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Türkan Yosun is an academic and farmer. After getting her BS degree from Bilkent University Management department, she worked as a finance professional at banks and auto companies.

She later got a PhD degree in Management from Sabancı University, where she still teaches courses on Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship, and Technology Management. In her Phd dissertation entitled Marketization of Social Sectors and Strategic Responses of Social Enterprises, she analyzed the evolution and competitive dynamics of the field of supplementary education of the disabled in Turkey.

She has supported many social enterprises, mostly focusing on environment and fair trade, in volunteer, mentor, and founding member roles.

Türkan's interest in testing and making wine evolved into the adventure of starting her own vineyard. She later extended the idea to an ecological farm with different kinds of plants, where visitors can learn and experience ecological farming along with winemaking. In her short article in this issue, she explains the evolution of the idea and how the rising concept incorporates Sustainable Development Goals into the physical design and the business model.

Designing an Inclusive Ecofarm

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A single woman doing agriculture? Don't dream about it.

Starting a vineyard? Way too difficult, forget about it.

You will make and sell wine? Only big bosses can do it.

An organic vineyard? This is not possible. Bullshit.

Agri-tourism? A customer won't like the tomato at breakfast, and you will go mad about it. (Yes, I literally heard this sentence, from a family member.)

As you guessed already, these were some of the reactions I got when starting the journey. No need to say I couldn't find any support, up until people saw I already did most of it.

Background Story

Going a few years back, to the pandemic era, as things to fix-paint-replace were diminishing in my apartment, along with my patience, my family understood my psychological need for a new larger apartment and agreed on selling a jointly owned property to finance it. I was not, at least intentionally, cheating them. (I had even forgotten about my plan of moving to an island to write novels, which had started a family crisis six years ago.) But once you have the cash, you know, people may lose themselves. I first started searching for a tiny vineyard, in addition to a new apartment, so that I could make my home wines-a hobby at that time- from my own grapes. Next, I was looking for bigger land where I could start a new vineyard. Then I

contented there should also be some tourism activity going on, so that the farm could financially sustain. Hey, why not grow some other plants as well?... At the end, I found myself buying a big land for which I paid half the money I had for the new house, later spending the rest for infrastructure work. But at least I did not move to a distant island.

To be honest, I was not planning on a venture with a deliberate social aim. It was a period of my life that I had quit the social ventures I was a member of due to internal disputes and underlying reasons, which would need another article to tell. All I wanted was a little hedonistic world for myself. My city-escape plan, however, gradually evolved into a high-impact business model, from which my subconscious apparently cannot escape after years of researching, teaching, and practicing the management of social ventures. In what follows, I will explain some observations, experiences, and the rising inclusive farm concept.

The Context

Nicaea is a town in the city of Bursa, Türkiye. It is situated by Lake Nicaea surrounded by plains and mountain villages. The town is world famous for being the site of the first Ecumenical Council of the Christian Church, as well as its tile art. In its history, this ancient Greek city has been controlled by the Roman, Byzantine, Seljuk, and the Ottoman Empires, with key roles in their culture and trade. Today, however, Iznik (with its contemporary name) is a modest town with a 44 thousand population and low economic activity based on agriculture and limited tourism income.

My farm is on 23 acres of land on the northern side of the Lake, at a hill with 460 mt altitude. It is situated in Yörükler village (of Iznik) but is only 300 meters from Fulacık village (of Kocaeli). The two

villages have quite diverse historic roots; former a Muslim Turk village proud of being one of the first two Turkish border villages founded by the Seljuk Empire, latter an ancient Christian Greek village once famous for its vineyards. In sharp contrast to today, the population in these lands used to be so high that cats could go from one village to the other by jumping on the roofs. The two villages lived in harmony for many centuries under the rule of several empires. Following WWI, however, Fulacık villagers were sent to Bulgaria in exchange for a Turkish population there. The newly arriving Turks were not into wine business and the vineyards gradually disappeared.

Today, around half of the land in these and nearby villages is sold to investors or city-escapers and the population goes on declining as the youth continue moving to big cities. The local villagers make a life by selling their agricultural products to wholesalers, by selling their land, and by working on the farms sold to the urban. Agricultural practices rely on using chemicals and the locals believe organic farming is not feasible. While many have shifted to drip irrigation with the help of subsidized loans, there is no interest in other good farming practices such as soil analysis. The wholesalers come to the village to buy the agricultural products grown and picked by the villagers. Not an exception to the global case, they pay very low prices to the villagers to get the bulk of profits for themselves. While a local villagers cooperative exists, its activities stay limited to bulk buying of some necessities, with no attempt to directly sell agricultural products in the market and/or adding more value by processing them. Despite not having much of an entrepreneurial orientation, villagers have seen an opportunity in cultivating farms of landowners from big cities. A fact that also caused some trouble for me at the beginning, is that they tend to charge astronomic fees for tasks like ploughing, fertilization, and planting. Unable to bear those costs in the long run, most city

escapers later escape from the village, where they had planned to stay on weekends and holidays. The planted trees and crops are left uncared for until the land is sold to new city-escapers or investors.

Women of the village are invisible heroes. There is a café in the village center, not officially but culturally reserved for men. I kept going there as the only woman, because I wanted to learn about the local life, and I needed local knowledge and connections. In time, they accepted my existence naming me Hoca Hanım (meaning the professor lady). I made many friends, especially of the elderly men who liked telling stories that I liked listening to. Months passed and I saw only a few women; one young girl shepherd, one old lady shepherd, and one woman in her garden as I stopped for the cute dogs in front of a house. I also saw from a distance, some women working on neighboring land. As the situation increasingly bothered me, one day I jokingly rebelled in the café: "Hey! Where are the women of this village?" I was told they were either at home doing housework or working on the farms, and that it was not proper for them to go to the men's café. One elderly friend of mine also explained that parents did not want their daughter to be married to the village as women are made to work very hard there. Therefore, they sought grooms living in the city, no matter how poor they are, to save their daughter from village life. "I will open a women's café; they will sit there, and you will go work on farms" I reacted, which they took as a joke, and I didn't take it further to avoid a dispute at that moment. I later had more chances of talking to local women who complained about the hard manual work they do in the farms while men do the easier work with the tractor.

The rising inclusive farm concept

Blending cultures:

The vineyard has a unique tile pattern; the Seljuk Star. In addition to its nice look, the corners in the pattern symbolize values of mercy, compassion, patience, integrity, confidence, loyalty, generosity, and gratitude. After sleepless nights of design phase, it took ten days of work on the land to mark the exact places of nearly 2000 vines. But at the end we succeeded without going mad. The whole pattern of the vineyard is visible from most parts of the farm thanks to the naturel altitude and slope differences, as well as the ground levelling we did to enable this. You have a view of the Nicaea Lake and a huge Seljuk Star, which the contemporary locals would all like. Coming to growing wine grapes and making wine, the mostly conservative locals do not really like it. However, their reaction turns to positive as I talk about this art in the vineyard; it successfully serves as an icebreaker. I believe it will be a cultural bridge between the region's past and today, and between people of different lifestyles. In addition to wine, I will also produce Hardaliye – a soft grape drink in which you add black mustard seeds to prevent fermentation, and sour cherry leaves. This way, people with diverse beliefs and lifestyles can enjoy nature and the workshops together.

Care for the environment:

To start with, I had a solar system installed, with an inverter capacity to also charge my electric car. Although I can have access to electricity from the grid with minimal investment, I will not do this but increase renewable energy capacity as needed. Next, I needed to store water and the practical way is of course plastic tanks. Instead, I ordered huge oak barrels from a local artisan. I was stamped crazy for

paying that price for water storage; but luckily, I don't care. Seeing another opportunity for the barrels, I designed a water collection and watering system with also another practical use. There is an umbrella on the barrel connected to a pipe. In rainy weather, the umbrella faces upwards to collect rainwater into the barrel. In shiny weather, it faces down to create shade and serves as an authentic bistro where you can sit around to enjoy the view. The farm is, no need to say, designed all organic. Instead of pesticides, I used products such as neem oil for protecting the trees from harmful insects. While preparing the vineyard for planting, I used cattle and worm manure, and forms of organic leonardites. When it came to fertilizing the vines after we planted them, however, things got trickier as plants needed specific minerals at different phases of growth. The organic alternatives to the chemical fertilizers are, in addition to being ten times costlier, not capable of diffusing to the soil to be absorbable in a reasonable time. Instead of directly giving minerals, I found a solution using some organic bacteria. These bacteria tear down some molecules to free away elements such as phosphorus from other elements they had tied to in the soil. This way, we are turning the minerals into a form absorbable by the vines.

Gender equality:

In addition to the unfair workshare for women in the family I explained above, women in the region are not paid equal with men. This is even evident in the day labor rates for olive picking workers announced by the chambers of agriculture. Having heard this before, I deliberately showed a big reaction when a couple working on my farm wanted different rates for themselves, and I paid them equally. I keep paying more than expected rates for women, with an expectation that

their perceptions and expectations will change in time. With an aim to turn them into microentrepreneurs, I also designed a shop for local women in the farm, where they can sell traditional food and handicraft to the visitors.

Accessibility:

The farm is designed considering accessibility for the disabled, although not all details have been put in place yet due to ongoing infrastructure works. I built an accessible path around the vineyard having the lateral slope levelled, and this will be extended to whole farm with addition of side ropes from which visually impaired can get help. As the geodesic domes are built, accessibility will also be a must in the internal designs.

Budget and solo travelers:

So many colleagues have been congratulating me saying that is also their dream, which they cannot realize due to several reasons. Many friends, on the other hand, have bought some land, but were not able to look after it. When they go to stay at small hotels in the nature or the farmhouses, on the other hand, as I personally experienced, the rates are super high. There are some low-cost options but are mainly camps or glamping areas without any facilities. Being a solo traveler is another problem due to the added cost of stay; there are no single rooms, and you even pay for the breakfast same with couples. Taking those into consideration, I designed geodesic domes with varying stay and work options in the farm, both within the vineyard and next to it. Visitors can look after the plants surrounding them during their stay and pick for themselves. There are also woodcrafts and winemaking workshops, in addition to permaculture trainings.

So, this is my farm, evolving for better day by day both for the nature, the public, and for myself.

