different line of work in each village, we first developed the Woman Goose Shepherd project in the village of Bostancı.

Balıkesir has a type of local dumpling called 'saçaklı mantı.' This dumpling was traditionally made with goose and duck meat. If we are making dumplings, let us raise geese. So, we decided to establish a goose farm, and in the Kaz Mountains, we developed our Woman Goose Shepherd project. Within this project, we started a project whereby some members in this village would raise geese while others would cook meals on the goose farm to generate income. We will complete the project in about one or one and a half months. We will have our own restaurant, goose farm, and goose and duck production; between them, we will have our lavender field of about four decades. Bostancı village has extensive pastures and water sources. Since there will be no feed cost, we can earn more income from the raised geese.

For the same purpose, in Tuzakçı Village, we implemented the Zero Waste in the Fields project. Since it is a village where rice is widely cultivated, there is much agricultural waste. We started establishing small family enterprises by providing sheep in exchange for recycled waste. So far, we have provided 32 sheep in exchange for 500 kg of agricultural waste.

3.3. Thoughts of Cooperative Members on Their Struggle to Establish the Cooperative

Some cooperative member women who participated in a public organization for the first time expressed their thoughts on the meaning of the cooperative for themselves and its contribution to their lives:

Huriye: We gradually gained members. Some backed out, some continued. If one person quits, two more join. So, as time passed, we had many things (members), and we continued to sustain this. We did some work. We made dough products, dumplings, and noodles. We did all kinds of work, and we continue to do so. We did not give up. We always worked, worked a lot. Friends are happy, and we are happy too. Then, thanks to Ms. Belma, we made a project. The sheep project for rural women came out. We also acquired sheep. Each woman was given fifteen sheep and a ram.

We have our notebooks. We record when the medications for all sheep and lambs should be administered and when they should be given. Some happen immediately after birth, and some happen later. There are also injections for some diseases. We wrote them all in our notebook and work accordingly.

You know, (the cooperative is important) freedom is important; now I have money. You can buy everything for yourself. You do not have to ask for money from your husband. You always have money in your pocket. Doing business is a beautiful thing.

Furthermore, I am 75 years old. I still do not give up on them. I will continue, probably. I will go as far as my strength allows.

Ayten: Many people in the village said, 'You are working for nothing.' In other words, you are going for nothing; nothing will come out of these things; you are running in vain. We received quite some adverse reaction from the village. We understood that we were pretty wrong about some things. After that, we met Ms. Belma, who was good for us. We were good for her, too. Since 2017-18, we have been walking on this path together. Hopefully, our children will continue to walk on this path after us.

We have a great team. In other words, it will be enough when I need only one person. A friend... When I tell one person, whether it is about animals or planting the garden, ten people come behind me.

Teachers come to us from foreign countries. Every two or three months. The Farmer School was started. Moreover, when we go to that farmer's school, it's not like a class, but... we're having fun too. We are learning. We learn a lot. We all contribute a lot to each other. However, we also love to have fun.

For those of us who live in a village like ours, for example, when we feel suffocated or bored, we want to go to Gönen. To go to Gönen, we must ask our husbands, 'Can you give me money?' This time, what happens? We are doing something for our husbands; we are in need of a 20-minute trip. Nevertheless, if I had money in my pocket, I would say, 'I am going to Gönen,' just to let him know. A woman earning her own money is significant.

Nihan: In some places, people always grow up as 'me.' Like, I know everything, I do everything, I say everything. After joining the cooperative, I realized that I did not know much. We learned to be We. Ms. Belma added a lot to us, both culturally and spiritually.

We had ministers visiting our farm, and we served them. We offered them the products we made. Of course, people become happy; you know that we exist.

The story of the Cooperative was featured on the program "Hayallerinin Peşinde" (Chasing Their Dreams), broadcasted on the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), and the members of the cooperative talked about Belma:

Huriye: "She never left us. She must also have had an inclination for this job to deal with us. She really struggled; may God be pleased with her."

Woman 2: "She helps in every issue. She doesn't turn anyone away. With our friends, that is. She is everyone's helper. May God be pleased with her."

Woman 3: "She is constantly working, working, working without expecting anything in return. What is her goal? Just to support women gain a little more income."

Woman 4: " When Ms. Belma goes out of the village, I feel as if my arm or leg was broken."

Ayten: "We have a great team. I mean, when I need only one person, I know that it will be enough. A friend... Whether it's about animals or planting the garden, ten people come behind me when I tell one person."

As evident from the expressions, the relationship among members is more like that of a voluntary solidarity group than a formal organizational structure. Members define themselves as part of a family. Belma's approach is closer to that of an activist working to improve herself and disadvantaged women's living conditions rather than a cooperative president or project manager. Cooperative member Nihan's words describe this situation:

When I get bored when I have a problem at three in the morning, I pick up the phone, and there she is, like a sister, a mother, a family member, giving us this feeling as if we were part of a family. Even at 3 am, if we have a problem, I know she is instantly by our side. I met a person with a big heart, a huge heart, who can take us to the doctor when we are sick.

Belma, on the other hand, summarizes her relationship with the cooperative member women and what they have experienced over this long process as follows:

Finding a common language with the women joining the cooperative and their families was challenging. Some families preferred religiously referenced words and a conservative attitude. They were questioning or judging my words, my attire, my style. Some approached only to exploit and use. Moreover, if you allow it knowingly or unknowingly, falling into a group of fraudsters is very likely. Some sincerely came with the desire to work, earn, and produce, but at the same time, they feared exploitation. Understanding these and adapting to the situation took a lot of work. It took a decade to be constantly stable, build trust, and create a style and structure by establishing honest communication with each other. To be the first women's cooperative established in Balıkesir, to open the way, and to set the bar, I paid the price individually, both materially and spiritually. I devoted all my time from my home and family to here. For a period, especially in village coffeehouses, people gossiped about the '*blonde woman*.' They were using this phrase to belittle me. I worked more in those villages that were most conservative, reactive, and damaging to me. I tried to do more projects in those villages. Now, wherever I go, they respectfully or maybe 'fearfully' say, 'Ms. President.'

When I met the Governor of Balıkesir, he said, 'Oh... Ms. Gönen is here too.' I think I am promoted to Ms. Gönen from the blond woman. Although I live in a rural area, I became the first woman to receive the City Gratitude Award.

In cooperative work, especially in a cooperative that operates in rural areas, I learned everything through trial and error: what could be done, what could happen, and what could not happen. This was very exhausting. There was neither an instructive example nor an enlightening legislation. A general law governs the foundation and operations of all cooperatives, regardless of their differences. For example, a construction cooperative and an agricultural development cooperative are being tried to be managed with the same regulations. From time to time, I share these difficulties with relevant ministries and politicians who are members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) Gender Equality Commission and are trying to support the generation of solutions.

The co-founder of the cooperative, Belma, describes the shared values, principles, and common goals of the cooperative processes as follows:

Question: What are your cooperative's values, principles, and goals that are personal to you?

The fundamental principle for me is social justice in the broadest sense. I embarked on this journey with my women friends, intending to produce, experience, and learn

by doing and sharing. Sharing is about making life better for ourselves and those around us. For instance, being a woman or poor sometimes exposes you to injustices and sets various barriers in your life journey. I thought justice begins by struggling with these injustices as much as possible where you are. While establishing the cooperative, I saw that I was not alone in these thoughts; many of my friends felt the same way but did not know where or dare to start somewhere. Our common goal as a group is to exist as women with our loved ones. We have seen that sharing reduces difficulties and increases joy.

Specifically, with the cooperative's educational and other activities, we aim to meet the basic needs of our members, women, and their families by producing, combating gender inequality as much as we can, and not polluting the environment but making it more beautiful.

Question: How do you combat institutional devaluation of women's work?

First and foremost, we had regular meetings with the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Agriculture, and the District Directorate of Agriculture. We pressured them about the policy of equal pay for equal work, asking them to ensure equal pay for men and women field workers among their members. Additionally, as a cooperative, we have struggled for two years to receive agricultural social security payments for our cooperative partners who go for seasonal work, aiming to get higher daily wages.

Question: What narrow approaches or pressures do you experience in a small village, and what roles and duties does a patriarchal society impose on women?

In a small village, they don't want women to go to jobs that would challenge the authority of men or surpass their status, undermining the conservative values of the men in the community. Women are expected to contribute to the household income and fulfill their own and their children's needs. However, their activities should not undermine the position of men in the village or should not be disapproved of by other men in the village. There are still patriarchal values that women in the village should engage with families at the same income level and status.

Question: Do you have any special efforts to keep the group together, constantly develop, and survive?

The number of cooperatives is increasing. We strive to attract new members and reach more women members by engaging in new income-generating activities or increasing the scale of the existing activities. This is possible by expanding existing projects and initiating new ones. For example, in our first sheep project, we started with 50 sheep within the cooperative, and five women benefited from this income. Later, with a new sheep project in collaboration with FAO, we provided benefits to 25 women.

Furthermore, we expand our activities by initiating different projects considering the skills and conditions. Additionally, our members who have been involved in the same activity or project for a long time are still waiting for an increase in income. In that case, they either distance themselves from the cooperative or shift towards activities that will generate more revenue to meet their needs. Therefore, since our establishment, we have undertaken five significant projects at the national and international levels and created regular incomes for 168 members to meet their needs.

We also supported some members by providing labor and sharing their burdens. For instance, we try to meet some of the needs of members who cannot leave the village due to illness or old age, keeping them within the system. Sometimes, we take women burdened by heavy workloads and family pressures who consider sparing time for themselves a luxury on cultural and social trips. We bring women who have never left Gönen in their entire lives on trips to other cities. Some even express their desire to join us to participate in these trips for free.

Question: What environmental issues exist in your locality? Does the cooperative have concrete projects on these issues?

As a cooperative organized in rural neighborhoods, our surroundings, fields, and gardens are heavily polluted with agricultural waste. Due to the lack of a proper

waste collection system like in the cities, we started the initiative to clean and keep our environment clean by implementing the "Zero Waste in Fields" project. We already have two pioneer female farmers in the 13 sheep-husbandry project villages. We collaborated with the Balıkesir metropolitan municipality to install two waste bins in 13 villages, one for agricultural and the other for organic waste. These bins were assigned to our pioneer female farmers. They weighed the waste brought and put it in the containers. They registered the weighted waste in the name of those who brought them. When the waste reached 509 kg, we denoted a sheep to the waste provider. The municipality provided funding in 2021. We managed to recycle 17.500 tons of agricultural waste into valuable resources, received 35 sheep as a reward, and distributed it to those who collected the waste. Not only did we earn, but we also set an example for our youth and created environmental consciousness in the rural areas.

Another example of our environmental project is that within the scope of our sheep farming project, we have been unable to sell the wool obtained from the sheep or sell it at a meager price, almost at the cost of waste. Despite having a considerable amount of wool, we could not process it due to a lack of facilities, and it turned into organic waste. While considering what we can do about this issue this summer, we discovered processing facilities in the Uşak province. As a cooperative, we visited those facilities. We saw that the wool we sell for 5 liras is washed, dried, and then resold to processing factories between 90 and 110 liras.

Upon this, I prepared a project proposal for the GMKA (South et al. Agency). The project is approved in the first place in the field of environmental conservation. With a 90% grant, in October, we started the work for establishing a factory that will utilize solar energy to wash and transform the wool we produce and the wool from neighboring districts into added value. Operating under the zero-waste principle, this factory will use entirely renewable energy to prevent environmental pollution and convert our organic waste wool into value. Moreover, it will generate income from a product that would otherwise go to waste. This new factory will also employ 10-15 women with social security.

Question: Are women concerned about preserving nature and the environment for future generations?

As a cooperative, we have undertaken three projects with a zero-waste approach. These projects involve both educational programs and practical applications conducted by experts. For example, we provided permaculture training and visited permaculture gardens in Yalova and Istanbul. Only a few people know about this concept, even in cities, but the women in the cooperative learned about permaculture and started implementing it in their gardens. One member, for instance, began growing Aronia using permaculture practices.

Question: What efforts do you make to achieve a clean environment?

In their daily lives, all cooperative members create recycling bins in their homes and fields; they give these recyclables to the municipality truck and contribute to the economy and the environment. Also, they strive to produce more natural produce with good agricultural practices. They consciously choose products meant for continuous use rather than single-use items.

Question: What does gender equality mean in the daily lives of your members?

Cooperatives, especially ours, operate in a democratic environment from formation to implementation. All women partners at the cooperative (except myself) are either elementary or middle school graduates. Before joining the cooperative, they needed more voice in family matters, especially concerning meals, cleanliness, and childcare. In the cooperative setting, they participate in voting, electing or being elected to leadership positions, taking charge of project branches, and directing production in their respective areas. The emphasis is on learning, teaching, sharing experiences and knowledge, and, most importantly, creating an environment of empathy. It is about making the environment they live in a livable place.

Question: Can you say "We" exist as women?

In the early days, some skeptics believed and talked around that a woman from the city would come, exploit, and use women for her benefit. When her true intentions were exposed, she would escape to her city, leaving the women in the same state of

oppression and devaluation. However, we found them, and while striving for empowerment within the cooperative, we also organized events to showcase our strength to the community. We invited high-level executives to these events, demonstrating our trustworthiness and unity, proclaiming, "We Exist." With each project and event, our visibility increased. Executives began calling us when they wanted to visit a cooperative or provide images to the media. This benefited us in two ways: first, our recognition and visibility grew, and second, as we gained trust and appreciation even from the highest levels of government, our credibility has also increased in our region. Additionally, we became an example for newly established and emerging cooperatives. We also started to be shown as an example of new and emerging cooperatives.

3.3. Diminished Lives and Skillful Hands

We can describe poverty as an amalgam of social problems that cause devastating harm and suffering to the human experience and the causes and consequences of which occur within/across the same social context. Poverty is a process that is simultaneously related to and involves many issues - welfare, health, morals, religion, etc. For instance, violence caused by poverty can also have cultural and political roots. Moreover, both statistics and various academic studies show that the sources of mental and social health problems, social breakdown, violence, epidemics, etc., are more prevalent in poor populations and their most "powerless" segments. (Desjarlais et al., 1995)

When we define poverty in a more dynamic way than what is seen as the capacity to meet basic needs, that is, in a way that recognizes the possibility that meeting one's needs today does not guarantee that one will be able to meet them tomorrow, we have a chance to relate it to other concepts such as vulnerability (Kaaber, 2005, 4710). The concept of vulnerability draws attention to the fundamental uncertainty surrounding poor people's capacity to meet their needs regularly and assuredly" (ibid).³ Accordingly, vulnerability can take the form of exposure to short-term

³ The Minimum Wage Determination Commission set the minimum wage at 8,506.80 liras for January-June 2023 and 11,402.32 liras for July-December 2023. SOURCE: Ministry of Labor and Social Security website: <https://www.csgeb.gov.tr/asgari-ucet/>

particular risks, and people experiencing poverty are more vulnerable than the rest of the population because they face a wider variety of risks and shocks (ibid). While almost all of the cooperative women who are the subjects of this research are below the poverty line according to official statistics, the vast majority of them experience poverty in its many dimensions and are vulnerable according to this definition. The women I interviewed said that they were worried about their own and their family's future, at least in some respects, and that they experienced this feeling of uncertainty. Founding member Belma, for example, frequently emphasized that one of the cooperative's common goals and common grounds was to find ways to fight this poverty together:

The first reason that brought us together is poverty, a poverty that is getting deeper and deeper, a poverty and deprivation that is getting worse and worse. We came together to create lasting gains for ourselves alone, to meet our basic needs first and foremost, and to cope with these difficulties. The sine qua non of the cooperative is the relationship between our relatively poorer women members living in the surrounding neighborhoods and the equitable distribution of earnings to these women in line with their labor. Sometimes, this is difficult because some of our poorest members have no land for agriculture and animal husbandry, none of their family members have social security, no regular income, and they have to live on whatever they earn daily. On the other hand, we want to share what we earn according to the cooperative's activities, projects, and the labor involved in maintaining these projects. For example, in order to participate in the sheep project, the members must have a place to take care of and feed these sheep. In other words, making the sharing fair according to need and labor is also part of our struggle. I tend to support people experiencing poverty more.

In the specific context of Gönen Merkez Hasanbey Tuzakçı Agricultural Development Cooperative, where almost all women suffer from poverty and various poverty-related social adverse, I focused on women's daily life experiences revolving around poverty in order to understand the factors affecting women's status in the cooperative. I used "thick description" (Geertz, 1988, 1973) to tell the stories of several women I have deliberately chosen to show how the social, economic, cultural, and political factors that influence women's subordination are interrelated and reproduce each other.

- According to the December 2023 results of the research in the newsletter of the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions TÜRK-İŞ; Monthly Food Expenditure of a Family of Four (Hunger Limit): 14.431 TL,
The total income that should enter the household for food and all other essential expenditures (Poverty Line) IS 47.009 TL.)

3.3.1. Gülcan

Gülcan⁴, one of the members of the cooperative, is a 55-year-old woman who joined the cooperative two years ago and worked in the cooperative office for almost two years. While conversing to warm up and drinking coffee, a friend of Gülcan's called her. Gülcan told her that we were sitting, chatting, and drinking coffee. After a short phone conversation, Gülcan said:

This friend still goes for parsley-picking, just like me, before I started working here. Parsley's work is backbreaking. You pick it in the frost, mud, and rain in the winter, and your hands freeze. It is a tough job, but we have no choice. If you do not go, what will you eat? What will you do? I used to go to parsley with this friend; she has to do it like me. Thank God I survived. She is a very good person too. Poor woman says to me, 'You were saved; may God save us from this parsley-picking scourge.'

When I asked Gülcan, "Were you also going to pick parsley?" she showed me her hands, which she could not fully open, and the calluses on her fingers with tears in her eyes:

What are you going to do? In this unemployment and high cost of living, when there is no other way to make a living, you will either work in other people's fields or a tomato paste factory, if you can get in, or you will go picking parsley. Most women like us, who do not own a field or land, are like this. Diesel is always increasing. You cannot afford that either. Only the rich, those who can afford it, can plant. The rich plant, and we go to work in their fields. What else are you going to do? We have to accept whatever wage they say. There is no insurance in these jobs.

Gülcan's working life started when she was a child. Her father is a construction master. Gülcan started working in the fields with her mother after she finished primary school. Her other brothers worked in the fields when they were old enough. In the meantime, she and her mother were also responsible for the household chores. She took care of her younger sister and raised her. Her younger sister thought of her as her mother. After Gülcan finished primary school, her father did not send her to secondary school because their economic situation was unsuitable. For the same reason, her other six siblings are also primary school graduates. They could not

⁴ The names used are pseudonyms for the convenience of the interview participants.

continue their education. Since Gülcan was the eldest of the girls, she was responsible for household chores and the care of all her siblings - after her mother. When Gülcan's mother went to the fields, Gülcan would stay home to knead dough and bake bread. Despite being in primary school at the time, she was already skilled at the task. However, she was not able to put the bread in the oven herself and would wait for her mother to return and do it. When Gülcan turned 17, her father's decision overruled her grandmother's choice for her future. She accepted her father's decision and went to Sarıköy, even though it was far away. Confident in her father's judgment, she said, "I believed that the father is big; if something happens to me, if there is a problem, it is my father who will protect me against all odds." Despite resenting his father's violence towards his mother and children, she believes that it is the father's responsibility to protect the members of the household in the event of a crisis".

Gülcan continued talking about her family memories with me, especially her father. She said that she was overwhelmed by the fights over who 'to give' her to. She also could not stand the violence and injustice her father and grandmother inflicted on her mother and told her grandmother that she did not want to marry anyone:

With my child's mind, I said enough is enough! I have had enough; I have had enough. I said to my grandmother that every night, every day, you get into my father's head and make him beat my mother. Shame on you for what you did to my mother. Would anyone do that? I said I would not get married; I would stay single. My poor mother comes from the fields; she has no strength to walk, and on top of that, every day she is beaten, every day she is beaten...

Gülcan, who was forced into marriage despite what she had experienced and seen, said that there was no change in her lifestyle and status as a woman when she got married: "Will a face that does not smile ever smile? A face that does not smile at the beginning will not smile at the end". She married into a large family where her husband, father, mother, in-laws, and sisters-in-law lived together. The family's economic situation was good in the first years of her marriage. They had fields and animals. They worked in their fields as a family. The father-in-law, who held the income and resources of the household, went bankrupt. Some family members, including Gülcan, started working in other people's fields:

My father-in-law rented land on loan, but we could not grow it either. When poverty came, fights started. My husband was good; he looked after me. Nevertheless, my mother-in-law was evil. After my father-in-law died, my mother-in-law became safe. She wanted to collect all our earnings like my father-in-law. I did not want to give up the money I earned. Why should I? It is my labor. I have children. She got sick later on; she had a stroke. My children and I took care of him for years. She died at my hands.

Later, Gülcan said she finally moved into a separate house with her nuclear family. Gülcan continued to work in other people's fields. She went to pick parsley and olives. Her husband could not find another job, so he worked as a shepherd. She has two daughters and a son. Her son is a bachelor and works as a shepherd. He also works without insurance or social security. Both of her daughters are married. The husband of one of her daughters is unemployed, and they have four children. Gülcan helps to take care of her daughter's children and tries to support her financially as well. The son-in-law works uninsured as a temporary laborer in the paddy fields from time to time if he can find one. Gülcan brings at least one of her grandchildren while working at the cooperative. Gülcan emphasizes that she is satisfied with and grateful for her current work by describing the working conditions in the past. She described the difficulties she experienced while working in the fields as follows:

In the first years of my marriage, we had our field. We were planting parsley in our field. However, my husband developed heart disease, and then we married my sister-in-law. The fields were sold after the in-laws got sick. We did not see any money until our mother-in-law died. We could not put anything aside. When she died and we left, there was nothing. The children were hungry, my husband was sick, and there was no income; out of desperation, I started to go to whatever work there was in the village. If there is work, I go; if there is no work, we are in a tough situation. By the way, I had a neighbor who went to the village for parsley. She told me, "I am talking to the foreman; if there is a vacancy, let us take you to our team." After that day, I went to parsley.

Parsley work is arduous. With your hands freezing, you pick it in the winter, in the frost, in mud, in the rain, and in the cold. Some women spare some money and buy gloves, but I could not do that for years due to lack of money. It is a tough job, but there is no solution. If you do, you get sick. If you do not go, what will you eat or do? (pointing to his calloused hands, which are not fully straightened due to rheumatism in his knuckles). These hands became like this in the parsley fields. The foreman takes you to the field before dawn. He shows everyone a furrow. Since I am new, I am left with the most challenging part of the field. The soft places are easy to pick and produce much harvest. We get paid per sack for parsley. When I fill one sack, other

people make two or three sacks. While I get 20 liras, they get sixty liras. Then they gave five liras for a waterproof glove so that they would not get sick like us. The women who befriend the foreman immediately get the good parts of the field. Some do not like the part they are given and tell the foreman. I could not say that either, for fear of starving if he told me not to come anymore. The cold, frost, and mud would make your hands stiff, and you would not be able to pull the stalk of the parsley; I would put my hands under my armpits to warm myself up a bit, and the foreman would stand over me. Parsley is harvested eight or nine months of the year, and while one side is harvested, the other continues to grow. When you find a parsley job, even if it is hard, you will be fed for eight months of the year. The cold in winter and the humidity in summer get into your bones. Nevertheless, you go anyway in despair. Now, my hands are not getting better. My fingers do not make me do fine work anymore. When it rains, my fingers and bones ache and ache so much I cannot explain. I cannot sleep because of the pain.

As Gulcan reflects on her past and present circumstances, she says that one of the things that makes her very sad is that she had to give the money she earned to the elders of the house, first to her father-in-law and then to her mother-in-law after he passed away, even though she had worked so hard in the past.

We don't have you and me. Because if there is no unity in a house, there is no livelihood... After my father-in-law died, my mother-in-law became the cash register. After I left my in-laws, we started to keep our own money. If you need something, where is the money to buy it? When we were all working in the fields together, they didn't give my husband Bağ-Kur. Now, he cannot retire. At least let him pay his insurance; let him pay his Bağ-Kur. Once she puts that money in her pocket, you will never get it back. My daughter was poisoned too. My husband had a heart problem. I whitewashed the house. I was so tired I couldn't tidy it up. I went to the parsley field. I had to leave my child with someone. Sevda (daughter-in-law) was still a child. We left my eldest daughter with my mother-in-law when she was 2. My daughter took her father's heart pills! She was poisoned by the pills she took. We didn't know. My mother-in-law took the girl on her back. If she had stopped a passing car and told it the field was close to the village, called a passing villager to the field owner, and told them that the child was sick, they would have helped. They are human, after all. We came home, and the child started vomiting. We gave her salty buttermilk, and she got worse. They hadn't eaten anything; we just came back from the field. The child was going to die; her fingernails started to turn purple, and foam started coming out of her mouth. My father-in-law didn't say, "Take her to the doctor," and she didn't give any money either. My brother-in-law saw her; God bless him; I can't praise him enough for that. He said, "Screw your money, they earn the money here. If something happens to the child here, will you be able to bring him back with money? She doesn't give money either; she doesn't say take him to the doctor. Then, my brother-in-law helped me to get a car, and we took her to a doctor. Otherwise, the child was going to die.

Another difficulty that troubles Gulcan is that "in the old days," as she puts it when she lived in a large family dominated by her parents-in-law, she could not say even a word to the unfair words and insults, especially those of her mother-in-law, and had to obey everything unconditionally.

Back then, as a bride, it was considered shameful for me to speak out, so I did not speak out; I didn't let anyone know. Even neighbors would say to me, 'Don't you ever fight. I couldn't even tell my own mother about it, both because I was ashamed and because I didn't want to hurt her. Then all this happened (she died) before we could talk about it. Every Friday, when I went to them, my mother greeted me, but she was no longer there, and I didn't feel like going there anymore.

What makes Gulcan feel better today is that she and her husband do not fight much, and she thinks he looks after her, protects her, and is, therefore, a good man.

And now, just when we were going to relax a little bit, the children's livelihood problems and the toddlers' problems started. My son works as a shepherd 5 km away from the village, and if he had insurance, he would be fine, but he doesn't. That's why he's going to quit that job. My daughters are married; the elder one is doing well, but the younger one is financially unstable. She has already eloped, and now she has four children and takes care of them at home. My son-in-law also works sometimes, wherever he finds a job because he likes field work more. But with one person working like this, the house cannot support itself. I take care of the grandchildren as much as I can; one goes, and one comes. I want to support them financially, but I can't afford it. Now, the son-in-law is unemployed again; I think about him; I think about the education of the grandchildren. I always think about the grandchildren and wonder if they are hungry or full if they can eat. I always think about these things in my head, so much so that my head hurts thinking about them. I bring the grandchildren as much as possible from the food I cook, canned food, stew, etc.

Gülcan's health problems due to fatigue and stress are very common with the women in the cooperative: rheumatism, high blood pressure, headaches, etc. She says that there are days when she has to go to work even when she is sick, and nowadays, when she gets upset, her head hurts, and her blood pressure rises.

Gülcan is very sad that she couldn't educate her children because she couldn't afford it, so she wants her grandchildren to go to school and says she has to work hard to support their education.

I hope the grandchildren will go to school and save themselves. We wouldn't have ended up like this if we had been educated. I couldn't educate my children either; my younger daughter was good at school, but we couldn't send her to school because of our economic situation. We could barely support ourselves; otherwise, she would have saved herself, and we couldn't afford it. Now, she takes care of the children at home, and I try to support her. My grandson Tonguç will start primary school this year. He stays with me, but there are no schools in our village, and the ones that exist have all closed. They need to study. Otherwise, tomorrow, when they grow up, they will end up like us.

Nowadays, Gülcan thinks that her life is passing by. She is now more concerned about the future of her children, especially her grandchildren than about herself because she thinks that there is no end to this kind of casual labor.

We are neither growing nor shrinking. We are always struggling. We work all the time, and we have nothing, and on top of that, I got sick. Now, there are Afghan and Syrian workers who work for cheap, and the wages have fallen even more. They pay them less and make them work more, so will the man (employer) employ us or not? Also, Afghans have taken over the shepherd market, and now our people can't find work.

Gülcan sees her joining the cooperative as one of the rare chances in life.

When we were working in someone else's field for wages, we were always working, running from home to the field, from the field to home. We saw nothing but work. Sometimes, we couldn't even sit for 5 minutes. After I started here (the cooperative), for the first time in my life, I could sit at the "workplace," drink coffee and chat with my friends. We talk about everything, and if I have a problem, we look for a solution together, and I feel relieved. I bring my grandson with me, and he is in my sight while I work here. Sometimes, even my son lends a hand in the cooperative work. My son has already been very supportive of me to come here. We also have our own sheep, and I work for them; my son takes care of them in the morning and evening while I am at work, but I never feel tired; it is fun for me.

Lastly, I would like to mention that Gülcan eagerly stated that she is no longer confined to her home or work from the cooperative, that she can commute wherever she wants on her own, and that she decides how to spend her own money. She added that she spends the money she earns on her children, grandchildren, and her household, and she is happy like this.

3.3.2. Ayten

Ayten and her husband live in the village. They have two children, a boy and a girl. The boy continues to study. The girl studied at the university with a scholarship, and the family sent only the dormitory fee. Now, she lives with her grandmother in Gönen. She found a job there and works. They do not own any land; they only have a house and a barn in the village. His uncle in Germany had a 400-500 m² field in the town. They plant it in the summer, can it, freeze it. They eat it all winter until they get crops again. "If we don't do this, we can't make a living, even in the village," Ayten says.

She finds it advantageous to live in the village. She says that in Gönen, it would be impossible for a family of four - even if both husband and wife worked - to make ends meet on minimum wage. "Let's take Gönen, for example. The big cities are different: Istanbul, Balıkesir, etc. Right now, the minimum wage is 11 and a half liras. But house rents in Gönen are 7-8 liras. Now, if two people work for minimum wage, 23 liras will enter the house. Well, you gave 8 liras for house rent. For a family of 4, 11 liras if 3 liras are kitchen expenses. Between the children's school fees, your clothes, electricity, and water, 20 thousand liras are already gone. With 3 liras, how will you make it through a month? Other needs, such as extra needs of the children, will be taken care of. That's why this is an advantage of the village."

Before Ayten joined the cooperative's sheep project, she and her husband took care of other people's animals. Her husband was in and out of low-paid temporary jobs. During a period of unemployment, they received a green card. Otherwise, she would not have been able to get treatment without the green card because she was suffering from early menopause symptoms at a very early age. After the treatment, they were only able to have another child they wanted. "My aunt had only one child. I used to feel sorry for the child because she was always alone. 'One child is no child'. We had a second child so that they could support each other.

Now, her husband works for minimum wage at a cheese factory in Gönen. They share both the care of the sheep and the housework. They also took turns taking care

of the children, as is customary, 'we didn't put all the burden on the mother,' says Ayten. Ayten did not know how to cook when she got married. Her husband, whose previous job was as a cook, taught her how to cook. He differs from the traditional husband figure we often encounter in the village. They were also harmonious in disciplining the children; what one said no to, the other said yes. They did not let the family's elders have a say in this matter or allow them to interfere. Ayten and her husband say that they are different from the families around them with this attitude and demeanor.

In 2018, they met Ms. Belma and the cooperative. "We were thinking about this animal business before. Now, we are going to a place where they want a certificate for everything wherever you go. If we try to multiply three or five in the future, they will ask us for a certificate. We got the 'Herd Breeding Certificate'. After that, they said, "Can you take care of my animals too?" Ayten took classes at Bandırma Merinos. They have been taking care of their animals ever since." For now, we haven't made much profit from the sheep; we haven't started earning; they are just keeping themselves afloat.

However, the cooperative has already started to contribute indirectly; his mother gave him her field in Karalar Farm. "You are doing this job anyway. Sow, plant, and provide fodder for the animals. Thus, he was saved from paying for hay and straw. Later, a relative from Gönen rented her field to Ayten and her husband at a reasonable price. In this way, she paid for some of what she cultivated.

The cooperative also became a place of socialization for Ayten and other women. 'It's an escape for me,' Ayten says, 'from a place with a lot of gossip, from the village.' When Ayten joined the cooperative and started going to the course, the rumors began in the village." They said, "You're wasting your time; nothing will come of it. Ayten said, "I have a saying, 'Better late than never.' The milking parlor here was also a project. If it happened there, this project would happen as well. It won't happen in a year, but it will happen in five years. In the end, it will happen, it will happen," he says. The villagers did not believe that the sheep would come (or that they would be given). A neighbor with a perpetually single son said, "I never

thought that these sheep would come; if these sheep have come, I believe that my son will get married; I never believed that.

Ayten repeated in different sentences that she went into the sheep business because she didn't want to depend on her husband:

I will go to Gönen today. It is challenging to say give me money. It is tough not only for me but all women living in the village. We eliminate those who are financially well off. For those who are not well off, who only depend on their husbands, even going to Gönen is sometimes a luxury. It is like this: the better we care for our animals, the better they will care for us in two years. It is out of pocket for now, but hopefully, next year, if we earn 10 billion, we will spend 8 of it on them, and 2 billion will be left for us. Nowadays, young people are graduating from university; there are no jobs. In other words, they cut open the belly of the farmer, and forty hopes came out. It is imperative that we raise one hope.

Ayten says that there is mutually complementary cooperation and solidarity among the cooperative members and that everyone contributes in their own way.

"Some are good at gardening, some at baking, some at needlework, we all have different skills. For example, if you are young, you care for fetching and delivering. Others write the dough, cut it, the young ones do the baking." They don't just come to work. " We write messages on WhatsApp. Whoever is available makes pastries and cookies, buy something ready-made, or comes. We chat there; it's like therapy for us. Sometimes just going there is enough."

She likens the functioning of the cooperative to the villagers' collective work method.

Whoever has a hangar in the village sets up (the loom) today for himself and the next day for the other. It is done for everyone who wants it (all together). For example, we are making a lavender garden for the cooperative. If they come at 10 o'clock in Gönen, we only go after we finish our work, after the animals. By 10:30, we barely caught up with them. This year, we planted watermelon. We picked some watermelon yesterday. Whoever is available, whoever has nothing to do, she runs to lend a hand.

Ayten works late all day long. When her husband goes to work in the morning, he takes her to the animals by motorcycle. In winter, she is with the animals all day. In

winter, her husband usually does the housework - vacuuming and cooking. In summer, she goes to the garden after feeding the animals in the morning and closing them. He works there for an hour or two and then comes home. During her husband's lunch break, they have breakfast together. Then the dishes, dinner, tidying up the house... when she finishes, she takes care of the animals again. Sometimes, it takes them until nine or ten in the evening to get home. Whenever their work was finished, they could eat.

"Sometimes I get bored when these (sheep) are out here. If it is early, if the call to prayer has not been called, I say, 'Come on,' let's go to the café, have a cup of tea (to her husband). We go back and forth. Because after a certain hour (the sheep) don't go anywhere, they stop."

Usually, only men went to the village café when I started going to the café. At first, they said, 'Can women go to the café?' What's wrong? In Gönen's park, a man sits in the back chair, and a woman is in the front. You don't say anything to him, but you interfere with me drinking tea here in the middle of my village?" Ayten emphasizes, making fun of herself, "I've always been like this, like a man."

But she emphasizes that she is not very uncomfortable with this appearance; she is pleased with it.

God bless my father for raising me like this," she says. During the interview, she wore pants and a cap with a visor on her head, and her hair was visible underneath. She walks around the village like this, but when she goes to Gönen, she covers her head per Islamic requirements. She stayed with her grandmother and attended a Koran course as a child. Back then, she didn't wear a headscarf all the time. Needing to explain why she wears a headscarf nowadays, she said

"Now I only wear the hijab out of habit because it's a tradition here. I don't wear it in the village; I walk around with this hijab; I even go out in shorts at home. But when I go to Gönen, I don't know, I don't know what to call it, I wear a headscarf, I don't know if it's to look more dignified or not, I go in that way, with a headscarf. Let's say it's a tradition. I used to walk around openly, and then I willingly covered myself. When I am a woman and dress like a woman, they stare and look at me strangely. But when I am like this (like a man), they honk and pass by; that is, they say hello and then turn around and don't look at me again.

Without any question, Ayten started to explain the gossiping and hypocrisy of the villagers with her appearance and character, as if she was answering someone or as if she wanted to say something to someone; her father said, "If you are right, don't step on anyone's heel. But if you are wrong, you should know how to take a step back and apologize". Ayten took this as a motto. Even if the other person is more vital than her, she emphasizes that she will fight if she is right. She expressed in different ways that she suffers a lot from gossip and slander and that she is sensitive about this issue and tells an incident she experienced:

Probably not more than a month ago, a friend of ours, someone we see all the time, said what she said to others and her husband as if I had said it, and then her husband went and told my husband. My husband says, 'Look, Ayten, she didn't say it, but I will ask her when I go. He said, "Oh, let's keep this conversation here." My husband came and told me. The next day, I went to the factory where our husbands worked, and I said many words to the husband of the woman who started this rumor. Then my husband's boss said to my husband, "What happened? Ayten raided the factory," my husband said. "that's how Ayten is; if she is slandered, if a word she did not say is thrown at her, she will not let it go; she will find that person to confront her" That's how I am, I get angry with the gossip slander of the sheep people.

I believe that this sensitivity of Ayten's, why she suffers from these rumors of the sheep people, may be related to the harassment incident that Ayten's child was subjected to, which I heard by chance from other women. The teenage son of one of the wealthiest men in the village, who owned a minibus that provided transportation for the people of the town, raped a boy who was much younger and much poorer. Ayten's son was one of the children forced to watch this rape, this violence. The harassment was taken to court, and there were fights, but the harasser used his power and money, if necessary, to intimidate the child's family, potential witnesses, and their families. The victim's family even had no choice but to leave the village. In this power struggle, the family of the victimized child also succumbed. The conservative villagers, who strictly follow traditional gender roles in their daily lives, could not show their reaction against this "powerful" family, even though they condemned the alleged rapist. The other children who had to experience this violence were also from relatively poorer households. Ayten could not digest this and continued to go to court even though she did not get any results. According to the women, Ayten would walk if she had to, but she would not get in the minivan of those harassers. Even though

her son's name was mentioned in the harassment incident, and she was pressured about it, she did not cower. On the contrary, she defiantly started to dress more "masculine," to be more assertive, to go to the café, which is considered to be a men's space, to make herself more visible to show that she was not afraid; this is how she was trying to cope. Although they say that it does not conform to traditional and religious values, this reaction of the villagers invites us to think about how economic class and patriarchal structures of culture and culture are intertwined with each other. Ayten now shepherds the sheep she bought from the cooperative. She emphasizes that being in touch with the sheep and nature and keeping a distance from people is good for her and that shepherding makes her feel good and heals her. At the same time, she says she is pleased to contribute to the family's livelihood. Ayten now has a dream of establishing and running a butcher shop. Her father was a butcher, and she learned how to butcher when she was young. "Or rather, I had to learn it because when my father went to the fields, if something suddenly happened to the sick sheep, I had to slaughter it before it got spoiled," Ayten says. Ayten aims to open a butcher shop in Gonen if they can increase the number of sheep from the cooperative. For now, she is trying to improve her knowledge and skills in animal husbandry with the support of the cooperative. "I have more hope and confidence that I can do this," says Ayten.

3.3.3. Fadime – Buğdaylı Village

'I work in shifts. At night. I leave at noon and work until eight in the morning. But since the shifts change constantly, I worked the day shift for a month and the night shift for a month. Once you get used to the day, it's hard to sleep when you return tonight. Just when I get used to it, the shift changes. Even though there is no sleep problem, my leg swells from standing all the time. I work in the section they call cooling, where the tomato paste is filled into 10-kilogram cans. My job is to fix the cans that are upside down in the machine. I lift and straighten, lift and straighten, a lot of them... How many cans pass in front of me all day long... It is tough to work standing with this leg, but I have to. My hands swell like this; they burn from the heat. I hope that one day when the number of sheep increases and my *economic situation is a little better* (emphasis is mine), I will never go to the factory."

This is how Fadime, one of the women from the village who participated in the sheep project, describes the conditions in the factory where she works. Despite these very harsh working conditions, she endures because her insurance is paid, and she stays patient for her retirement. When the tomato and pepper season passes, the tomato paste factory closes. Then, he goes to the Fish Factory in the Organized Industrial Zone. "The fish factory is better because it is a single shift, but as we always work in the freezer, it is freezing, we get freezing. If we are fine one day, we get sick the next. Especially if you work without insurance, when the men come to the factory to check on you, they lock you in that cold place, in the icehouse," she says.

Fadime has a daughter and a son from her first marriage. Her daughter is mentally disabled. Her son graduated from high school but did not get into a university. He sometimes works as a hay hauler in the summer. He also works in his mother's factory when there is work. The factory pays his insurance during the period he works. Now, he is of military age. He has heard from his friends that he can stay there after his military service and continue working with a salary and insurance. Fadime is afraid for her son's life, but her neighbors tell her: "If he has such a possibility, let him stay, don't drag the boy. At least here, the child will not see you (the fights and problems between Fadime and the children's stepfather) and will not feel sad. If he is going to die, he will die here or there." It is not for nothing that the neighbors thought and said that Fadime's situation saddened their son. Fadime has a life story full of very difficult traumas.

"I was initially married in Paşacıftlik. My first husband died. I married my second one here. My first husband's family was poor. When I was 18 years old, they came and asked my mother. I was ignorant myself; my family didn't want it at first, but then they gave me. My husband was well-behaved, and his parents were well-behaved people. We lived together.

Someone from the village deceived my first husband, and they took out a loan in his name and put him in a lot of debt. He was already a naive man with good intentions. At that time, he was taking care of other people's animals. Because he couldn't pay back the loan, he got *depressed* (emphasis is mine) and hanged himself in the barn.

When he didn't come for dinner, my son went to look for his father. He was only 6-7 years old then. My husband hung himself, and my son stayed there next to his father. We don't know how long he stayed there. Then we brought him back, but he always kept to himself after that. He was already a reticent child."

When my husband died, we were starving. We had neither an income nor anything to sell. My mother-in-law and father-in-law told me to go to work, and they would take care of the children. There was no tomato paste factory then. I was going to hoe in the fields. The boss, my husband, worked for before he died paid all his Bağ-Kur payments collectively. He put us on salary (social security pension). My whole life passed with many trials. I hope we will see better days.

After their situation improved a little, her sister-in-law took her father-in-law and mother-in-law away, saying, "I'll take care of them now; you have children, you can't take care of them." "First, my mother-in-law, then my father-in-law died. We had no one left, no fields, no livestock... I was left with my two children," Fadime says. At that time, Fadime had a house and her husband's pension. However, being a single woman with children in the village was very difficult for Fadime. According to her, "It was very difficult to live in the village without a husband and a father." She says there was a lot of gossiping in the village. She adds, "When the girl was 12, and the boy was still a child, boys started coming to the door of the house." One day, when she came home (from work), she couldn't find her daughter at home. "I searched everywhere; we looked all over the village. It turned out that the young men of the village had taken her down the road (Fadime does not use the word rape). We went to gendarmes. We heard a lot of insults because we had no one to look after us."

After all these experiences, remarriage seemed like a salvation to Fadime. She wanted someone to 'take care' of her and her children. That is how she accepted the marriage proposal of a widower from a nearby village. An acquaintance from the man's village acted as an intermediary, and they married. The man also has two children with his ex-wife, but they stay with the mother. She says, "I always try to work two times more than I can because I have my children with me." She has felt indebted and grateful since her second husband accepted her with her children. According to the villagers, however, the situation is different. In conversations

among themselves that I have joined, they do not speak well of Fadime's current husband. "Fadime works, her son works, her daughter takes care of the sheep, and her husband just lays back," says one of the women from the village. His ex-wife barely saved herself from him. He beat his first wife and beat her regularly; the gendarmes barely saved her.

The woman had to go to a shelter to escape from his beating. Other women say that he beat his first wife and sold her property. According to them, Fadime also sold the house she inherited from her husband because of 'this man.' The women from the village describe how her current husband speaks to Fadime in an imperious manner, imitating the man as follows:

He only knows how to shout: 'Fadime, give me your salary, bring me food, buy me cigarettes!' Fadime's stepfather and daughter take the sheep to graze; the girl takes care of the sheep, and he just takes the stick and sits. This man is eating her salary, but fortunately, Fadime also has an insured job, so she will have security in the future.

The women of the village 'gossip' that Fadime's husband did not treat both her daughter and her son well; they often saw her son with "black eyes and bruises." Some of the women think that maybe the young man takes out his anger on others by fighting with them all the time because of what he has been through in the past and what he witnesses at home now." In contrast, others think that the stepfather beats her.

Some cooperative members are also concerned that Fadime's husband mistreats Fadime and their children and contemplate how they should help Fadime. They are worried about her. One day, a small group of female members were gathered in the cooperative office for a business meeting, and they were chatting. Somehow, the subject of their concern for Fatima came up, and a small discussion started. Most of them said Fadime should get rid of him, but she was not strong enough to do such an action. One woman said that it would not be suitable for Fadime to leave under the circumstances, that the community in which they lived, the villagers, would disapprove of it, and that if she got divorced, she and her children would have much more financial and emotional problems. Another woman agreed that if Fadime left

before she got stronger, she would face even more problems from the social circle; another said that Fadime had a small salary and temporary insurance and that she should take her children and live in a separate house without caring about the gossip and harassment of the villagers and added that she couldn't understand why Fadime was putting up with this man when she had a small salary. The conversations did not conclude, but the spontaneous forum-like intimate conversation with a fellow group member was fascinating. They talked and listened to each other without hierarchical distance and perhaps more than ever in their homes and public life. One of the conclusions I drew from these conversations is that in poor sheep households in this region, according to dominant cultural norms, it is generally thought that there should be a man in authority. The man is responsible for protecting and safeguarding the household, especially the women and girls in the household, from others, as well as the family's honor against outsiders. In return, he is privileged to claim rights, while women are forced to accept a subordinate position of dependence. From my observations, I can say that gender-ascribed roles are more pronounced in poorer households. People in the region widely believe that if there is no man in the home, a woman's social status is severely diminished.

The children said they were looking after came from the cooperative's sheep project. Fadime tells the story of meeting the cooperative as follows: "My husband heard in the village coffee house that the state was giving grants to women, and he asked me if I would sign up. I said I would sign up. I went and signed up. Then Ms. Belma called me. She said you were selected for the sheep project. She told me that sheep breeding training would start and that I should continue with it. When we took the course, they also gave us money. We took the training; it was very hard. I didn't mind the work, but the lessons were hard. Then the sheep came. Since I was working, when the sheep came, my husband, son, and daughter started to take care of them. It is nice to deal with animals. Especially when those lambs are born, it is very nice, and I go and take care of them. After Fadime's sheep arrived, her husband said, 'I should buy a sheep for myself instead of working for others.'

According to Fadime, her husband manages the income from the sheep and lambs, and with that money, he meets the basic needs of the house. Fadime says that she would like to be able to go to the cooperative more often to participate more in work, but that she never has time because she has to work all the time. Her leg hurts a lot occasionally, so she cannot participate in cooperative activities. She is very sorry that

she cannot go, but she adds that she was able to go on some of the cooperative's trips to other cities, and these are the memories she is pleased about. "Thanks to them, the other friends are managing me because they know my situation. Ms. Belma also helped us a lot with everything. God bless her. Our sheep came thanks to her."

At first, Fadime, like the other women who participated in the sheep project, faced similar adverse and pejorative reactions from the villagers. No one believed that the cooperative would keep its promises. "In Buğdaylı (Fadime's new village), three women entered the sheep project. The villagers said, 'They won't give you sheep; they are like the other cooperatives. You are working in vain,' they mocked us. After that, the other two women did not wait; they left the project. I didn't care, neither my husband nor I; we didn't lose hope. We had some neighbors near the old house. When my husband was going to the market with my daughter, they made fun of them, saying, 'The sheep are coming, the sheep are coming! But finally, we received the sheep. When the sheep arrived, they were all speechless. There was a beautiful ceremony when the sheep were distributed. The Minister of Agriculture came and took photos of us. I showed the photos to my friends at the factory. They said it was wonderful. Some of my friends especially came to see me at the ceremony. Everyone was amazed. It was very nice; I felt honored for the first time in my life. We got sheep, and we were happy. Especially when I went to that sheepfold; I felt thrilled when I saw the sheep. Now, when I enter the sheepfold, the lambs come to me immediately. I say oh my babies, they come and snuggle up to me. I gave them names; they look at me when I call them Zeliş, Maviş. My father was a shepherd; we had sheep, too. I remember them." Fadime adds, "My life has always been a life of suffering. I hope we will be better in the future if we have the time to see..."

3.3.4. Nurdan

Nurdan is fifty years old and lives in the village with her husband. Nurdan and her husband do not have a regular job or income. Nurdan's husband occasionally works in the village coffee shop or in the market. However, the wages he receives for these jobs are very low. Nurdan does the housework and never leaves the house. Nurdan says that she lives a life full of pain and says, "If I were to tell it, my life would be a

novel, a very sad novel.' Married at the age of 19, Nurdan says that the first years of her marriage were full of pressure and torture.

Nurdan describes those years as follows:

It is very difficult to tell without crying. I was 19 when I got married. We lived in the same house with my husband's mother, father, brother, his brother's wife, and his brother's children. We had a room to ourselves. There were a lot of people living in the house, and I was not used to it. I was doing housework and working in the fields. I always made sacrifices so that there would be no problems in the house, no resentment. If there were something that needed to be done, I would do it because others would run away when something needed to be done. I accepted and did everything that was asked of me.

Nurdan's husband's brother had his own sheep and did not contribute the income from these sheep to the common coffers. Nurdan's husband's brother moved to another house with his wife and children. Nurdan and her husband's income was used for joint expenses. Nurdan's husband's brother made the decisions, and Nurdan and her husband did not have the chance to go beyond that. Nurdan's husband's brother even decided how to spend the money in the joint safe. Nurdan and her husband worked hard for many years according to their brother's division of labor, but they were never able to save for themselves.

Nurdan says that her husband's brother's and mother-in-law's ignoring and tormenting her wears her down more than the fact that they are very poor. She describes those days when she had to ask permission even to drink tea as follows:

"Even the decisions about our nuclear family were made by my brother or my mother-in-law. We had no chance to say no. We had no chance to say we wanted to do this and not that the other one was more suitable for us. We could neither save money with the money we earned nor with the work we did. We had to act as my mother-in-law, and my husband's brother saw fit. As if that wasn't enough, my mother-in-law would yell at me all the time. When she got angry, she would say, 'This house, garden, and field all belong to me. You have only one dress that belongs to you. Take it and go away. We lived with my father-in-law for a short time because he died at an early age. But my mother-in-law and I lived together for 27 years.

When she was old, I took care of her personal care. I washed her, I dressed her, I did all her work. I like to drink tea after I finish my work. My mother-in-law was very angry with me drinking tea. I used to drink tea on the balcony so she wouldn't see me drinking tea. She would come to the balcony and get angry with me for drinking tea even though she could hardly walk using two canes. I didn't even have the right to drink tea. I was an unskilled laborer working for my husband's family without pay. Wouldn't you be psychologically disturbed? It went on like this for years. Even when my mother asked me, I would say, 'I am fine.' My husband would say, 'My mother is very old. Manage her and ignore what she says.' (Naz's note: he is very good, but he does not fulfill the roles that culture attributes to men)

Nurdan had an accident one day while working in the fields and broke her arm. Her husband's family did not even take her to the hospital and tried to treat her with traditional methods. Nurdan's arm did not fully heal, causing physical and mental distress for years. Thanks to her daughter being a nurse, she was able to undergo surgery ten years after the accident. This left her with a crippled arm. Her arm cannot perform many functions. Nurdan describes her experiences after the accident as follows: "They wrapped raw meat and fleece around my arm for ten years to treat my broken arm. They didn't take me to the doctor to avoid paying money. My arm was getting gangrene. Now I can use my arm very little."

Nurdan also has other health problems. She can hardly move because she is overweight. Her joints ache. She has undergone surgery for gynecological diseases in her eyes, both legs and nose. Since Nurdan has no social security, her daughter pays for her medication.

The hardships she has been through have also affected her psychology. After an argument with her mother-in-law, she committed suicide. Nurdan described the day she committed suicide as follows:

I took a lot of pills, locked the door of my room, and went to bed. My daughter had just finished primary school. She came to the door of my room and started begging me to open the door. But I didn't have the strength to bear it anymore; I wanted to die to get rid of her. My sister, who lives in Tokat,

called and said they were going to visit us. My daughter said, 'My aunt is coming'. I would never tell my family what I was going through. I didn't want them to know my situation. So, I got up and threw up. I prepared tea as if nothing had happened. If my sister had not come that night, maybe I would have died.

Nurdan has withdrawn from social life due to her physical and mental disabilities. She can hardly walk because of her leg and back injuries, and she is overweight. She is very uncomfortable with people giving her advice because she is overweight. Nurdan explained this discomfort as follows:

"Everyone who sees me starts giving advice. Everyone I knew before or just met started to be a dietician or a doctor. This demoralizes me. That's why I don't go out of the house because I don't want to see anyone." Before her marriage, Nurdan was relatively happy living with her mother and father. She had an authoritarian mother, an understanding father, and three sisters. She describes her relationship with her mother as follows:

My mother was an authoritarian woman. She put pressure on me and my siblings. When someone came near my mother, she would signal us to move away from there. We could see in her eyes that we had to get out of there. She would not allow us to talk. I don't know why my mother acted like that. We used to talk more freely with my father. My mother probably acted like that because we were girls. My mother ran the house and the family.

Despite the tradition of not giving daughters a share of the inheritance, Nurdan's mother divided the fields equally among her daughters before Nurdan's father died.

Nurdan meets her sisters often. Her sisters support Nurdan in everything. Nurdan's mother is 75 years old and has health problems. Nurdan is very worried about her mother's health. Nurdan graduated from middle school, and her three sisters graduated from high school and university. Nurdan regrets that she did not get more education. Nurdan's father wanted his children to get an education but did not put pressure on them. Nurdan explained her father's approach to education as follows:

He told my siblings and me, 'If you want to study, you will go to school; if you want to learn to tailor, you will go to a course. You will do what you

want to do. One day, the school principal came to our house and told me to continue my education. I said I didn't want to study and ran out of the room. I wish I had studied a little more.

Nurdan says that her father did not force her and her sisters to marry. However, she says that their father was very strict about not allowing them to meet anyone. Their father never allowed them to meet their prospective spouses beforehand or get close enough to talk to them. She (Nurdan) says that their father told her and her other sisters that he would not force them to choose between prospective spouses. Nurdan emphasizes that their father considered it a great shame for them to run away from home to get married. She says that their father told her and her sisters, "Don't run away from home to get married. Do not embarrass me. Even if you want to marry a Gypsy, I will allow it."

Nurdan had an arranged marriage at the age of 19. The families agreed, and they did not object. She (Nurdan) did not have a courtship period with her husband, but she got along very well with him. There were only three months between the day Nurdan and her husband met and the day they got married. Nurdan's husband never pressured Nurdan. Nurdan has never thought of leaving her husband, even though she has experienced difficulties caused by his family. Nurdan explains this situation as follows: "According to our traditions, it is very shameful to divorce. You leave your father's house in your wedding dress. You can only return to that house in a shroud, no matter how unbearable what you have been through."

Nurdan has two daughters, and both of her daughters decided on their own who they would marry. Nurdan explained this as follows: "In our village, girls get married at the age of 16-17. I did not want my daughters to get married at the age of 16-17. I wanted my daughters to get an education and have a profession first." Nurdan's mother and sisters supported her decision. However, Nurdan's husband's mother and sisters thought that Nurdan's daughters' education was unnecessary. According to them, the girls should get married immediately. Nurdan and her husband supported their daughters. Nurdan describes this situation as follows: "My daughters said they wanted to complete their education first. My daughters got married at the age of 25-26. They chose the people they married themselves. My eldest daughter said, 'I want

to marry this person. If you don't approve, I will accept your decision. But I will never marry anyone again.' My husband and I accepted her decision. My daughter is happily married."

Nurdan's older daughter won a scholarship, so they did not pay for her university education. Nurdan's eldest daughter received a bachelor's degree in nursing. Nurdan proudly says that her daughter is undergoing spinal cord transplant operations at the City Hospital. Nurdan's younger daughter also studied nursing at the vocational school of nursing. Nurdan's younger daughter worked at the hospital where her older sister worked but quit after giving birth.

Nurdan's two daughters also support their mother financially. She (Nurdan) says that without the support of her daughters, they would struggle financially. When Nurdan's older daughter started working, she paid off her father's debts. When her younger daughter had a child, Nurdan wanted to give her gold as a gift, but she could not buy it because she did not have the money. Nurdan's eldest daughter buys the gold for her mother. However, Nurdan, who cannot even buy a gift for her granddaughter, has spent her life working under harsh and difficult conditions. Nurdan described the time she and her husband worked as follows:

What can I expect from the state? My husband and I worked for years for nothing. Our work benefited my husband's family. Although I have worked all my life, I have no pension because I have no social security record. I worked as a seasonal worker in a tomato paste factory, a fish factory, and a chicken factory. Employers made me work illegally in every factory I worked in. My social security registration was not done. When inspectors came to the factory for inspection, the factory owners hid us in the freezer. When my husband was working in the tin factory, he was registered for insurance. However, my husband had to quit his job because my husband's brother wanted him to. Because there was work to be done in the family house. Since my husband's brother was working, they forced my husband to quit his job to do these jobs. That's why my husband quit his job, even though he was registered for social security.

Nurdan recalled an incident that happened to a coworker at the fish factory and told the following story: The factory had not paid her for six months. One day, the woman said to one of the bosses, who was going around to check on her, 'I left my one-and-a-half-year-old son at home and came here to work. I hadn't been paid for

six months, her friend beside her started crying. Her friend said that she thought the boss was going to beat her for asking for her rights. Nurdan added, "We were very scared, but then when nothing like that happened when he didn't get angry with her, we were all relieved."

Until Nurdan's health problems started, both Nurdan and her husband worked as temporary workers in the fields and factories. Despite this, there were days when Nurdan and her husband went hungry and ate margarine on their bread. Nurdan tearfully described those days as follows:

I am going through my first pregnancy. My husband's brother and his wife had moved to another house, but they still had their room in the house we lived in. My husband's brother slaughtered a sheep and made sausage from the meat. My husband's brother hung sausage from the ceiling of their old room to the floor. They cooked sausage in the middle of the house and did not give it to me. They ignored me even though they knew I was pregnant. They treated me like the house dog. I won't forget this, even in the grave.

When Nurdan's second daughter was only two years old, Nurdan and her family experienced a great disaster. Their house and all their belongings were destroyed in a fire. Nurdan and her family lost everything they owned. Nurdan described this disaster as follows:

It was four days before Eid al-Adha. I painted the whole house. Our house was adobe. Since the electrical cables were not insulated, there was a short circuit, and the fire started. My 2nd daughter, Kübra, was only two years old. I got up at night to breastfeed Kübra, and the rope of Kübra's swing broke. It turned out that there was a fire, and the exterior and roof of the house were completely burnt. We realized the fire too late because we were inside the house. I remember telling my husband to throw out the kitchen tubes and the TV because I was afraid they would explode. Then I went into shock, and I don't remember anything. There was an announcement in the village. Those who heard the announcement and knew about the fire saved a few of our belongings. It was raining at the time, so there was mud everywhere. The things they rescued also got stuck in the mud. We lost everything. We started living in a small room given to us by an old husband and wife who were our neighbors. We had no furniture. My brothers gave us a sofa. The people of the village collected the skins of animals slaughtered on the Feast of Sacrifice and gave them to us to sell. The Ministry of Forestry gave us timber to rebuild the roof of the house. Thanks to the help, we rebuilt the house. But how did we do it?

I can't forget what I went through in the past, the injustices and persecutions that were done to me. I think my life has no importance, no meaning. They even said that I started the fire. Sometime after the fire, my husband's father died. The pressure of my husband's mother on me increased even more. My mother-in-law said that everything my husband and I did together belonged to her. We had a lot of debts. My husband and I were working at every job we could find. We were also working on the construction of the house. My husband was bringing the stones from Manyas for construction. My husband's brothers did not bring a single stone. When we finished building the house, my mother-in-law started saying that these are mine and that I can do whatever I want with these houses. This put a lot of pressure on me. They did not have any support. My psychology completely deteriorated after these experiences. Our house burned down in 1996. We have only recently recovered economically and psychologically.

Nurdan met the cooperative at a time when she had completely cut off contact with her social circle and lost hope for the future. Nurdan's husband applied for a sheep grant from the Ministry of Agriculture. Nurdan's husband went to the Gönen District Directorate of Agriculture 15 days later to find out the outcome of his application for support, only to find out that his application had not been accepted. An official at the District Directorate of Agriculture told him that a cooperative founded by Belma also had a sheep grant project. The officer sent Nurdan's husband to Belma. Nurdan described the meeting between her husband and Mrs. Belma as follows: "The president (Belma) asked Mustafa (Nurdan's husband) if he knew anything about sheep breeding. The chairman gauged Mustafa's interest and knowledge about sheep breeding. Mustafa's grandfather used to make Mustafa do the work related to sheep when Mustafa was a child. Mustafa excitedly explained that he loved sheep and sheep breeding. Mrs. Belma told him about the project to support women. She told Mustafa that he would come to their house as soon as possible to meet his wife. Mrs. Nurdan's husband, who had applied to many institutions of the state to no avail, did not expect Mrs. Belma to come to their house, but he told her about their situation. Mrs. Belma told Mustafa that 380 women had applied for the grant sheep project, but only 25 women who were really in need would be selected, and they could only give the sheep to them. Nurdan describes Belma's visit to their home as follows:

Ms. Belma came to our house after a short time. I was much heavier then. If I join the project, I have to take a course for a month. But I have difficulty walking. 'I can't walk, I can't go to the course,' I told Ms. Belma. Ms. Belma

said, 'Don't worry, I will take you to the course by car. I have never seen such a favor before. I was very surprised, but Belma Hanım's support was very good for me. Ms. Belma did not look down on me because of my weight, and she did not scold me or insult me. Ms. Belma did not tell me that I was not suitable for this job because of my weight. On top of that, Belma, who gave me strength, told me, 'Nurdan, we will do this together. We will be each other's hands, arms and legs. Ms. Belma is the only person who understands me without me speaking. When Ms. Belma gave me such hope, I said to her, 'Ms. Belma, I was waiting to die. Thanks to you, I now have hope. I was withdrawn; I was not going anywhere. Now, thanks to the hope you gave me, I am trying to stand up even though I have a problem with my leg.

Nurdan participated in sheep breeding training with the support of Ms. Belma and received a breeder certificate. However, the delivery of the sheep was delayed, and because of this delay, there were rumors in the village about the project and Ms. Belma. Some of the village people said, "That woman is deceiving you. She will not give you sheep. She is making you work for free." Nurdan said that she responded to these words as follows:

What will Ms. Belma get from me? Do I have money or health? I can't walk, my legs are crippled, my arm is crippled. What will she take from me? If she deceives me, let her deceive me. What did Ms. Belma say? 'If the sheep don't come, I will buy sheep with my own money and distribute them to you. This project has become a matter of honor for me. I will bring the sheep and deliver them to you.' I trusted Ms. Belma a lot, and when the sheep arrived, they were given to me first. I cannot describe my feelings and emotions at that time as a person whom no one considered a human being.

Since Nurdan was the woman who best fit the profile in terms of economic, social, and even psychological status as defined by the conditions of the project, the sheep were given to Nurdan first. This made the other women uncomfortable. Nurdan described this situation as follows:

"Because I was given the sheep first, this caused problems among the women who were members of the cooperative. They told me:

You took the sheep from where you were sitting, even though you were not working in the field. If Ms. Belma does not give us sheep like she gave you, we will not accept this situation. I cannot work in the cooperative's fieldwork because I am very overweight and have a leg disease. I can only work in the

pastry. Some women who were members of the cooperative were jealous of me because the sheep were delivered to me first, so they accused me of not working. Especially Ms. Reyhan treated me very badly. But Reyhan was not able to take care of the sheep, so she had to return them after 2-3 months. God showed Reyhan the evil she did to me.

Nurdan's two daughters also supported her becoming a partner in the cooperative. They think that Nurdan will get out of the house to participate in the cooperative's work and gain morale. Nurdan's daughters want Nurdan to continue to work at the cooperative and strive to attend pieces of training. Nurdan's daughters say, "Mom, try to go to class; if you don't have shoes, we will buy them for you; if you don't have a jacket, we will buy it for you; just go."

Although Nurdan was not able to participate in all the activities of the Cooperative, she experienced a big change in her social life. Nurdan described this situation as follows:

Ms. Belma brought us together with people. Before I joined the Cooperative, I used to live without leaving the house. Ms. Belma changed our lives. We celebrated my birthday at the cooperative's office. Ms. Belma bought a cake for me and celebrated my birthday. I will never forget that day. Before, only my daughters remembered and celebrated my birthday. For the first time in my life, someone other than my daughters cared about me and celebrated my birthday.

The cooperative is the only place where my husband and I can go unannounced, without hesitation, and feel good about ourselves.

Mrs. Belma would call Mustafa and me to the Cooperative office. Mrs. Belma would cook for us with her own hands. She tells me, 'You don't do any work. You just come and sit here. However, I go less because I am worried that other women might think, "We are working, and she is not," and be uncomfortable with this situation.

The cooperative organized a trip for women who are members. The women visited Anıtkabir. I could not go because I could not move because of the diseases in my back and legs. I wanted to visit Anıtkabir very much, but I could not go because I could not walk. Hopefully, I would like to go next time if I feel better. Even if my legs get better and I can go to Gönen market, it will be very good for me.

Nurdan says that Belma supports them a lot. Nurdan and her husband Mustafa feel that Belma is like one of their own family. Nurdan said the following about Belma:

God bless Belma. She took us by the hand. We cannot forget her support. She is our everything. (crying...) Mustafa and I both call her our sister and brother. I have never seen the support I received from her from anyone. Belma President does not even take the dues money of the cooperative from us. Belma President knows that our economic means are insufficient, that we even have difficulty in paying for the bus ticket to get from our village to Gönen. While other people just talk, Ms. Belma makes our lives easier. Belma Hanım and some bureaucrats came to my daughter Kübra's wedding. I was very proud that they came to our wedding. The people of the village asked me, 'How do you know these judges and presidents? Mrs. Belma came to the wedding where Mustafa's siblings did not come, and she also brought bureaucrats.

Nurdan, who felt ignored even by her family, was very proud that the President of the cooperative and high-level bureaucrats came to her daughter's wedding because she was a member of the cooperative. Nurdan expresses her neighbors' surprise as follows: "How do you know these people? You bring judges and presidents to the wedding?" they asked me. Her sisters and brothers (her husband Mustafa's) did not come to the wedding. Mrs. Belma came with her husband and friends."

After getting their daughters married, Nurdan and her husband Mustafa were left alone. Stating that she and her husband got along well, Nurdan described her relationship with her husband as follows: "Mustafa does everything I say. I do whatever he says. But our money is not enough. Why didn't anyone warn us? If we had a pension, we would have a more comfortable life. For example, I use bleach a lot when I clean. Mustafa says to me, 'Do you smoke these cleaning products? Mustafa's grandmother got him used to smoking cigarettes she made by wrapping tobacco in calendar leaves. Mustafa was seven years old when he smoked his first cigarette. Mustafa smokes all the time. When I warn him, he says, 'If you were in my place, you would smoke even poison.'

Mustafa complained less about their economic situation. Before, he used to buy whatever Nurdan wanted and, at the same time, said that the price was too high. Mustafa no longer does this. Mustafa sold one of the sheep given to Nurdan for sacrifice. This was the first money they earned from sheep breeding. Until today, Mustafa has not been able to slaughter a sheep on Eid al-Adha. Because they did not have enough money to buy a sheep. Mustafa plans to slaughter one of the lambs of the sheep given to Nurdan as part of the project on Eid al-Adha.

Mustafa's dream is to buy a big car. Nurdan and Mustafa have 40 sheep today. Mustafa believes that one day, they will have a hundred sheep, and then they will be able to buy a car. Nurdan says that Mustafa is very happy raising sheep.

Nurdan's dream is to buy Mustafa a hearing aid. Because Mustafa has little hearing. When I ask Nurdan what she wants for herself, she says: "I want health. I want to be in good health. I want to be able to go to circumcisions and weddings. I would like to go to the Gönen market. It doesn't cost money to go to the bazaar, right? I would like to go to the bazaar and go sightseeing."

3.3.5. Necibe and Her Mother-in-law – Keçeler Village

Her mother-in-law describes her as 'our Necibe, who is a bit withdrawn and shy. She can't talk freely among people', Necibe, a primary school graduate in her thirties, ironically heard about the cooperative from a friend, made contact with it herself, and applied for the sheep project.

A friend of mine in Alamadın, my village, called me one day. His uncle is a Mukhtar. He was told there was a project in the mukhtars' offices to give sheep to women. My friend said, 'My uncle said something like this. You're in the village, you know, you're not in a good financial situation (she says the "not in a good financial situation" part with difficulty, Necibe pauses), they'll give it to you, your conditions are suitable. 'Girl Pınar, you say they give 20-25 sheep; who would give such a thing to whom for nothing without a promissory note,' I said, a little scared. There was no one at home. My mother and Recep (Necibe's husband) were in Istanbul for my mother-in-law's heart surgery. Then I phoned my brother. I said, "Brother, there is such and such a thing; let's go and sign up." Turns out he had heard about it, too; he was convinced. Then we went. They directed us to the District Agriculture Department. We signed up, we came, and some time passed. One day, my teacher (Belma) received a phone call; they called us to a meeting at the Chamber of Agriculture. Oh, what a crowd. They questioned us, for example, if we owned a house or property. Both the well-off and people experiencing poverty, those with 5-10 animals, and those with many animals, came.

Necibe waited, saying, "Maybe I'll get a chance." No one from her village applied except Necibe. The villagers didn't know about the cooperative then either. No one said anything about it, neither positive nor negative; no one gossiped about it. 'Even if they had said something, I wouldn't have cared,' Necibe says. "My parents said you

were a dead sheep. They didn't know my teacher (Belma) then. But God blessed her; she didn't let anyone oppress me. He didn't let me be wronged; I got my sheep."

Her mother-in-law Neriman (in her seventies) was also skeptical about this project at first but expressed her despair to Necibe about the future of the sheep:

The ones who write from Gönen and nearby villages are more arrogant women. This one (Necibe) is not comfortable talking in public. I didn't have much hope. I thought she wouldn't be elected. But thanks to Ms. Belma, she never let Necibe get crushed anywhere. Necibe is always silent, but Ms. Belma fixes everything. Mrs. Belma was very protective of her. She still does.

The mother-in-law was very supportive of Necibe when she went to cooperative activities. When Necibe had to go somewhere for cooperative activities, the mother-in-law also did her domestic chores. After Necibe married and joined the family, she started to learn how to farm; she had been a livestock farmer in her village before marriage.

When I was a girl, this was our job, too. We didn't have fieldwork; we had sheep and cows. They were doing field work here: eggplant, vegetables, everything. When I got married and came here, I learned vegetable work. We decided to concentrate on the animal business. We had twenty or twenty-five sheep of our own. Then, when we joined the cooperative, they gave us 15 sheep. Now we have about 45-50, thank God. We have a 3-meter exhibition in the market. Every week, we take what we produce and sell it. So we are trying to manage ourselves.

In the past, my mother-in-law also used to go to the market, but now she cannot go because of health problems. She cares for the house, looks after the grandchildren, cooks, and goes to the fields. "I don't sit in a corner because I'm old," she says, adding that her mother-in-law is still very active and has many responsibilities.

I did a lot of market work for years. I had heart surgery three years ago. When I do a lot of standing, these stitches start to ache. You can't sit in market work; you must always be standing. My legs hurt a lot then. When I walk a little and do some work, it keeps me awake. Until this year, Necibe and I stood at the exhibition together or took turns, but this year, I couldn't go anymore. I mostly look around here, at home. There is also work in the field;

there are eggplants. I can't work in the field much, but we still do it together. Our work is that of farmers. We have to sow and reap; otherwise, we will starve. When Sunday becomes Monday, our job is to pick peppers and eggplants to go to the Tuesday market.

Necibe explains that farming is no longer economically viable, and the conditions are getting harsher by the day. The cooperative gave her hope for the future.

"We met my teacher at such a time when I was terrified (anxious), but now I am not nervous, even for the children. I have confidence that my teacher will find a way and guide us. There is no environment for young people to produce anymore. Young people are looking for a salaried job instead of producing," Necibe says, and continues:

He has a field, and it sits there empty. Why? Everything is very expensive; there is maintenance because of diesel fuel. There are laborers and so on. She can't buy seedlings. Were the seedlings 5 liras each this year, or how much was it for eggplant seedlings? If he buys 10 thousand seedlings, how much does it cost? Well, you have to pay for that. You have to buy a siphon, that's money, you have to buy fertilizer, that's money, you don't have a field, you have to rent it, you have to pay the field owner. that's 500 liras. Then, when there is abundance, the price will drop. If you sell this eggplant for 20 liras, you can sell it for 10 liras. If you sell it for 10 liras, you can sell it for 5 liras. That's how it has been until now. It would be very abundant in August. We used to send it to Istanbul. Not only was there no money left, but it didn't even cover the expenses. That money goes to the car (transportation). This time, you make a loss on what you sow. We had many such days. You calculate this, you calculate that. At the end of the year, you realize that the money you earned from eggplant didn't cover your expenses. Then you plant more next year. If there is more this year, you think you can pay off last year's debts, at least some, but that doesn't work either. These difficult living conditions require everyone in the family to be involved in some way or another.

Necibe explains that all family members are somehow involved in farming and the division of labor.

We all do everything. For example, for eggplant, my husband irrigates and fertilizes. My mother (mother-in-law) and I do the digging and picking. The child comes to pick. We must refrain from taking workers. We cannot pay the wages. We plant a little, just enough for the family to cope. So, we do it ourselves, the whole family. We used to produce a lot, but now we can't

afford it, so we produce less. We take it to the market to sell. We send a few parcels to Istanbul to the broker. That's how it is; we are always on our own, and everyone, big and small, is in the field. The mother-in-law emphasizes that she also participates and that their business is farming; 'Look, at my age, I am still trying to do something good or bad for myself. I am a producer. We have been sowing and planting for as long as I can remember.

Nasuhcan, the eldest son of the house, went to work in the fields with his family until his brother was born and turned one year old. Then, when the whole family went to work in the fields, he had to take care of his younger brother. Neriman explains that her grandson was able to take care of his little brother very well; he was very good at it:

Nasuhcan was nine years old when his little brother was born. He took care of him at home. We left his one-year-old brother with him after he was weaned and went to the fields. His grandfather was also at home; he had a foot problem because of diabetes. He was not alone; his grandfather was also at home. But his job was mostly to take care of the grandchildren because he was sick. Nasuhcan took care of his brother most of the time. We were gone until the evening. We left him at home so that the baby wouldn't be in the sun so that he wouldn't get in the way while doing work. Nasuhcan used to take his brother on the back of the bicycle, in the basket, all day long. He would pick him up and put him to bed when he fell asleep on the back. He also changed his brother's diapers when necessary. In the village, they still say that he was a mother to his brother. That's how these children grew up together.

Necibe's son (Nasuhcan) now works as a temporary worker in the municipality. They named him after his grandfather and added 'can' at the end. Nariman emphasizes that Nasuhcan and both children are very precious to the family.

"Nasuhcan is as dear as his name. May God grant him a long life. His room is here, and my room is here. I go to bed after the Isha prayers when it is eleven or half past eleven. When he comes in after me, he doesn't go to his room without opening my door and asking if I am okay if I have any problems," says his grandfather.

Grandmother Neriman is the earliest because she gets up for morning prayers. Then, she prepares breakfast for her grandchildren, who go to work or school. Necibe and her husband go to the animals first thing. It is their job to milk them, take them to the

pasture, and feed them. The mother-in-law says, "Then I cook. Necibe sets the table when she comes home from work. If there is a salad to be made, she makes a salad. She washes the dishes. That's how it is. We divide it, we share it."

Mother-in-law Neriman reminded that she was of a different ethnic origin, Circassian, and explained that when she was young, the sharing of farm and household chores and family relations were very different from today.

Our roots are Circassian. In my youth, everything was different. This village is mixed; it is not a Circassian village. We cook the food from here too. Although nowadays, even the true Circassians don't cook Circassian food anymore. Circassians used to have respectful customs. When I first got married and came here, I didn't sit at the table with my mother-in-law for 4-5 years. Out of respect, you can't sit at the same table. Later on, you know, after one eats and gets up, the other one sits down. I couldn't take my first child, my dying child, and breastfeed him in front of my mother-in-law, even if I turned my back. You can't take your child and love them; you can't kiss them. For example, a small child cries and wants a hug. Neither my wife can take it, nor can I. If my father-in-law is inside, either my mother-in-law takes the child or my grandfather takes the child himself to console the child. You could take the child in your mother-in-law's arms but not in his father's arms.

It reminds us how difficult it was for Neriman to act according to the patriarchal gender-based roles she experienced in the first four or five years of her marriage.

"Until the mother-in-law herself said, 'these old customs have to change, they have to stretch,'" the mother-in-law recounts:

One day, we were digging eggplants in the field, and my mother-in-law was sick, and she was not coming to the field. We carried the water from the fountain to the house; that's how we came to the field. In the past, there was no water in houses like there is now. We'd come in the evening, she'd cook, we'd set the table together again, we'd eat our food, whatever... One day at noon in the field, I was making a salad. My brother-in-law is single; he's with us. We sat down to have lunch. My grandfather (father-in-law) is lying under an apple tree. He doesn't sit next to us at the table. We sat down and started to eat; we set aside salads and whatever food we brought from home for her. Just as we started eating, he got up from where he was lying and started coming towards us. My husband immediately got up; the three of us were eating, me, my husband, and my brother-in-law. My husband immediately got up from the table because he saw his father coming. His father gestured with his hand to sit down. Anyway, my wife sat down, and he came and sat at our table. He said, 'Enough of the respect you show me. Everyone should eat

together at the table. Everyone should love their children. OK, that's the way it is from now on.' 'You will work and these customs, this is not the way. OK, your respect is enough." My father-in-law was a very Ottoman person. I mean, he was listened to. Even if we didn't take the child on our laps again, we sat at the table with him. Now, for example, if we are sitting here, if he is coming from outside, whoever is here will stand up when he opens the door, for sure. If he is sitting in the room, if you are going out of the room, you turn your face towards him until you reach the door and go out. You don't turn your back; open the door and go out. We have always lived these customs like this.

When his own children got married, he did not apply Circassian customs to his daughter-in-law. 'But everyone in the family should respect the elders to a certain extent,' he says.

"We never kept these customs alive. No, no, we abolished them, and Necibe never saw anything like that. Still, everyone knows their respect. Whether it's your wife (husband) or your elders, when they come in, you have to pull yourself together."

Necibe still has to get her husband and mother-in-law's permission to go somewhere, for example. As the elder of the house, she has the authority, and she makes the decisions. "Now, for example, I ask Recep, and he says, 'Do something with my mother; consult her too. You can't just leave.'"

The way the foundations of the family are laid from mother-in-law to daughter-in-law has also changed over time. The mother-in-law arranged an arranged marriage, and her son and daughter-in-law got to know each other beforehand and agreed on a marriage. The mother-in-law explains:

"I was not yet 18 when I came here. In our time, there was no such thing as marrying whomever you wanted. We didn't have the chance to say, 'I will marry that one.' Now, there is no such thing. Of course, now girls can also choose their husbands. Recep and Necibe's marriage was like that. They met themselves. It was up to us to go and ask for the girl."

The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are very harmonious; they get along well. In general, the mother-in-law is delighted that the whole family lives together.

"It is very nice to be a family. Especially if they are with you. For example, I buried two people two months apart, my loved ones. I lost my son and my husband; without them, I would not have survived this long".

The mother-in-law had two major surgeries, and her daughter-in-law and son took care of her until she recovered.

Before the heart surgery, we went to a private hospital here in Balıkesir. They told us to come right away and have surgery tomorrow. They did my tests and so on. When I came home, I phoned my brother-in-law. 'Aunt, take your papers and tests immediately, get on the bus, and come to Istanbul. You can have surgery in a hospital here,' he said. It would be better to have the surgery in a big city. I stayed there for a month at my brother-in-law's house. My brother-in-law's daughter was working at the hospital; she helped me a lot while I was there. In this way, we didn't spend a lot of money; if we had been in Balıkesir, we wouldn't have been able to cope with the costs of the private hospital.

I had brain surgery 15-16 years ago. I cannot thank God enough. I have no defect left anywhere. I stayed for 16 days at Uludağ University in Bursa. I came home when I started to recover a little. Necibe took care of me after that. They both took care of my son. After the brain surgery, I was diapered for a month or so. They took care of me at home during that time.'

She says that she faced these two difficult, major surgeries with calmness and resignation, thanks to her faith. Before she underwent heart surgery, the nurse told her all the details and risks of the operation.

'Auntie, your face has never changed. Many people's blood pressure skyrockets, they get scared, something happens,' she told me. I said, 'My daughter, I came here to have surgery. Whatever is written in the providence, if I have a lifetime, all will pass, I will recover. Otherwise, I will die; it is providence', I said. I had done my ablution and read the Koran before entering the operation. When I woke up, I woke up reciting the prayers I had repeated.

His biggest worry now is that his grandson Nasuhcan is going to join the army. She is very fond of her grandchildren, especially the eldest. He is very sad that he will be separated from him; he can't spare him at all. "Now you know that it can be done with money. If I could afford it, I would print the money so that he would do less and come right away."

The little boy is not like his older brother; he's a bit rough, Kadir, says his mother. ' Their temperaments are very different. I raised them both.'

Kadir goes to swimming lessons, but his real passion is soccer. The family is uneasy about this. 'None of us agree,' says his grandmother. Necibe, too; "What if he doesn't become a soccer player in the future? What then? Let him finish school and guarantee his life first. We work day and night to give them a better life than us.

Necibe explains that the head of the cooperative, whom she calls Hodja, sometimes helps the younger son with his studies. " 'Kadir is brilliant; if he wants to, he can get into any school,' said Belma Hodja. Kadir (the younger son) also loves my teacher very much; he says, 'Belma Hocam is a very skillful person; she knows what the villagers don't know.'

The whole family loves 'Hodja,' especially Necibe. Joining the cooperative and meeting the 'hodja' has added a lot to her life. According to her, the social life of the women in the cooperative has been enriched (colored).

"Oh! My teacher took us everywhere. She took care of us everywhere and in every matter. We are village people. We don't understand anything. We have never been anywhere; we have never had a say anywhere. But God blessed him; he took us everywhere and put us in different environments. I am glad I met him. He took us by the hand and took us out in public. We even went to ministries together. It's all thanks to him; who else would have ministered to us? Everyone took us for a lady, for something.

Even your own relatives, even your own life, are of no use in these times. People who didn't know each other now became each other in the cooperative. He didn't know us, he didn't know us either, but he took us all by the hand, and he worked hard with us.

We went to Ankara twice, Izmir, Balıkesir, Denizli, Bursa. Canakkale... he took us everywhere. Sometimes, he took us to courses, seminars, and fairs, sometimes just for traveling and having fun. Thanks to our teacher, there is no place we have not seen. Before I joined the cooperative, I had never been anywhere. The people in the cooperative were like me; they had never been there either. I'm telling you, our eyes have been opened in many ways.

We all love each other very much. Even if there are sometimes minor problems between us, my teacher keeps us all on the same scale. Otherwise, there are those who stir things up and gossip every now and then.

We meet when we work at the cooperative. We are together when we make dough and at events. Someone has a job and can't come, for example, I can't go to some things. When I say, "Oh, I couldn't go," I worry that they will say something, but my teacher keeps us in balance. May Allah be pleased with him. He has no tolerance for injustice. He always speaks the truth. He is very compassionate. Really. He can never accept the oppressed. We loved him very much, and he loved us very much. Sometimes, something happens. If something upsets me, she always tries to cheer me up. I say to Belma Hodja, "God brought you to us."

3.3.6. Huriye

Huriye explains how she started making needlepoint:

We learned how to do needlepoint from our mothers and grandmothers. 'Take the thread in your hand, take the needle in your hand, hold it like this. Twist the thread like this, tie knots like this.' We started needlepointing at a very young age. On winter evenings, women gather around the stove and make needlepoint. Even before they start school, girls learn to needlepoint alongside their mothers. Our grandmother did it and set an example for our mother. And my grandmother was taught by her mother. Our needle lace goes back a long time.

Huriye is one of the founding members of the cooperative. She learned needle lace at a young age and started earning income after she got married. Unlike other women in the cooperative, Huriye does not say that she contributes to the household economy but that she is the breadwinner. She also takes care of the sheep she bought as part of the project. "Thank God, the sheep have already started earning a little," she says.

When I went to see her, she was making needlepoint with a friend, a former cooperative member.

Huriye, the oldest of the women in the cooperative, is in her seventies. She has three sons and a daughter. She lost her husband, a farmer, two years ago to the covid epidemic. She now lives with her single son, who lives downstairs in her house.

The idea of earning money by making needlepoint came to her by chance;

"I learned this trade from a gypsy. I don't look at people's faces much but pay attention to what they do. This is my habit, too."

It must have been the second year of my marriage because, in the first year, they didn't send the bride to the market. A gypsy woman was standing next to

me. I started watching her. A man came from a distance. I looked, and the gypsy took her embroidery out of her bag and sold it to him. Then the gypsy woman came to her friend and said, 'Let's go; we have money for bread and meatballs.' When I heard that, I said, "So he made a lot of money." They went to eat bread and dumplings, and I went to sell needlepoint to the same man. I sold six pieces of bedroom sets that day."

Huriye continued to sell needlepoint to the same man in the following weeks. This is how Huriye's story of selling needlepoint began.

"My husband did not ask me for the money I earned from selling needlepoint. My husband saw that I was making money, so he didn't give me money anymore. I used to spend the money I earned from selling oya for my children's school expenses, clothing expenses, and food needs of the house."

The Oya trade has been practiced in Gönen for a long time. Traders from all over Turkey come to Gönen to buy oya.

"Merchants come from Van, Diyarbakır, Konya, Bursa, everywhere. They buy whatever is in demand in their hometowns, whatever they can sell. In Bursa, they sell our lace as their own, as if it was from there. It's all lies! They buy it for three liras here and sell it for 13 liras in Bursa. In Istanbul, the price goes up to 53 liras. The merchant wins, not the woman who produces. This is why we established the cooperative." Mrs. Huriye is very angry about this.

Not only merchants but also women come to the market to buy dowry for their daughters.

"Our village is called Hasanbey. The beauty of the lace made by the women in our village is famous. The women of our village produce very difficult models. There has been a needlework market in Gönen for more than 50 years. Every Tuesday, the needlework auction is organized in the Gönen market. One street in the market is reserved for the Oya auction. Oya sellers perform morning prayers and come to the market. They sell their needlework until noon. With the money she earns, she buys her vegetables and necessities and goes home. In the afternoon, she does her household chores. In the past, needlework was valuable. It was sold in a short time. Urban women who wanted to buy needlepoint for their daughters' dowry would come right after

the morning prayer, knowing that the needlepoint would be sold out early. Back then, girls had a lot of things in their dowry. Nowadays, young girls don't show much interest in needlework. In the past, I used to collect the lace of women from the village who could not go to the market or whose families did not send them to the market, and I would take them to the market and sell them for them. I married off my three children with the money I earned from selling lace."

Huriye was married at the age of 19 without her family's permission or knowledge. Huriye tells this story with a laugh: "Actually, they were going to come to ask for my hand, but I don't know. It was fashionable then, so I ran away."

Huriye's children met and agreed with the people they married beforehand. Huriye's son was staying at his wife's family's house (in-law). Since the girl's family had no sons, they wanted their daughter and son-in-law to live with them. Huriye could not accept this situation. Huriye could not digest her son being an in-law: "I cried a lot, a lot. I didn't cry that much when I gave my daughter to her husband."

Huriye asked her family for the girl for her young son; "God bless these embroideries. I bought the bracelets with the money I earned from the embroidery I sold and put them in my bag. My husband is with me, but he is a quiet man. I told him, 'I want your daughter for my son according to God's command and the prophet's prophecy.'"

Huriye spent less money when marrying off her daughters. Because in marriages, the boy's side covers the significant expenses. Huriye says, 'I didn't spend as much money on my daughter's marriage as I spent on the boys because she was a girl.'

Huriye's biggest problem is that her 53-year-old son is not married.

Huriye says to her son, "Son, look, find a woman, even if she has children, and let her be a friend for you in your old age. Look, if I die, you will be in trouble.

Huriye's son did not have a university education. "But my son has improved himself. My son doesn't want someone ignorant. We show him the girl, he doesn't like her. He wants a young one. I said, who will like you?" says Huriye.

A rich woman liked Huriye's son. But Huriye's son didn't want to marry a woman from a wealthy family.

Huriye was tired of tidying up her son's mess. "He throws a sweater here; his socks are all over the place. I get angry, but he doesn't get smart. The others are not like that, and they got wiser when they got married," she says.

Although Huriye was upset at first about her younger son staying with her husband's family, she now says: "Both of my sons never submit to their wives. They please their wives, that's different. The younger son did not submit either, he is even more dominant than his wife," she says proudly.

Huriye's younger son beat his wife. Huriye advised her crying daughter-in-law: "She came crying. I said, 'Look, my daughter, if you hold your tongue, you won't be beaten. I am grumpy, too, but when my husband yells at me if I have something to say, I leave it for tomorrow. If I say it, then it will be worse. I said to my son, 'Women cannot be beaten; if you are outraged, leave the house. You can't beat your wife like that.' I gave advice to both of them. It never happened again.

Huriye tells a story about her mother's advice about marriage:

"My mother said, 'Ninety percent of husbands fight over food. When you get up in the morning, cook first. Clean your house. Whether you have guests coming or you are going somewhere, you will be comfortable if you have food. Because if there is no food, husbands get angry.' I have always done the same. I make my dinner early in the morning. Even if I'm not there, they put it together and eat it themselves. They can do that much. But I don't leave them without food. Then I mind my own business; I can walk around all day if I want."

Huriye's husband was a good person. The other women agree: 'Mahmut Abi was a very well-intentioned, calm man.' Huriye describes her husband's experiences: "But he didn't like to move. That's why he died. He didn't walk, and he didn't do breathing exercises. His lungs didn't work when he had Covid. My husband had open heart surgery before. He didn't do what the doctor said. He didn't make any effort."

Huriye had a lot of difficulty taking care of her husband. Her husband could not go to the toilet because he could not stand up. Huriye did all the cleaning for her husband. Her husband developed wounds on his body. She said, "I took care of my husband with my children. My children used to give me a rest sometimes. But when my son was not at home, how many times did I have to go to the coffee house and call a man? God bless them; they helped me. I couldn't lift him by myself because he weighed 110 kilos."

Huriye's husband was very supportive of the cooperative's work. When the cooperative did not yet have a premises, Huriye and her husband's house and garden were used for cooperative activities. Pastries and tomato paste were made in the garden. Belma, the founding president of the cooperative, said: "When we needed molasses, Mrs. Huriye would find us a cauldron. She gets into the kitchen and cooks for us. She put us through a lot, thanks to her." Mrs. Huriye's husband was also pleased about these activities.

Mrs. Huriye's son encouraged his mother to join the cooperative.

"My child also supported her. I didn't know what a cooperative was then. They were established in the village, and they were selling. I said, should I join the cooperative? We are going to establish a cooperative, is it a good thing? 'Come in, Mom,' he said, 'don't be afraid, nothing will happen. You will only be loyal to the cooperative. You will not break away from your cooperative.'"

Huriye took her son's opinion before her husband's. She said of her husband: 'My husband is ignorant, he wouldn't know. Anyway, if I had made the decision, he wouldn't have interfered or said anything to me,' she says:

I've been selling needlepoint in the market for years, so I'm actually used to this kind of work. I took courage from him and became a founding partner of the cooperative. We were people living in different villages, but we fit together. We had our ups and downs (we had good times and bad times), but we always walked together. For 11 years, I have never left the cooperative.

Huriye received a cooperative education in Antalya. Belma says that Huriye and three other cooperative members attended the training organized by the German

Cooperative Association. Huriye received training on cooperatives, entrepreneurship, leadership, and legislation for a week. Huriye is very knowledgeable on these topics thanks to the training she received.

During the interview, the women talk about cooperative work. They talk about how to do the work that needs to be done in the garden and how to make pastries when the weather is so hot. Huriye also helps with the work in the garden despite her advanced age. When she cannot go, she follows what the women are doing in the WhatsApp group. Sometimes, Huriye calls the women and gives them advice. Huriye teaches the women how to do the work. Huriye also participates in events outside Gönen. She often goes to fairs, festivals, and competitions. She was a jury in the needlework branch. She also received an award for her needlework.

A festival was organized in Bursa with the theme of 'Ten Forms of Art.' A jury was formed from academics, public education center teachers, and masters (folk art) who make traditional productions in the competition categories. Needle lace was one of those ten arts. Huriye also participated in the festival as a jury member.

"I was invited as a jury member for the needlepoint competition. We went to dinner, the contestants, the juries... Maybe 20 women, all professors. Everyone is talking. I was sitting there listening to them in ignorance. One of them, also a professor, turned to me and said, 'What is your specialty?' I felt like laughing, but I restrained myself. I said, 'I'm a housewife.' I remembered the conversations I had with Ms. Belma. I said, 'As she always tells us, we are the masters of this business.' I said, 'I'm not going to let them crush me.' I said, 'We have improved ourselves a lot in needle lace. As a cooperative group, we traveled a lot. We traveled everywhere. As you can see, I am a member of the jury... We have been doing this work since childhood. We did both our home and fieldwork and our needlepoint work. I said I am a housewife, and I cannot say anything else. No one could give an answer. Everyone looked at each other. Some people liked it. After dinner, we went to the bazaar with some of the women. We walked around, we made friends, we established warm relations."

At the same festival, Belma and other partners gave information about their work as a cooperative. Then Huriye sang the folk song Çemberimde Gül Oya. She received great applause and was provided a certificate of gratitude by the festival.

Together with a few other women from the cooperative, they traveled to Bursa for the Needlepoint Festival. Huriye recounts a dialog she had with a woman who was making designs with small embroidery and dried leaves:

"A woman came from Istanbul. She said, 'I am a designer. We will turn the work of needlepoint makers like you into designs so that they can be sold more expensively. I said, 'What do you mean? If we design, these women will starve. We all made all kinds of needlework here to sell and make a living. We made big tables and coffee table covers. I said, "Ours is a bigger design, and we sell them and earn money." She made a leaf and put it in a box. Where am I going to buy that leaf? She dried five pipiriks and put them in a box. Is that a design? You dried the leaf and put it inside. Come, I'll show you the embroidery and designs I've made. If we don't make the embroidery, how will you make the design?"

The women give ten percent of their sales in these places to the cooperative. Huriye says the following about these journeys and Belma: "One day we earned well, the next day we earned less, but thanks to Mrs. Belma, she takes us everywhere we go in her car. I don't know what she earns; it's always a loss for her. Yet she has always managed us. She is a real volunteer. We cannot repay her."

Huriye tells about their last visit as a cooperative with a smile: "Last week, as a cooperative, we were guests of TRT Music channel in Ankara. Bedia Akartürk invited us to play while singing a Balıkesir folk song. I would have been shy in the past, but since we went as a cooperative, I was not embarrassed at all. Müzeyyen and I went on stage to play. The whole country saw us. 'I am 74 years old now. I will continue this work as long as I live. I wish this Cooperative had existed 30 years ago.'

3.4. Analysis and Conclusion

In terms of the factors that affect the social position of the women, there are striking similarities between the specific lifeworld and everyday life experiences of the women; I have presented detailed excerpts above and other members of the cooperative and the impoverished rural women of the social environment in which the cooperative was founded. Building on the argument that women's subjectivity, status, and work are constructed with intersecting social, economic, cultural, and

political factors, in this section, I concentrate on the specific women's stories in their particular social contexts.

I believe these specific women's life stories and experiences would give us insights to understand how women's subjectivities in a particular context are socially and culturally constructed. Therefore, it became necessary in this research to understand and explore poverty from the vantage point of rural women by following the paths that the actual field, via fieldwork, showed me, both as an insider (because I was involved with the cooperative) and as an outsider (because I am an outside researcher). I wanted to explain why the economic dimension came to the forefront among the factors affecting women's status and subordination and, therefore, why the focus was on poverty because the information I learned from the field through fieldwork drew the direction of the research in this way.

Almost all the women I spoke to said their primary responsibility was to "take care of their family and children and contribute to their health and well-being, and the family's livelihood." They value being a mother, daughter, son, or sister. While only a few of the women I interviewed said they were head or joint breadwinners, the majority said they "contributed to" and supported the household through their work. While working in the fields of others (other landowners or agricultural enterprises) is seen as a prestige and status-reducing job for both women and men, they think that picking and harvesting parsley, performing certain parts of olive production and processing, and embroidering needlepoint, doing piecework and selling it in the local market is women's work. Women who work in their own fields and homes describe their work, but they do not identify themselves as farmers or housewives. They only state, "I try to support my household as much as I can, as much as I can afford." Some women see men as the head of the household and the breadwinner, in the past as in-laws and today as husbands. Those who have lived in a traditional extended family in the past emphasize that in those times, it was the father-in-law who was the head of the household and the one who had the most say in decisions and allocation of resources. After his death, the mother-in-law and one of the adult men of the household jointly shared the position of authority. Almost all women emphasized that the "newcomer bride" had the household's most minor rights and

responsibilities. For example, they said that while it was considered meritorious for the new bride to make needlepoint at home, it was traditionally unacceptable for her to sell needlepoint in the market or even go to the market. Other women said they would not want to work off-farm in other people's fields - unless they were very poor. Most women emphasize that this pattern of off-farm work has changed. In today's challenging economic conditions, they are willing to work whatever jobs they can find for their families to survive.

Women describe the economic adversities as hyperinflation, decreasing purchasing power, unemployment, the inability of their husbands and adult children to be employed in stable, socially secure, and long-term jobs, the lack of or insufficient land, and the high cost of production, which results in lower income from agricultural production and not enough to support the household. In addition to these economic conditions, we can say that in Balıkesir, a region that has an important place in the production and processing of fruits and vegetables in Turkey, it is easier for women to turn to off-farm jobs. Women say that in seasonal, casual, and intermittent jobs in the fruit and vegetable industry, women are often more easily employed than men, and some jobs are exclusively for women. For example, in parsley harvesting, apart from drivers, only women are employed by agricultural subcontractors or traders. The sergeants (*italics added*) who act as intermediaries between the women and the companies and traders and who mediate between the companies and the hiring of women are also women selected from the region. "In any case, men would not work in parsley even if they were starving, even if they could not find a job," the women said, indicating that gender-based cultural and traditional values, stereotypes, and attitudes, along with economic factors, shape the participation/involvement of women and men in off-farm work. In most food processing enterprises, such as tomato paste factories, and in some parts of production, women are likely to be employed as wage labor, either entirely or mostly in temporary, intermittent, labor-intensive jobs. In such low-wage and casual work, women are either temporarily insured or uninsured against accidents, health problems, and risks, many of which are work-related. Moreover, the costs of treating injuries and illnesses resulting from these work-related accidents are borne by the poor woman and her household.

As we have seen in the case studies, workplace conditions and long working hours can also take a devastating toll on women's physical and mental health. Worse, according to the interviewees, women are asked not to speak out, complain, or object to their employers and workplace conditions. For example, in parsley picking, they are aware that they should "never" complain not only about the work and the employers but also about the sergeants who play a role in women's employment. The words of one interviewee, "We have to get along with the sergeant so that he will call us for parsley work later," aptly express the women's internalized fear of not being able to find work when needed outside the workplace. A strikingly inhuman description of the workplace that I heard from some women, both members and non-members of the cooperative, that makes one think "this is modern slavery" gives us an insight into this issue: men and women working without insurance in a fish processing factory were hidden in the icehouse by the managers when inspectors came to inspect the company. One woman who was subjected to this violence says she cannot forget how badly she felt after the incident.

Among similarly low-paid jobs with similarly poor conditions, women tend to choose those that offer social security and some benefits, even if temporary. The reason for this is related to their concerns about the future. Women from households where at least one family member is uninsured, especially husbands or adult sons, often emphasize the importance of being able to get a job that is insured: "We have to take any job because we don't even have social security to cover our treatment when we get sick, tired or old."

However, at that time, they (women) made their husbands insured either by working as uninsured casual laborers outside the home or by contributing to the household through various household economic strategies (they made their husbands insured). In addition to poverty, gender ideologies (care and nurturing) and cultural values also motivate women to work outside the home. Most of the interviewees emphasized that their children are their priority and are very precious to them. Making sacrifices to meet their children's needs, to ensure that they can live in slightly better conditions now and in the future, even if they work in these devastating conditions, gives them a sense of fulfillment. It is meaningful to them, and they explain that "otherwise, we

would not be able to endure these jobs". For example, a significant number of women members do not blame their husbands for the fact that bringing home an income does not reduce their difficulties in daily life, because they emphasize that their husbands and all the family members also suffer a lot under these harsh conditions of poverty. They say that they have many more rights in the home today than in the past when they lived with their mother-in-law, father-in-law, and husband's family. For example, some women say that their husbands also suffer from the economic situation and that if we could afford it, none of us would have to work in these poor working conditions. A relatively small number of women feel resentment toward their husbands for not being able to fulfill their roles as breadwinners, economic providers, guardians, and protectors of the family against external threats. They believe that no matter what happens, the father or husband will protect them in the end, and the men of the family will at least be the shield of protection against social pressure from their local community.

In sum, the nature of off-farm work, the level and sustainability of economic income, and the availability of social security and benefits all affect gendered role expectations in the household and women's bargaining power within the household in different ways. As a result, women's past and present temporary work without social security remains invisible and is seen as supplementary to the family income. Many women emphasized that having a job with a regular income and social security benefits would change their power, rights, and responsibilities within the household. For example, women who received sheep from the cooperative's sheep project experienced changes in the attitudes of family members and husbands toward them because they provided this economic resource to the household, and there were slight changes in the roles and responsibilities that family members assigned to them.

As a result, all these economic and cultural factors, on the one hand, force women to work off-farm under any circumstances. On the other hand, these conditions, as Collins shows, lead to job segregation; and agribusiness increases the recruitment of a large female workforce for fieldwork and packing in agri-food companies. Agribusiness exploits women's impoverishment and gender ideologies to erode their employment and worker rights (Collins, 1995, p. 217). According to Jane L. Collins,

“This is in part because women’s labor in many parts of the world still the ‘cheapest of the cheap’, not only because women can be paid lower wages but because women’s labor can be obtained on more flexible terms than men’s labor in many cases” (1995, p.217). Collins shows that agricultural companies believe that they can exercise more control over women when it comes to meeting the quality standards of the products they export. This is because the dominant gender ideology perceives women as less volatile than male workers. As a result, these companies believe that “women workers can provide a combination of quality, flexibility, and political stability” (Collins, 1995, p.217). Therefore, they prefer to employ women in fruit and vegetable production. As Collins puts it, drawing on Enloe (1989), “labor is never simply 'cheap', it is made cheap, and the same goes for flexibility on political stability” (ibid). That is, Collins pointed out here that capitalist firms are dependent on the family and institutions grounded in gender ideology to make women's labor cheap and to discipline women workers. In summary, we can say that the capitalist flexible mode of production needs the household, grounded in the ideology of gender, to condition women that their paid work is subsidiary to the household, to teach them that their wage work is supportive of housework. Another reason why the capitalist system of production needs gender ideology is to teach women that women's work is less important than men's work. In this way, capitalist agricultural firms make sure that women are conditioned to always be at the service of social reproduction through the household, which is grounded in gender ideology (ibid). Collins' view draws our attention precisely to the world-system approach and Dunaway's argument. The world order of production, through the semi-proletarian household and within the semi-proletarian household, as Dunaway says, exploits women to the fullest. So, capitalism and patriarchy go hand in hand. But, according to Collins, while in different parts of the world the view of women as internal helpers is dominant, it is very "unstable" and open to change. Perhaps this is why we must seek out alternative methods, approaches, and systems that have the ability to challenge the capitalist mode of production and the patriarchal system. In my opinion, every endeavor and approach is significant in this fight. In this sense, if the new generation of cooperatives can create an imagination of a more equitable, more egalitarian world, they can open a space for women in this struggle.

CHAPTER 4

THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACTS OF THE COOPERATIVE ON WOMEN

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I aim to discuss how this cooperative is an organization that enables women to build relationships, contact, communication, and interaction with people from wider circles, both locally/countrywide and internationally, based on their own lived experiences. Gönen Merkez Tuzakçı Hasanbey Villages Cooperative can be considered as one of the "new-generation cooperatives established by women for women", where all partners are women (Nizam 2021). It is the first cooperative established in the agricultural field with all-female partners. Currently, the cooperative has the most significant number of women and covers the largest geographical area. Its goal is to empower women economically, politically, and socially. Based on the narratives of founders Belma, Huriye, Nevriye, and the other member women, the ethos of the cooperative is perceived as "complementary ethics," creating social and economic survival strategies, contributing to economic productivity and social well-being of poor women and their households through societal solidarity as the shared, common ground of the cooperative.

The majority of members are over thirty-five years old; all members are women and come from households below the poverty line, according to TUIK statistics. Although the cooperative as a group is relatively homogeneous in terms of economic status, there are differences among members in terms of cultural, religious, and world views. For example, some women are culturally more conservative and economically more egalitarian compared to others. Although there is general agreement among women on issues such as the state providing jobs for everyone, increasing social security benefits, and supporting agricultural production and

farmers, there are subtle differences in their views and attitudes towards issues such as family, gender relations, motherhood, marriage, premarital sexuality, abortion, women's bodies, and childbearing. They emphasize the importance of following religious rules and standards as Muslim women in these matters. However, they also acknowledge that current difficult living conditions have influenced their attitudes towards these issues. For example, in our focus group or one-to-one conversations, some women express the view that having more than one child is "not wise" in today's economic conditions and advocate the use of birth control methods. "Similarly, using the saying 'a person's home is not where they are born but where they are fed,' the majority express their support for their children living in distant places if necessary.

Moreover, almost all of them emphasize the importance of their children obtaining a modern-secular education to 'save themselves' economically. They believe that education plays a crucial role in social mobility, helping them ascend to higher social classes and escape poverty. The vast majority of women had no prior experience in joining or working for any cooperative or similar public organization. Some women said that if the cooperative was not for women only, men would also join. They might not have joined as they wouldn't feel comfortable if their husbands wouldn't let them. Since joining the cooperative, many women have experienced various practices for the first time. For instance, one member mentioned how their lives changed, saying, "We took the lead. Even at home, we took the lead." Another woman mentioned overcoming her shyness during social gatherings through cooperative activities; "For instance, women in the neighborhood used to have women's days or gatherings from time to time. When I went there, my face would turn bright red, and I couldn't speak more than a few words. But now, I confidently give interviews without any hesitation. I've really overcome that. Of course, this is thanks to the cooperative and Mrs. Belma." Based on what members often share with me in different contexts and my observations, I can say that women are more involved in decision-making processes both in public and domestic domains with the help of the collective acting process in the cooperative. Hence, we can consider the process of learning and practicing women to participate more actively in decision-making processes from which they have previously been denied. It is possible that

they may provide organizational capacity for poor women, an achievement that many domestic developmental interventions fail to accomplish.

It is difficult to predict whether the practical experiences women gain in cooperative activities will have a lasting impact on their gender relationships and actions. One may argue that the cooperative offers its members effective and essential tools for economic, social, and political changes on different fronts. Cooperatives promise significant potential impacts, but there is little empirical study on the impacts of cooperatives on poor rural women. The tangible results the cooperatives expect to achieve may take a long time, and more studies are needed on those long-term effects. Therefore, in this section of the thesis, based on participant observation and individual or focus-group semi-structured or unstructured interviews drawn from years of fieldwork, I focused on discussing the perspectives of women who have experienced the effects of cooperatives in the actual field in their daily lives. I tried to discuss and analyze the perspectives and views of women who have experienced the effects of cooperatives in their daily lives.

4.2. Analysis

In terms of women's willingness to participate in cooperatives and the impact of cooperatives on their lives, the common thread shared by almost all of them is that women want to contribute to the livelihood of the family by providing additional income and resources to the household, improve the living standards of the family, and increase their capacity to cope with poverty/economic adversities. In their local circles, there were many examples of them trying to meet the basic needs of their households in solidarity with other women, even if not all women were members. One can also observe that the cooperative has increased the willingness and motivation of many women to participate in paid work in some economic areas where they were previously rejected. For example, some women have taken up animal husbandry and self-employment with the sheep provided by the cooperative. This has an increasing effect on the motivation to engage in such activities not only among the cooperative members but also among other women in the local neighborhood as an example for others to follow. We can also see there are some

conflicts among the local women, and I can say the existence of conflicts, competitions, and negotiations are some of the reasons why not all women are involved in this solidarity.

Yet from what I have observed and often heard from them, the cooperative's central support to women's lives is as much, if not more, social and cultural as it is about increasing economic productivity and options. At every opportunity, women emphasize that their social circles/networks are generally growing, sometimes through education, sometimes through cooperative activities such as recreation, and meetings with local municipal officials, NGOs, ministries, and other cooperatives. For example, through the FAO project they are involved in, they had the chance to exchange knowledge and skills on farming with experts from the EU. So, a national cooperative can raise awareness about what is happening worldwide and in other countries. The cooperative has provided opportunities for women to develop their vision of their local community and the broader social world. In particular, the cooperative has provided opportunities for women to further develop their knowledge and skills and practice new methods to improve their quality of life and that of their families in the areas of healthy environment, nutrition, education, and social security.

I had the chance to interview many women who spoke about the confidence they gained. As women's cultural and social vision has improved, I have also observed some changes in their relationships and their bargaining power within the household, even if it is only partial sometimes, such as not having to ask their husbands for permission to go out, to be able to visit other people by themselves and invite them home, to participate in entertainment programs, and so on.

Most importantly, the fact that they somehow socialize in this cooperative has allowed them to stop being restricted or isolated in the home/domestic space. I want to underline that I have noticed a strengthening of motivation in these women to fight for themselves, get out of the house and into the public sphere, and even have the freedom/right to move to other cities physically. The fact that they can gain insight into public life and other women's lives by learning how to access economic

resources and legal services/institutions may open possibilities that change their perspectives. For example, Belma, one of the cooperative's founders, goes to various community organizations where they can interact voluntarily without pressure from their husbands or elders. In addition, they can take another woman as a role model and take different steps, if not for themselves, then for their children (i.e., education). I also had the opportunity to observe examples where their opportunities to be more active in decision-making mechanisms within the household increased with the small amount of economic freedom/contribution they gained by participating in these cooperatives and projects, and they were less hesitant to ask for support for at least some of the responsibilities on their shoulders. I think women in the cooperative can become actors in social life by voting and participating in public meetings, campaigns, workshops, celebrations, training, and so on. Most importantly, they have experienced and are experiencing ways of seeing, thinking, and acting that are different from today's utilitarian and self-centered culture and practices that promote violence and impose oppressive, traditionalist norms of religion.

In my meeting with Belma regarding gender inequality and women's empowerment, when I asked about the impacts of the cooperative on these issues, she began with a story that her mother and father told her growing up:

There was a little sparrow. It was flying from branch to branch when suddenly a heavy rain started. Lightning struck, and thunder followed. Seeing this, the bird threw itself to the ground and started flapping its little wings and legs rapidly. Someone passing by, curious, asks the sparrow what it is doing frantically.

- What am I doing? I'm holding up the sky so it doesn't fall on us, says the bird.

This time, the man asks:

- You're so small; how will you hold up the sky?

The little sparrow replies:

- So be it, even if I can't hold it, I try.

This may be what I and my fellow female friends are doing. But I believe that everyone, wherever they are, should fight against all inequalities, including gender inequalities.

NAZ: Is that why you wanted to start a cooperative with women?

BELMA: Yes. As a woman, I wanted to start from where I, myself, suffered. Because I thought women were oppressed for just being women, so we started this journey with women, especially poor women living in rural areas. These women are doubly oppressed. Of course, when you try to do something with women, you also communicate with their children, husbands, families, and loved ones. Even though it's small, doing something here is crucial to me to change something.

NAZ: Can you give examples of these small but essential experiences?

BELMA: Before joining the cooperative, some of them had only left their village for family visits. Most of them are primary school graduates. It's meaningful to be able to establish a cooperative with my female friends despite all barriers and obstacles, for example. What we learned together and what we learned at the farming school is also essential. Sharing our cooperative experiences with other groups in other cities or at the international level is essential. Participating in a TV folk song program in the capital with my hardworking female friends who work 15 hours a day and have no time for themselves is important. There, women with headscarves, "traditional," women performed folk dances in front of the audience. It's crucial that a few female students from the members' children participate in cooperative activities as interns. It's vital that one of our members, after joining the cooperative, said it was the first time in her life that she was understood and heard and that it healed her...

NAZ: It seems like you're referring to an open-ended learning process. Can you elaborate on learning/doing something together?

BELMA: This process of cooperativization can be seen as a step-by-step journey of creating awareness, consciousness, and sensitivity among women, individually and

in interaction with each other and broader communities, against gender inequality and all kinds of inequality, discrimination, violence, and marginalization. It involves knowing, defending our rights as individuals, and finding ways to cope with disadvantages and difficulties together. This happens in different ways, such as having coffee together, harvesting in one's field or the cooperative's field, celebrating and sharing the joy of our accepted project among a multitude of privileged projects, participating in education with an international NGO, dealing with an education or health issue of a member's family member, taking a street dog for treatment, collectively seeking solutions to the problems of one of our members' family members... In short, it is a process that we try to sustain by complementing each other and experiencing together. Especially in a small community where culturally patriarchal male rules are relatively dominant at home, on the street, at school, in the workplace, and in institutions, when we hit the wall, either small or large, when we feel confused, we try to provide each other with support and create solutions to these difficulties.

We have ideals and goals, but the processes that lead to those goals are as essential to us as the goals themselves. It's a process of searching, researching, and learning through trial and error how to go and how to do it because not only what we do but also how we do it is vital for us. Like the sparrow in the story I mentioned, maybe the effects are minor now. Still, in the long run, we believe that it can open up significant horizons for women, their families, and loved ones – a process with many falls, obstacles, hitting walls, getting up again, and struggling again.

Of course, like in all social processes, there are contradictions, conflicts, difficulties, and abandonments. In this process, there are differences of opinion, discussions, and communication problems within our group. Because everyone is different, they have a different lifeworld learned and experienced over the years, and they look at the world from there. In the face of these contradictions and conflicts, we are trying to learn to make democratic decisions collectively and produce standard solutions despite the challenges we are trying to handle.

NAZ: What projects have you undertaken so far?

BELMA:

Our projects are as follows:

- 1- UMay FARM: Sheep farming project with 15 women funded by the European Union and the Ministry of Agriculture. Started in 2013.
- 2- FESTIVAL IN THE FIELDS: Medicinal aromatic plant cultivation project. Funded jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality. Support for thyme, echinacea, and sage seedlings. Ongoing.
- 3- ANCESTRAL SEED - MOTHER SEED Project: Started in 2014.

Our project aims to find and register ancestral seeds in our region and propagate them. Ongoing.

- 4- ROSE LACE ON MY SCARF: Started in 2014. Creating a single sales and marketing channel to better utilize the lacework of women selling needlework in our region and taking it to fairs, festivals, and events... Ongoing.
- 5- PIONEER WOMEN FARMER PROJECT: The budget for this project was provided by the UN - FAO, with technical support from the Ministry of Agriculture. We established 25 small family businesses and provided grants for sheep and rams. When I wrote the project and sent it to FAO, they responded, "This is not our area; we have never provided live animal grants anywhere in the world." When I emphasized that if your goal is to ensure access to healthy and good food for those in need, people who cannot afford meat due to poverty and lack regular income for quality nutrition, they sent experts from three countries to review the project. After getting to know us, talking to us, and asking questions, when they were convinced, Erin, the Israeli manager, said to my husband Kazım behind my back, "Your wife is a saint." They approved the budget. A first in the world, FAO initiated a practical Farmer School by providing live animals.

- 6- PIONEER WOMEN FARMERS FOR ZERO WASTE IN THE FIELDS: Started in 2020, this project is a joint effort with Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality and the Cooperative. We placed two waste bins in 13 villages where our Pioneer Women are present, making them responsible. They weigh and record agricultural and farm waste collected by themselves and other citizens in their regions. When it reaches 500 kg, Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality provides a lamb through the project.
- 7- WOMEN SHEPHERDS IN KAZ MOUNTAINS - 2023: In the village of Bostancı, where they have wide pastures, we started a project to establish a goose farm and a Kazevi restaurant eight months ago. We obtained the permits and planted lavenders last year for environmental landscaping. Construction began twenty days ago. The project is created with the zero-waste logic, household pot wastes will be turned into compost for the field through a machine. Protein waste will be turned into cat and dog food through composting. The municipality provided these machines. We convert sink water into gray water through a machine for the geese and feed a pond. Our geese will be fed entirely in the pasture, and we will minimize our carbon footprint with this zero-waste project. The building is constructed by the metropolitan municipality.
- 8- SUN-DRIED WOOL: In 2023, the wool from our sheep in this project became an organic waste. We cannot sell it or give it to the shearers at a ridiculous price just to get rid of it. When these wools are washed and dried, the cost is 80 lira per kilogram. However, if they are turned into yarn, the cost becomes 320 lira per kilogram. So, I submitted a project to GMKA (Southern Marmara Development Agency). The project was approved with a 90% grant and 10% cooperative contribution for the purchase of machines such as wool washing, wringing, and drying machines, as well as solar panels to operate these machines with solar energy. The machines are under construction, and we plan to start operations in May 2024.
- 9- WOOL FAIRYS - 2023: In this project, after washing and drying the wool from our sheep, we plan to set up a workshop within the cooperative to make

wool pillows, duvets, and healthy baby products to sell on e-commerce sites such as AMAZON, OZON, ETSY. We established the WOOLFAIRY company in the UK under the cooperative name and started the approval and registration process for the brand. I won the HALKBANK Project competition with this budget. I am managing the process with mentors who guide me. When our wool factory starts, our wool products will be produced and will be sold internationally.

Nevriye, another founding member, explains what the cooperative means to her and how it has contributed to her life.

Naz: How did you come to the cooperative and why? You are one of the founding members. Can you tell us how you felt from the establishment of the cooperative until today?

NEVRIYE: I chose the cooperative because it teaches us to work together because it enables us to do something collectively. My uncle founded the first animal husbandry cooperative in our village when I was a child. He was the village headman. There was no electricity in the village then. We used to do handicrafts; needlework was more tiring and difficult. But we couldn't take our needlework to the market, and he would take our needlework to the market. My uncle was also illiterate and very interested in reading and education. He was a primary school graduate, but he tried to educate everyone around him. That's why this cooperative has been familiar to me since its establishment. When the cooperative was being established, I went to the market. I was working very hard, but I still agreed to become a founding partner in the cooperative so that I could support it in some way. Even if I couldn't participate in every work, I entered the cooperative so that I could support it. I already knew that the cooperative would do me no harm.

When my uncle first established a cooperative, he was collecting milk; now, many people can retire from that milk collection business thanks to my uncle. He used to take the birth certificates of those who poured milk; he used to register them, then they used to get angry, and they used to ask my uncle what he was going to do to

take our birth certificates. But my uncle ensured the retirement of those who poured milk in that cooperative through the cooperative. Since these things remained in my consciousness, and I was already curious about such things, the cooperative business was not foreign to me. I became a founding member with confidence because I thought Belma would lead us in this cooperative. I joined willingly. A cooperative means unity and solidarity. At times, money is also earned. Needlework is a job that is tiring to the eyes and cannot be done as you get older, so I became curious about animal husbandry, which I did not have the opportunity to do before. When the first sheep project was held, I immediately told my husband to take me; we could not find the exact location with the motorcycle, so we turned around many times and we barely found it. But I was determined to come, to participate in the project.

NAZ: You have started a livestock farming business with the cooperative. What other contributions do you think it has made?

NEVRIYE: There have been many differences with the cooperative. We said unity, solidarity, and equality between men and women, and we created a lot of differences in all of these. We learned about sisterhood through cooperation. Even if you don't earn a lot yourself, you leave someone a memory; you teach them something. There have been many changes in our lives in the cooperative. Let me tell you about the most recent incident. When we used to go to the village, it was impossible for a woman to enter the café. It was always said that women could never enter. But now we could quickly go in. Men went out without any embarrassment, and we could sit in the cozy place inside the coffee house without any embarrassment. The Mukhtar wanted this, and everyone wanted this very easily. Neither those who came out were disturbed, nor we were disturbed.

Of course, as the projects continue, more economic contributions will be made. For example, with this environmental waste project, the cooperative taught us to collect waste and keep our environment clean. We were told that whoever collected waste would be given a lamb, and even if we weren't, we participated in this project for environmental cleanliness. This project has set an example for us and for everyone. It became an example for other people in the cooperative. For example, women were

taught that it is crucial to clean the environment and to make it worthwhile. For example, we bought a lamb from here. We collected waste, which benefited the world, and we bought a lamb, which benefited us. Many things have changed in our lives with the cooperative.

For example, we went to fairs. Even if we couldn't sell anything at the fairs, I thought like this: We are here as a cooperative. When I looked at the sign of the cooperative, I was very happy at the fair. Having our name there gives us great pride to represent Gönen. It is very proud to say that we are here too.

When I joined the cooperative, some things changed at home; I became more independent. For example, when I say I am going to the cooperative today, my husband tells me to go. Go and contribute to the work there, support it. We saw in ourselves the right to have a say, and the family accepted this.

I loved this place (cooperative). When I couldn't go to the cooperative, when I had work to do, my mind has always stayed at the cooperative. I couldn't stop thinking about how it happened and how it went. It is essential to be helpful to people, to be useful to the family first, to support the economy, to support the environment, to be an example to the environment, and to be more beneficial to those who will come after us. So that the next generation can rise above us and go further. For example, cooperatives were not known in our childhood. Now, it is only recently known. For this, some people need to bring it forward, and they need to be leaders because people say they cannot do it on their own. But when there is unity, she (the leader) becomes an example for others. For example, even to get a vote, you need to look at her example; we will be an example by looking at each other.

For example, we experienced an incident today. We helped a friend with the work that she could not do because of her illness. As a cooperative, we tried to solve her problem by supporting our friend all together. The aim here is to provide both material and moral support. The happiness our friend is experiencing today has no price. It is very nice to solve our problems together, to accomplish something by knitting, and to carry out the work together with love and affection when we are

together. Even if I don't have a job at the cooperative, coming here and chatting with my friends, talking about our problems, and drinking coffee here, like at home, gives me a lot of happiness.

Cooperative means cooperation, it means being together, it means unity, it means contributing to people materially and spiritually, it means support, it means freedom, it means doing what we want to do, it means being able to buy what we want to buy.

NAZ: You say it is essential to be together, to be a group, and to do things together. Has being a group made a difference in your relationships with those around you?

NEVRIYE: Of course, it happened. Maybe people who don't take us seriously on our own take us seriously as a cooperative. For example, when we are doing projects, we go to the mayor and municipal administrators to tell them about our projects and get support for them, and when they support us, we support them. But if our mayor doesn't support us, we don't vote for him. We talk about it with our friends.

We support those who support our cooperative; we support those who support our projects in the same way. We both support each other and choose our municipality to support us. For example, the big city municipality supports our project, where we collect the waste around us and send it for recycling. They give us lambs and give us piggy banks to collect the waste. We talk to our friends about voting for those who support our projects and electing them. Before my husband used to tell me to vote for this party or that party. Now, I tell both my husband and my sons that we vote for those who support us and not for those who don't.

When we came today, I got very excited. We have done a lot of projects, and we will do more projects. I always think at night how these projects will be done."

Another founding member, Huriye, describes the impact of the cooperative on the lives of women members as follows:

"When the cooperative was established, we started going to fairs, we sold our products, we sold our embroidery, we made money, we had more opportunities.

when the cooperative was newly established, life was not so expensive, so our products were not so expensive. We were selling a lot. Everything was good; it is still good; we have been continuing our business since we established the cooperative. We had many meetings. We had conversations about how to manage the cooperative. We have learned everything. We didn't know what a project was; we learned how to do a project; we entered the sheep farming project; for this project, foreign experts, managers, managers of the Ministry of Agriculture came here, and we held meetings together. Every 15 days, we discussed the project with the applied farmer school. As the projects we made were approved, we did new projects; we made requests from the state by writing projects with these requests. We held meetings together to decide what we needed and what we should ask for. We decided with our friends, which project would be better for us. First, we bought sheep and became sheep owners, for example. 20-25 people were given sheep. Now we are working on the Goose House project. Our goose house project was also accepted. Hopefully, we will see good days. We will be better in our projects.

Because we work together in the cooperative, there has always been unity. We all try to do something for each other. We realized that we could solve the things we couldn't do alone when we did them together. We opened needlework courses, we gathered with all our friends, and we all laughed and did our needlework together. We learned how to appear in front of people. We learned how to speak. Each person's speech is different. We learned many things like this.

There are some trips, and when all our friends see us, they say, "Mrs. Huriye, we saw you on TV or in so and so place." They say they saw you in some sales places, and we saw you making your sales. They recognize us more everywhere. So, we are recognized everywhere. At least they recognized us thanks to the cooperative. They recognized our cooperative.

Thanks to the cooperative, all women in our region were recognized, the cooperative made all women recognized. Women want to become members of our cooperative and have become more assertive toward their men. They see themselves as strong and say I am going to work in the cooperative. They can say they are going to the

cooperative to do work. Women were afraid before. But now they have lost their fear."

NAZ: How did it happen to lose these fears?

HURIYE: The women have found a purpose for themselves. They have found a place to work.

The men in the village say about the women, 'Look, they work harder and better than us'. For example, some men talk like that; they say that in cafes and public places. Women can do everything, they can do the jobs that men do, but men can't do women's jobs.

Working women should take us as an example and know that if they work, they can be like us. Let them come to us and work, and we will support them. They should produce. Housework alone will not do. They cannot prove themselves to their families, nor can they provide an economic benefit. They should do these jobs to contribute to the economy, to contribute to their homes. Our duty is to support everyone in unity and solidarity.

That a group of women took time off from their long working hours on and off the farm to participate as the audience in a TV program in December 2023 can be considered an example showing that women have started to seek more power in decision-making processes both in public and domestic spheres during the cooperative activities. Before and after the program, they visited other places they wanted to see in Ankara. During a shared meal, one woman mentioned her involvement in decision-making within the household and negotiations for a more significant share, saying:

For example, when we first started with the cooperative, to be able to participate in such trips, we had to work twice as much in advance, just to be able to go out, visit the neighbor, or just go out. We had to work twice as much to avoid criticism and tension from our husbands, elders, or children and not to give them any reason to speak. But our husbands don't ask us when

they want to go somewhere. It used to be like that, but it has changed; we have overcome that situation now. For example, we bought sheep; now, my husband takes care of the sheep, and I came here (to Ankara). Well, now I say, 'you take care of the sheep, and I'm going out...'

Another member who participated in another trip said, "I don't have a husband anyway. I tell the children to let them know. I say, my son, we have a trip on such and such a day. Of course, whenever you want, wherever you want to go, you can go, Mom, you are free, he says. You work so much; at least one day a week, you should reserve for yourself, he says. I tell them just to inform them..."

Another one says, "My son also says, you already do what you know. Why do you tell me where you are going? I tell him to know my place; I say now."

During the interview, when other women mentioned positive changes in household gender roles, I asked the women about their ideas on the reasons behind these changes. One of the women said, "Traditionally, it was like that in our home, too. We used to struggle to get permission 3-4 days in advance to go somewhere. Can we get permission? Can we go? We didn't even know that. But now, they (husbands and elders in the family) have also become accustomed to the social life we engage in. Now, I don't ask if I can go. I just go. They (husbands and elders) don't question me about it. For example, when I came here, I told my husband, 'I'm going to Ankara...'. In the past, when I asked for permission to go somewhere, he used to say, 'Why bother? Just don't go, what will happen if you don't go...' and he would say a lot of things. At that time, I couldn't say anything. I accepted it. It's not only related to the contributions we make to the household. It's related to our clear stance, I think. As a woman speaking for myself, our stance has solidified. I gained self-confidence. It's about being able to say, 'I want this, I can do this.' When our husbands see our clear stance, they take a step back, and they don't put a question mark after the sentence anymore. They think, 'Remziye wants this, so I won't interfere.' Otherwise, they would have a hard time dealing with us..."

These words were spoken by a woman who was previously a "housewife," taking care of unpaid domestic work, providing care to the elderly and children with a primary education level, living a daily life based on religious references, wearing a headscarf, and being a conservative member. Upon these conversations, a woman in

her seventies, with a primary education level, advises mostly younger women, saying, "Well, ladies, you have the right to live; use it." Among them, a relatively younger woman says, "I'm still a bit afraid. It's a bit easier to tell my husband but hard to tell my mother-in-law. Thanks to our elders, they help us in everything, but living together in this matter is difficult." When this topic came up, women spent a couple of hours exchanging views, resembling a group therapy session or a forum.

The patriarchal system doesn't only operate through men and husbands. Some women mention that resisting the pressure from mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, and villagers is sometimes more challenging than negotiating with husbands about decision-making. For instance, one woman shared that those villagers questioned her about participating in cooperative activities and trips, saying, "Your wife is freely going around. Do you know where she's going?" Remziye's husband, expressing trust in his wife, did not let them speak further. Women also talk about how other women's husbands faced pressure from villagers in the past, stating that they participated in cooperative activities and went on trips. They express joy that their husbands responded to these reactions and resisted. Just as women fight for control over their lives and choices and against husbands, fathers-in-law, mothers-in-law, and villagers, husbands also face such pressure and take their share of the patriarchal gender ideology in some contexts.

In this section, I will discuss the parts of various interviews where I focused on the following aspects in my questions: What are the contributions of the cooperative process to the well-being of women and households? How does the cooperative process affect existing class and gender inequalities, particularly its impact on gender relationships and gender roles within households? In connection with this, I will try to convey, in their own words as much as possible, women's thoughts on the contributions of cooperatives to their well-being, women's social and economic agency, their social lives in interactions, and their resilience against domestic violence.

When I asked how and to what extent women use the cooperative's additional income or resources for their personal needs, the majority emphasized that it contributes to the family economy. Because financial support increases and regulates

the income of women and their households' livelihoods, it has a particular/relative contribution in meeting women's and their households' basic needs, such as shelter, nutrition, and raising living standards. For instance, from my interviews with the cooperative founders, I have learned that a selection was made among the women and their families living in the villages around Gönen, and those who have a place/pasture to keep animals benefited from the sheep grant and engaged in animal husbandry as a family.

Seher, who is in her 60s, stated that she was previously selling greens and some fruits according to the season in the local bazaar and received 25 sheep and one buck as an incentive after participating in the project and completing the necessary training. She also stated that when she started to do husbandry besides the bazaar, she contributed more to the income entering the household by selling a lamb and added that the green leftovers were not wasted because they were given to the sheep as feed. She also emphasized her happiness after she started farming/husbandry, that she had social security (Bağkur) for the first time in her life, and that increased the family's monthly income. Another woman said she made her daughter, who is jobless and helps with the housework, enroll in "Bağkur for farmers at home." Another woman spends part of the income she gets from the sheep on her children's educational needs. She says she sometimes has a hard time buying children's textbooks.

Another cooperative member, who is in her late 40s and has 2 children, received 30 sheep and a ram as an incentive from the project. She said that her son was in high school, and her daughter was in college. Since the expenses of the children were high compared to their incomes, the money earned by her husband, who worked in a factory, was not enough to cover the expenses of their children. In addition, her daughter was studying in a city, and dormitory/school expenses were too much. After starting to work in the cooperative and joining the project, she started to support their children's school expenses with husbandry. She increased their living standards by cooperating in the household.

Another member, one of the poorest women in her late 40s, received 25 sheep and one ram as an incentive within the scope of the project as well. Her financial

situation and her overall situation were different from other interviewees. She stated that she and her husband had to sell everything they had and took loans from relatives in order to get their two children married because her husband was not working regularly, and she was not able to work as well. After she became a member of the cooperative and the project, she received the incentive; she said that with husbandry, they are trying to meet daily needs and improve their situation with this income.

Many women who participated in the sheep project, like the interviewees, state that they mostly spend their earnings on the livelihood of their children and families. In addition, there are a few women benefiting from the various forms of resources and earnings provided by the cooperative to meet their own daily needs. Even if women have only a small income, they say that it benefits the family's livelihood and can even influence family relationships. One woman, before receiving the sheep from the cooperative, used to feel upset and hesitant about asking her husband for money, even for grocery shopping, before making her own contribution to the household. She expressed her feelings this way:

“When my husband used to go to the market to buy basic house stuff, I did not have the right to make any decisions since I did not earn any money. If I made a request from my husband at the market, my husband would tell me the price, and later, he would complain to the family elders, such as, “She wanted something like this; the price was very high/expensive.”

She added that after her participation in the cooperative, made/sold ‘noodles’, received her sheep incentive and started earning her own money, the price of the things purchased from the market was no longer mentioned, and comments were stopped.

Another interviewee told her experience as follows:

“Before, we used to keep a field and plant rice with my father-in-law and my husband. But my father-in-law was taking more money and not making us talk. We bought 20 sheep and one ram from the cooperative. When I started

to do animal husbandry, I convinced my husband by saying that I gave the capital from the money my cooperative gave. My husband left the paddy, and we brought up to 40-50 animals by farming together. Neither my father-in-law nor my husband say anything to me anymore. In fact, my mother-in-law asks me for lamb from time to time and says, "Let us start a little by giving us some lambs." But I sold the lamb without them knowing, and then I said the cooperative took it to my mother-in-law. Now, whatever I say happens. My husband doesn't even speak of about anything."

Under the conditions they live in, women say that even a minor increase in income brings relief to their lives and affects their relationships with other family members. For example, one woman describes the changes she derives from such a mundane daily experience:

"We started selling lambs, thank God. The other day, we went to Gönen for some official work related to social security. We were a bit tired and hungry. After selling the lambs, my husband said, 'Come, Cemile, let's have some meatballs here.' Usually, when we finish our work in Gönen, we go to the cooperative, where we get free tea, and sometimes Belma and others also prepare something, and we eat together while chatting. We ask and learn from each other about things like social security and other matters. We wait at the cooperative until the village bus arrives. I told my husband, 'Let's go, as always, let's eat at the cooperative.' My husband said, 'No, let's do something special today.' We had our meatballs in Gönen and drank our tea. I've been married for so many years, and it was the first time. Until now, my husband would not offer me to eat something outside, nor could I ask him. That meatball felt like the most beautiful meal in the world."

Another woman, with the earnings from her first sold lamb, bought herself a gold ring because, despite her desire and love for it, she had no gold jewelry. She now happily wears this ring when she goes out. Another woman was striving to become a Bağ-Kur (social security for farmers) retiree in agriculture. She mentioned that if she retired, she wouldn't give her first pension to her husband but would treat her cooperative friends to a meal. Unfortunately, she couldn't realize this "dream" before her passing.

This section provides insight into the coping strategies of women facing economic adversity within the limits I cannot further elaborate on. There are numerous examples of how cooperative members, many of whom are poor rural women, deal with economic difficulties, shedding light on the relationship between their status

and living standards and how economic factors shape women's relative status. What I have deduced from these examples and what women said in the interviews is that women's voices increased in the decision-making process of family. After their participation in the cooperative activities, especially after the distribution of sheep, women's standing in their families is improved. They became more active in negotiating an equitable share of decision-making power in the household. Most of the interviewee said that their power increased in the household after they joined the cooperative and the project. Most of the women stressed that "economic contribution" plays a significant role in increasing their power at home. There are also women who state that they have made joint decisions with their spouses in the house before and that they have rarely made the decisions themselves and still do so.

Many women also say that after this project, in addition to the economic contribution, being a member of a group has encouraged them to improve their self-confidence, they became more social, and they were motivated by other hopes for the future. As an example, Busra, a member of the cooperative, who is younger than the other members and who has studied college in another city, says:

"I believe there were positive changes for me after joining the cooperative because I graduated, and when I returned home, there were not many job opportunities. Being involved in a project that can benefit many women is a great source of motivation. When I returned home, I always had responsibilities. I have two siblings. I used to help my mom and dad, and we would have our own business. When I started in the cooperative, I had to get away from them a little bit. Because I started to give priority to the work in this place. New projects are always coming. We also became a project production center. I always think about what I can add new. This time, my mom and dad didn't say anything about me going out. They wouldn't have sent me out before. Cooperative now? Well, they say go. Sometimes I stay at home for a few days. There was even a situation as if they were trying to send me by asking if I weren't going anymore. So, it has been very positive for me. Besides, I expanded my social circle by entering different circles myself, and I witnessed for myself what society really needs. I can say it was a very good experience for me."

Members who joined the cooperative after the project started point out the reactions they received from their neighbors and people around them about how much money they could earn by working in the cooperative as follows:

"We get to know people. We visit some places, go to big cities for fairs, and meet different people. We meet with new people and new environments, and the most important thing is not to make money. If we set up better businesses for tomorrow, we can hire/employ those in need. We don't have to make money."

Another woman added:

"I cannot imagine our villagers and neighbors, like my husband and mother-in-law, would get to meet such important people. We have seen important people, even foreign (international) experts, including directors and ministers. We received farming lessons from them, attended festivals, and even gave speeches. We improved our knowledge and experience, and our lives changed a lot. Money is important, but these experiences are also important."

In this way, women show me that their motivation to attend cooperative activities is not only related to financial support but also to their need for socialization. Interactions and enjoying life together with fellows and loved ones. Seeing new places and expanding their social environment and networks.

In one of our conversations, women started to talk about the effects of gender disparities. My question was, "How do you make decisions in the family?" Here are a few examples of the answers I have received during the focus group interview, one of the members said:

"We have become stronger in this regard. We sit in the family and decide together how it will be and how it will end. There was no such thing before. Now, when we are going to do something, we sit down and talk about how we will do it with the children, what we will do."

Another woman added, "Me too; when we take pictures, attend events or something, or when I share, everyone says to me, 'What are you doing?' I also signed up for the cooperative; it was very good. I say that at least I keep busy. Oh, they say you're improving yourself. I want to participate more, but I can't do more. At the same time, I want to earn my own money, and I want to do something myself, but my husband is a bit strict in this respect. In fact, we talked a little while on the way."

Another woman, Reyhan, joined the conversation and said, 'I'll give you money; buy whatever you want.' No, I said, Mehmet, I don't want your money. I want to do it myself with my own money.'" Serpil interrupted Reyhan and said, "Yes, Reyhan, tell

him that you want to earn your own money to spend.” Also, Hatice added her own response similar to Reyhan’s situation (she was one of the quieter ones): “He says to me, 'I'll tell you what you want, you do it yourself.' But I say no, you will never interfere. I want to do it myself. There was such a conversation, but I hope to participate in future projects if I can convince them.” Sabriye continued, “Well, I've been very happy since I joined this cooperative. My self-confidence has increased; when I go somewhere, I say, 'I'm going', I don't say, 'Should I go?'” After she said that, she laughed and continued: “Of course, I say I'm going to such and such a place. Projects are also going well; I have sheep, and I am very happy about that. My business has increased. I am working more actively.” Another woman contributed to the group:

“They wouldn't let me out of the house before. I regularly come to these cooperative works. I also do needlework at home, I produce dough. I take bazaar money out of them. No need to ask my husband. Even my mother-in-law and father-in-law sometimes refer to my husband, they say, 'What will the women's part do in the cooperative? My husband doesn't say much about this because more money comes into the household.'”

When I tried to shift topic to domestic violence, women don't want to talk much about explicit domestic violence. If it's not a situation that is very visible and known to everyone, women tend to remain silent. When asked whether they have experienced violence themselves, they perceive violence as strictly physical. Some women say that they have not experienced brutal/explicit violence, and such violence is not common in this region. The same women mention witnessing in the past, whether from family elders, men, or authority figures like mothers-in-law, instances where violence was directed towards them or another female family member. However, they state that they don't experience explicit brutal violence from their husbands in the present.

Nevertheless, I observed that two or three female members suspect that one of the members and/or her children may be experiencing violence from her husband, and they express concern for that woman. Additionally, I observed that women seek ways to support their female friends. Nowadays, especially among relatively young women, they claim not to have witnessed explicit violence from their husbands.

When it comes to subtle forms of violence, women mention being wearier of violence from their husbands' relatives and fellow villagers than from their husbands. Only one woman describes the violence she has experienced:

When I was little, my parents separated. I grew up under pressure from my grandmother and uncles. When I got married, I faced a lot of hardship from my husband's family, but I didn't want to end up like my mom and dad. Instead of getting divorced and being cast out, I chose to endure this hardship. I always remained silent. If it were now, I would behave differently. I would speak up and not let myself be oppressed. Now, our women advise and support each other. Thank God, we have seen these days.

After these words, the members talked about how there was an improvement in their gender roles at home and that their self-confidence increased by socializing and making new friends. All the women in the focus group applauded each other by saying, "Strength comes from unity!" Busra, the only young university graduate member of the cooperative, wanted to share her experience about how important it is for her to be a part of the cooperative:

I also want to say something about this. For example, I have just graduated. Now, my friends are getting jobs, and my peers are getting jobs. People around me say, 'Well, you studied so much, they cost you so much, you finished with a degree, you had some homework. What are you doing there now? You don't get paid, you don't get a salary, you're unemployed and wandering around.' My God, there is so much pressure sometimes! This job is actually the most important of all... But if a person cannot understand, he cannot understand. Then I say, maybe you will understand in time, as you see our activities, I am sure that you will want to participate. But I don't know anymore, at that time sometimes they make you angry. Since people do not know much about the cooperatives, they approach them with too much prejudice because they do not know what cooperatives are and what unity is. But after the families are convinced, no matter what anyone says.

Also, Rahime wanted to narrate her feelings about the cooperative as follows: "All the fellows in the cooperative gather among us every month. We talk about both cooperative problems and individual problems. We also hold quarterly meetings with cooperative fellows across Turkey. Others attend each meeting each time. We both get to know about other women who produce, and I hear new ideas. These are not only encouraging but also, as the right example, cause women to establish better relationships with each other. We go to the women's cooperatives fair in Antalya

once a year. We are making an effort to achieve better work together with productive women like them. More environmentally friendly, more woman-friendly, correspondence is being made over Whatsapp.”

Despite all these positive changes, what I have gathered from the women's experiences narrated during the interviews is that, generally, traditional roles and responsibilities attributed to women, such as domestic work, caregiving, childcare, and nurturing, haven't changed much. While some women mention that their husbands and children have "helped" with both taking care of the sheep and participating in domestic tasks they didn't engage in before obtaining the sheep from the sheep project, there are also women who attribute their infrequent participation in cooperative activities to the additional responsibility of taking care of the animals added to their domestic chores. For example:

Well, when the animals came, our work increased. The housework is mine. My husband takes care of the animals rarely, and I take care of them most of the time. Of course, it got more. But of course, it's an exercise. Look, I got a little thinner." (laughs) "I look after the sheep. I get up early in the morning, pick up the child, and prepare his breakfast. After that, I feed the sheep. I come and clean the house and do the cooking. After that, I look at the sheep again in the evening. My husband also works. That's how it goes. So, things got a little bit hard." Also, Seher added, "When we go to visit places, this responsibility is not normally present, but it is added. Now that we have the sheep, our care for them has been added. Since the sheep are also my job, my workload has increased even more because I have to look after them. On the one hand, it was fun, there was a change, it was good for me, but with housework, it can sometimes be difficult to keep up.

Since the beginning of the cooperative's process, members' relationships with their wider social environment have also changed. Similar to domestic relations, we can observe changes both within households and in the wider local community. Like in all societies, there are both sharing and conflicts in relationships; different individuals within families and different social actors within the community negotiate for more control over resources and decision-making mechanisms. Social processes operate in such a way. In the local community where the cooperative is established and in the relationship between cooperative members and this community, there are sometimes more conciliatory and sometimes more conflicting

interactions between different people and groups living in the same geographical space, such as neighbors who have positive or negative views about the cooperative. On the one hand, in some contexts, member women began to gain more respect from their local circles and inspired many non-member women in the area. On the other hand, the inclusion of poorer and isolated women in the local community that has joined the cooperative has caused some relatively upper-class local women to stay more distant from the cooperative, as they perceive being a member of the lower-class women as a matter of 'prestige.' Ultimately, women's participation in the cooperative contributes to the improvement of their social relations with others. This process sometimes leads to increased interaction with wider circles, as well as confrontations and conflicts. However, the communication, interaction, and confrontations triggered by this cooperative process create a foundation that can enhance the visibility of these women in society. It may also open possibilities for them to speak out on issues that concern them as social actors.

4.2.1. Feraye

I wanted to conclude the effects of the cooperative process on women's struggle to become a social agency, with Feraye's story and Feraye's own narratives because I believe that the economic conditions and cultural values that make this process meaningful for Feraye are relevant for many poor women trying to survive in this region.

Feraye tells her experience as follows:

I am 55 years old. I've been working with these hands since I was 15 years old. My family is in Ayvalidere. We were poor, we had no field to plant other than the courtyard in front of the house. My fathers were six brothers. Everyone had a piece of land, and it was neither enough nor enough to feed. Both my mother and father were going to other people's jobs. I am the oldest. I finished primary school in the village, and after that, I took care of my siblings. I cleaned and cooked until my parents came. When I turned 15, I started going to the parsley field with my mother. My mother was very hard-working and did a better job than anyone else. I was doing the same thing, looking at her. When the female worker was forming a team, she put us at the top.

When I was 17, my well-to-do husband's family wanted me in Gebeçinar. My parents said that their situation was good, they could be comfortable, and wouldn't be a victim like us, and they gave me. I got married right after. But the mother's fate becomes the daughter's fate. My husband's family had fields, and they were planting parsley and hiring workers. They put me in charge of the workers. I became a parsley worker in my husband's house without a daily wage this time. It turns out that my father-in-law saw me doing work a few times and said he would take me to his son, Ferit at home because I was very hardworking. Another fifteen years passed like this. Parsley is such a crop that you can't let it sit on its branch for a day when it doesn't like rain or sun. That's why you pick your winter parsley while it's raining. You also collect summer parsley under the sun.

My husband's father suddenly fell ill and died. The job was left entirely to me and my husband. However, while we were collecting parsley, the merchant came, took the money from the field, said he would send it to my husband, Ferit, and left. When I asked for money, Ferit, I need money, Ferit said, 'Istanbul hasn't sent it yet; there is a problem,' he was stalling, but the family needs to eat and get things like dress etc. We started to become worse off than my own mother and father. I have three children, two of them boys, who will go to the military one day, and there is nothing to set up a home with.

Even though I was afraid that one day I would get beaten by Ferit, I caught the trader in the field and said, 'Brother, you are delaying the money; we are barely making ends meet as children; if not, let's find another trader. The man said, sister we do not have a maturity date. We buy the goods, give the money, load them, and go, you ask your husband.' There was a little hope inside me when he said this, and it went away. It turns out that my husband was giving all the money he received to drink with the women in the club.

From that day on, I started going to someone else's job for money. At least I'll get paid. But my husband was drinking and starting fights at home. When he ran out of money, he set his sights on the rights of the children. Eventually, my husband sold the fields and ate the money in the night clubs. We don't have an inch of land left other than the house we live in. I got the girl married by working in a public job. I sent the boys to the military with these two hands of mine. I worked, Ferit drank, Ferit was always drunk, constantly drunk. I bought one gold coin a month from all the money I worked and had it hidden by the neighbor's mother. Otherwise, my husband would fight and get the money. I married off the boys one year apart with the little money I saved. They were not like their fathers. They both worked and helped me.

Three years ago, I was selling parsley in the market, and I heard two women talking. They were saying that there was a cooperative where only women were going and that they would give sheep free of charge to those who came. I immediately approached them and asked where they had heard about it. They said, 'District Agriculture, we don't know yet, we will have our name written down.'

When I ran out of parsley from the market, I went to District Agriculture before going to the minibus. Women have heard such a thing; what is the truth of this? I asked the engineer girls there. They said they would only take my name and send it and the cooperative would select 25 people among the names. I said, 'describe the place to me and I'll go myself.'

I told the cooperative president that I wanted sheep, too. I told her everything I had lived through. Save me from the rain and tears. 10-15 sheep are enough for me. I said, "I want to do my job, go out, herd the sheep for a while, and sit by the stove when I get cold." They sent me away, saying that the application reached 350 people in the cooperative and that interviews would be held one by one.

Even though I wasn't busy, I went to Gönen every day so they could pick me up. The villagers heard it. My name is known in the village as the wife of the drunk Ferit; not many people know my name, especially the men; they all know Ferit. While I was passing by the mosque, a member of the community said to me, 'Nobody gives anything for free; they are trying to defraud you. I said, 'What do I have to do to defraud? You have always defrauded me. Let them defraud me a little bit. I walked away.

I came to training for months. I gave up my job just to buy the sheep. As I came to the cooperative, I started to learn a lot of things. Neighbors would come out of curiosity and ask what I was doing there. They were wondering what they were telling me. I told them everything I learned. My neighbor's daughter-in-law, Aysel, was curious, so I said I would take her to the next meeting. Her mother-in-law and her husband did not allow her to come.

It was said that there would be a sheep distribution ceremony in two years, and the Minister would come. I am this old, and I had only once taken my mother-in-law to the hospital in Balıkesir. They said now we would meet the Minister in Balıkesir. The minister came. While he was giving me my certificate, the journalists took a picture and printed it in the newspaper. All Gönen saw it. I told the truck driver that brought the sheep, 'Don't unload them off at my house, unload them in the village square. I'll walk the sheep from there.' And so, I did.

Now, I have 52 sheep. Last month, I sold 61 lambs and received 269 thousand liras. The merchant counted the money for me with a bag in the village square. The people who were sitting in the courtyard of the mosque and saying that 'you could not understand them, and they would defraud you' started to say 'Mrs. President, when will you accept our ladies into the cooperative?' Villagers who had called me 'the wife of drunk Ferit', now started to salute me as 'Mrs. president'.

We bought back the four decare field along the stream that my husband sold to his uncle. Now, I am dealing with sheep and lambs and also planting that field. So that my husband can earn pocket money from market to market. I signed up for Umrah this year and put my money aside. I hope my Lord will

show us those days, too. I don't look at my child's hand or my husband's hand. I still support them with what I put aside.

4.3. Conclusion

To conclude, we can see from the interviews that through cooperative activities based on collectivity rather than individuality, not only in economic terms but also in social areas, women are able to meet every day practical needs to a certain extent, and they can improve their living standards to a certain extent as well. In this sense, Kabeer points out, the effects of financial services differ depending on factors such as whether they are applied individually, collectively, or with which strategies and how they are used (Kabeer, 2005). As I noticed in the interviews, we can say that the interaction between women, at least among the women participating in the project, improved their social relations and helped with their self-confidence. We can say that some women were able to gain considerable power in decision-making in Gönen Merkez Tuzakçı Hasanbey Agricultural Development Cooperative. However, like other effects, I believe we cannot say for sure whether these effects are permanent or not; only more comprehensive and long-term studies can enlighten this path. The patriarchal gender ideology marks ideological differences between women and men on a hierarchical plane. After these differences are socially constructed, different roles deemed appropriate for women and men by society are assigned. Through the hierarchy established by this difference, society designates men as primary/superior and women as secondary/inferior. In such a context, the sexual division of labor allocates unequal (not egalitarian) roles more privileged to men and lower secondary roles to women in both the domestic and public realms. Since patriarchal structures and relationships prevail in every micro and macro aspect of society, we cannot expect the agricultural domain to be exempt from this. In a social context dominated by patriarchal gender ideology, it is challenging for any structure, institution, or process to remain entirely outside of it. The Gönen Merkez Tuzakçı Hasanbey Villages Cooperative, as a rural development initiative, was established in a social and cultural context dominated by patriarchal gender ideologies. However, women and men who somehow believe in the possibility of resistance where there is oppression and a desire for change are striving to find these possibilities and make changes.

Establishing egalitarian gender relations can be seen as such a struggle on both macro and micro scales. In this sense, we can interpret the struggle of the women of the Gönen Merkez Tuzakci Hasanbey Villages Cooperative and their impoverished husbands who support them against social and cultural barriers as such a process. For example, during the process of establishing the cooperative, some agricultural institutions, acting within the patriarchal gender ideology, tried to hinder the co-founder of the cooperative, Belma, from accessing resources. They tried to lower her social hierarchy by categorizing her with the words "That blond woman should not come." In this way, the presence of women is made invisible, and their labor is devalued. Through such derogatory words and foot-dragging practices, patriarchal relationships are reproduced. Similarly, the attitude of villagers and local people who devalued their efforts when the cooperative was first established is also based on the same gender ideology.

Just like in every realm of society, in agricultural and rural areas where rural development initiatives emerge, the position of women is culturally constructed. Therefore, the same patriarchal dynamics and processes operate in this microenvironment, too. Hence, the struggle against hegemonic, hierarchical relationships in various fields of society can also be reflected in these initiatives. Both oppression and resistance, subordination and emancipation, can be the grounds, tools, and ways. I don't believe that any freedom project (including cooperatives) will bring "automatic" freedom, as Kabeer indicates, will automatically empower poor women (2005). "There are no magic bullets, no panaceas, no blueprints, no readymade formulas which bring about the radical structural changes that the empowerment of the poor, and the poor women, implies" (Kabeer, 2005, p. 4718). The chances of success of these projects change depending on the specific context, conditions, and the ways in which social actors act and their purposes. From this perspective, I believe that looking at the relationship between women's subordination and development policies, projects, and practices, including farming and rural development initiatives, can provide insights. On the one hand, these policies and practices can lead to effects that enhance the "status quo" (Shortall, 2002, p. 164) in a particular context. On the other hand, they can support gender equality in another particular context. Or they can lead to both to some extent.

When examining the Gönen Merkez Tuzakçı Hasanbey Women's Cooperative case, the rural and agricultural restructuring taking place within the context of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) allocated by the world system to developing or periferic countries like Turkey has resulted in the impoverishment of household incomes and the reduction of state supports. The capitalist world production system, through agricultural business, has semi-proletarianized household populations in countries like these, where it can find cheap labor and externalize costs (Wallerstein, 1995). As clearly seen in the stories of the women in the cooperative, the burden of this impoverishment falls most heavily on women. While women are exploited within the production system, they are also doubly exploited by the patriarchal system both inside and outside the household, as Dunaway suggests (Dunaway, 2002). On the other hand, the modernist/culturalist perspective argues that agricultural and rural restructuring, at least partially motivated by Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP), increases women's participation in rural development policies and practices, which is relevant in the case of the cooperative (Shortall, 2002). However, the income and resources from this cooperative have not lifted the members and their households out of poverty but have contributed to meeting the household's basic needs, allowing them to survive. These resources and income are vital, especially for extremely poor farmers with no resources to meet their daily practical needs. The crucial point here is whether these incomes will turn into a sustainable mechanism or in what direction this process will evolve. Additionally, the modernist approach suggests that off-farm income potentially provides financial independence to women, consequently leading to women gaining power in decision-making processes within the household (Rogers and DeBoer, 2001, as cited in Shortall, 2002). This argument is partly relevant to the women in the cooperative.

Moreover, the modernist/culturalist perspective suggests that off-farm work provides opportunities for women within agricultural businesses to claim independence and challenge male dominance (O'Hara, 1998, as cited in Shortall, 2002). When we look at the example of the Gönen cooperative, we can observe that the significant impact of the cooperative is evident in the members' fair demands for decision-making processes within the household and the public sphere. However, some women mentioned in the discussions that this change did not solely arise from economic

reasons. Women who did not receive significant economic support from the cooperative especially claimed that their decision-making power increased in the household, drawing our attention to other factors, such as cultural and social factors, that contributed to this change. One can argue that the S.S. Gönen Merkez Tuzakçı Hasanbey Agricultural Development Cooperative contributes to the process of women becoming social actors by increasing their motivation to participate in household decision-making mechanisms and creating social platforms for them to practice participating in decision processes. Only if women can transform into social actors can they turn the various resources they access into significant gains for themselves (Nizam, 2021).

One of the founding purposes and goals of the Gönen Cooperative is to ensure a more just representation of poor rural women in the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies at local and national levels. Therefore, it consistently addresses the fight against gender inequalities in its policies and practices. It motivates its members to bring about changes in patriarchal norms and gender roles within households and local communities. As we can see in the example of women's stories, the cooperative opens up opportunities and paths for women to enter social and political areas they couldn't enter before or even imagine.

Thus, it supports their social agency. In this sense, the S.S. Gönen Merkez Tuzakçı Hasanbey Agricultural Development Cooperative can be seen as "a new participatory form of development" (Shortall, 2002, p.160) because it "offers a new form of governance that is more inclusive, more representative, and more transparent" (Shortall, 2002). Of course, the effects of cooperatives on poor women and the changes in their households "cannot substitute for broader policies to promote pro-poor economic growth, equitable social development, and democratic participation in collective forums of decision-making" (Shortall, 2002, p.160). In the absence of such policies, positive changes brought by cooperatives, like education, political quotas, and access to wage labor, fall short, just like all other interventions (Kabeer, 2005). In this sense, I believe that considering micro and macro efforts as interrelated in the fight against poverty and inequalities, rather than viewing them as poles of a dichotomy, will bring more solutions for societal change. In a particular context,

cooperatives, like any other invention, can serve as 'an entry point for social transformation' to broader projects and processes, as suggested by Kabeer (ibid).

Furthermore, the cooperative creates a common organizational ground for its female members based on complementary ethics, social solidarity, and collective benefit to solve specific social problems and fight against gender inequalities. This shared ground based on shared conditions and values can pave the way for envisioning a more egalitarian world together. This contribution is not to be underestimated in societies where both the classic patriarchy and "Islamic patriarchy" prevail in the struggle for women's and gender rights (Moghadam, 1999, p. 11).



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Globalization of the economic, political, and socio-cultural systems across the world has become the single most crucial force since the end of the Second World War, especially in the post-Cold War era. The end of the Cold War harnessed tremendous changes that had already started a decade ago with the ascendance of neoliberal policies. Together with other changes in the global economy, radical changes in the rural economies that neoliberal policies have induced in the last four decades have not only radically altered traditional family-based agricultural production relations but have also had devastating effects on rural households. The demise of the welfare state and social benefits for the working classes, increasing flexible, part-time, minimum wage work policies, decline of the labor associations, and collective bargaining have had crippling effects on low, middle-income households. Neoliberal economic policies prescribed by international lending organizations, such as IMF or World Bank, to developing countries, recommend curtailment of public spending, downsizing of the public sector, privatization of the previously publicly provided services, the attraction of foreign investment, and liberalization of trade and pricing regulations for the encouragement of trade-led growth through cheap and “flexible” labor usage (Moghaddam 1999, p. 369). Increasing competition under free-trade policies not only crippled many previously sheltered sectors in the developing countries but also forced labor wages down. Increasingly, female labor was drawn into production relations, as women provided flexible, unprotected, and cheap labor. Export-oriented sectors in developing countries, where competition is intense and where many American and European companies have exported their production sites to exploit cheap labor and keep their competitive edge, are also the sectors that predominantly employ and harshly exploit female labor (Moghaddam, 1999). Flexible ‘work sites,’ ‘work hours,’ and ‘work conditions’ of the new neoliberal

economy often mean low wages, long hours, lack of social benefits and social security for workers, especially women workers. Women have not only been the source of cheap labor for the new export-led development strategies but also have been the primary bearers and victims of the entailing poverty, deteriorating living conditions, and domestic and social turmoil.

Rural economies and rural households could not stay immune to these powerful global changes. One of the most critical changes in the rural economy has been the consolidation of previously family-owned lands in big agro-industrial corporations' hands and the family landowners' proletarianization. Family farms, successively divided generations after generations as inheritance, have been increasingly consolidated under large corporate ownerships. Also, increasing production costs, living costs, and the penetration of the consumer economy into the rural areas gradually turned subsistence agriculture untenable and unsustainable. Small farmers, increasingly choked by rising consumer prices and production costs, were gradually forced to sell their land to big agro-industrial companies and migrate to big cities. Those who left behind became wage laborers. And deteriorating living conditions forced the entire rural household to sell their labor to the intermediaries working for the more prominent agro-industrial companies. In the Gönen district where I have conducted fieldwork for this study, almost all of the households, either landless or small landowners, increasingly felt the need to mobilize every able household member as a wage laborer.

The impoverished household can only survive only if each and every household sells their labor in the local agricultural labor market. Consequently, rural households, which had been small landowner families in the traditional subsistence economy, have gradually become impoverished wage laborers who reluctantly add yet another member to the labor market with the gradual deterioration of their living conditions. Rising production costs, like the regular increases in the prices of gasoline, feed, seed, water, electricity, and other associated costs, increasingly put small-scale agricultural production, as well as the production of cooperatives, in jeopardy. Small farmers, just like the cooperative, do not have control over the commodity chains: they have to sell their products relatively cheaply at the local markets or to the

intermediaries in the supply chain, and they have to buy means of production as well as consumer goods at high prices. Both input and consumer prices double yearly, but the prices at which they sell their labor and produce fall behind. Big merchants and big agro-industrial firms reap the surplus value. Gradual impoverishment of the rural household leaves them feeling vulnerable, materially, morally exhausted, and incapacitated. The rural labor force also resentfully feels the impact of migrant labor on their labor prices. Intermediaries working for big companies increasingly rely on migrant labor to keep the labor prices down.

Agro-industrial complexes not only consolidate land they buy from squeezed small farmers, who are unable to cope with the rising production costs, but also plunder government resources meant to help small farmers, introduce migrant labor to keep labor prices at bay, which further squeezes means of the substance farmers leaving them with no choice but to migrate to cities and join the labor force in a different commodity chain. Allocation of government-controlled resources favors big business at the expense of subsistence farmers, and the bureaucratic process associated with obtaining the few available resources is riddled with favoritism, politics, bureaucratic red tape, paperwork, and such.

Changes at the global scale, like the shifts to flexible production, flexible employment, and neo-liberal economic policies, easily unsettle weak local structures and agents while preferring to work, cooperate with, and enforce the strong structures, agents, and traditions. In the locality at hand, Gönen district, and the surrounding villages, the intersecting global, national, and local forces impose a disproportionately heavier burden on the most impoverished while working in tandem with the wealthy and the powerful. Rural women, children, and the elderly feel increasingly deprived of their essential needs. At the same time, big companies, prominent merchants, macro-scale policies, and increasingly globalized production and consumption chains penetrate remote areas and disrupt existing relations, networks, and structures.

Women's cooperatives, in such a dismal setting, have a significant impact on the status of women in terms of their economic and social empowerment and in terms of

gaining visibility, social recognition, and standing. The Cooperative's contribution to the women in the region goes far beyond providing them and their households some economic relief; the cooperative's impact on the women's social status has been considerable, and increases as the activities of the cooperative deepen and diversify. Women who had never been outside of Gönen, or women who had to ask permission from their husbands or husbands' mothers to visit a neighbor, now feel confident enough to go to other cities to join international seminars, to host international instructors in their cooperative and to appear, speak and even play traditional dances on TRT, the national broadcast service. Their participation in the decision-making concerning them, their children, and their household has also increased so that they can negotiate, challenge, and refuse the traditional patriarchal relationships in their households and the community. Some even go to the village coffee house to drink tea or feel they don't necessarily need to obey the modesty rules imposed on them. They keep their earnings, have more voice and visibility in household matters, and feel they also have social rights to go to the cooperative, organize entertainment, and participate in decision-making not only in their households but also in the cooperative. Running, successfully running, one of the most successful and publicized cooperatives by themselves also diminishes the hurdles waved on their way by the local powers-to-be and the bureaucracy as they feel they should instead be a part of a success story rather than being villains in a story that opens international doors. At the same time, they try to close local doors. The social empowerment of women in a small locality is as vital as the economic empowerment that the cooperative provides with its limited resources.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
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 ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu 29 KASIM 2023

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Ayşe Gündüz Hoşgör

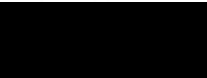
Danışmanlığımı yürüttüğünüz Nevma Deniz Naz Var'ın *"Kırsal Kadın Emeği ve Kalkınma Projelerinin Bölge Kadınlarının Hayatına Etkisi; S.S. Gönen Merkez Hasanbey Tuzakçı Köyleri Tarımsal Kalkınma Kooperatifi"* başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek 0509-ODTÜİAEK-2023 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.


Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan


Prof. Dr. İ. Semih AKÇOMAK
Üye


Doç. Dr. Ali Emre Turgut
Üye


Doç. Dr. Şerife SEVİNÇ
Üye


Doç. Dr. Murat Perit ÇAKIR
Üye


Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Süreyya ÖZCAN KABASAKAL
Üye

B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

Bu tez, toplumsal cinsiyet eřitlięi konusunu en geniř anlamıyla ele almaktadır. Bir kırsal kalkınma giriřimi olarak kadın kooperatifleri rneęinden yola ıkarak, kadınların (ve erkeklerin) kırsal alanlarda (hem iftlikte hem de iftlik dıřında) yařarken ve alıřırken karřılařtıkları zorlukları analiz etmeyi amalamaktadır. Ama, kadınlar ve erkekler arasındaki eřitlięin nndeki sosyal, ekonomik ve kltrel engelleri ilk elden tespit etmektir. Bu nedenle, bu tez belirli bir kadın grubunun belirli bir yerde kendilerini nasıl temsil ettiklerini duymayı amalamaktadır. Yani, kadınların yařadıkları eřitsizlikleri ve olumsuzlukları, bunlara verdikleri tepkileri, mcadeleleri ve bařa ıkma abaları hakkında konuřmalarını dinlemek bu tezin odak noktasıdır.

Potansiyel olarak kırsal kalkınma giriřimlerinin toplumsal cinsiyet eřitlięini geliřtirebileceęi dřncesine dayanarak, kalkınma projelerinin Trkiye'deki kırsal kadınların greli stats ve glendirilmesi zerindeki etkisini toplumsal cinsiyet ve kadın perspektifinden tartıřtım. Temel olarak, tarımın ve kırsal alanların yeniden yapılandırılması baęlamında uygulanan kalkınma projelerinin etkisini inceledim.

Bu kooperatifin yesi olan kadınların yařamları ve alıřmaları, daha kapsamlı kresel glerin etkisi altında mikro dzeyde geliřen toplumsal cinsiyet iliřkileri aısından incelenmektedir. Bu arařtırma kadınlara, toplumsal cinsiyete ve hane halkına odaklanmaktadır. Hanenin i dinamiklerini ortaya ıkarmak, hane iindeki g mcadeleleri ve eřitsizlikleri, haneyi řekillendiren dıř sreleri analiz etmek kadar nemlidir. Dahası, haneye odaklanmak, ekonomiyi toplumsal baęlamı iinde konumlandırarak kadınların tabiiyetini řekillendiren oklu, kesiřen sosyal, kltrel ve ekonomik g srelerini anlamamızı saęlayacaęına inanıyorum. Bařka bir deyiřle, dřnyorum ki, byle bir analiz, kadınların maddi ve maddi olmayan faaliyetlerini ve gndelik hayatta genellikle grnmez olan ve gz ardı edilen emeęini grmemizi saęlar. Analizim yorumlayıcı bir yaklařıma ve refleksif etnografiye dayanıyor. Etnografik bir alıřmada, kırsal kesimdeki kadınların

gündelik deneyimlerini nasıl yorumladıklarını ve bunları daha büyük ataerkil yapılarla nasıl ilişkilendirdiklerini keşfetmeyi amaçladım.

Temel bulgularım, diğer kalkınma ajansları gibi kadın kooperatiflerinin de kısa vadede tarım sektörünün derinliklerine işlemiş ataerkil ideoloji üzerinde yapısal bir dönüşüm etkisine sahip olamayabileceğini gösteriyor. Ancak kadın kooperatifleri, kadınların çiftçi haneleri içinde daha eşitlikçi toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerini müzakere edebilecekleri alanlar olarak hizmet etme potansiyeline de sahiptir. Daha da önemlisi, kırsal kalkınma daha kapsayıcı ve temsili formlar yaratma ve toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği, dayanışma ve güvene dayalı alternatif bir kültürü teşvik etme fırsatları sunabilir. Dolayısıyla bu tez, tarım dışı işlerin kırsal kesimdeki kadınlara fayda sağlayıp sağlamadığıyla sınırlı kalmak yerine, kadınların deneyimlerine odaklanarak bu olasılıkları araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bu tezi yazmaktaki amacım, kırsal kesimdeki kadınların mikro dünyasını ve deneyimledikleri dünyadaki eşitsizlikleri bir dereceye kadar göstermektir. Bu mikro dünya önemsiz görülebilir; ancak benim bakış açımına göre makro dünyanın ve eşitsizliklerin yaratılmasında ve yeniden üretilmesinde önemli bir rol oynamaktadırlar ve makro ve mikro çerçevelerin aralarındaki ilişkilerin daha fazla irdelenmesi, periferideki kadınların ücretli emeğe dahil edilmesi ve "tüm dünyada yoksulluğun kadınlaşmasının derinleşmesi" (Dunaway 2001, p. 4) eğiliminin ele alınması için elzemdir. Bu tez, kırsal kesimdeki kadınların hane içinde ücretsiz çalışmasına ek olarak, bir başka eşitsizlik alanı olarak kırsal kesimdeki kadınların hanedeki işgücünü de ele almaktadır. Türkiye'nin kırsal kesimlerinde yoksulluğun kadınlaşmasını, kadınların kendi yaşam öyküleri ve deneyimleri ışığında incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Tezim için bu konuyu seçmemin ve hatta konuya etnografik bir yöntemle yaklaşmaya karar vermemin temel nedenlerinden biri, çocukluğumdan beri bu bölgenin kırsal alanlarında çok zaman geçirmiş olmamdır. Dolayısıyla kırsaldaki kadın emeğine dair gözlemlerim, hislerim ve deneyimlerim daha öznel bir yan taşıyor ve feminist bir perspektiften bu çalışmaya değer kattığına inanıyorum. Öte yandan bir sosyal bilim öğrencisi olarak olabildiğince objektif bir araştırma yapmaya

çalıştım. Bir araştırmacı olarak öznellik ve nesnellik arasındaki dengeyi kurabilmemde düşünselliğe dayanan eleştirel perspektiflerden yararlandım. Balıkesir'in Gönen ilçesindeki diğer kadınların deneyimlerini kendi deneyimlerimle birlikte isteyerek ya da istemeyerek uzun süre gözlemlene şansına sahip olmamın ve bu kadınların arasında büyüdüğüm için bu konuya dışarıdan bir tepegöz gibi bakmamış olmamın tezim için yaptığım bu etnografik çalışmaya ve yakın gözleme katkı sağladığına da inanıyorum. Bir şekilde küçük yaşlardan itibaren kırsaldaki kadın emeğinin ne kadar görünmez olduğunun farkındaydım, ilk başlarda anlamlandıramadığım, bazen hüznölendiren bazen de öfkölendiren duygularla. Büyüdükçe, okudukça, öğrendikçe bu duygularıma hak vermeye başladım. Uzun lafın kısıası, ODTÜ Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları yüksek lisans programına girmemi sağlayan en önemli etkenlerden biri olarak bu konuyu gösterebilirim.

Bir taraftan bu yüksek lisans programı ve tezim ile, insan hakları gibi evrensel, insani deneyimlerin önemini kavradım. Öte yandan, kendileri de belirli sosyal ve tarihsel bağlamlara dayanan evrensel hakikat iddialarına meydan okumanın önemini anladım. Benim için zorlu ama anlamlı bir yaklaşım olan ne evrenselciliğe ne de göreceliliğe dogmatik biçimde bağlı kalmaktan kaçınmak ve dahası bu ikilemlere düşmemek için mücadele etmek oldu. Çünkü ikili zıtlıklarla ya da dikotomik düşünme biçimleriyle sosyal dünyayı kutuplaştırmamanın ve bu kategorilerden birini *hakikat* olarak kurmanın, sosyal yaşamdaki iktidar işleyişini gizlemenin ve belirli sosyal pratikleri üstün/doğal/normal olarak göstermenin mümkün olduğuna inanıyorum. Örneğin, kadınlar ve erkekler arasındaki biyolojik farklılıkların dikotomik ve hiyerarşik olarak sosyal inşası, belirli deneyimlerin "doğal" deneyimler veya kadınların "özünün" bir parçası olarak görülmesine izin verir ve bu mantığa dayanarak kadınlara belirli roller atfedilir. Bu nedenle, zengin ve dinamik dünyayı sabit, donmuş ve geçirgen olmayan kategorilere bölmekten kaçınmak için düşünömsellik temelli yorumlayıcı ve eleştirel etnografiye yöneldim. Kalkınma ve kadınlar arasındaki ilişkiyi, kalkınmanın kadınların statüsü için yararlı mı yoksa zararlı mı olduğu gibi bir ikileme sıkıştırmak yerine, farklı yaşam öykülerinin zenginliğini gösteren bir etnografi aracılığıyla tartışmayı amaçladım. Dolayısıyla bu tezde ikili karşıtlıklardan/ikilemli mantıklardan kaçındım; öncelikle konuyu teorik

bir evet-hayır sorusuna indirgemedim. Çünkü görüştüğüm her kadının deneyiminin etkili olduğunu düşünüyorum; her kadının sesi esastır.

Toplumsal deneyim ve temsilin birbirini dışlamadığına ve dilin gerçek yaşamın çeşitliliğini yansıtmada çok önemli olduğuna inanarak, mümkün olduğunca kadınların kendi dillerinde kendilerini temsil ettikleri bir etnografi yapmaya çalıştım. Bir anlamda etnografimin metne dönüşmüş hali olan bu tezde, bir araştırmacı olarak kadınların sesini boğmamaya çalıştım. Dahası, yoksulluk ve toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğini yaşayan ve çoğu zaman istatistiklerin gözünden kaçan kadınların dilinin, sosyal ve kültürel dünyanın analizi için bilindik politika-program dilinden daha uygun araçlar sunabileceğine inanıyorum. Dahası, onların anlatıları, küresel söylemler ile yerel gerçeklikler arasındaki ilişkiselliği anlama ve tanımlama konusunda iç görüler sunabilir.

Bu tezin tüm bölümlerinde ele aldığım sorunlara yaklaşımım, dikotomik düşünmekten kaçınmak ve temel kavramsal aracım olarak "ilişkiselliği" benimsemek olmuştur. Örneğin analizlerimde, kadınların statüsünü etkileyen ekonomik faktörleri kültürel faktörlerden, bireysel faktörleri kolektif faktörlerden ve yerel faktörleri küresel faktörlerden ayıran dikotomik bakış açılarını benimsemek yerine kategoriler veya süreçler arasındaki ilişkiselliği ve bunların sınırlarının geçirgenliğini vurguladım. Bu nedenle, kuramsal çerçevemde, Ayşe Gündüz Hoşgör (2001) ve Valentine V. Moghaddam'ın (1990) bakış açısını izleyerek, hem Marksist/çatışmacı hem de modernist/kültürcü yaklaşımlardan yararlanarak kırsal kesimdeki kadınlar ve kalkınma arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamaya ve açıklamaya çalıştım. Özellikle Marksist yaklaşımı, ve de dünya-sistemi/bağımlılık ekolünden, Wilma Dunaway'ın (2001) feminist perspektifinden ya da onun dünya sistemi yaklaşımını revize ettiği yorumundan okuyarak yararlandım.

Dunaway'ın dünya-sistemi teorisi anlayışından yararlanarak, dünya-sistemi yaklaşımının feminist bir perspektifle nasıl ilişkilendirilebileceğini, kadınların gündelik yaşamlarının kapitalist yeniden yapılandırılmasının dünyada meydana gelen diğer dönüşümlerle birlikte nasıl gerçekleştiğini ve 20. yüzyılda bu yana dünya ekonomik sistemindeki yapısal dönüşümlerin belirli bir gelişmekte olan ülkede,

Türkiye’de belli bir kırsala bölgedeki kırsal kadınların yaşamlarıyla nasıl ilişkilendirildiğini anlamaya ve açıklamaya çalıştım. Dunaway’in (2001) çalışması bana bu sorulara ayrıntılı yanıtlar sundu. Dunaway’in dünya sistemi analizi, Gönen ilçesindeki bir köylü kadının yaşamının küresel kapitalizmle nasıl bağlantılı olduğunu anlamamda ve analiz etmemde bana yardımcı oldu. Başka bir deyişle, tezin teorik çerçevesi içinde, bireylerin veya toplulukların meta zincirleri aracılığıyla küresel ekonomik yapılar ve süreçlerle nasıl bağlantılı olduğunu gösteren argümanlarını kapsamlı bir şekilde dahil ettim. Dunaway, meta zincirlerinin temel bir sistemi yeniden üreterek sonsuz sermaye birikimine olanak sağladığını göstermektedir. Meta zincirleri, makro düzeyde artık değerin merkez ve çevre ülkeler arasında adaletsiz bir şekilde dağıtılmasını sağlayan küresel mekanizmalardır. Ancak bu adaletsizlikten önce de meta zinciri mekanizmaları eksik ödenen ve ödenmeyen emekten elde edilen azami artığı sömürüyordu. Dunaway meta zinciri analizlerinde kadınları ve toplumsal cinsiyeti göz ardı etmekten uzaklaşmak için, meta zinciri ağlarının her bir düğümünde artık değerin nasıl ve kimler tarafından üretildiğini sorgulamamızın gerektiğini, bunun için de günümüz dünya düzeninin yeniden üretilmesinde başat rolü olan yarı proleterleştirilmiş hane halkına ve hane halkının içindeki kadın emeğine yoğunlaşmamızı önerir.. Bunun için hane kapılarından içeri girmeliyiz. Bu kapıların ardında unutulmuş kadınları, artık değere katkıda bulunmak için erkeklerden daha uzun saatler çalışan kadınları buluruz. Dolayısıyla ihtiyacımız olan şey, "meta zincirlerini, zincirdeki her düğümde emekçi hanelerin gündelik yaşamlarına yeniden yerleştirmektir" (Dunaway 2001, s. 11-13). Bu düşünce çizgisini takip ederek Gönen'deki kırsal kadınların gündelik hayatlarını ve hanelerini anlamayı ve açıklamayı amaçladım. Bu aynı zamanda küresel ve yerel arasındaki bağlantıları keşfetmeye yönelik bir çabadır.

Bu amaçla, vaka çalışmasında kooperatifin ekonomik etkilerini incelemekten önce, yerel kadınların mevcut ekonomik durumunu ayrıntılı olarak tanımlamak istedim. Saha araştırmamdan elde ettiğim bulgular, Gönen'deki kırsal kesim kadınları arasında yoksulluğun hem bireysel hem de kolektif olarak yaşandığını gösterdi. Ayrıca, kapitalist üretim sistemi içinde dünyanın farklı yerlerindeki pek çok kadının yaşadığı yoksulluğun neden olduğu benzer acılar yerel ölçekte de yaşanıyordu. Küresel ölçekte yaygın olarak yaşanan yoksulluğun kadınlaşması olgusunun Gönen

ilçesinin kırsal kadınları için de geçerli olduğunu söylemek yanlış olmayacaktır. Bu nedenle, sınıf ve kültür, din, ahlak ve sağlık boyutlarının birbiriyle nasıl ilişkili olduğunu en açık şekilde gösteren bir toplumsal sorun olarak yoksulluğa odaklandım. Yoksulluk, birçok sosyal sorunun, toplulukların bu sorunlara verdiği tepkilerin ve güç ilişkilerinin üretildiği, bir arada var olduğu ve etkileşim içinde olduğu karmaşık süreçlere dikkatimizi çekmektedir. Ayrıca, yaşamın çeşitli alanları arasındaki sınırların muğlaklığını ve ilişkiselliğini de göstermektedir.

Özetle, akademik açıdan doyurucu olan bu araştırma, bir kadın, bir feminist, bir eş ve kırsalla bağını koparmamış bir birey olarak beni duygusal açıdan zorladı. Umarım tüm bu duyguları feminist bir bakış açısı ve yöntem kullanarak bu tezin okuyucularına aktarabilirim. Özellikle gelişmekte olan bir ülkede kültürel, sosyal, ekonomik ve tarihsel bağlamı göz önünde bulundurarak mücadelenin uzun soluklu olduğunun bilinciyle, değişimin kırıntılarını ve minik damlalarını kapısının önüne süpürmenin herkes için ne kadar anlamlı olduğunu vurgulamaya çalıştım.

Her zaman ilgi duyduğum bu konuya bakış açım, akrabam Belma'nın Balıkesir'in kırsal kesimlerinden kadınlarla birlikte örgütlenerek bir kırsal kadın kooperatifi kurmasıyla daha da derinleşti. Bu kooperatifin ilk projelerinden biri olan Öncü Kadın Çiftçi Yetiştirme/Eğitim Projesi, Avrupa Birliği (AB) IPARD fonundan hibe alan Balıkesir kırsalındaki öncü projelerden biridir. Bu tezin ilham kaynağının, bir akrabamın Ankara'daki görece "rahat" şehir hayatını bırakıp Balıkesir kırsalına taşınması ve ilk başta toplumsal normlar, mevcut kültürel değerler ve ataerkil yapılar gibi her türlü engele rağmen bu projeyi gerçekleştirmek için çok çalışması olduğunu vurgulayabilirim. Kooperatifin kurulması ve sürdürülmesi sürecinde i kooperatif dışından engellerin yanı sıra, yukarıda bahsedilen nedenlerden dolayı, üye kadınların eşlerinin bu projelere katılmasına izin vermemeleri de ataerkil cinsiyet ideolojilerinin getirdiği engellerden birisidir. Bunun gibi kültürel engellerle baş etmek kooperatifin karşılaştığı bir başka zorluk olmuş ve bu engellerin üstesinden gelmek ciddi bir çaba gerektirmiştir. Bu zor zamanlarda, proje kapsamında uluslararası kuruluşlardan alınacak hibenin sağlayacağı maddi faydalar insanların dikkatini asıl amaçtan daha fazla çektiği için, insanların kooperatife yaklaşımının yavaş ve görece az da olsa değiştiğini söyleyebilirim. Bu kadın kooperatifinin üye kadınları ve onların aile

üyeleri erkek ve çocukların yaşamında ve aile içindeki iktidar ilişkilerinin değişiminde oynadığı rol görülmektedir. Örneğin, erkeğin hane içindeki otoritesine eleştirel yaklaşan her yaşta kadının sayısının arttığını söylemek yanlış olmaz. Kadınların ev dışı üretime katılımındaki değişimlerin bu güç ilişkilerindeki geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinde ne ölçüde değişime yol açtığı ve değişimin ne ölçüde uzun vadeli mi yoksa geçici mi olduğu, uzun vadede önemli yapısal değişimlere yol açma potansiyeli taşıyıp taşımadığı gibi sorunsallara yoğunlaşan yorumsamacı etnografik bir çalışma yürüttüm.

Yorumsamacı yaklaşım, sosyal olguları yorumlayarak *anlamayı* vurgular. Hermeneutik yaklaşımın yorumsamacı etnografiye uygulanması, temel olarak her bir insan grubunun benzersizliğine, yaşam deneyimlerine, anlam ve eylem arasındaki bağlantıya ve herhangi bir insan eylemini motive eden değerlere, ilkelere veya normlara odaklanır. Tüm bunlar süreci yorumlayıcı perspektiften anlamının parçalarıdır.

Yorumsamacı yaklaşım, anlamının her bir insan grubunu ya da kültürü kendi tarihsel bağlamı içinde kavramak için kullanılabileceğini vurgular. Bu bağlamda, insanları arzuları, değerleri ve inançları olan bütünsel varlıklar olarak görür. Dahası, hermeneutik epistemoloji ve metodoloji, insanların sadece rasyonel, bilen özneler olmadığını, aynı zamanda duygu ve niyetlere de sahip olduğunu ortaya koyar. İnsanların yaşam deneyimlerini anlamak için, eylemlerini motive eden tüm faktörler de dikkate alınmalıdır.

Araştırmam, toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerindeki güç dinamikleri ve kişisel deneyimlerle ilgilendiğinden, insanın tüm bilişsel kapasitelerini, örneğin duyguların etkilerini dikkate almaktadır. Buna göre, tüm bu bireysel psikolojik süreçler kültürel inanç ve değerlerin üretilmesi ve şekillendirilmesinde etkili olmaktadır. Bu nedenle, paylaşılan kolektif gelenekler birey ve toplumu karşılıklı olarak etkileyerek oluşur. Bu anlamda bireysel hikâyelerden yola çıkarak kolektiviteler hakkında bilgi edinmek için yaşam hikâyelerine odaklanan katılımcı gözlemler yapmak anlamlıdır. Böylece, toplumsal olayların tetiklediği sosyal çevrenin kendine özgü tekil süreçleri gözlemlenerek, toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine/ilişkilerine dair bu belirli algı

versiyonlarının giderek nasıl toplumda kabul gören ortak/paylaşılan versiyonlar haline geldiğine dair bilgi edinilebilir. Bu tanıma göre, gerçek dünyada algılama, ifade etme ve anlatma gibi özgün süreçleri içeren kişisel yaşam öykülerini gözlemlemek, kişisel olanla kolektif olan arasındaki ilişkiyi anlamamıza ışık tutar, kırsal kesimdeki kadınların kendi deneyimlerini nasıl kavradıklarını ve bunu kolektif ataerkil yapılarla ve ikincilleştirmeye karşı eylemlerle nasıl ilişkilendirdiklerini önemli ölçüde ortaya koyabilir.

Saha çalışmasını 2020-2023 yılları arasında, ağırlıklı olarak katılımcı gözleme dayalı olarak ve belirli bir sosyal bağlam için uygun görüşmeler yaparak gerçekleştirdim. Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları yüksek lisans programına başladığımdan beri fırsat buldukça kooperatif üyesi olsun ya da olmasın kırsal kesimdeki kadınlarla toplumsal cinsiyetle ilgili konularda birebir ya da grup temelli görüşmeler yaptım. Kooperatif üyeleriyle açık uçlu, karşılıklı konuşmaya dayalı görüşmeler ve katılımcı gözlemler gerçekleştirdim. Ayrıca, kooperatif kurucuları ve yöneticileriyle daha resmi ve yarı yapılandırılmış ya da yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yaptım. Temel etnografyayı yürütmek için Gönen bölgesi ve çevresindeki topluluklara odaklandım. Baba tarafım Balıkesir/Göner'den olduğu ve akrabam kooperatifin kurucu ortağı olduğu için aile bağlantılarım aracılığıyla ulaşabildiğim kadınlarla görüştim. Gözlemler, onlarca sohbet ve ilk görüşmelerin ardından yakın etnografi yapmaya ve tezimi yedi kadın kooperatif üyesi üzerinde yoğunlaştırmaya karar verdim; bir kadın çalışmaları öğrencisi olarak daha önceki derslerim kapsamında bu proje üzerinde halihazırda çalışmalar yürütmüştüm. Son iki yılda zaman zaman kadınlarla birebir ya da odak gruplara dayalı görüşmeler yürüttüm. Bazı resmi ve gayri resmi topluluk örgütlerinin toplantılarına, ritüellerine, anma törenlerine, doğum ve cenaze törenlerine ve düğünlere seçerek katıldım. Bu toplantılara mümkün olan her fırsatta sıklıkla katılmaya çalıştım. Toplantı ve buluşmalardan sonra, mümkün olduğunca toplantılara katılanların enformel sohbetlerine katıldım.

Bazı durumlarda, yerel halkın geleneksel aile anlayışı, toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkileri ve toplumsal cinsiyet rolleriyle ilgili bazı olayların kaydedilmesi ve yazıya dökülmesi konusunda kooperatif üyelerinden yardım istedim. Araştırma için çarpıcı olarak seçtiğim birkaç kadının hikayesine odaklandım. Onların yaşam öykülerini ve faaliyetlerini "kapsamlı betimleme" yöntemiyle detaylı bir şekilde inceledim.

Düşünümsellik üzerinde temellenen bu tezde toplumsal cinsiyet kategorilerinin, bu araştırma açısından kadın öznelliklerinin bütün bağlamlarda ebedi ve ezeli olarak homojen ve sabit olmadığını ve belli özgül tekil bağlamlarda -cinsiyetin, sınıf, etnik köken, eğitim, yaş gibi kategorilerin kesişimleri boyunca- kadın öznelliklerinin ve dolayısı ile kadın tabiyetlerinin nasıl sosyal kültürel olarak inşa edildiğini analiz etmeye çalıştım. Alan bulgularım Hoşgör'ün argümanlarını destekler yönde; Türkiye'deki kadınların kalkınma süreçleri ile ilişkisi ve statüsü sınıf, etnik köken, eğitim ve bölge ve bunun gibi faktörlerin kesişimine göre farklılaştığını göstermektedir. Tüm bu kategorilerin kesişimi, kadınların kalkınmadan fayda ya da zarar görmelerini, kalkınmadan ne kadar fayda ya da zarar gördüklerini şekillendirmektedir. Moghaddam (1990), toplumsal cinsiyet ve kalkınma arasındaki ilişkinin ve gelişmekte olan ülkelerde kadınların ücretli emeği ile ilgili tartışmaların ilgi konusu olmaya devam edeceğini öne sürmektedir. Bu nedenle, kadınların ücretli emeğe katılımının hangi koşullar altında kadınların konumunda bir iyileşme ya da kötüleşme olduğuna dair daha spesifik açıklamalara (vaka çalışmaları ve karşılaştırmalı araştırmalar) ihtiyacımız olduğuna inanıyorum. Türkiye bağlamında düşündüğümüzde, kalkınma ve kırsal kesimdeki kadınların ücretli emeği arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyen çalışmaların sayısının az olduğunu görebiliriz; bu araştırmanın böyle bir amaca katkıda bulunmasını umdum ve hedefledim.

Toplumsal cinsiyet-kadın perspektifinden, kalkınma projelerinin Türkiye'deki kırsal kadınların görece statüsü ve kırsal kadınların güçlendirilmesi üzerindeki etkisini araştırmayı amaçladım. Spesifik olarak, neoliberal politikalar çerçevesinde uygulanan kalkınma projelerinin, AB tarafından finanse edilen ilk kalkınma projelerinden biri olan Balıkesir/Gönen bölgesindeki kırsal kadınların iş ve geçim kaynakları üzerindeki etkisini inceledim (IPARD). Bu anlamda bir vaka olarak, 2013 yılında Gönen'de kurulan ve kırsaldaki kadınları "güçlendirmek" için Avrupa Birliği kalkınma projesi fonlarından yararlanan S.S. Gönen Merkez Hasanbey Tuzakçı Tarımsal Kalkınma Kooperatifi'ni inceledim. Ayrıca, bu kooperatifi üyesi olan kadınların hem hane içi hem de kamusal alandaki yaşamlarına ve çalışmalarına odaklandım. Temel sorum, S.S. Gönen Merkez Hasanbey Tuzakçı Tarımsal Kalkınma Kooperatifi'nin kadın üyelerinin kooperatife katıldıktan sonra çiftlikteki ve çiftlik dışındaki yaşamlarında, hane içinde ve kamusal alanda nasıl etkilendikleridir.

Bu özel duruma odaklanarak, araştırma sorumla ilgili aşağıdaki soruları gözden geçirdim:

- Bu kalkınma projeleri belirli bir yerel düzeyde nasıl uygulanmaktadır?
- Bu projeler kırsal kesimdeki kadınların istihdamına ve güçlenmesine olumlu katkıda bulunmuş mudur?
- Bunlar kadınların yaşamlarını ve toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerini nasıl etkiliyor?
- Ücretli istihdam kırsal kesimdeki kadınların hane içindeki pazarlık gücünü nasıl etkiliyor?
- Bu projeler ataerkil yapılarda, toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerinde ve hane içinde yapısal bir değişime neden oluyor mu?
- Bu politika ve projelerin kamusal ve özel alanlardaki güç ilişkilerinin değişmesine ve kadınların çeşitli tabiiyet biçimlerinden kurtulmasına katkıda bulunup bulunmadığı.

Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerinde ve kadınların ikincilleştirilmesinde kapitalizmin ve üretim ilişkilerinin başat rolüne inanmakla birlikte gerek üretim ilişkilerini gerekse kültürel boyutları ihmal eden açıklamaların kadınların toplumsal konumlarını ve toplumsal cinsiyet deneyimlerini anlamakta yetersiz kaldığını düşünüyorum. Bu nedenle, özellikle kadınların ezildiği durumlarda, kadınların deneyimlerindeki çok düzeyli kesişen güç ilişkilerini anlamak için ekonomik sınıf analizinden daha fazlasına ihtiyaç vardır. Bu yüzden bu çalışmada, kalkınma projelerinin kadınların toplumsal konumu üzerindeki etkisini birbiriyle bağlantılı iki yaklaşımdan yararlanarak inceledim: Üretim ilişkilerine odaklanan ve kadınları işgücünde emekçi olarak kavramsallaştıran Marksist yaklaşımlar ve erkeklerin kadınları ezdiği ataerkil sistemi sorunsallaştıran feminist yaklaşımlar. Dolayısıyla çalışmamda kapitalizm ve ataerkilliği karşılıklı ilişkisellik içinde, birbirlerini besleyen süreçler olarak kavramsallaştıran bir teorik perspektif izledim. Kapitalist ve ataerkil yapı ve ilişkiler birbirlerini karşılıklı etkilemekte, şekillendirmekte, yeniden üretmekte ve pekiştirmektedirler.

Kadınların toplumsal konumlarını etkileyen faktörler açısından, tezimde ayrıntılı alıntılarını sunduğum kadınların özgül yaşam dünyaları ve gündelik hayat

deneyimleri ile kooperatifin diğer üyeleri ve kooperatifin kurulduğu sosyal çevrenin yoksul kırsal kadınları arasında çarpıcı benzerlikler bulunmaktadır. Kadınların öznellik, statü ve çalışmalarının birbiriyle kesişen sosyal, ekonomik, kültürel ve siyasi faktörlerle inşa edildiği argümanına dayanarak, belirli kadınların kendi sosyal bağlamlarındaki hikayelerine odaklanmanın bu süreçleri açıklamak için yollar sunduğunu düşünüyorum.

Dolayısıyla bu araştırmada, hem içeriden biri olarak (kooperatifle ilişkili olan) hem de dışarıdan biri olarak (dışarıdan bir araştırmacı olarak) yaptığım saha çalışmasında yoksulluk kırsal kadınların hayatını ve statüsünü etkileyen başat bir sosyal olgu olarak belirginleşti. Dolayısı ile ekonomik boyutun kadınların madunlaştırılmasında başat faktör olduğunu yoksulluğu bütün boyutları ile deneyimleyen kırsal kadınların bakış açısından anlamak ve açıklamak tezin vurgularından birisi haline geldi.

Kadınların statüsünü sadece ekonomik faktörlerin değil kültürel ve geleneksel değerlerin faktörlerin etkilediğini kadınların kendi iş, emek rol ve sorumluluklarına dair yaklaşımları açıkça göstermektedir. Konuştuğum kadınların neredeyse tamamı birincil sorumluluklarının "ailelerine ve çocuklarına bakmak, onların sağlık ve refahına ve ailenin geçimine katkıda bulunmak" olduğunu söyledi. Anne, kız evlat, oğul veya kız kardeş olmaya değer verdiklerini ifade ettiler. Görüştüğüm kadınlardan yalnızca birkaçı evin geçimini sağlayan kişi ya da ortak olduğunu söylerken, çoğunluğu çalışarak haneye "katkıda bulunduklarını" ve destek olduklarını söylediler. Başkalarının (diğer toprak sahiplerinin veya tarım işletmelerinin) tarlalarında çalışmak hem kadınlar hem de erkekler için prestij ve statü düşürücü bir iş olarak görülürken, maydanoz toplama ve hasat etme, zeytin üretimi ve işleminin belirli kısımlarını gerçekleştirme ve oya işleme, parça başı iş yapma ve bunları yerel pazarda satmanın kadın işi olduğunu düşünenler çoğunlukta. Kendi tarlalarında ve evlerinde çalışan kadınlar yaptıkları işi tarif etmekte ancak kendilerini çiftçi ya da ev kadını olarak tanımlamamaktadır. Mülakatlar hemen bütün kadınlar "Elimden geldiğince, gücüm yettiğince evimi geçindirmeye çalışıyorum" demekle yetinmiyorlar. Bazı kadınlar erkekleri-geçmişte kayınpederler günümüzde kocalar- "hane reisi" ve evin geçimini sağlayan kişi olarak görmekteler. Geçmişte geleneksel bir geniş aile içinde yaşamış olanlar, o dönemlerde evin reisinin kayınpeder olduğunu, kararlarda

ve kaynakların dağıtımında en çok söz sahibi olanın kayınvalide olduğunu vurgulamaktalar, kayınpederlerin ölümünden sonra, kayınvalide ve hanenin yetişkin erkeklerinden birisinin otorite konumunu ortaklaşa paylaşmakta olduğunu söylemekteler. Hemen hemen tüm kadınlar gecmiste "eve yeni gelen gelinin" hanenin en küçük hak ve sorumluluklarına sahip olduğunu bugün bu durumun kısmen degistigini vurguladılar. Örneğin, yeni gelinin evde oya yapması değerli görülürken, pazarda oya satmasının ve hatta pazara gitmesinin geleneksel olarak kabul edilemez olduğunu söylediler. Diğer kadınlar, çok yoksul olmadıkları sürece başkalarının tarlalarında çalışmak istemeyeceklerini belirtmekteler. Öte yandan kadınların çoğu bu kendi tarlalarının dışında çalışma isteksizliklerinin değiştiğini vurguluyor. Günümüzün zorlu ekonomik koşullarında, ailelerinin hayatta kalabilmesi için bulabildikleri her işte çalışmaya hazırlar.

Kadınlar ekonomik olumsuzlukları hiperenflasyon, alım gücünün düşmesi, işsizlik, eşlerinin ve yetişkin çocuklarının istikrarlı, sosyal güvenceli ve uzun vadeli işlerde istihdam edilememesi, arazinin olmaması ya da yetersiz olması ve üretim maliyetlerinin yüksek olması nedeniyle tarımsal üretimden elde edilen gelirin düşük olması ve haneyi geçindirmeye yetmemesi olarak tanımlıyor. Bu ekonomik koşullara ek olarak, Türkiye'de meyve ve sebze üretimi ve işlenmesinde önemli bir yere sahip olan Balıkesir'de kadınların tarla dışı işlere yönelmesinin görece daha kolay olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Kadınlar, meyve ve sebze sektöründe mevsimlik, gündelik ve aralıklı işlerde kadınların erkeklere göre daha kolay istihdam edildiğini, bazı işlerin sadece kadınlara yönelik olduğunu söylüyor. Örneğin maydanoz hasadında, şoförler dışında, tarımsal taşeronlar veya tüccarlar tarafından sadece kadınlar istihdam edilmektedir. Kadınlar ile şirketler ve tüccarlar arasında aracılık yapan ve şirketlerin kadınları işe almasına aracılık eden çavuşlar da bölgeden seçilen kadınlardır. "Zaten erkekler aç kalsalar, iş bulamasalar bile maydanoz işinde çalışmazlar" diyen kadınlar, hem toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı kültürel ve geleneksel değerlerin, kalıp yargıların ve tutumların hem ekonomik faktörlerin kadınların ve erkeklerin tarım dışı işlere katılımını/dahil olmasını şekillendirdiğini göstermektedir. Salça fabrikaları gibi gıda işleme işletmelerinin çoğunda ve üretimin bazı kısımlarında, kadınların tamamen ya da çoğunlukla geçici, aralıklı, emek yoğun işlerde ücretli işgücü olarak istihdam edilmesi muhtemeldir. Bu tür düşük ücretli ve

geçici işlerde kadınlar, çoğu işle ilgili olan kazalara, sağlık sorunlarına ve risklere karşı ya geçici olarak sigortalıdır ya da sigortasızdır. Dahası, bu iş kazalarından kaynaklanan yaralanma ve hastalıkların tedavi masrafları yoksul kadın ve hanesi tarafından karşılanmaktadır.

Özetle, tarım dışı çalışmanın niteliği, ekonomik gelirin düzeyi ve sürdürülebilirliği ile sosyal güvenlik ve yardımların mevcudiyeti, hane içindeki cinsiyete dayalı rol beklentilerini ve kadınların hane içindeki pazarlık gücünü farklı şekillerde etkilemektedir. Sonuç olarak, kadınların geçmişte ve şu anda sosyal güvencesi olmayan geçici işleri görünmez kalmakta ve aile gelirini tamamlayıcı olarak görülmektedir. Pek çok kadın düzenli geliri ve sosyal güvencesi olan bir işe sahip olmanın hane içindeki güçlerini, haklarını ve sorumluluklarını değiştireceğini vurgulamıştır. Örneğin, kooperatifin koyun projesinden koyun alan kadınlar, haneye bu ekonomik kaynağı sağladıkları için aile üyelerinin ve kocalarının kendilerine karşı tutumlarında değişiklikler yaşamış ve aile üyelerinin kendilerine biçtiği rol ve sorumluluklarda kısmen değişiklikler yarattığını vurgulamaktalar.

Sonuç olarak, böylesine sıkıntılı bir ortamda, ekonomik zorlukların yoğun yaşandığı bir bağlamda, kadın kooperatiflerinin, ekonomik ve sosyal açıdan güçlenmeleri ve görünürlük, sosyal tanınma ve itibar kazanmaları açısından kadınların statüsü üzerinde önemli bir etkiye sahip olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Kooperatifin bölgedeki kadınlara katkısı, onlara ve hanelerine ekonomik bir rahatlama sağlamanın çok ötesindedir; kooperatifin kadınların sosyal statüsü üzerindeki etkisi kayda değerdir ve kooperatifin faaliyetleri derinleştikçe ve çeşitlendikçe artmaktadır. Daha önce Gönen dışına hiç çıkmamış ya da bir komşuya gitmek için eşinden ya da eşinin annesinden izin almak zorunda kalmış kadınlar, artık başka şehirlere gidip uluslararası seminerlere katılabilecek, kooperatiflerinde uluslararası eğitimleri ağırlayabilecek ve ulusal yayın yapan TRT'ye çıkıp konuşabilecek, hatta geleneksel danslarını oynayabilecek kadar kendilerine güveniyorlar. Kendilerini, çocuklarını ve hanelerini ilgilendiren kararların alınmasına katılımları da artmış, böylece hanelerindeki ve toplumdaki geleneksel ataerkil ilişkileri müzakere edebilir, bunlara meydan okuyabilir ve reddedebilirler hale gelmişlerdir. Hatta bazı kadınlar daha önce giremedikleri koy kahvesi gibi kamusal alanlara girebilmekte, daha önce

geleneksel normların öngördüğü şekilde giyinmeye karşı çıkmakta bunun için müzakere etmektedir. Kazançlarını koruyorlar, hane içi meselelerde daha fazla söz ve görünürlük sahibi oluyorlar ve kooperatife gitme, eğlence düzenleme ve sadece hanelerinde değil kooperatifte de karar alma süreçlerine katılma gibi sosyal haklara sahip olduklarını sosyal aktörler olarak iddia ediyorlar. Oldukça başarılı ve kamuoyuna mal olmuş kooperatiflerden birini tek başlarına yönetmek, başarılı bir şekilde yönetmek, yerel güç odakları ve bürokrasi tarafından önlerine çıkarılan engelleri de azaltıyor, çünkü uluslararası kapılar açan bir hikâyede bir başarı hikayesinin parçası olmaları gerektiğini hissediyorlar. Kadınlar kooperatifi başlangıcından bu yana kendi mücadeleleri ile gün geçtikçe toplumun farklı kesimlerinden daha fazla destek almayı başardı demek yanlış olmaz. Kadınların toplumsal süreçlere birer aktör olarak katılma deneyimleri bile kooperatif sürecinin katkılarını göstermektedir. Kırsal alanlarda kadınların sosyal açıdan güçlendirilmesi, kooperatifin sınırlı kaynaklarıyla sağladığı ekonomik güçlenme kadar hayati önem taşımaktadır.

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