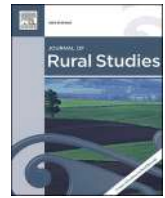




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Rural revitalization through territorial distinctiveness: The use of geographical indications in Turkey

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1. Introduction

Rural revitalization has been a rising concern in many parts of the world where new attempts to improve local agriculture and rural economy emerged in a contextual heterogeneity by different states, corporate actors, and grassroots movements (Liu and Li, 2017, 275; Hisano, Akitsu and McGreevy, 2018, 290). Van der Ploeg and Ye (2016) argue that there are two competing paradigms that inspire and inform different developmental trajectories in terms of farming techniques and rural transformation: 1) the dominant industrial capitalist model (entrepreneurial and corporate farming); and 2) alternative and multi-functional agriculture. Hisano et al. (2018: 290) emphasize that the boundaries and interrelations between these two development pathways and farming modes are varying and blurred. Introducing the concept of “peasant-like”, they highlight that the elements, which were originally intended for the creation of an alternative model, have already been appropriated and integrated into the corporate agro-food system (Hisano et al., 2018, 296). In a similar vein, Yan et al. (2020, 7) draw attention to the recent rural revitalization reforms of the Chinese state. They show the ways in which revitalization programs can be seen as part of a larger strategy to allow capital flow to the remote rural areas that had previously been excluded from national development politics. Hence, rural revitalization programs need to be analyzed empirically in order to reveal the new hybrid forms of governance they make possible.

In the last five years, “geographical indication” (GI) has become a crucial tool in Turkey for rural revitalization by creating the perception of territorial distinctiveness. Both government institutions and producer and consumer initiatives engage in the implementations of GIs, which usually have important consequences on the transformation of rural economies and livelihoods. GI that are ideally designed to protect and sustain local agricultural production, introduce new social, political, and economic transformations that may revitalize rural regions through new forms of governance. This study aims to identify the conditions under which GIs represent an alternative means of rural revitalization by

questioning local actors’ participation in and perception of the GI processes. We present a nuanced understanding of rural revitalization projects through a comparative analysis of two GIs in Turkey. Our comparative analysis suggests that by enabling local actors to cope with the agro-industrial paradigm and its homogenizing effects, GIs that target a small volume of production in a bounded territory, horizontal relations in decision-making and control, and reflexively local collective action can shape the effectiveness of the valorization process and the redistributive potentials of the rural revitalization projects they support. While GIs can empower rural producers who receive the lowest rate from the added value of the final product, their potential impact is shaped by local actors’ design and implementation of new forms of governance.

2. Geographical indications

Geographical indications (GIs) are designations that provide consumers with information not only on the origins of a product, but also the inherent qualities that link the product to its place of production. GI is a form of intellectual property that is tied to a bounded territory. It primarily promotes territorial distinctiveness of a particular product and its production techniques. In contrast to trademarks, patents or other intellectual property rights, GIs should be considered “collective property” (Barham, 2003), and a local group right. Rangnekar (2011, 2047) suggests that a GI is “less of a private property” than it is a “limited common property” that is used, protected and exploited exclusively as a “common good” by the members of a local group against unfair use by third parties or non-members of the local community. Thus, GIs, by defining the boundaries of ‘local’ production, first and foremost imply that local actors invent and appropriate a culturally and naturally distinct territorial quality. Thus, our study will analyze the criteria local actors use to define the boundaries of a territory in the design and implementation of GIs.

For many scholars, GIs have positive impacts on rural regions by

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creating niche markets for local and traditional products, increasing returns for small-scale farmers, protecting the latter from competition with big companies, and sustaining rural livelihoods in such a way that biological and cultural diversity is preserved (Babcock and Clemens, 2004; Suh and MacPherson, 2007; Mesic et al., 2017). However, the positive impacts of the GIs cannot be taken for granted. Some scholars (Thiedig and Sylvander, 2000; Bramley and Kirsten, 2007) consider GIs to be “club goods” that take the form of a collective monopoly based on membership and exclusion, with barriers to entry introduced or removed through particular definitions of production location, production practices, auditing, and verification processes (Rangnekar, 2011). Some argue that GIs create new rent through valorization processes (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005; Nizam, 2019). GIs reflect socially created “production-based scarcities” (Guthman, 2004, 515), and this scarcity maintains the benefits of rent generating supply chains. Recent critical literature on GIs has also shown that they risk the appropriation of local knowledge by experts and big manufacturers (Fonte, 2008:216) and that they can perpetuate the existing exploitation of plantation workers by recasting industrial production as craft production (Besky, 2014:92). Hence, each GI should be analyzed empirically, as its potential impact is contingent on the accommodation of its codes of practices in the existing supply chains. Accordingly our comparative study will empirically analyze local actors’ participation in the design and implementation of the codes of practices, and whether these codes alter the existing supply chains.

Friedmann and McNair (2008, 410) argue that a new type of global economy is emerging under a dual movement: from above, based on supermarket-led agri-food capital, and, from below, through regional organizations creating alternative institutions of culturally and ecologically embedded foods. Within this new global economy, new conventions of quality (setting, regulating or monitoring standards) have become crucial in the creation and governance of supply chains. In other words, the leading firms govern supply chains through quality (Ponte, 2009) using quality standards strategically not only to provide quality and safety assurances to their consumers, but also to gain access to and to control new markets (Hatanaka et al., 2006). Rural producers who fail to meet commercial standards, quality requirements, or certification costs are no longer allowed to sell products, and they lose their links to the end consumers or are excluded entirely from agricultural production. Consequently, agriculture has become an economic sector that produces intermediate goods for the agro-industry (Little et al., 1999). Similarly, in the drive toward the industrialization of agriculture, recent reforms in Turkey envisage a corporate farming model for the regions deemed most suitable for industrial farming. However many of the rural residents located in the remote hilly mountainous areas have been long excluded from this transformation, and they recently found themselves at a comparative advantage as latecomers to the industrialization process. These rural places are idealized as sites of biological and cultural diversity in opposition to the standardized and placeless sites of the industrial farming and food production. The rural actors are able to generate place-based characters for territorially distinct agricultural products through entrepreneurial projects that also revitalize the rural economy. Our comparative analysis will focus on the innovative ways in which local actors articulate traditional methods and industrial standards in the formation of territorial distinctiveness of the GIs.

Anthopoulos et al. (2017) highlight that the public narratives of “rural resilience” recast rural regions’ capacity to adapt to the changing conditions. The “rural” emerges as a site of social innovation, and it provides new employment opportunities. The shift in the global politics of development, from protectionism and interventionism to policies that encourage “self-help” (Herbert-Cheshire, 2000 cited in Onitsuka and Hoshino, 2018, 124) implied transferring the responsibility of planning agricultural and rural policies from public to private sector. The withdrawal of the state from an interventionist position paved the way for the proliferation of projects that rely on social innovation and networking. This recent transformation not only led to the formation of

new social groups in rural regions, but it also enabled new and innovative governance systems of rural development (Onitsuka and Hoshino, 2018, 134). This paper will empirically investigate two GI schemes to analyze how rural actors used them to adapt to changing conditions. The cooperation between various local (and non-local) actors and their self-organization in collective action as generated by the GIs, constitute a crucial site of our analysis since power relations shaping these processes have material impacts on the resulting governance systems and the redistributive potentials of GIs.

In Turkey, GI protection was first put into practice in 1995 with a decree law that established a legal framework for the protection of place-based labels as a part of the EU harmonization process, with the goal of creating common standards for the internal market. Until the decree law was replaced with the law on industrial property in 2016, the number of GIs registered increased slowly from year to year. However, over the last four years in Turkey, from 2016 to 2020, the number of certified GI products increased from 196 to 475, while pending GI applications rose from 80 to 474. The chambers of commerce and trade registered the majority of the existing GIs. The proportion of GI products registered by producer cooperatives and associations remained marginal at just 3 percent. This reveals that the majority of the GIs simply protect the use of place-based names through standardized production. Their inclusionary social and economic policies that preserve biological and cultural biodiversity, and sustain the ecological and cultural landscape are relatively less celebrated. Under the regime of self-help rural development, GIs have flourished as an important commercialization instrument for achieving local market stability against the detrimental effects of trade liberalization in Turkish agriculture (Nizam, 2009). This context reveals the importance of taking a critical perspective towards the rent generating characteristics of GIs. Our critical analysis in this article focuses on the actualizations of three tenets of a GI as outlined above, namely distinctive territorial quality, the code of practice, and collective action.

For the purpose of the present study, two GI schemes – the *Edremit Gulf Region Olive Oil GI* and the *Ayvalik Olive Oil GI* – were selected as case studies to analyze how different courses of action related to GIs, and how the options chosen by local actors in the design and implementation of GI tools in a particular area shape the potential and the impact of GIs for different producer groups. There were three main reasons behind the selection of these two cases for study. First, while the *Edremit Gulf Region GI* reflects a macro-GI boundary, the *Ayvalik GI* reflects a micro GI within the same GI boundary. Second, the *Edremit Gulf Region GI* was designed and obtained by a producer sale cooperative (Taris), while the *Ayvalik GI* was designed and obtained by a local producer/trader group (the Ayvalik Chamber of Commerce). Third, the *Edremit Gulf Region GI* has been made use of by five firms since being registered (including Taris), while 46 firms have made use of the *Ayvalik GI* (including Taris).

The fieldwork was carried out between 30 June and August 30, 2012, with a follow-up phase in August 2017 in Turkey’s North Aegean Region, known as the Edremit Gulf, the borders of which almost fully coincide with the boundaries of the production area covered by these two GI schemes. A total of 20 towns, 10 in each GI protection area, were selected for the interviews with olive producers, traders, mill owners and non-producer stakeholders, including local executives, experts and researchers. In all, 16 key informant interviews (non-producer stakeholders), 40 in-depth interviews (producers) and 150 survey interviews (producers) were conducted, with separate protocols designed for each respondent group.

3. Case studies and research setting

Ayvalik, Edremit and Burhaniye are the three main olive oil producer cities located on the Edremit Gulf in northwest Turkey. Currently, there are two GIs within the borders of this geographical region; however, many more GI applications have been made by different parties – some have already been rejected, and some are pending. Every single GI

project (application) has become a point of contention between local cities and local institutions. The Edremit Gulf, a relatively small geographical area, has seen many struggles over GI applications. In other words, the Gulf Region has become a battleground, triggering intra-regional competition, despite being a relatively small region compared to the south.

Indeed, in terms of GI applications, territorial competition has become more publicly visible since the 2000s, and the matter of naming a recently built airport became another manifestation of contention in the region. The facilities building of the airport is located within the city limits of Edremit, but its landing field is within Burhaniye – thus, both cities have been competing to name the airport. The name of the airport has changed three times: for the gulf (Edremit Gulf Region Airport), for the province (Balıkesir Gulf Region Airport), and, finally, for a national hero (KocaSeyit Airport) known for carrying massive bombshells in the Gallipoli War.

At the tip of the gulf, Edremit gives the gulf its name. However, other cities situated on the gulf – such as Burhaniye and Ayvalık – are hesitant with regard to using the Edremit Gulf as a brand for either the GI or the airport. The city of Burhaniye is the least popular, and it follows the strategy of a neutral macro name that will represent each city, advocating the name of the province (Balıkesir is the provincial capital, and these three cities are included under its direct control). This name will not promote the city, but neither will it promote the others. In a similar struggle, Burhaniye applied to the Turkish Patent Office (TPO) for a GI to be named BAL-KOR, an abbreviation composed of the first three letters of Balıkesir and first three letters of *Korfez* [gulf in Turkish]. Burhaniye's application for the BAL-KOR olive oil GI was initially challenged by public institutions in other cities. A bureaucrat from Edremit said that Edremit objected to the application because the GI name was supposed to be historical, not made-up.

After it was challenged, city representatives held joint meetings to reach consensus on a common GI. The new GI designed in those meetings was intended to include the three cities (Edremit, Burhaniye and Ayvalık Olive Oil GI). The involved parties resolved to obtain a common

GI, which indicates that real geographical names have a reputation and authenticity. This initiative agreed on a geography that included the political borders of these three cities. Taris challenged this agreement, however, because it reflected neither an “ideal” nor an “objective” boundary. Respondents from Ayvalık and Edremit explain that their application was rejected due to the requirement to refer to macro regions.

Taris challenged this attempt at GI protection because three or four other cities situated in the same landscape were excluded, claiming that there were no microclimates or any difference in the taste of olive oil in the region and that ideal protection boundaries are naturally drawn by local varieties. Taris divided the whole Aegean region into two main GI regions (the *Edremit Gulf Region GI* and the *South Aegean GI*) representing two different local olive varieties, and it applied to the TPO in 2003 (Fig. 1). After proficient groups dismissed counterarguments and objections, their expert opinion resolved the matter, and the Taris application was approved in 2007.

Shortly after it applied for the *Edremit Gulf Region GI*, Taris experienced conflict with one city within its GI production area. In 2004, the city of Ayvalık applied to the TPO for a new GI based on its own city limits, arguing that its own olive oils had a distinctive quality and stronger reputation. After a long dispute, the application by the Ayvalık Chamber of Commerce (ACC) for an *Ayvalık Olive Oil GI* was approved by the TPO in 2007. Since then, olive oil produced within the borders of Ayvalık could be legally marketed by two GI labels, both *Ayvalık* and *Edremit Gulf Region*.

The main challenge for Ayvalık was to present scientific evidence that distinguished its oil from others in the region. In cases of conflict, competing parties must fulfil a request by the TPO for scientific evidence – the result of some methodology to identify and differentiate a distinctive quality, perhaps a chemical or sensory analysis that shows that the product possesses special characteristics. In this dispute, both parties believed that the main problem was the lack of scientific evidence showing the distinctive characteristic of the product based on its genetic characteristics. The chemical and sensory characteristics of olive

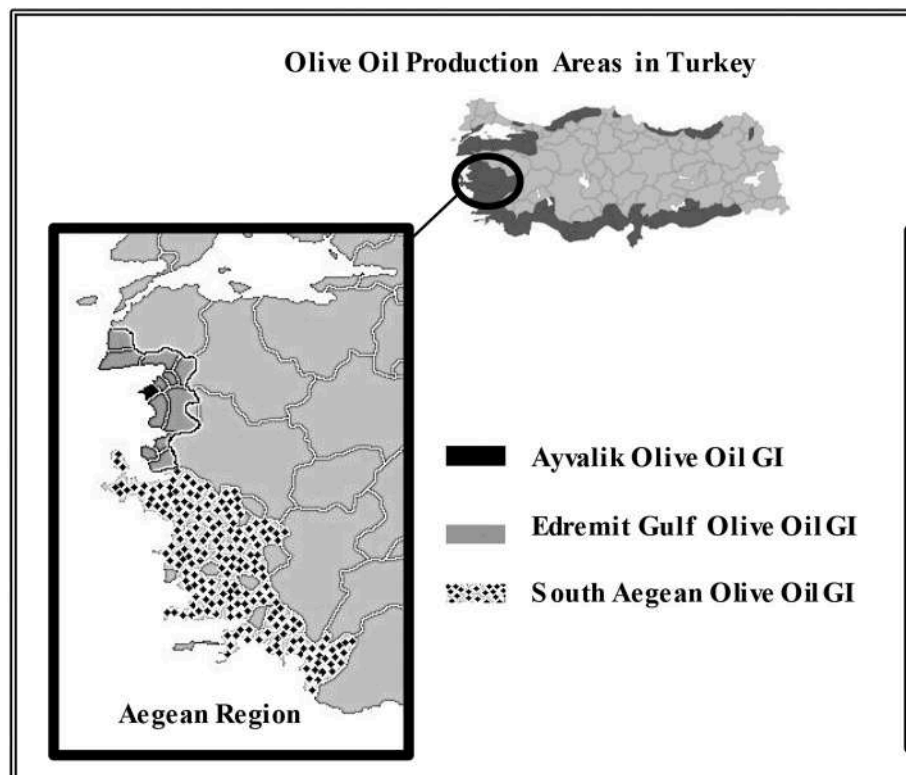


Fig.1. Aegean olive oil GIs.

oil change every year, which makes it very difficult to evaluate products categorically without statistical data. Consequently, Taris was unable to prove that Ayvalik oil did not differ from others, but Ayvalik was unable to prove that it did. In Turkey, the production of scientific evidence for territorial distinctiveness has been invoked both to resolve intra-regional competition over GI boundaries and to govern the path forward.

4. Drawing boundaries: economies of scale versus proximity

GI protection is based on a monopoly rent that is recognized, designed, and controlled by means of “boundary setting” and “governance of those boundaries” (Guthman, 2007). These borders are established to claim a distinctive quality and are then controlled to retain the added value. The point of boundary setting is not to limit the physical space; rather, it establishes new forms of cultural identities, proximity and social differentiation (Coombe and Aylwin, 2011). Setting boundaries is not a conflict-free course of action; local actors negotiate various options (certain strategies in the valorization process) during this process, which, in turn, can create a conflict of interest among the different parties involved.

This section discusses the boundary setting in two GI cases to understand how different options in defining the link between local quality and local geography become strategic options in fixing the production scale and commodity culture, which, in turn, determine the effectiveness and re-distributional impacts of these GI labels as rent-generating instruments (see Table 1). This section concludes with a discussion of the way in which the production of scientific evidence for territorial quality can perpetuate existing power relations: by establishing/defining who best knows the boundaries of an objective geography (local actors or experts/scientists) and by determining which methods (sensory or chemical tests) or indicators (variety or culture) can be used to prove this claim. Furthermore, it will be argued that this perpetuation enforces the first nature/second nature duality (nature/culture) and the bias for non-human factors in designing GI boundaries in two ways – by claiming a territorial product identity and by proving this claim through measurable methods.

4.1. Territory defined by a ‘local’ variety of the olive tree

In establishing the *Edremit Gulf Region GI*, the local variety was chosen as the super-identity of the territory. The GI border follows the physical boundaries of the local variety. The GI designers apparently believed that the local variety would secure a strong monopoly rent and thus would be the best boundary indicator. These boundaries were fixed as immovable and historical facts by the GI designers based on three different but related strategies: first, to claim an objective, tangible, and conflict-free indicator of quality; second, to claim an important cultural heritage that consumers will view as a collective asset; and third, to guarantee large-scale production and product differentiation allowing

Table 1

The requirements or process for GI distinction and a comparison between two olive oil GIs.

	<i>Edremit Gulf Region GI</i>	<i>Ayvalik GI</i>
Describing Uniqueness	Local Variety Natural Resources Scientific knowledge (hygiene)	Local variety Nature and Cultural heritage Local know-how (local flavor)
Limiting Boundaries	Variety Borders Macro Geography High volume of production	City Borders Micro Geography Small volume of production
Governance of common quality	Dominance of cooperative officers Top-down approach Vertical coordination	Dominance of local producers + traders Bottom-up approach Horizontal coordination

the governing cooperative to exploit economies of scale. One cooperative executive who designed the GI explains:

Taris did not draw the boundaries since these boundaries have already been established in the history. The civilization of Aeolis in mythology was located in the North Aegean Region, and the civilization of Ionia was located in the South Aegean Region. So, the cultural differences between those civilizations bring us the variety differences between these two regions. I always put the scientific aspects of the issue on the table. (A representative from Taris, Izmir)

Local variety is depicted as the most tangible outcome of a combination of various non-human factors (ecology, landscape, fauna, and climate) and human factors (traditional and cultural practices) along the Edremit Gulf. The origins of these varieties are argued to have originated in ancient civilizations that domesticated trees, through certain agricultural practices, pruning methods, and other cultural habits. In the prehistoric period, it is supposed that the Aeolian civilization was located in the Northern Aegean Region and the Ionian civilization in the Southern Aegean Region of contemporary Turkey. The differences between their traditions supposedly created the particular varieties grown in each area.

Accordingly, the GI boundary is said to overlap with the lands of Aeolia, which extended along the Aegean Sea, from Canakkale in the north to Sakran in the south. Taris, however, widened the borders, claiming that the physical boundaries of the local variety would form the best objective GI boundary. This widening led to the inclusion of certain cities that grew the same variety within the business area controlled by Taris – regardless of whether they were on the gulf coast. Using a local variety as an indicator of quality seemingly allows the governing cooperative to guarantee production and differentiation on a large scale to exploit economies of scale. A Taris representative explained the importance of scale for Taris:

We wanted to make sure we had a large volume of oil that was more or less the same in terms of quality. What you can do with just a thousand tons of oil, even if it has a distinctive quality? Approximately 40–45 thousand tons of oil is produced in this region annually, from the same tree variety. (A representative from Taris, Izmir)

A targeted production volume is one strategic option in setting the boundary between quality and geography based on the targeted markets (Galtier et al., 2008). Accordingly, the strategy to establish a macro-region aims to enable mass production that targets “niche intermediate markets.” Its clients are wholesale market chains, such as Metro, and grocery stores or retailers sourcing oil for private label sales. Taris is a major brand that combines oils from thousands of producers to attain a sustainable and standard quality throughout the year. From its perspective, scarcity is viewed as compatible with a certain scale of production because combining oils is unavoidable for major market actors, such as Taris, that need large volumes.

Taris introduced a more macro-origin label that identifies the whole Aegean Region to offer supermarkets a differentiated product. GI protection at regional levels has the benefit of pushing agro-industries to restructure their supply chains towards either international or regional-local levels of scale, to the detriment of the national level (De Haan, 2000:355). Yet, only five firms have shown interest in the *Edremit Gulf Region GI* since it was registered in 2007. They are small firms that source oil from Taris. According to a member of the national trader group, if the target is niche intermediate markets, then the GI logo has failed to create this demand:

When we purchase oil, our only concern is whether it is substandard or not; its origin doesn’t matter to us... You can’t feed the whole world with Ayvalik olive oil; it ultimately has a limit. That might be 100 bottles, 1000 bottles or 10,000 bottles, but it is not infinite... If you want to focus on a specific region, then all right... We believe that the Taris GIs are problematic... (An olive oil exporter, Izmir)

As the quotation above suggests, local traders and brands are opposed to the separation of the region by Taris into large sub-regions. They argue that GI protection is in fact compatible with micro-geographies, since combining oils is the only way to obtain large volumes of the product, which can be standardized according to industrial methods that can erase regional specificities.

4.2. Proximity through cultural heritage: micro geography

In the case of the *Ayvalik GI*, the claim of distinctive quality was complicated by the challenges in presenting scientific evidence for verifiable claims of difference (evidence for exceptional quality that distinguishes its oil from others in the region). Members of the *Ayvalik GI* committee argued against Taris' claims, stating that local taste depends not on local variety but primarily on micro geography. The designers of the GI referred to both non-human (soil, micro climate, water) and human factors (cultural and traditional characteristics) for the remuneration of local resources in Ayvalik.

As in the *Edremit Gulf Region GI*, *Ayvalik* argued that the local variety produces the ideal fruit characteristics only within its original territory. In contrast to the *Edremit Gulf Region GI*, however, it highlighted micro-characteristics to obtain its own GI since Taris challenged its application, arguing that the variety was the same in both GI regions. Local actors usually refer to the soil as the main distinguishing characteristic for each city within the Gulf Region; thus, the taste and flavour of Ayvalik oil is depicted as uniquely associated with the physical attributes of the soil, possibly in interaction with plant biodiversity and sea winds.

In addition to biophysical characteristics, the city of Ayvalik claims reputation as well as distinctive quality in creating monopoly claims by exemplifying its cultural heritage and local know-how. Local habits and traditions in the production and processing of olive oil are described as the main resources of Ayvalik's well-established reputation in this area, and they are mostly derived from traditional processing methods, which apparently lock in sensory characteristics at the ideal level. Traditional characteristics include tangible practices such as picking, transporting, and pressing fruit – all in a timely manner – in addition to artisanal pressing techniques and ideal storage methods. One of the main designers of the *Ayvalik GI* explains:

Olive trees are known as the immortal tree... The local culture and traditions facilitate and shape their regeneration capacities... The olive harvest in Ayvalik is earlier than in other regions. This early harvest helps retain the maximum possible flavour, nutritional values, and oxidants. These things make Ayvalik oil different from others. (A representative from Ayvalik Chamber of Commerce, Ayvalik)

The *Ayvalik GI* coincides with the physical boundaries of the city of Ayvalik. When first designed, it extended beyond the city limits to include land that had originally been within the city limits in the Ottoman era but that is currently incorporated within a city, Gomec, located 11 km away. The TPO challenged this boundary, however, because it conflicted with the requirements for clear-cut city limits as a political division. As mentioned above, Ayvalik was forced to base its claim on its distinctive quality, which also shows that GI protection should be given to micro-areas.

Ayvalik was instrumental in establishing its reputation for monopoly claims and defining a cultural identity and proximity with consumers through a nostalgia for multiculturalism, which was the norm in the Ottoman era. Firms in Ayvalik use family histories and recollections by farmers to highlight their uniqueness, which is an extension of hybrid, multicultural values. [Harvey \(2001\)](#) notes how local actors invoke "nostalgia" when there is no other mode of distinction through terroir, tradition or flavour (401). Due to the difficulties that it experienced in securing a GI protection status, Ayvalik appealed to nostalgia for Ottoman multiculturalism to establish a monopoly claim based on

reputation and highlighted the validity of its claims. In 1923, Greece and Turkey signed an agreement for an exchange of populations, which forced the Muslim and Orthodox populations in the countries to migrate. Local boutique shops in Ayvalik appropriate cultural heritage in two ways: through nostalgia for the Ayvalik Greeks, who made the city an important cultural centre of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and through nostalgia for the Ayvalik Turks who replaced the former Greek population after being forced to migrate from Greece to Turkey. The claim of distinctive quality and reputation through historical and cultural heritage allows local traders to establish proximity with end consumers.

[Coombe and Aylwin \(2011\)](#) argue that marks of distinction are an important means of expressing identities and desires that potentially link producers and consumers in new relationships of identification. According to several studies, consumer interest in products linked to place is based on either a nostalgia for real and wholesome food ([Ilbery and Kneafsey, 2000](#)) or renewed interest in or a nostalgia for culinary heritage ([Bramley and Kirsten, 2007](#)). The claim of reputation through cultural heritage clearly seems to be an effective valorization strategy for capturing both growing consumer demand and general benefits for all actors in the city. Tourism reinforces this trend, playing an important role in acknowledging that both human and non-human factors can be related to reputation. This claim of reputation distinguishes Ayvalik oil from placeless mass products.

However, the expectations of GI protection are essentially realized by fitting certain ideal boundaries into different strategic levels of scale ([Galtier et al., 2008](#)). There are an estimated 15 million olive trees in the Edremit Gulf Region, 1.8 million of which are within the borders of Ayvalik ([UZZK, 2013](#)). A comparison of GI boundaries illustrates that while Taris decided on a macro-region based on distinctive quality that was based on a local variety, Ayvalik decided on a micro-region based on reputation within the administrative border of a city. Since the Ayvalik GI covers a small land area and is a tourism destination, its logo may be able to capture demand by firms and niche end consumers. Its effectiveness is contingent on local reputation and cultural identity, which establish proximity with end consumers.

4.3. Nature/culture binary in the perception of territorial distinction

The GI procedures in Turkey clearly force local actors to claim some distinctive quality based on scientific evidence; however, such claims are not always numerically measurable. The majority of the producers surveyed in the region believed that human factors did not have much of an impact on the quality or taste of olive oil, and they viewed themselves more as passive actors maintaining what nature gives them.

Neither culture nor tradition play a role in improving quality. It is all about natural resources and local variety. I heard that a scientific study was conducted, and the goats headed towards and ate leaves of the Edremit oilseed variety. It is a scientific experiment. (An olive producer, Kucukkuyu)

Quality claims for obtaining GI protection are subject to the production of scientific evidence, and they cultivate a bias for non-human factors. The majority (74%) of the producers surveyed believed that specific quality claims should be based on "natural resources," a small minority (3.3%) believed that they should be based on "culture/tradition," and the rest (22.7%) believed that they should be based on "both." There was no significant difference between the responses of the surveyed local producers based on GI locations.

Local actors think that all natural resources – including the soil, winds, land characteristics, flora and fauna – reflect the miracle of Mother Nature or the gift/excellence of God. The "miracle" discourse is hidden in a bias for natural resources over human skills ([Babcock and Clemens, 2004](#)). Apparently, the non-human factors are logical to the majority of local olive producers in generating alternative livelihood

strategies against a placeless agro-industrial model:

Humidity from the sea and oxygen from Mount Ida meet in the Gulf of Edremit. This is the most important thing for quality. It is a gift from God. (An olive oil producer, Edremit)

It is hardly surprising that local actors have appropriated the bias for natural resources (non-human factors). For instance, in the Mount Ida National Park project – which includes mountainous areas along the Edremit Gulf – local residents have been systematically excluded from using or contributing to the management of natural resources. Ari and Soykan (2006) show that culture is a missing element in these “National Heritage” policies and that scientists and bureaucrats have ignored the role of local residents and their everyday practices in creating and preserving the local environment. In a similar vein, the procedure of producing scientific evidence has played an important role in shaping the arguments of locals in claiming and reproducing a territorial quality. The limitations in controlling ecological processes – replacing the territorial aroma and taste – present a basic view for local actors to think about the possibilities that geographical indications offer as a rent-generating policy. One olive oil producer puts it as follows:

Its [olive oil in the region] aroma resembles a new-born baby. The perfume industry has never produced a scent that smells like a three-month-old baby or the smell of olive oil produced here. (An olive oil producer, Ayvalik)

Within this understanding, human factors are perceived as “movable” effects that can be reproduced and applied in other regions. As argued, this perception is partly because of the dominance of a scientific epistemology that views nature “as an obstacle to be overcome and controlled for production” (Barham, 2003, 136). However, if a GI scheme fails to protect human factors, such as traditional knowledge and local practices, then it threatens the link between the product and its origin, leading to a loss of heritage and distinctive characteristics of the product under GI protection (Bowen, 2010, 229).

The comparative analysis shows that the Ayvalik GI reflects a micro region and a small scale of production that targets niche end consumers through a reputation policy, while the Edremit Gulf Region GI reflects a macro region and mass production that targets niche intermediate markets through a distinctive quality policy. As argued, geographical indications reflect cultural identities that potentially link producers and consumers in a commercial context (Coombe and Aylwin, 2011). This comparison shows how valorization strategies invoke the macro and micro region duality in GI procedures and how, in turn, this duality – which local actors claim limits the scale of production scale – affects the potential of GIs in establishing cultural proximity with end consumers.

5. Designing the code of practices for the distinctive quality

In GI protection, monopoly formation is based on exclusionary and protective measures that define “who can participate” (geographical limits) and “on what terms” (codes of practices) (Bramley and Kirsten, 2007, 82). Local quality is protected as both “a producer protection measure” that captures and retains the added value within a local area and “a consumer protection measure” that addresses quality asymmetries between the producer and the consumer (Bramley and Kirsten, 2007, 77). In defining the code of practices, GI initiatives run the risk of either codifying cultural products “as museums of production” by creating static notions of culture or privileging powerful extra-local actors at the expense of local actors by undermining local characteristics (Bowen and De Master, 2011).

This section discusses the codes of practices in the two GI regions to understand how exclusionary and protective measures limit production conditions and perpetuate power relations in favour of certain actors. It will be argued that the code of practices in the Edremit Gulf Region GI reflects a homogenous and mass quality, privileged commercial

standards, while the Ayvalik GI code aims to attain a heterogeneous quality, providing all producers an opportunity to enter the GI chain. The difference between these two approaches in maintaining quality practices is discussed in terms of a trade-off between traditional and industrial production methods in the region. In both GIs, the designers occupied a central role in establishing the code of practices; however, the discussion here will also examine locals’ views of the dichotomy between traditional and industrial techniques. Most seemed to be in favour of traditional methods during the farm phase and of adopting industrial methods for processing. Implications for practice will be discussed by considering the possible redistributive potentials of each GI.

5.1. Enforcing the requirements of the retail industry

In the Edremit Gulf Region GI, it was decided to regularly adjust the code of practices to meet the requirements of national and international food codices. Codes of practices are usually designed to be in line with the principle of homogenous and mass quality to meet the requirements of the retail industry, while the aim of food codices is to create commercial standards that act as a mass quality stabilizer. A representative from the governing cooperative argued that traditional techniques were controversial and that the production standards identified in the food codex were essential to preserving quality and reputation:

Traditional methods are a very controversial issue that must be taken seriously. The possibility of producing substandard oil is very high when traditional methods are used. People use traditional methods to gain authenticity, but it has so many risks. Indeed, it has many disadvantages. (An executive from Taris, Izmir)

GI protection provides some flexibility to preserve local production techniques within a specific region. In European countries, local actors still use traditional production methods under GI protection. A study by Bowen (2011, 329) in France shows that Comte cheese producers have gradually added some strict rules (code of practices) for GI regulation to create obstacles to industrialization and to preserve artisanal methods, guaranteeing the continued use of traditional methods and equipment, even if they conflict with the standards identified in national or international food codices.

The code of practices – privileged standards – defined in Turkey’s food codex either leaves no room or allows exceptions for traditional methods. For instance, a regulation in the Turkish food codex recently made stainless steel tanks a requirement for oil storage; however, the majority of the farmers on the Edremit Gulf will be unable to afford them. If production conditions are adjusted according to standards designed and governed by extra-local actors, then they will create uncertainties (insecurity) about the conditions, as actors are excluded from GI supply chains or certain segments of them. Producers who cannot afford the required storage tanks or meet other conditions, for instance, are required to leave their whole yield in the mills after pressing, which means selling during the high season (harvest) when prices are usually at their lowest, reinforcing power asymmetries and the unfair distribution of added value along the supply chain in favour of certain actors. Thus, strict quality requirements may reduce the ability of producers to negotiate exceptions or to adopt new methods (Rangnekar, 2011).

5.2. Traditional methods preserves the reputation

The Ayvalik GI design offers more flexibility in pressing methods by means of two different quality management systems: one for the traditional press and another for modern press processes. Since the sensory characteristics of Ayvalik olive oil are said to be strictly tied to the locale – where variety, microclimate and particular skills give the fruit its characteristics – local know-how is also viewed an important resource that can be protected through GI protection. Ayvalik’s code of practices seems to have been designed with heterogeneous quality in mind, and

this flexibility allows all producers to enter a GI chain. The designers of the GI argue that maintaining both traditional and industrial standards is important to preserve reputation:

We created a space for both traditional and modern press methods. In terms of the industry, we are very lucky because the chemical values of the oil are very compatible with industrial standards. The shelf life of the Ayvalik oil is quite long... In terms of tradition, yes, Ayvalik olive oil has a reputation derived from traditional characteristics. (An executive from Ayvalik Chamber of Commerce, Ayvalik)

In both the *Edremit Gulf Region GI* and the *Ayvalik GI*, the codes of practices focus substantially more on processing (pressing) than on on-farm practices; for instance, in both GIs, local variety is the only identified requisite at the farm stage. The local variety is viewed as an important policy because producers in other regions in Turkey widely cultivate another local variety – Gemlik olives – as a monoculture crop. The Gemlik variety has a strong reputation in table olive production and bears fruit in a short period of time in its original territory; however, outside its region of origin, it yields a low-quality fruit and is mainly used for oil, not table olives. As a result, these new olive-growing regions have become inexpensive oil producers, increasing regional competition (Nizam, 2017).

Furthermore, olive oil benchmarks have privileged chemical characteristics and numerical values such as acidity and peroxide levels. As a result, sensory characteristics (flavour and taste) have become increasingly less important due to the commodification and standardization of consumption. The reputation of oil from the Gulf Region is mostly associated with its distinctive flavour and low acidity due to the short time interval between picking and pressing. However, the standardization of consumption based on chemical values has forced producers in Turkey to produce standard-quality oil with especially low levels of free acidity. This trend pushes local actors in the Edremit Gulf Region to compete with other regions based on quality and price.

Traditional techniques are eagerly preserved in both GIs to address the economic and environmental destruction brought by the agro-industrial paradigm. The majority of local actors are against industrial, chemical and physical force on-farm practices that act on soil, tree, and fruit. Local farmers believed that a one-sided focus on industrial methods to improve quantity affects the characteristics of the fruit and oil and that agro-industrial practices had been limited due to land characteristics that hampered industrial production.

5.3. Dilemma between local flavour and hygiene

The local actors seem to perceive the trade-off between traditional and modern production techniques in extraction as a dilemma between local flavour and hygiene; thus, for locals, hygiene is a key term that is primarily related to commercial standards. In Turkey, the term hygiene became very popular in the late 1990s as integrated food-processing plants began to use the advertising slogan “without human intervention.” Consequently, local actors think that industrial processing methods should be free of physical human contact. This line of thought undermines the human/actor focus because the majority (52.7%) of the local actors surveyed thought that production should be based on only industrial techniques, 20.7% were for only traditional techniques, and 26.7% supported both.

The number of traditional presses (stone mills) in the region has been declining with the recent wholesale introduction of modern presses (hammer mills) because of earmarked governmental funds and loans. The increase in the number and processing capacity of mills has translated into a steadily improved milling capacity. Rural producers are in contact with the change since the old system had an inherent timing problem due to its low processing capacity, causing a delay between harvest and press. With new technologies, farmers wait less to press their fruit, enabling them to produce high-quality oil, as defined by the food

codex in terms of chemical values such as lower fat acidity and oxidation. While some producers believe that acidity levels are important for safety reasons, others argue that they are simply a matter of personal taste:

We are used to consuming oil even if it has a high acidity level. Low acidity levels became popular only recently. It depends on personal choices; you can eat a 0.8% acidity olive oil, or a 20% acidity olive oil. It is a personal choice. (Interview 20, Ayvalik)

As mentioned above, the differences in the design of stone mills and hammer mills are perceived as a dilemma between local taste and hygiene. Some consider stone mills to be detrimental to oil quality because of the failure to press the fruit within 12 h after picking and the high levels of oxidation that occur while the olive paste remains uncovered. Others argue that sensory characteristics can be maintained when fruit is crushed using the basic principle of physical weight such as stones. Such concerns have led to a search for either modernized traditional mills or traditionalized industrial mills:

There should always be a place for traditions. Why? Because Ayvalik olive oil has a traditional flavour. I used both stone mills and modern presses. I modernize the stone mill to have better sanitary conditions by using chromium instead of stone, covering the ground with epoxy, installing wall tiles, and building Cretan ceilings. (A mill owner, Ayvalik)

GI protection is based on a valorization process where culture and territorial relations are commoditized in the form of intellectual property. This commoditization raises an important question in regard to whether GIs necessarily reduce the authenticity of these cultural forms. According to Comaroff and Comaroff (2009), “cultural commodities are indeed strange hybrids; not only does culture turn into commodity, but commodity also turns into a culture, both as self-reflection and self-construction” (cited in Coombe and Aylwin, 2011, 2039). In this sense, it is important to ask how the dilemma between traditional and industrial methods generates new cultural hybridities, especially in the form of locally designed technologies that combine traditional and industrial techniques along the Gulf of Edremit.

In Turkey, product differentiation based on new (hybrid) extraction methods exists only along the Gulf of Edremit, especially in Ayvalik, perhaps because reputation from artisanal experiences in processing oil is considered a collective asset and because such methods help retain added value within the city limits. The growing demand for traditional products seems to be encouraging more diversified and authentic local products to boost consumer willingness to pay. The popularity of the stone mill among consumers creates a price gap between stone-pressed oil (sold for 35 liras per litre) and oil from modern mills (sold for 28 liras per litre). Industrial production generates general consumer anxiety, which, in turn, creates dynamic rent relations that shape consumption practices as neo-liberalization increasingly devolves regulatory responsibility to consumers (Guthman, 2007). For instance, production methods have become a site of social action where farmers have attached an economic value to ethical behaviour and the expression of their cultural identities. According to a local olive oil producer, the problem is not about technology but personal values:

I am not against modern milling methods, but temperatures should be adjusted properly to keep nutritional values... I always warn them not to use chemicals or hot water during the processing phase... there are moral, personal values I have to protect in my life. (An olive oil producer, Ayvalik)

Indeed, codes of practices are a critical site of power relations in both conflict and negotiation (Mutersbaugh, 2005). As mentioned above, rural producers unable to afford steel tanks are excluded from the marketing chain, and women constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in these circumstances and are increasingly excluded as methods

and techniques become more industrialized. The majority of women respondents, for instance, reported never having been to a press mill; their knowledge of a mill depended on their husband's description. Women partially participate in olive oil production through practices and organizational efforts that overlap with domestic work (picking, storing). When methods are defined based on industrial standards, women and their traditional know-how related to storing oil are excluded from the system. Indeed, GI protection should privilege the place as a lived and grounded space, if it in fact offers a livelihood strategy (Rangnekar, 2011), to create the possibility of collective action that offers alternatives to existing systems, rather than allowing extra-local actors to dominate (Guthman, 2007).

In summary, in the *Edremit Gulf Region GI*, the GI designers argue that technological upgrades are inevitable to improve efficiency (time- and labour-saving methods) and sanitary conditions in production. However, in the *Ayvalik GI*, the GI designers aimed to be flexible in defining a code of practices and formally listed traditional and industrial methods that preserve product reputation in different ways. The *Edremit Gulf Region GI* runs the risk of operating as "a simple extension of the standardization to new attributes linked to the environmental characteristic of the production process" (Galtier et al., 2008, 2). The implication is that the GI logo may act as a certification scheme of industrial standards and reinforce a less fair distribution of added value along the local supply chain. In contrast, the *Ayvalik GI* offers the potential to introduce more producers into production and trade with different tools and resources – this flexibility plays an important role in the emergence of hybrid cultural forms that combine traditional and industrial methods as a mode of self-reflection and self-construction.

6. Mobilizing for collective action

GIs are considered a rent, not only in terms of external recognition – enabling consumers to recognize the special qualities coming from unique local characteristics – but also in terms of internal coordination in forcing collective action in the region and supplying products with these qualities as a result of the voluntary verification and labelling process. Thus, unequal access to or control over scarce collective resources is practically and legally constructed by a purposive action. This section presents a discussion of how the horizontal relations in decision-making and control mechanisms shape the effectiveness of the valorization process and the redistributive potential of GI projects (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005).

6.1. Top-down decision-making by extra-local actors

The *Edremit Gulf Region GI* was a top-down project where officials technically decided the main codes of practices (product characteristics and production volume). Rather than a collective institution such as a local GI initiative, local bureaucrats and technicians from the marketing cooperative coordinated the verification system and sanctions, and producers were not encouraged to participate in the design stage. Moreover, producers are excluded from the procedural structures required to use, regulate, monitor, and control the GI protection status. A Taris representative explains that the GI was designed in a top-down manner:

I think technocrats made the decisions. Producers were not directly involved in the decision-making process. (A representative from Taris, Izmir)

The *Edremit Gulf Region GI* project seems to have been realized based on professionalism and elitism where local or extra-local bureaucrats made decisions without negotiating with producers in the region. As Giovannucci and Ponte (2005) note, although some certifications may provide substantial benefits for producers, the existing power relations may remain essentially unchanged or be perpetuated if producers have

no control over key decision-making processes. From the consumption relations side, these kinds of certifications based on niche consumption lead to an aestheticization of food that exacerbates existing social inequalities by creating more limited and more prized commodities that only a privileged few can obtain (West and Domingos, 2012, 141).

Taris is a sales cooperative that has 23,980 members in 32 local branches, and it can be assumed that local producers would be very familiar with the GI logo. In the *Edremit Gulf Region*, 49.4% of the producers surveyed were Taris members. Surprisingly, however, the majority of local actors surveyed were found to be unfamiliar with GI protection: only 12% were fully familiar, 17.3% were somewhat familiar, and 70.7% had no knowledge. Taris operates within a wider geography and prioritizes a corporate business strategy based solely on the mass production and mass quality approach.

In GI protection, the institutional structure of governing bodies is very important to sustain the exploitation of rent (Pacciani et al., 2001). For the bureaucrats, Taris – as a producer sales cooperative – was the most legitimate institution for overseeing the appropriation and distribution of all possible local rents and benefits associated with the product, as Taris already had a well-organized supply structure that complied with GI protection in terms of a strict verification model (traceability for GI products) and fair social consequences (distribution of the benefits). Its membership schemes help reduce the transaction costs in detecting the origin and authenticity of products. However, local traders view Taris as a major market player in competition with others, and they consider its governance of the GI chain to be unethical.

GI protection secures monopolistic market power that can be used for anticompetitive reasons, which indicates a verification problem in both internal coordination and external reputation: local actors show no interest in the GI and fear falling under the control of a cooperative that uses GIs for its own products, even though the cooperative is supposed to be controlled by an independent body. According to an olive oil trader, the *Edremit Gulf Region GI* cannot create sufficient demand to use the GI logo because other firms are reluctant to be controlled by such a powerful market actor:

Even if Taris is a producer cooperative, it is ultimately a private company. No one is willing to apply to a private company to use the GI. (An olive oil trader, Izmir)

Taris is indeed a powerful actor in the domestic supply chain, and its cooperative model posits a fair distribution of added value from the end product. Although a majority of the producers (62.6%) considered that cooperatives were an indispensable part of their livelihood strategies to retain a fair share of the added value of the final product, they indicated that Taris had transformed into a prudent corporate body following the neo-liberalization of agriculture. Some argue that the competition for leadership in Taris has resulted in convoluted power relations and corruption in the governance of sourcing relations benefiting cities that support the current administrator.

A local leader in Ayvalik argues that Taris is only interested in GI protection due to power plays that current administrators and bureaucrats use to boost their egos:

If you are the head of Taris, then you need some stories to convince people to vote for you. He cannot say that he doubled production or exports... Because none of that happened, so how else can he pull the wool over people's eyes? The GI is a perfect theme for such epic stories (A local executive, Ayvalik)

Thirty-two local cooperatives are located in different olive-producing towns or small cities, but the administrative centre is in Izmir, the third largest metropolis in Turkey, where decisions are made and implemented by bureaucrats and a group of administrators. This centralized approach produces inequalities, and consequently, local producers view Taris as an extra-local actor.

6.2. Cooperation among local traders in decision-making and control mechanisms

In the case of the *Ayvalik GI*, local actors – helmed by the local chamber of commerce – registered the GI based on close cooperation and coordination. In the face of disputes, registration was raised and achieved through strong collective action, with the close involvement of local traders. The whole GI design process developed through a bottom-up approach that fostered better cooperation as well as more successful and equitable consequences in the distribution of potential benefits. The participants in the *Ayvalik GI* administration have explicitly formulated their approach in opposition to *Taris*, which sponsors the *Edremit Gulf Region GI*. The designers of the *Ayvalik GI* consider that they have an advantage in creating demand for the GI label based on an ideally limited geography that makes the verification system more traceable and reliable:

As an area gets bigger, controlling it becomes difficult. And the risk of blended oil increases accordingly. You must earn the trust of your customers... we will build a database to create a traceable system. It would be very difficult to apply this method to large regions. (A representative from Ayvalik Chamber of Commerce, Izmir)

According to the designers of the GI, the first system idealized included five different steps in monitoring. This verification model could not be implemented, however, due to increased auditing costs, given the lack of sufficient human and financial resources of the sponsoring body; thus, it was necessary to introduce a short cut where the control chain begins at the mills. Applicants file a receipt taken from the mills to prove that the product was pressed within the city limits. Oil samples of the GI users are checked to confirm authenticity and quality (chemical followed by sensory analyses) by an established taste panel group of local residents.

Given its poor financial and human resources, the chair of the sponsoring body thinks that the chamber of commerce is a very inappropriate institution to be the locomotive of the GI initiative. In Turkey, the chamber of commerce is responsible for the promotion of all sectors in the city, not just a specific sector. Administration members work on a voluntary basis, and financial resources are limited to member fees. Thus, the verification model involves a short cut and excludes olive producers from the control mechanism. However, as the sponsoring organization, it is governed by the local elite, dominated by the local producers/traders in the city. Controlling the GI could reinforce these traders' monopoly in determining the maximum prices in the local market. Even if GI protection brings extra premiums and benefits for the whole region, the greater part of the profit will go to the governing traders, raising questions in regard to whether the chamber of commerce is a legitimate institution for the fair distribution of benefits among actors:

I am the chair of chamber of commerce, which has 1200 members. Only 100 of them are olive oil producers. I am supposed to reflect on problems related to tourism, fishing, industry, and other crafts, as well as the olive oil sector. This is clearly not the proper institution to manage the GI status. (An executive from Ayvalik Chamber of Commerce, Ayvalik)

The traders in the city represent different interest groups that differentiate their marketing strategies to secure either niche end consumers or bulk markets. This situation leads to differentiation in sourcing relations; while some source olive oil produced only in the city, others bring in oil from other regions. Well-established brands or major traders who supply oil to retailers or supermarkets are especially able to profit from the blended trade. However, blending activities generate controversy in regard to the GI protection status in the region. Nevertheless, the expectations of all actors who currently benefit from GI protection are to establish a control mechanism to monitor the local

supply chain and to protect the historical reputation of the product.

Due to a lack of trust in sourcing relations, scientific indicators with numeric values – instead of social or organizational structures – officially ascertain product authenticity, and they are believed to create transparency. However, olive oil is not a solid product, which makes its authenticity even more controversial. The notion of distinctive quality, which is viewed as being scientific – measurable based on chemical values – seems to be legitimized by a dual function in GI protection: not only to claim GI protection status but also to check and audit the samples provided. The implication is that objective descriptions of quality can be used to check product authenticity during the regular controlling and monitoring processes of GI protection. The projected role of science in setting and governing boundaries reveals the difficulties in building collective action in GI projects, given the plurality of actors and their spaces of action.

The reputation strategy followed by the *Ayvalik GI* initiative aims to create indirect benefits that may flow from the established GI to all actors within the city. A harvest festival and other campaigns have been organized, and media channels are invited each year to support *Ayvalik*'s external reputation and to promote GI protection status. Compared to the *Edremit Gulf Region GI*, local actors' familiarity with the *Ayvalik GI* protection is relatively high (24%), although familiarity varies between rural and urban spaces of the city. While large-scale producers or small-scale producers living in the town centre are fully familiar (nearly 100%), the majority of producers living in villages are unfamiliar (90%) because activities to promote GI protection have mainly been performed in the centre and producers are not a part of the verification chain.

The varying impact of the two GIs is also based on the forms of control and coordination that generate rents. The governance of the *Edremit Gulf Region GI* reflects a "normative localism" in which a small group of bureaucrats decides what is best for everyone and defines who and what will be included and excluded (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005). There is no collective action "crystallized" in the emergence of this GI since strategic options were not recognized and established based on a common learning process (Paus and Reviron, 2010). In contrast, the governance of the *Ayvalik GI* reflects a more "reflexive localism" in which a large group of local producers/traders collectively discuss and decide how to change their society, despite contradictions and conflicts of interest (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005). This method not only is an important strategic option recognized and constructed by GI protection but also represents an important moment of disarticulation from industrial chains, supporting a change in supply chain governance. However, the implications of both GI projects in producing social consequences (fair distribution of added value) are controversial, given that producers living in villages are less familiar with GI protection and are less included in decision-making processes.

7. Conclusion

This study contributes to GI literature with a comparative case study which shows that different approaches and various nuances in the design and implementation of GI policies have different impacts on rural livelihoods, and that GIs has led to the rise of innovative, hybrid forms of governance in rural revitalization policies that rely on strong collective action. We analyzed two olive oil GI schemes in western Turkey comparatively by focusing on local actors' perception of territorial distinctiveness, strategies of commercialization, participation in decision-making processes, and collective action in fostering varying localisms. The main findings of the study suggest that a small volume of production limited by a boundary setting, a collective definition of territorial quality, horizontal relations in decision-making, and reflexive localism shape the effectiveness of the valorization process and the redistributive potential of GI projects.

GIs are important instruments for rural revitalization policies since they offer a potential to challenge the dominant agro-industrial systems and their detrimental effects on rural livelihoods through collective

action of the local actors who engage in bottom-up decision-making processes that give rise to the new hybrid governance mechanisms. Onitsuka and Hoshino (2018) draw attention to the potential impacts of the acceleration of inter-community networking in developing innovative rural governance systems. Our comparative analysis of the processes of setting the boundaries of a GI, of designing its codes of practices, and of implementing internal coordination among producers suggests that local actors might develop innovative techniques that re-articulate certain discursive and ontological dualities such as culture/nature, human/non-human factors and traditional/industrial methods. Thus, GIs create new hybrid forms of governance, which is an important component of rural revitalization policies.

Our analysis revealed that while protecting traditional and unique production techniques through GIs can be effective in the valorization process (Bowen and DeMaster, 2011), it is difficult for local actors to design new forms of governance that would ensure the unique characteristics of local products. As the rural becomes a zone of social innovation and entrepreneurship, “peasant-like” elements are increasingly appropriated and integrated into the corporate agro-food regime (Hisanoa et al., 2018). Our study also highlights that producers integrate their traditional methods with the pressures of industrialization and standardization. We show that the codes of practice designed in accordance with the legal hygiene standards have resulted in increased homogenization and loss of traditional flavor. This problem makes clear that legal food production standards should be redefined and restructured in such a way that rural actors are able to preserve and improve their traditional mode of production. Yet, our research reveals that the same codes of practice also include traditional practices in olive oil production, especially in harvesting or milling processes. Hence, GIs enable local actors to find innovative ways of linking traditional methods with industrial requirements and scientific measurements.

Because top down projects often fail to achieve their goals in rural revitalization projects (Liu and Li, 2017), this study focused on how collective action among local actors can contribute to the effectiveness of GIs as an instrument of rural revitalization. Our analysis reveals that strong collective action among local actors defending the production of their local product with its traditional territorial quality should be the core of GI protection to be offered to rural regions wishing to revitalize. In this regard, it is important to develop rural development policies that are able to preserve natural and cultural resources that not only give the local product its territorially distinctive quality, but also secure the livelihoods of rural communities and foster a reflexive politics of localism.

GIs, as new certification instruments, grew rapidly and they are expected to gain further strength in the near future of the agro-food sector and rural revitalization projects in Turkey. Different than most studies on GIs, this article addresses different expectations and strategies expressed by local actors engaged in GI projects. In this regard, this study fills an important gap in literature concerning agricultural transformations in Turkey with respect to the increasing importance of certification practices and their social consequences. Relatedly, it offers an original case and potentials for comparative studies within a broader international field of third-party certification, local labeling, and rural revitalization projects.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Derya Nizam: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data curation, Formal analysis, Software, Visualization, Investigation, Writing - review & editing. **Mehmet Fatih Tatari:** Writing - review & editing.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2020.07.002>.

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