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HIDDEN HANDS IN THE MARKET: ETHNOGRAPHIES OF FAIR TRADE, ETHICAL CONSUMPTION, AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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PREFACE

Always on the lookout for good material for the *REA* series, at the end of March, 2007, I contacted Geert De Neve about a workshop he and his colleagues, Peter Luetchford and Jeffrey Pratt, were preparing to host in late April at the University of Sussex. Word of the workshop had initially come to me via the Society for Economic Anthropology Listserv months earlier. At the time I was tied up with Volume 26, a health-related installment, and so had only hoped to pick up a few quality papers for a later volume, thinking that they could perhaps be grouped into a special section together. Fortunately, however, I got much more.

Geert acted quickly, and many of the workshop participants showed interest, so within 1 month of my initial enquiry, plans for this book were underway. Geert, Peter, and Jeff at Sussex made the decision on which workshop papers to include in this volume, and guided the authors in their initial revisions. Each author then submitted a revised version of his or her paper, which I in turn put through a blind peer-review, in accordance with *REA* policy. When the reviews (which were generally quite positive) came in, I responded to each author with the feedback of the referees, along with suggestions of my own, in most cases, and the authors began their final revisions. As chief coordinator of the initial workshop, Geert played a central role in the editing and revisions of the papers, and I shared anonymous referee feedback with him along the way.

This volume makes a very special contribution to economic anthropology in general, and to the *REA* series. With first-hand data from a variety of geographic areas, its comparative ethnographic take on fair trade and corporate social responsibility (CSR) is unparalleled. It also very clearly elucidates alternative conceptions of how markets ought to work and also in what ways control over powerful economic forces might be achieved among relatively disempowered people – producers and consumers alike – in a variety of situations. This edition also combines the strengths of two different types of edited volumes in one book. Normally, those that grow out of conferences or workshops contain chapters that evolved from papers initially presented orally. All chapters are edited by the same person or people, who generally also write the introduction, and then the final manuscript is submitted to a publisher, who may have the entire thing reviewed by one or two other referees. The main strengths of these volumes are that their chapters are usually thematically or methodologically related to one another, and that the author (or authors) of each are at least familiar with the other chapters because they were present at their initial presentation. In addition, discussions of the papers and their findings at the workshop or conference usually help the authors shore up the weak points of each prior to their publication, and also serve to reinforce the linkages between the chapters of the finished product.

Peer-reviewed book series, such as *REA*, are different. With one of these, it is generally up to the editor (or editors) alone to find linkages between the chapters, for the respective authors are usually unaware of what else will be contained in the volume until it appears in print. However, the great strength of such volumes lies in the peer-review process, for each individual chapter is read by one or more specialists in its particular thematic and/or geographic area (in addition to the editor) and then is revised accordingly if it passes the initial review. The present book possesses the strongest points of both types of edited volumes. First, the workshop organizers in Sussex selected certain presented papers for the volume. Second, they were revised before their initial submission. Third, they underwent a rigorous peer-review process. Fourth, they were revised again by their authors. Finally, the contributions to this volume were edited one final time before the manuscript was submitted to the publisher. Although all *REA* volumes to-date have made strong contributions to the field, I believe this is an *REA* volume of which all editors and contributors together can be especially proud.

Although it delayed the publication of the chapters in this volume by about 6 months, adhering here to the peer-review policy of *REA* was an important part of the preparation of this volume, as explained above. However, this volume deviates slightly from the *REA* standard in that it contains one previously published chapter, authored by Jeffrey Pratt, which appeared in Vol. 27, No. 3, of *Critique of Anthropology* (September, 2007). This is something that, to my knowledge, has not been done by *REA* since George Dalton edited the series. I stated clearly in the introduction to Volume 25 (2007) that as editor I would not be interested in previously published work, and this holds true. However, in this case I have made an exception to the rule because Pratt's contribution was an integral part of the workshop, and because many of the chapters in this volume refer to, and rely on, it. I feel that it is deserving of being reprinted here along with its fellow workshop papers. Incidentally, Pratt's paper was not subjected to a peer-review for inclusion here.

One more matter that deserves mention is *REA's* recent move from the offices of Elsevier to those of Emerald Publishing, based in Bingley, UK. This is the second such move in *REA's* history, for Elsevier had originally acquired the series from JAI Press shortly after the publication of Volume 19 in 1998, when Barry Isaac was editor. Volume 27 (2008), guest-edited by Christian Wells and Patricia McAnany, with which I was essentially uninvolved, was actually the first *REA* volume published by Emerald, but the manuscript was initially submitted to Elsevier during the transition period just after the deal between the two companies had been inked. Therefore, while Volume 28 is actually the second *REA* volume with the Emerald label, it is the first that I have actively edited, and it is the first to be submitted to Emerald. As editor of *REA*, I look forward to working with Emerald in further developing the series. Indeed, as I write this Preface in April of 2008 I take note of the fact that this is the 30th anniversary year for *REA* – JAI published Volume 1 in 1978 – perhaps a good occasion for making a new start.

Before closing, I would like to thank my co-editors and the other contributors for helping to produce such an outstanding *REA* volume. I also extend my gratitude to the 24 scholars who were kind enough to serve as official readers for the chapters of this book. Their suggestions helped to significantly improve what was already an excellent set of papers. Finally, I would like to acknowledge Mark Newson of Elsevier for his work on Volumes 25, 26, and 27 of *REA*. Mark served as Development Editor in charge of *REA* (among other projects) from the time that I took over as editor until the series was sold to Emerald in late 2007. He handled Volumes 25 and 26 from start to finish, worked on Volume 27 at the initial stage, and also helped me get Volume 28 started with advice on the publishing schedule and other matters. I am indebted to Mark for his fine work on these volumes and for his excellent support.

Donald C. Wood
Editor

INTRODUCTION: REVEALING THE HIDDEN HANDS OF GLOBAL MARKET EXCHANGE

Geert De Neve, Peter Luetchford and Jeffrey Pratt

The central theme running through this volume is the relationship between producers and consumers and questions about the moral and political content of that relationship. In ever more parts of the world this relationship unfolds within a market economy; indeed producers and consumers, as categories of people, are constructed through market relations. If the market is part of our central theme, the context for the articles is the spread of neo-liberal globalisation, with its roots in the reforms pioneered in the US and the UK in the 1980s.

While post-war economists and politicians have entrenched a neo-liberal view of the Market, to use Carrier's (1997) capital letter, across the globe there have always existed alternative strands of thought and practice that contest this dominant model of market economy. Fair trade and local food movements, for example, are one expression of anti-market feelings, while corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives on the other hand seek to emphasise (and protect) capitalism's inherent human and sustainable character. Such alternatives are "ethical" perspectives in as far as they engage in the very old "conversation" about the rights and wrongs of economic behaviour and market exchange. They are "alternative" in that they imply or directly articulate a critique of the unfettered Market and

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locate themselves either in opposition to the Market, or in struggles to reform or replace the Market with exchange carried out on a different basis, under different principles. As Kahn put it, "contemporary understandings of the market are informed as much by critical anti-Market strands in modern thought as by the Market triumphalism of Adam Smith and his successors or, perhaps better, … Market and anti-Market polemics stand in an interior rather than exterior relationship one to another" (Kahn, 1997, p. 76). While it is precisely the manifold manifestations of this critical polemic that we seek to discuss in this volume, the introduction is meant as an exploration of some recurrent ideas in the social sciences (and hence in society) that inform much contemporary anti-Market thought and activism.

Alternative ethical perspectives, however, are rarely systematic or coherent. Rather, they are made up of a series of overlapping themes that at times support one another, but at other moments move in different directions. In this sense, discourses that drive these "alternative hands" in the economy are as problematic to map as those relating to "local" and "authentic" food discussed by Pratt in his article in this volume.[1] Some of these perspectives are more "textual" and appear more systematic, at other points these more "erudite" formulations become entangled and intersect with embedded everyday life and practices. Yet, in both guises they remain ethical and political in as much as they are part of a conversation about economic conduct and the purpose of the economy and the Market.

As a step towards untangling these discourses we have identified four separate, but related, strands. In each case the alternative can be presented as a mirror image of the Market, although there is always a dialogue between the polarities: (1) *social relations* are opposed to impersonality; (2) ideas about *boundedness* and *autonomy* reject open markets and the separation of production and consumption into distinct domains; (3) *fair prices* based around livelihoods contest intermediaries and profit, which is also a conversation about where and how value is created and how it circulates; and (4) *regulation* stands against the unregulated market. Some of these strands are expressed in the negative: they oppose the breakdown of face-to-face social relations, contest the compromising of local autonomy and object to the moral emphasis in the dominant market model on exercising individual self-interest. But there is also a more positive vocabulary that imagines and seeks to create an inversion of the world as conjured up by the market, often expressed in terms of defending specific forms of collective organisation: households, communities, regions, and nation-states.

We are not suggesting that alternative moral ideas about market relationships are ever easily realised, but rather that fair trade and CSR rely on such alternative moral perceptions of the economy, just as the Market relies on a particular Western rendition of individualism and self-interest to justify its existence. It is one of the aims of this volume to show how moral constructs are mobilised, (re-)interpreted, and imperfectly translated into action by different actors, often resulting in trajectories and transformations not initially imputed to them. As Appadurai pointed out some time ago, "mythologies" are generated by and through the "institutional distances between production, distribution and consumption" (1986, p. 48). Many of the articles in this volume can be read as attempts to contextualise and document these mythologies. But just as myths can lay claim to containing "deeper truths" that are worthy of serious study, so does the attempt to identify alternative ethical perspectives on the economy tell us something about the moral and political world people inhabit or wish to create.

The remainder of this introduction is constructed around our four themes. In each case, we show how the theme is instantiated as part of neo-liberal ideology, and the way it is then countered through different alternative strands of thought and practice that have long been present in society and that currently inform activism and alternative movements. Some of these themes – such as morality, alienation, commoditisation, and de-fetishisation – are also part of long-standing debates within anthropology, and the social sciences more broadly, about the nature of commodity production and market exchange. We indicate how ethnographic studies of alternative trade movements, corporate social initiatives and ethical consumer behaviour shed new light on older debates, and how they allow anthropologists to contribute to an understanding of what drives such initiatives, how they are understood and represented by different actors and what makes their outcomes at times ambivalent and contradictory.

SOCIAL RELATIONS IN A DEPERSONALISED ECONOMY

The first theme is the "problem" of personal relations in the economy. Under neo-liberalism the Market is treated as universal, a trans-historical and trans-cultural entity; it is naturalised and reified, rather than thought of as a set of social relations; it is treated as a given rather than the result of a historical process with complex social actors. This view of the Market dovetails with a particular understanding of the individual, as driven primarily by a (universal and naturalised) desire to maximise material well-being and seek out value for money, while an "invisible hand," rather than known personal needs, provides the mechanism to relate supply to demand.

As is well known, the philosophical and economic underpinnings for this moral scheme were provided by Bernard Mandeville in his *Fable of the Bees* (1714), and, more famously, Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776 (Carrier & Miller, 1999; Dilley, 1992; Luetchford, 2005). The ethic conceives of people as social beings, driven by rationality and careful accounting on the one hand, or by the desire to consume on the other hand (Campbell, 1987; Friedman, 1989). In either case, capitalism is associated with an individualistic impulse. Consumption becomes the black box of individual yearnings, and the business of economy is to produce incrementally to satisfy consumer demand: "[T]he economy produces goods and goods are good so more goods must be better" (Princen, 2002, p. 24). The proper and heroic job of the entrepreneur is to match supply to demand.

Today, this vision of the Market is not simply an ideal; it is substantially enacted through a series of measures, which include de-regulation and privatisation carried out by national governments, and the abolition of trade barriers through international agencies such as the IMF and later the WTO. Indeed it is normally argued that the expansion of capitalist operations into new spheres, and the political vision of the Market, operate together. Whichever way we analyse what drives this process, the result is that an increasing range of societies are opened up to international competition, often through structural adjustment programmes and shock therapy. The post-Washington consensus is perhaps the only point at which hard line neo-liberalism has been mitigated by the promise of a more human-centered vision of development and socially responsible forms of capitalism.

The process of "dis-embedding" is a counterpart to this opening up of economies. In a globalising economy the competitive drive to take advantage of lower labour costs means that much manufacturing industry has been relocated to the south, while many economies in the north revolve increasingly around services and international finance. As a result, the producers of an increasing range of economic goods (from food to clothing or computers) live in a different society from those who consume them. The attempt to create a moral or political content to the relationship between producers and consumers runs up against the problem that the relationship is increasingly dis-embedded from any shared social or political space. The "old" politics, with its debates about collective ownership, regulation, subsidies, wages and conditions was in part concerned with the relationship between producers and consumers. It was not articulated in those terms, instead it was part of a much wider discourse about society and its values (cohesion, solidarity, equality, freedom) played out at the level of national governments and programmes. Under neo-liberal globalisation, state-based mechanisms cannot address those issues, and one consequence has been a new politics, now articulated explicitly around producer–consumer relations, and working through new political forms and actors (such as NGOs and Alternative Trade Organisations).

These new politics build on a contestation of dominant Market rationality and forward the idea that economic exchanges should be based upon personal social relations; an inversion of the impersonality of the market. It is common for sociologists writing on alternative economic forms to refer this idea back to Polanyi and the concept of embeddedness (Hinrichs, 2000; Jaffee, 2007), but it may be more useful to analyse it through readings of Mauss and Marx. The key question here concerns the way people relate to each other through the medium of things, the cultural ideas they bring to bear on that relationship, and the social processes and politics that surround it.

One view is to read economic history as a process of increasing alienation, in which producers gradually lose control of the means of production and become depersonalised elements in increasingly disaggregated and spatially separated production regimes (Carrier, 1992). Another perspective focuses on social and cultural processes ensuing from that separation. Moral concerns are raised when the distance between producers and consumers increases and when commodity exchange begins to pervade ever larger areas of our lives (Hart, 1982; Hudson & Hudson, 2003). Ethical consumption initiatives, for example, are the direct expression of a chronic ill feeling about the circulation of commodities that separate consumers from producers, often located hundreds of miles away from each other. Similarly, fair trade movements seek to re-establish a direct link between consumers and producers, and to re-embed consumption in the social relations of production and exchange.

We need to note, however, that a desire for social embeddedness is not a merely Western sentiment. It seems to be morally approved across cultures and societies. In *Money and the Morality of Exchange* (1989), Bloch and Parry commented that, despite considerable cultural differences in moral assessments of exchange, comparative research revealed a strikingly similar distinction made across cultures between "a cycle of short-term exchange which is the legitimate domain of individual – often acquisitive – activity, and a cycle of long-term exchanges concerned with the reproduction of the social and cosmic order'' (*ibid.*, p. 2). Whereas short-term or socially disembedded exchanges tend to be seen as lacking moral content, socially embedded transactions that seek to consolidate long-term relationships are commonly deemed more desirable and thus morally more satisfying. Fair trade may well touch a cross-culturally engrained moral sensitivity.

For anthropologists, to consider the way social relationships are forged through the exchange of things inevitably leads to the work of Marcel Mauss (2002). The wider inference from theories of the gift is that things always contain something of the previous owner. They can never be fully separated from the person who creates or transfers them and they embody the intention, energy and meaning invested in them. As objects circulate, so they become both the vehicle for connections with other people, and an expression of the desire to establish or maintain social relationships. In our own society, and in the literature, it is common currency to identify two domains of exchange: the market in which alienable commodities circulate and the gift economy based upon the exchange of inalienable objects that carry the good intentions of the giver (Miller, 2001). Whether this strict separation is useful or not, it is nevertheless true that part of the ideological power of the gift is that it should be freely given as an expression of selfless love, often inspired by a renunciatory ethic (Parry, 1986). While this ideology of the gift finds its idealised expression in Western culture in the arena of the family or the household, it is now also being adopted by alternative and ethical trade movements. Fair trade advertising, for example, builds on this ideology and, as Luetchford points out (this volume), fair trade puts the small family farmer, set in a peasant household, at the centre of its publicity. Following this reading of the gift, and as Berlan (this volume) shows, fair trade is part of a wider trend in development that blurs the boundary between trade and charitable giving (Dolan, 2007; Luetchford, 2006; Rajak, 2007; Stirrat & Henkel, 1997). As consumers shop they are encouraged to voluntarily and philanthropically ''choose fair trade'' to forge a relationship of concern with struggling producers and to give freely and selflessly.

We have learned from Malinowski's discussion of the Kula that goods have histories and that those histories are central to the creation and consolidation of social relationships (Malinowski, 1984). In the Kula exchange value is located in the accumulated histories and trajectories of the circulating goods, and thus in the relationships they establish, rather than in any use value per se. This idea that value lies in the very trajectory of traded goods is replicated in much ethical trade discourse today. A strong desire to re-embed commodity exchange in social, affective relations is reflected in a widespread preoccupation with "tracking" where goods come from, how they have been produced and by whom. It is also reproduced in the marketing of many contemporary products, in which information is given, or an image presented on the packaging, of people engaged in the production of the goods we consume. Fair trade, farmers markets, and local systems of food provision can be understood as manifestations of the search for a social or moral relationship. The articles in this volume engage with this issue of mounting moral dissatisfaction with the spread of socially and politically dis-embedded exchange relationships. This moral unease is widely felt among northern consumers and is a driving force behind a rising number of ethical trade initiatives. Through such initiatives, consumers use their purchasing power to express ethical or political assessments of trading practices and global injustices; to "respond politically to all those people who daily put breakfast upon our table, even though market exchange hides from us the conditions of life of the producers" (Harvey, 1993, p. 56; Lyon, 2006, p. 456).

While Mauss focused more directly on social relations in the economy, Marx concentrated on revealing how human relations were alienated and commodities became fetishised by and through capitalism (Marx, 1999). Under capitalist modes of production, commodities become fetishes, that is, they are given a life and a productive force of their own, while the human labour that goes into their production remains invisible (Bloch, 1989, p. 171). Commodities are viewed in terms of the characteristics of the final product (price, quality, aesthetic, etc.) while the processes through which they are created remain obscured (Hudson & Hudson, 2003, p. 413). Commodity fetishes are masks that hide a complex political economy of labour, value and exchange.

The initiatives discussed in this volume can be read as a direct expression of a widespread desire in the West to unwrap commodity fetishes, particularly those that play a central role in our everyday lives such as food items and clothing. Fair trade tries to reveal who grows our coffee and under what conditions, corporate social initiatives aim to protect labour rights and improve working conditions, and NGOs such as "Labour Behind the Label" try to strip commodities from their mystical power and to re-appreciate the productive labour that goes into their creation (Hudson & Hudson, 2003; Luetchford, 2007; Lyon, 2006). These initiatives are the expression of a desire to de-fetishise commodities, to re-think how they are manufactured and traded, and to shift attention onto the workers and resources that produce them. The wish to de-fetishise is a wish to demystify what the market tries hard to keep hidden. Hudson and Hudson comment that there are two sides to this process: one refers to an attempt to make the social and environmental conditions of production visible to the consumer, while the other refers to a changing view of the commodity, in which the latter is not merely judged in terms of the product's final characteristics but also in terms of the production processes through which it is created (2003, p. 421).

This wish to de-fetishise is now widely acknowledged as a driver of much alternative trade. Writers on organic food and fair trade movements, for example, have emphasised that such movements raise "important challenges to conventional capitalist market practices that make invisible and devalue the natural and human resources that go into producing the foods we eat. These initiatives make us more aware of the true ecological and social costs of our consumption practices…" (Raynolds, 2006, p. 59).

Interestingly, the language of commodity fetishism is no longer the exclusive prerogative of social scientists; it has widely spread among activists and consumers. A high-ranking officer of Transfair USA commented in an interview to Nicholls and Opal:

> …I think that a lot of people really are coming to understand the interrelated nature of the globe …. It's hard anymore to neglect what Marx in the 1840s or 1850s called "commodity fetishism": the notion that a commodity is not simply an apple that exists in a vacuum in space and magically appears in your grocery store, but that an apple is, in fact, the product of a series of relations of production from the tree to your store. (Nicholls & Opal, 2004, p. 57)

But where does one begin to de-fetishise global commodities? Several papers in this volume suggest that such a project of de-mystification might well be more complex and ambivalent than appears at first. Questions need to be asked about where this urge to unmask the commodity comes from, and whether any project that seeks to de-fetishise commodities inevitably leads to the creation of new fetishes, wrapped in fair trade, organic or öko labels. What does the consumer seek to do when stripping a commodity to its bones and what is really achieved by activist or corporate initiatives that try to reveal the human relationships behind the goods we consume? While fair trade organisations seek to reconnect people and to make visible the hardships of producers in the South, Peter Luetchford (this volume) shows how a fair trade marketing focus on smallholding producers eschews a fuller engagement with the social relations of coffee production. In Costa Rica, coffee production involves not only family producers but also landless labourers, many of whom are women and migrant workers from across the border in Nicaragua. A marketing focus on smallholders and farmers may well produce new fetishes that hide a more complex reality of rural production relations and harvest workers' vulnerabilities. In similar ways, Amanda Berlan (this volume) illustrates how fair trade marketing and promotional materials, which portray African cocoa farmers as the helpless and needy recipients of fair trade interventions, end up stripping farmers of their social and historical agency. Representations of passive and needy individuals relate poorly to the reality on the ground, in which Ghanaian cocoa farmers' strategies are marked by determination, ingenuity and farsightedness. Berlan rightly questions whether fair trade advertisements tell us anything novel about the lives of Ghanaian farmers, or whether we are merely presented with new fetishes – of helpless farmers at the mercy of the Western consumer – that disguise enterprising and conscious economic actors.

Or, as suggested in Carrier's contribution, promotional materials for ecotourism, which seek to reveal the protective and ethical nature of ecotourism, end up fetishising natural environments by ''removing them and the creatures that live in them from the social and natural contexts in which they exist'' (Carrier, this volume). Tourists are left with images and (visual) narratives of untouched coral reefs and underwater scenes that obscure as much as they reveal about the social and economic processes behind tourism. This builds on Lyon's point that the release of information about production processes often ends up doing little more than reifying categories of difference ''between the consuming self and the producing other'' (2006, p. 458). Indeed, here we suggest not only that alternative trade practices create new commodity fetishes, but also that new representations keep hiding a great deal about the complexity of productive relationships, the structural inequalities between producers and consumers, and the suitability of individual consumption practices to remedy such ills (Hudson & Hudson, 2003). More generally, such questions remind us that we still know very little about how Western consumers perceive the imagery of ethical advertisements, what exactly consumers try to achieve when buying a fair trade product, and the extent to which such fetishes are key to securing niche markets and attracting business.[2]

In the opposite direction, an ethnographic focus on ethical trade initiatives allows us to rethink some anthropological perspectives on commodity exchange. For Mauss, for example, commodity exchange is the ultimate expression of the separation of people and things in modern societies (Mauss, 2002; see also Carrier, 1995; Graeber, 2001). Current fair trade, CSR and ethical consumption initiatives, however, disclose a different view of commodity exchange: one in which commodities are *not* thought of as morally neutral or separable from the people who produce them. Rather, such initiatives express a view in which the commodity remains activated by the identity and experiences of those who produce it. This "spirit" of the modern commodity – be it a T-shirt or a packet of beans – is recognised in the physical or bodily exploitation, abuse or pollution that went into its production. The commodity spirit that stirs the imagination of the consumer is quite literally the "blood and sweat" of the people who made the product. The media is one site where these feelings are frequently and evocatively revealed. A recent UK newspaper article illustrates this well. In October 2007, *The Observer* reported of children in Delhi embroidering clothes for Gap in abysmal employment conditions. In reply to the findings, a Gap spokesman was reported to have confirmed that they would immediately "withdraw tens of thousands of items from the market" and "prevent the product from ever being sold in our stores" (McDougall, 2007, p. 37). The crucial point here is that a major corporation like Gap clearly cannot afford to sell a commodity made with child labour on the Western market – in this case embroidered toddler garments. The reason for this can only be understood in terms of the spirit of the commodity: it is widely believed that the "sweat" of child labour, and with it the guilt of exploitation, stains the garment and would be transferred onto the person buying it. The article concluded by urging shoppers in the West to ask themselves: "Is this top stained with a child's sweat?" (*ibid.*) Such a question indicates not only that the commodity is a sign value for a morality and a relationship that has to be restored, but also that immorality can be contained and transferred in the physical "stains" of unacceptable labour conditions. The consumer is directly affected, both morally and physically. Why, otherwise, would these garments have to be removed from our shops?

THE ECONOMY UNBOUND: PROBLEMS OF BOUNDEDNESS AND AUTARKY

This leads us to our second alternative perspective on the economy. While the notion of embeddedness concerns social relations between categories of people (namely producers, middlemen and consumers), the notion of the bounded economy refers to the spatial location of the activities of production and consumption. The moral purpose of the market is to mediate between production and consumption as domains that are usually distinct and spatially separated. But an alternative perspective precisely seeks to collapse this spatial separation, or at least to shorten the distance between production and consumption. Hence, the idea of the open, unfettered market is countered by an alternative notion of the economy as a bounded place within which specific relationships are nurtured and economic activities take place. If we have to have markets, so one argument goes, the ideal form would be local ones, from which outsiders are excluded, or discouraged from participating, through the application of taxes or levies. In this way, exchanges can be ''bound'' to localities and involve known parties who operate within a defined social space. This is the form markets took prior to the eighteenth century (Carrier, 1995, pp. 63–68).

The extreme form of the bounded economy is one in which the producer and the consumer are the same person or people. Marx recognised this ideal type in his description of Robinson Crusoe: by producing everything he needs to satisfy his wants the islander created his own bounded economy, and so ensured his autonomy. In this version the ideal becomes not so much a restricted local or regional market, tied to ''place,'' but economies that are autarkic and based on a different economic rationale than exchange. When welded to the principle of social relations discussed above, the ''prototype'' of an autonomous economy is the peasant household. Its purpose, in its ideal form, is to reproduce the family as a production–consumption unit, maintain livelihoods rather than seek profit, and avoid market exchange by producing for consumption and practicing thrift.

The origin of this alternative ethical vision is usually traced back to Aristotle and *The Politics* (1962). The Aristotelian tradition insists that the proper purpose of the economy is to create self-sufficient households, and to produce only enough to provision members and allow the household head to indulge in leisure activities and engage in civic duties and politics. Despite obvious inequalities in the model – the Greek household accepted and relied upon slavery – a scheme based on an ideal of autonomous reproduction rather than limitless expansion and market dependence proffers an alternative moral architecture to trade and profit seeking (Booth, 1993). Some early Greek thinkers were drawn to the creation of wealth through exchange, but Aristotle preferred and proposed a science of household management (Collier, 2001).[3] Aristotle's ethical scheme insisted that the household should subsist from nature or from direct exchange with other households when unable to produce items required for consumption. Conversely, to engage in exchange in order to seek profit was deemed morally wrong.

This alternative economic legacy underpins fair trade and local food movements, making them particularly popular among consumers. Forms of self-provisioning appeal because they re-connect the activities of production and consumption. Two things ensue. Firstly, the moral purpose of such bounded activity is to sustain livelihoods and reproduce specific social forms. Secondly, economic boundedness and autonomy ensure that the value created in productive activity is contained and used within specific boundaries. This can work at different ''scales'': from individual foraging (e.g., ''wild food''), through self-provisioning (e.g., the British allotment system), to local and regional markets (e.g., local food networks), up to nations wishing to ensure ''food sovereignty,'' the term used by the *Via Campesina* movement (Desmarais, 2007). In Marxist parlance one might say that by linking production to consumption within an autonomous and bounded social space more of the use value of a product remains with the producer or production unit, be that defined as the individual, the family, or the nation. The result is an economy imagined and mythologised as a contained social relation.

While the relationship between producer and consumer can easily be imagined as close and the commodity presented as authentic, as in the case of ethnic art, ethnographies of global commodity markets reveal that such imaginings frequently contrast with the reality of commodity production, in which consumers are often removed from producers through powerful and deceptive market mechanisms. Esperanza (this volume), for example, describes how commercial handicrafts – such as native American dream-catchers and African drums – that are thought of by Western consumers as ''authentic,'' or handmade by the indigenous people from whom they originate, are in fact produced by Balinese craftsmen in Indonesia. The point made by Esperanza is that these handicrafts are produced on a large scale by people who have little of no cultural connection to the original aesthetic forms. The consumer is ultimately removed from the producer by powerful middlemen who control both the commodity chain and the authenticity of cultural aesthetics. Such middlemen, Esperanza explains, play a crucial – yet often hidden – role in the production of commodities and economic value, while at the same time generating and transforming aesthetic value by determining what can pass as ''authentic'' and thus desirable and valuable.

Jeff Pratt's article develops this theme. He suggests that the concept of authenticity is invoked in labels and connoisseurship as a way of connecting the attributes of a consumption item back to the circumstances of its production. It is also a concept thoroughly embedded in a romantic discourse of tradition and cultural specificity, one which is established in opposition to "mass" production and market value. However, the relationship between the two economic sectors is complex and intertwined, since the process of authenticating, controlling and regulating such goods very often turns their qualities into market value.

Yet, in contrast to the above examples, consumers and producers can be the same people, especially at the sites of production in the non-Western world. In her contribution entitled "Looping the Value Chain," Prentice describes how women garment workers in a Trinidadian factory have become consumers of the factory's products by making their own copies of the company's brand-name garments. Using factory machines and factory time, women workers "thief a chance" covertly to assemble clothes for their own consumption. Rather than being separated from the commodities they produce, women workers imbue the company's garments (and their self-made copies) with their own values about aesthetics, status, and morality. Workers' narratives about copying garments, Prentice argues, also provide a site of reflection about the value of their labour and about their rights vis-à-vis employers. Closely intertwined spheres of consumption and production allow these Trinidadian working-class women to construct not only use value, but also symbolic values about self and society.

CONTESTING VALUE: JUST PRICES AND EXCHANGE

The politics of the "bounded" economy thus introduces our third theme – contestations over how value is created and distributed. In the Market model the just price is settled by the natural law of the market and established in the relation between supply and demand. The mechanism of the invisible hand settles the matter of the value of goods, by price measured in money. The impulse to "truck, barter, and exchange," and the desire to accumulate ensure that the economy expands. Putting exchange at the centre of the economy sets up the pre-condition for exchange as the basis of all value in the economy.

By contrast, ethical trade initiatives seek to transform the dominant model of market exchange by introducing "ethical" practices that make trade relations fairer and the price paid to producers more just. CSR discourse, on the other hand, tends to eschew notions of "fairness" or "social justice," emphasising instead that CSR initiatives produce a humane capitalism, firmly located within the orthodox logics of the Market

(Rajak, this volume). Taken together, however, such responses emerge from a wider recognition within society that:

(a) In many circumstances global markets are creating insecurity and immiseration, not prosperity.
(b) A single-minded search for "value-for-money" by consumers may create misery for producers.
(c) The returns to labour, or wages, of southern producers may bear little relation to their material needs, partly because only a fraction of the price northern consumers pay for their goods end up in the hands of the producers.
(d) Global markets may lead to the destruction of small producers, who are simply trying to earn a livelihood, to the benefit of corporations who seek to maximise profits.

At the heart of these concerns lies a broader set of political questions about how and where "value" is created, what the role is of market intermediaries and how a fair price can be reached. Whereas Polanyi focuses on the idea drawn from classical political economy that value is fixed by the relation between supply and demand, measured in money, Marx returns to a labour theory of value. One important consequence of such a labour-based theory of value is that it allows one to critique intermediaries. If value is created in the act of production rather than exchange, then the activities of intermediaries, who effectively make a living off other people's labour, become potentially illicit and morally dubious. In practice, however, debates about the rights and wrongs of exchange have focused not so much on the demand that the total value is returned to labour, but instead on the fixing of a fair price. In the medieval period, for example, a moral code demanded a "just price" (Dilley, 1992; Gudeman & Rivera, 1990; Parry, 1989). Against the possibility of extracting ever more profit from production, stands the demand for fair prices to ensure social ends, such as reproduction or livelihoods. Arguments about what constitutes a fair price resonate with ideas within fair trade, not only about the exploitation of labour, but also about how a just price might be arrived at (Jaffee, 2007). Whereas the tendency has been for prices to be set in the north for the benefit of southern producers – and in the case of coffee to remain unchanged since the 1980s – this type of moral economy insists that a fair price is agreed according to local conditions and demands, and if necessary is enforced by the crowd or fought for by rebellious peasantries (Scott, 1976; Thompson, 1991).

Paying a fair price is one of several ways in which northern consumers believe themselves to be able to improve the lives of producers in the south. The acts of consumers, such as shopping for cheap clothes, selecting fair trade items, or campaigning for responsible corporate behaviour, are believed to affect commodity producers in a direct manner. Put differently, buying cheap imported beans is increasingly perceived as exploiting African farm labourers, and buying non-fair trade coffee as undermining the livelihood of Costa Rican coffee growers (see Berlan, Carrier, and Luetchford, this volume). However, it is precisely in this sphere of commodity exchange that we also find the strongest beliefs in the transformative capacity of consumer behaviour. CSR, fair trade, and ecotourism are driven by a conviction that the market offers opportunities for alternative engagements with commodities and that it has the capacity to transform existing relationships of inequality (Barrientos & Dolan, 2006; Nicholls & Opal, 2004).

Here we find a major paradox of fair trade: on the one hand it presents itself as a critique of mainstream trade relationships and as an attempt to re-engineer relationships between consumers and producers, while on the other hand it works through, and is located well inside, mainstream capitalist trade relationships (Jaffee, 2007; Nicholls & Opal, 2004). Nicholls and Opal, for example, firmly state that "Fair Trade is a development tool that uses existing capitalist supply chains to return more income to producers. It does this through improving free-market mechanisms as well as through non-market measures such as price floors" (2004, p. 32). Transformation can be engineered in and through the market. More recently, however, this has led to a debate about the ability of fair trade initiatives to retain their transformative capacities and ethical edge as they enter the mainstream (Tallontire, 2006).

In this volume, we seek to address a series of questions not only about the nature of the commodity itself, but also about the capacity of markets and prices to act as conveyors of values – economic, moral, social, and other – and as mediums for transformative political projects (see Dolan, Carrier, this volume). That the values conveyed through markets are not merely economic is revealed in Dombos' discussion (this volume) of emergent ethical consumption practices in Hungary. Recently emerging fair trade and organic movements in Hungary, Dombos argues, are an expression of a desire to become Western, or "modern," as much as they are about the protection of the environment or returning money to producers. In Budapest, Dombos shows, the fair trade and organic commodity has come to represent another world – the "modern" West – and a particular set of values and practices associated with that world, such as consumer consciousness, civic activism and ethically guided economic behaviour. Here, the values materialised through ethical consumption relate less to the *qualities* of the commodity itself than to the *origins* of the commodity, and the world of *modernity* that it represents for the post-socialist Hungarian consumer. Hence, the ''value'' materialised (or longed for) by alternative commodities and markets can only be fully grasped from within culturally located contexts of meaning making.

REGULATION, DEREGULATION, AND GOVERNANCE

The final theme addressed in this volume is deregulation and regulation. At the level of popular political discourse there has emerged a wide consensus that the market should be unfettered and unchained from any non-economic purposes and restrictions. Market competition is presented as the best way to maximise material prosperity, and any restrictions on this, such as collective ownership or allocation systems (based on state action and ''bureaucracy'') are harmful to growth and well-being. The market maximises prosperity through competition, and this cannot be achieved if it is restricted or encumbered by moral or political purposes. Versions of this discursive construct of the Market are widely consolidated at the level of commonsense, and have as their counterpart the conviction that the highest value is the individual and their freedom to choose. If, in Margaret Thatcher's famous phrase, ''there is no such thing as society,'' then there is no collective subject of economic or political policy, and no social goals (of solidarity, etc.) beyond those achieved by the Market.

Alternative perspectives, by contrast, focus on regulation as a way to re-establish relationships and pursue social purposes in the economy. Here the work of Karl Polanyi is informative. *The Great Transformation* (1944) documents the rise of the self-regulating market in England during the transition to industrial society. While local markets were framed by moral and social considerations up until the dawn of the industrial era, long-distance trade was – and remained – impersonal, and it was this model that *laissez-faire* drew upon. Efforts to dis-embed the developing national economy from society could, however, only be partially implemented and caused immiseration in the process. Polanyi argued that because land is only another name for nature, labour a synonym for human activity, and money a token of purchasing power rather than a product created for sale, they will always remain "fictitious" commodities that can never be fully subject to the laws of the market ([1944] 2001, pp. 75–76). As a result these elements of the economy are always hedged by social and moral considerations, and subject to government control and legislation.

To document how the economy had been and might be regulated, Polanyi turned to a range of movements. Most of these were politically motivated attempts to direct the economy towards social ends, such as cooperatives and friendly societies, exemplified by the work of early socialists, particularly Robert Owen. Other evidence for regulation comes from a time before the ideology of the self-regulating market was hegemonic. As James Carrier (1995) has pointed out, prior to the eighteenth century rules regulated markets in a number of ways. For example, monopolising practices, such as the buying of bulk stock to control supply was forbidden and regulations sought to ensure that market sales were fair and transparent rather than free; officials controlled weights and measures, quality, and the price of goods.

The idea that regulations are required to control the market is also central to fair trade and CSR initiatives. In the former case, the concern is that a free market drives down prices to levels that threaten the livelihoods of marginal producers. It is no accident that fair trade coffee took off in the aftermath of the collapse of the International Coffee Agreement in 1989, an alliance of producer countries established to regulate coffee supplies and hence prices. The rise of the fair trade movement in the 1990s was a conscious attempt by NGOs and activists to re-regulate a market threatened by deregulation. Likewise, CSR can be read as a response by industry to consumer demands to regulate the social conditions and environmental consequences of production, and thus as an attempt by corporations to underscore that a "humane capitalism" is possible. But regulation is not purely a "global" concern. Indeed, Markowitz (this volume) documents parallels between a local initiative to provide good food to low-income households living in a "food desert" (Kentucky) and the transnational fair trade movement; both seek to regulate prices, terms of exchange, effects on the environment, and to ensure transparency about these processes. These forms of regulation, exercised by and through fair trade and CSR, are generally represented as benign, since they are designed to counteract inequalities and environmentally destructive practices.

But global exchange is obviously also regulated in a different way, that is, by the powerful interests of northern corporations, retailers and brand names, and by the inequalities that the latter impose on transnational economic exchanges. This form of (invisible) regulation has been addressed in the global commodity chain (GCC) literature under the term "governance." Given that CSR and fair trade analyses have used this GCC framework as a way to understand the changing forms of global connectedness, we briefly turn to a critical discussion of the ways in which GCC analyses address the power inequalities that shape and regulate global exchange.

The GCC framework has been particularly fruitful for the analysis of chains of firms connected through outsourcing and subcontracting, and for discussions about inter-firm linkages, the upgrading of smaller firms, and the spread of "global gains and losses" (Dolan & Tewari, 2001; Gereffi, Humphrey, Kaplinsky, & Sturgeon, 2001; Kaplinsky, 2000). But these, as the list goes, are largely questions of structure rather than agency, and of economics rather than power and politics. However, attempts have been made to develop conceptual tools that address issues such as power inequalities between producers and traders or gender injustices in global outsourcing networks. To this aim, GCC analysts introduced the concept of "governance" in order "to express that some firms in the chain set and/or enforce the parameters under which others in the chain operate" (Humphrey & Schmitz, 2001, p. 20). However, it remained rather unclear how this concept was to be operationalised in particular case studies. The concept by and large referred to types of "chain governance," or to the question of who controls what in a global supply chain (Gereffi, Humphrey, & Sturgeon, 2005; Humphrey & Schmitz, 2001).

Unfortunately, discussions of governance ended up explaining power asymmetries largely in economic terms, that is, as matters of technological transfers, transaction costs, and access to skills and markets, without questioning the concept of power itself, and how it is variably generated across different social, political, and institutional contexts (Gereffi et al., 2005). Anthropologists and geographers have recently begun to unpack this concept of governance, and explore relations of power. Adrian Smith, in a discussion of Slovak clothing industry clusters, urges us not to assume a priori that Western supermarkets or retailers simply have "power over" other firms, but to consider "power as constructed through networks of relations involved in the production of commodities, which opens the possibility of fluidity and change…" (Smith, 2003, p. 22). What Smith's discussion reminds us of is that power is contextual and relational, changes over time, and rarely goes uncontested (*ibid.*, pp. 24–29).

In an attempt to refine and reconceptualise "governance" in the study of global chains, Anne Tallontire (2007) as well as Gibbon and Ponte (2005) have begun to shift the focus away from structural relations towards the actors, processes, norms and values shaping power and politics within chains.

One example of such processes is the private standard initiatives – such as company codes of conduct and voluntary labour standards – that have emerged as new forms of regulation within supply chains. Attempts have been made to understand the impact of such initiatives on inequalities within production chains, and questions have been asked about the ability of corporate ethical initiatives to address workers' rights. Barrientos and Smith's study of the UK Ethical Trading Initiative, for example, concludes that "corporate codes have a role to play in improving labour standards, but are currently doing little to challenge existing commercial practices or embedded social relations that underpin poor labour standards" (Barrientos & Smith, 2007, p. 713). To date there is little evidence that codes can shift the balance of power between northern retailers and southern suppliers, or indeed empower workers vis-à-vis their employers. Similarly, research informed by feminist economics has examined the gender sensitivity of corporate codes, asking whether codes and standards are sufficiently sensitive to the needs of women workers, often over-represented in temporary and informal sector jobs (Barrientos, Dolan, & Tallontire, 2003; Prieto-Carrón, 2006; Smith & Dolan, 2006). Pearson reminds us that labour markets are themselves gendered institutions, and that to be effective CSR policies need to incorporate the wider gendered contexts of women's working lives (2007). However, findings from both African horticulture and Nicaraguan banana production suggest that the gender sensitivity of corporate ethical interventions remains wanting, and that few codes are capable of addressing the needs of women and marginalised workers in any substantive manner (Prieto-Carrón, 2006; Smith & Dolan, 2006; De Neve, this volume).

So far, two solutions, both closely connected, have been put forward. One is that the auditing processes of labour practices need to be made more participatory. It is suggested that if auditing procedures involve workers and their organisations in the implementation and monitoring of labour standards, there is a better chance that employers' "mindsets" change, that workers' awareness of their rights increases and that improved labour conditions reach all groups of workers, including women and migrants (Auret & Barrientos, 2006). A second solution, we are told, lies in the development of multi-stakeholder initiatives, in which industry, trade unions, NGOs and government representatives are brought together to facilitate participatory auditing, promote dialogue, and circulate knowledge (Auret & Barrientos, 2006; Dolan & Opondo, 2005). Although such solutions may sound promising, they are in many ways problematic. Auret and Barrientos acknowledge themselves that participatory processes are likely to be affected by "the relative power of different groups and the economic resources available to employers relative to trade unions and NGOs" (2006, p. 145), while Dolan and Opondo write that a multi-stakeholder model "assumes that stakeholders are situated on a level playing field and that power asymmetries diminish within multi-stakeholder bodies" (2005, p. 97). Several authors claim that developing successful stakeholder collaboration is merely a matter of time or a matter of devising more effective tools of mediation.

In this volume, however, we propose a different perspective on GCCs, and the CSR and fair trade initiatives that engulf them. Rather than to assume that power is distributed in a once and for all manner, our perspective seeks to unpack the ways in which power and control are generated through the very standards, regulatory schemes and auditing procedures that are put in place. We suggest that it is worth rethinking regulatory schemes and their audits as technologies of governance (and regulation) that reveal and shape the economic leverage of those who design and impose them. We know from studies of activities as diverse as organic farming and University teaching, that auditing as an assessment activity transforms the very activity it assesses (Shore & Wright, 2000). We also know that audit processes create extremely fine-tuned systems of micro and macro management. This is not always apparent because audit practices are articulated within a language of universal values and objective criteria. What is monitored is a particular production site (an Indian factory or a Zambian farm), set in a particular cultural world, with its own patterns of economic compulsions and dependencies. What emerges is a report stating that ethical standards have been met, dis-embedded from the social and cultural contexts in which they are located. The certificate allows the movement of goods through ethical zones of the global economy, but is as universal, seamless, and as essential to trade, as money itself. Labels and certificates, as standardised markers of value, thus risk dis-embedding human relationships in ways similar to money. And, as "money value" hides other values, so do labels efface all values that are not assessed by the fixed and standardised criteria of auditors. Several of the contributions unpack the universalism and neutrality of this process, explore who sets the ethical standards, and reflect on how they are naturalised as new systems of governance. We suggest that ethical standards increasingly act as new tools of governance over production chains and that they represent a novel form of "control at a distance" (Tallontire, 2007, p. 787). They also act as one of the latest paradigms of development, in which the language of partnerships and stakeholder initiatives has come to replace that of charity and philanthropy (Rajak, 2007, this volume; Stirrat & Henkel, 1997).

In a critical analysis of the fair trade cut flower, traded within the Kenyan European horticulture commodity chain, Dolan reflects on the ways in which fair trade labelling and auditing act both as a signifier of ethical value and moral responsibility, and as "a metonym for risk management, deploying new regimes of control and accountability to ferret out the ambiguities and potential dangers that inhabit commodity chains" (Dolan, this volume). Paradoxically, while consumers support fair trade because of "its approach of 'trade not aid,' which tackles poverty through *dialogue*, *partnership*, and *equal exchange*," Dolan found that Kenyan producers conceptualise the same exchange as one of charity, suggesting highly unequal and hierarchical patron–client relationships. The ethical standards that underpin fair trade are particularly powerful and appealing because they are cast in neutral, universal and rational idioms impervious to cultural context. In reality, Dolan argues, such standards are potentially highly deceptive, not only because they convey a very specific morality (that of the Northern consumer) presented as natural and universal, but also because they form a particularly coercive mode of governance, shaped by the normalising and abstracting power of the social audit.

Rajak (this volume) similarly discusses how current CSR initiatives in South African mining shy away from a language of charity and instead frame corporate ethical behaviour within the rational paradigm of "social investment" and "empowerment through the market." Front-line CSR initiatives on the South African mining belt, however, reveal a different reality – one of financial dependency, conditionality and patronage – counterbalanced by recipients' gratefulness and veiled by the familiar partnership paradigm. Rajak makes the incisive point that companies' continuous insistence on "empowerment" and "partnerships" with local communities is experienced on the ground as a powerful extension of corporate control. In the process, an ideal-type citizen is fashioned, one who is able to respond to the entrepreneurial demands of the market and hence to use the market to "uplift" themselves out of poverty. Paradoxically, market capitalism itself emerges as the celebrated vehicle for economic empowerment, social upliftment, and, ultimately, legitimate citizenship. In both Dolan and Rajak's case studies, CSR narratives emerge as an extension and authentication of hegemonic market ideology and corporate power – rather than as a critique of mainstream market exchange – which seriously challenges popular representations of CSR and fair trade as genuinely alternative market practices. Paradoxically, it appears that the market ends up being regulated by the market itself!

Finally, like the advancement of partnerships and empowerment, the language of "stakeholder development" is another channel through which CSR and fair trade initiatives seek to establish more participatory approaches to local interventions (Auret & Barrientos, 2006; Eade, 2004; Wills & Hale, 2005). Whether they take the form of bringing producers together in cooperatives or uniting NGOs, unions and employees around corporate code implementation, "facilitating" and "building" stakeholder collaboration is widely promoted as a way of enhancing local participation and empowerment (Nicholls & Opal, 2004). We suggest, however, that a critical look at such stakeholder development initiatives is needed for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is not clear why highly differentiated interest groups or socio-economic classes should suddenly be thought of as stakeholders, or assumed to have similar stakes in the process at hand. We have known for a long time that labour and capital tend to have not only different but radically conflicting interests in the capitalist production mode, and it would need a great deal of effort to convince either of them that their stakes are in fact shared. Secondly, the assumption that bringing stakeholders together would solve power inequalities seems rather unsupported by most of the evidence currently available. Nor can it be presumed that merely calling stakeholders to a joint meeting will shift their opinions of each other, or alter their attitudes in such a way that new forms of solidarity or collaboration would result. Furthermore, the claim that stakeholder initiatives will enhance producers and workers' awareness of their rights reflects a more general, patronising attitude that conceives of workers and producers as too "unaware" or too "powerless" to fight for these rights without the external intervention of a moral agent such as the fair trade activist or CSR officer. This ethical high ground renders "the moral claims exercised by fair trade redolent of colonial beneficence" (Dolan, this volume).

De Neve's study (this volume) challenges the claim that the rights of workers in the global economy are best protected through stakeholder initiatives that seek to unite trade unions, NGOs and employers. De Neve found extremely weak and ultimately collapsing linkages between local trade unions and international activists in a south Indian garment cluster. His case study reveals some of the reasons why such initiatives often fail from their inception. One is that trade union movements are themselves frequently internally fragmented, politically coloured and uninterested in (or, in the best case, incapable of) representing marginal workers, such as women and migrants. Other reasons relate to the deep-seated antagonistic stance of both trade unions and employers towards NGOs, and the immense power imbalances between industrial capital (exporters, manufacturers, and employers) and labour (including unions and NGOs) found in many parts of the developing world. De Neve suggests that what is needed is a better understanding of the political economy of production at the sites of struggle, an insight into frontline stakeholder politics that shape the interaction between different interest groups, and a fuller recognition of widespread pro-liberalisation policies that discard any criticism of the neo-liberal order (not just in India but also elsewhere).

It is from a similar set of concerns that Lawrence (this volume) unpacks the various forms of engagement between global investment banks, NGOs, and institutional clients involved in commodity industries with controversial social and environmental impacts. Whereas in this sector high-profile NGO campaigns have had a considerable impact on the way in which banks are managing environmental and social risks, Lawrence found that the banks' engagement is also "constituted by practices of secrecy: banks claim client-confidentiality limits their ability to be fully transparent, and NGOs…campaign to make public and reveal the link between banks and clients in commodity industries." Rather than resulting in open dialogue and enhanced mutual understanding between stakeholders, Lawrence shows how secrecy and "deliberate not-knowing" constitute a means through which banks keep NGO demands for transparency at arms' length. At the same time, banks purport to do *something* by passing potential social and environmental impacts through standardised Environmental and Social Risk Management systems. Such systems, however, tend to reduce these impacts to a matter of technical risk assessment, mirroring the effects of the social audit abstraction discussed above.

Hence, several of the abovementioned contributions seriously interrogate the extent to which audit and stakeholder initiatives generate real improvement, conciliation and on-the-ground transformation. It appears from our varied conclusions that such initiatives may well facilitate powerful corporations' claims to ethical legitimacy – by foregrounding their public engagement with audit procedures and stakeholder dialogues – while at the same time allowing them to translate complex social and environmental questions into issues of rational risk assessment and standardised auditing procedures. It remains to be seen whether such techniques will ultimately mitigate corporate sway or deepen its uncurbed effects on the world's poorest producers and labourers.

CONCLUSION: HIDDEN HANDS IN THE MARKET

Alternative trade organisations, fair trade movements, and CSR interventions are in varying ways informed by these overlapping moral perspectives.

Fair trade movements aim to contest the Market and to replace (or at least reformulate) existing production and exchange relationships, while CSR is keen to promote (and enhance) the "human face" of capitalism as it exists today. Such alternative practices are necessarily entangled with mainstream trade relations, and often find it hard to position themselves in relation to the Market, thus raising important questions about the sorts of values and politics that remain possible under market hegemony. In this volume, we consider emerging initiatives that admit "working in and through" the market, while at the same time seeking to imbue the market with new values and a new ethic. But do we know what such ethical initiatives aim to achieve beyond the slogan of, for example, "Guaranteeing a better deal for Third World producers"? How do they mobilise the alternative ethical perspectives outlined above? And how can an ethnographic approach to ethical initiatives shed new light on the morality and politics of global commodity exchange today?

Firstly, we are faced with a complex scenario in which the processes of deregulation and dis-embedding meet moral and political objections and initiatives. Most of these initiatives aim to transform the situation through some form of ethical consumption. In the sphere of circulation, they bring in discourses and practices around what constitutes "fair trade," or the just price. In the sphere of production, they establish measures designed to regulate work conditions, eliminate child labour, or ensure that some profits are ploughed back into social development programmes. In this part of the economy the unfettered market is mediated by preferences that qualify (and sometimes over-ride) choices made on the basis of price and by objectives that combine with profits.

The result is a complex scenario for consumers, NGOs and corporations. In many circumstances consumers continue to prioritise value-for-money, and do so without much knowledge or reflection on the various production factors that make low prices possible. Alongside that, some consumers, some of the time, wish to know about the conditions of production, and are prepared to pay a price premium on moral or political grounds. They do so by buying a range of "ethical" products, a choice that becomes possible because various NGOs and social movements have created a system of regulation and labelling that make products "ethical." NGOs in turn have to position themselves in relation to mainstream economic activity. Do they try to create distinct niche commodity chains based on small producers and more direct marketing, or encourage the growth of the ethical sector by opening up to major manufacturers, processors and supermarkets? Finally, corporations, driven to reduce costs by outsourcing and subcontracting across the globe, nevertheless have an incentive to engage in ethical, longer-term practices where they do hit the ground. How these realities, and these values, combine and contradict each other is one of the themes addressed in this volume.

Secondly, among northern consumers such ethical commitments, generally speaking, are shaped not by direct experience of conditions in the south, but by a series of mediated representations of the operations of global capital and of those who are exploited by it. The kind of feedback loop that ethnography can provide is often missing from such representations. In other words, they are often "local" conversations within the north about economics, morality, responsibility, and the self, which then construct particular images of those who will be the beneficiaries of their actions. One common result is an imaginary of the small peasant or producer living in a traditional or Arcadian world, whose skill and labour brings food or clothing straight to our door, effacing all the realities of stratified production systems and lengthy marketing chains.

A third general point follows on from the issue of agency, and who exercises it. Discourses of the Market are structured around constructions of the individual and freedom: there should be no restrictions on people being able to compete in the field of production, or consumers' ability to choose. But what happens when ethical principles are introduced? The intention is to create new kinds of "fairer" exchange relationships that will empower producers and lead to greater social justice. These aims are often combined with arguments about responsibility and what is to be done to remedy the inequalities – or the extreme volatility – of the unfettered market. So at one level the ethical, concerned consumer, or corporation is acting to rectify some of the material inequalities and power relations which globalisation has produced. Ethical action is a move to restore some kind of balance, or reciprocity: that which normatively should exist. Yet throughout these representations of fair trade and CSR there surfaces the language of charity and philanthropy. The premium paid by the consumer becomes a gift to the producer. The normative balance, or the absence of exploitation which should exist, only comes about through consumer intervention or generosity: "they" are the beneficiaries of "our" actions.

We then perceive that underlying these representations of ethical consumption are particular "local models" of structure and agency. The unfettered market, whose injustices are the object of ethical action, is conceptualised not as the result of a historical process, with complex social actors, but as a structural given, impersonal and often invisible in its workings. Agency is found only within the various movements, which create a domain of ethical choices and personal responsibility. There are thus tensions within these movements, and in the analyses of them, in the articles that follow. Some are critical of the tendency to portray "passive" southern producers who are beneficiaries of northern generosity. Others, while supportive of the ambitions and achievements of ethical trade initiatives, have reservations about the political priorities, and the silence about the processes that have made those initiatives necessary. One of the strengths of the articles that follow is their exploration of fields of power, operating at many levels, within the market and within the movements advocating more ethical economic relationships.

NOTES

1. Having no absolute point of origin, and with no meta-historical narrative at work, it is perhaps more useful to think of opposition to the market ethic like Nietzsche's (and Foucault's) concept of genealogy: "the isolation of different points of emergence does not conform to the successive configuration of an identical meaning; rather, they result from substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests and systematic reversals" (Foucault, 1977, p. 151)
2. For a revealing discussion of Fair Trade participation strategies of large coffee brands (see Jaffee, 2007).
3. These two economic rationales were recognised in early Greek thought. The science of money making was known as *chrematistics*, but the dominant meaning of economy was that of household management (*oikonomia*), from which the discipline of economics famously, and somewhat ironically, takes its name.

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THINK LOCALLY, ACT GLOBALLY: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ETHICAL CONSUMPTION

James G. Carrier

ABSTRACT

Ethical consumption exemplifies thinking locally and acting globally, and the political economy in which it exists makes its ethics problematic. This chapter uses ecotourism to illustrate two aspects of thinking locally in ethical consumption. One is the local institutions and practices that this form of consumption reflects, embodied in the Western commercial capitalism that provides what Westerners consume ethically. Ethical consumption extends the reach of that local capital and its logic. The second is the local understandings and values it reflects, embodied in the desires of ethical consumers and met by commodity producers and the institutions that influence them. Ethical consumption does not, however, only impose local institutions and values globally; but it also shapes local consumers, by portraying individual market choice as an appropriate vehicle for bringing about an ethical world, thereby diverting attention from other sorts of ethical action.

What I present here is a polemic, intended to set out issues and ideas about ethical consumption. In that form of consumption people base their purchasing

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decisions on their moral evaluation of objects[1] for sale, of the ways that they are produced and distributed and of the companies that offer them. The issues and ideas that concern me spring from what I know of consumption, economy and political economy, and of one sort of ethical consumption, socially- and environmentally-sensitive tourism, commonly called ecotourism. To say that this is a polemic means that my focus is on those ideas and issues, and that I invoke ecotourism to illustrate the points I make, not to prove them. My purpose is to challenge one particular aspect of ethical consumption.

Ethical consumption can be viewed as a private or public matter, though the two may not be as clearly distinct in practice as they are in theory. As a private matter it is the reluctance of an individual to have or be associated with objects that have attributes that violate that person's moral values. This is a private matter because our hypothetical individual intends simply to avoid having these distasteful objects in his or her life, to avoid consuming them in the conventional anthropological sense of 'consume'. The reluctance to consume such objects is likely to mean that the person will not buy them, which of course reduces the sales of such objects and hence, presumably, the profits of those who produce and sell them. While this reduction is not a significant consideration in private ethical consumption, it may be that the consumer intends to affect those sales and profits, perhaps with the goal of changing the practices in one or another company or industry. In this case, ethical consumption is a public matter, as it is when it becomes a social movement. It is this public side of ethical consumption that concerns me here.

In spite of its name, public ethical consumption revolves around market transactions rather than consumption. That is because it seeks it effects through buying: the local farmer who delivers a box of organic vegetables sees only your purchase, not your consumption. With this stress on purchasing, it invokes, explicitly or not, an idea that is familiar in conventional economics. That is the idea that the market operates as a signalling device (e.g. Spence, 1976), which for brevity sake I will call the 'signalling idea'. According to this idea, when buyers select one object over another they necessarily signal their preferences about the objects that they confront and the prices that they are willing to pay for them. To put this more formally in relation to ethics, people's ethics shape the value that they put on different objects; those values influence the price that they are willing to pay for those objects; that in turns affects which of the objects on offer they buy and which they do not; those purchases convey the signal that is the end result of the ethics.

So, according to the signalling idea, when buyers select, for instance, Fair Trade coffee at £2.40 for a half-pound bag over the other coffees arrayed on a supermarket shelf at prices from £1.85 to £2.20 per half-pound, those buyers necessarily are signalling that they prefer coffee produced in a particular way over coffee that is not, and that they are prepared to pay more for it. Closer to home, when I was shopping for a pair of jeans recently, I did not buy the £10 pair, assuming that it was produced in conditions that I find distasteful. I bought the £25 pair, which I assumed was produced in more civilised circumstances. Whether I intended it or not, when I bought my jeans I was signalling to the seller, and through the seller to the jeans market, that I prefer objects produced in what I assume to be certain ways rather than others. If I intend that signal, I try to produce a better world through my buying. The person who buys Fair Trade coffee may be trying to do the same.

The difficulty with the signalling idea is that the signal sent by the purchaser may express the buyer's preferences, but it does not necessarily communicate them. That is because the signal is obscure. At one level, of course, it is crystal-clear: confronted by the array of jeans on offer at the store, I bought the pair that I did at the price that I paid. However, if those in the clothing business are to understand and perhaps learn from that signal, they need to know the reason for my choice, which is not part of the signal. Did I buy the jeans I did because I preferred their colour or fit or style? Was it because they were displayed better in the store? Was it because of the way that I thought that they were made? As this example indicates, while the signalling idea seems reasonable in principle, it is more problematic in practice. And as I illustrate later in this chapter, in fact the idea is even more problematic than this.

Because the idea is problematic, I think its place in ethical consumption is problematic. Here I am concerned with two aspects of the use of this idea. Firstly, it entails suppositions about buyers, objects and buying that need to be investigated rather than assumed. Secondly, it takes the market as little more than a signalling system, rather than as an active interchange between sellers and buyers that has its own consequences, an important one of which is that it is expansionist.

THINKING LOCALLY, ACTING GLOBALLY

This chapter's title is an inversion of a slogan that became common in the US in 1970s and 1980s, 'Think globally, act locally'. That slogan exhorted people not to base their decisions and actions only on their personal interests and immediate local circumstances. Rather, we were supposed to consider things in terms of their broader, even global, context and especially the ways that our decisions and actions would affect that context.

At first glance, ethical consumption appears to be a clear example of thinking globally while acting locally. My shopping is a local activity: it takes place 'here', in my immediate life, and it reflects not only my needs and desires, but also those in my household. If my decisions about what to buy were guided only by an economic calculus of thrift, of getting the most while paying the least, I would not just be acting locally, I would be thinking locally as well (Miller, 1998). Alternatively, I may make my decisions about what to buy in terms of my sense of the larger context of my shopping: my decision to buy Fair Trade coffee or the £25 jeans may reflect what I take to be the effects of my actions in the larger world out there, whether coffee regions in Central America or textile regions in South and Southeast Asia. Here, then, I appear to be thinking globally while acting locally.

However, I think this view is misleading, as indicated by my inversion of the slogan in this chapter's title. I mean to challenge, even if only in the context of this polemic,[2] the easy assumption that we should, even that we can, try to make a better world through our buying. Instead, I argue that ethical consumption is better seen as thinking locally and acting globally.

In both invoking the slogan and inverting it, I am pointing to the relationship between the personal, the immediate, the local, and the public, the general, the global. This is nothing very novel. Adam Smith, after all, in both *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1984 – originally 1759) and *The Wealth of Nations* (1976 – originally 1776), devoted substantial attention to the relationship of private acts to the common weal. Famously, he concluded that thinking locally (in a self-regarding way) while acting locally (buying for one's own consumption) can help to achieve a global good, the improvement of the common weal. That is because our self-regard is guided by a divine invisible hand, which is manifest in 'the operation of instincts planted in men by Providence. This providence was assumed to be benign and the order so established was favourable to the welfare of men' (Habakkuk, 1971, p. 54; see also Lubasz, 1992; see generally Carrier & Miller, 1999, pp. 28–32).

While considering this relationship between the local and the global may not be novel, it is important. It is especially so for anthropologists who seek to do what the organisers of this volume urge, make more comprehensive the simple renderings of the local, the global and their relationship that predominate in economics, both of the academic and popular sort. Daniel Miller pointed out the importance of this task when he wrote:

> Anthropology cannot be defined by any one agenda or ambition, but one of the critical criteria by which it is likely to be judged is how well it deals with the relationship between the private and the public, between the agency of individuals, households and small groups on the one hand, and on the other the behaviour of transnational and global

> institutions and forces. This relationship is a fundamental element in the struggle by anthropology to influence the discipline of economics. For much of this century the social sciences, including anthropology, have seen themselves as engaged in a fight with economics over the academic representation of social relations. So far, this has been a losing battle. In the mass media, the rhetoric, discourse and models of economists stand in apparently unassailable dominance in defining what is important in the contemporary world. (passage by Miller in Carrier & Miller, 1999, p. 24)

In terms of the local and global that concern Miller, ethical consumption is thinking locally, and it is so in two important ways. Firstly, the values of ethical consumers reflect the particular segments within Western societies that have given birth to things like Fair Trade. Secondly, the assumption that commercial transactions are an appropriate vehicle for enacting these values reflects equally provincial origins: others may think God, kin relations or legislation is the appropriate vehicle. Public ethical consumption is not just thinking locally, it is also acting globally because, both in intent and in fact, the signals that ethical consumers emit pass out through the chains of retailers, buyers, shippers and merchants to the places where objects are produced, well beyond the localities where ethical consumption is advocated and practiced. So, in ethical consumption we have a set of people who have peculiar local ways of thinking about how the world ought to be, and who have peculiar local assumptions about the appropriate vehicle for imposing their vision on distant parts of the world.

At least, this is the theory. The problematic nature of the signalling idea means, however, that the reality can be somewhat less ethical than ethical consumers might hope. In part, this is because there can be processes and pressures that make it less likely that ethical consumers will be able to interpret objects and situations in terms of their morals. In part also this is because the medium through which ethical consumers seek to signal their values is not a neutral vehicle, but instead induces actions that can contradict the ethics of ethical consumers.

SEEING AN ETHICAL WORLD

To be an ethical consumer requires a set of morals: as I said, it is these that shape the way we value things in the world. Somewhat less self-evidently, it also requires the ability to relate what we see in the world to our morals and so decide what an ethical state of affair is, or at least distinguish a more ethical from a less ethical one. This second requirement raises the issue of legibility (Scott, 1998; see also Errington & Gewertz, 2001). That is, people have expectations about what an ethical, or more ethical, outcome is like, and compare what they see of the world with those expectations. To claim that ethical consumption is possible in practice, rather than in an ideal world, is to assume that consumers' expectations are reasonable and that they can assess situations reasonably in terms of these expectations. I want to investigate this assumption.

I will do so in terms of ecotourism. This is a form of tourist consumption that claims to be ethical, and doubtless many ecotourists think that their consumption is. In ecotourism, people travel to alien or exotic places and enjoy them in ways that do not degrade the natural surroundings and support the people who live there. Honey (2003), the director of The International Ecotourism Society, said that ecotourism 'should: (1) protect and benefit conservation; (2) benefit, respect and help empower local communities; and (3) educate as well as entertain tourists'.

While ecotourism exists in many parts of the world, here I will be concerned with it in the Caribbean, especially Jamaica. There, the focus of ecotourism is the natural environment rather than the people who live there. The main form of ecotourism is concerned with the coastal waters, and there are two national parks in Jamaica with oversight of such waters, which I have studied intermittently since the mid-1990s. One is in Montego Bay, founded around 1991 and covering effectively all of the bay's waters.[3] The other is in Negril, declared in 1998 and covering effectively all the in-shore waters along more than 20 miles of coastline.[4]

What I have to say about ecotourism suggests that it is not safe to assume that people are reasonably able to relate their moral values to what they see of those parts of the world that concern them. Put differently, ecotourists generally are not very knowledgeable about the environments that concern them, what marks a sound one that conforms to their ethics and what marks a degraded one that does not. This does not mean that ecotourists have no sense of what ethical and unethical environments look like. They do have that sense, shaped by the images that are presented to them by environmentalist organisations and those in the ecotourism industry. The result is a faulty sense, so that what appears to be legible is in fact misread. This sort of misreading based on images directed at potential purchasers is not, of course, restricted to ecotourists. As Luetchford (this volume) shows, people are presented with misleading images of peasant growers, used to sell Fair Trade coffee. Ominously for ethical consumers, the force that drives these images and this misreading is the very market that is supposed to be the medium for sending ethical signals. I need to explain why this is so.

Environmental organisations and ecotourism companies may be knowledgeable about the natural surroundings that concern them and dedicated to protecting those surroundings. But however knowledgeable and dedicated they may be, circumstances oblige them to extract money from our would-be ethical ecotourists. In the case of ecotourism companies the commercial context in which they operate requires this. The situation of environmental organisations, including parks and the bodies that run them, is more complex.

In the tropical countries where so many ecotourists go, governments are decreasingly able and willing to spend money on environmental protection. To a significant degree that is because of their changing position in the global political economy (e.g. for Jamaica and its structural adjustment, see Bartilow, 1997, Chapters 2, 3; Payne, 1994, Chapter 7). So, those in these countries who are concerned with the environment are obliged to search for other sources of funding. This tends to result in a mixture of conservation and tourism, and in the need to project an image of nature that will attract money, whether in the form of foundation or agency grants or of public donations to support environmental management systems, or in the form of ecotourists (for a discussion of how this works in Jamaica, see Carrier, 2004). This leads to a marketisation of the environment.

As a result, parks become tourism-market actors (e.g. Bacci, 1998) and park management becomes concerned with enhancing 'the tourism product and recreational opportunities' of their parks (Geoghegan, Smith, & Thacker, 2001, p. 10). Money becomes important to park managers (as illustrated in Esteban, Garaway, Oxenford, Anderson, & McConney, 2002, especially pp. 13–14, 17–18), and at times the success of a park is reduced to its showing a profit and the failure to showing a loss (see generally Drumm, 2003). This orientation does not only spring from the circumstances of parks, but it is also encouraged or even demanded by funding bodies (e.g. Carrier, 2003, pp. 216–222). For instance, the EU gave money to the Negril park and explained its goals this way:

> The project aims at protecting the coral reef ecosystem and at achieving long-term financial sustainability of the Negril Marine Park and Protected Area through income generating measures. The project will contribute to the overall objectives of the Jamaican government to stabilize its economy by maintaining and increasing foreign exchange earnings through tourism, while at the same time protecting the fragile coastal environment of Negril, including the entire coral reef ecosystem. (EU, 2002)

With these sorts of financial and institutional pressures, it is not surprising that park managers tend to see park waters in terms of tourist demand. At the simplest level, the manager of the Montego Bay park repeatedly told me that she wanted studies of what made a ‘good dive’, one that would attract tourist-divers. At a more complex level is the scholarly work that amounts to market research, identifying the degree of attractiveness of different species to tourists. So, for instance, a study of the preferences of tourist-divers in the Turks and Caicos Islands concluded that ‘in aggregate, divers were willing to pay at least $10 [US] extra for dives during which more abundant Nassau groupers [a type of fish] were observed’ (Rudd & Tupper, 2002, p. 146). The same orientation appears in other sorts of parks in the region. One study of visitors to a Mexican terrestrial park concluded that ‘the presence of crocodiles in the site is the main attraction for visitors and that special emphasis needs to be put on their conservation’ (Avila-Foucat & Eugenio-Martin, 2004, p. 13).

It should come as no surprise that this commercialisation shapes the images that parks present to those considering visiting them, such as those on park websites. These portray healthy coastal waters and influence the perceptions of those who are not knowledgeable about tropical coastal environmental systems. Because such images are widely circulated and are likely to be familiar, I will deal with them only briefly. Commonly these images are of underwater scenes of the sort that a tourist-diver might hope to encounter. Perhaps because they are easier than fish to photograph, coral formations predominate in these images (some images are fabrications). Some coral have striking shapes and other have bright colours; some are shown by themselves and others are shown with a diver swimming near.[5]

Fish and, especially, coral are reasonable indicators of the state of the coastal waters. However, when used to define, however implicitly, an ethically (environmentally) valuable state, such images have two problems. Firstly, they ignore features of the coastal waters that are perhaps more important but less attractive. Prime among these is sea-grass beds, which often are in waters too shallow for diving and monotonous compared to fish and coral,[6] but important for the nutrient cycles of in-shore waters and as fish breeding grounds.[7]

There is a second problem with such images that is more subtle. The state of the coral and fish may be one indicator of the environmental state of the waters. However, fish and coral can be seen in different ways, which encourage identifying different sorts of things as environmental threats and hence identifying different sorts of acts as improper. Given the importance of tourists for parks, it is not surprising that fish and coral are presented primarily as visible individuals that could be seen by tourist-divers. This focus on individual fish and coral growths tends to identify as improper any acts that harm a fish or damage a coral and tourists are, accordingly, told to take care when they dive so that they cause no damage. Fishing kills fish, which serves to identify the artisanal fishers who work in Caribbean coastal waters as the important environmental threat (see e.g. Haley & Clayton, 2003), and anecdotal evidence from Negril indicates that tourists object to seeing fishers in the in-shore waters.

Alternatively, one can see fish and coral as populations rather than as collections of individuals, though this does not lend itself to attractive images. Such a view tends to direct attention to things that affect the state of the population, rather than the fate of individuals. Unlike acts that affect individuals, such as catching a fish or damaging a coral growth, these need not occur in the waters. Indeed, they often occur on land, like pollution that feeds into the waters and that harms the in-shore ecosystem in Montego Bay and Negril. Such sources of pollution include the construction and operation of tourist facilities: in 1994, three-fifths of the hotel waste-water in Jamaica was either untreated or treated inadequately (Burke, 2005, p. 11), and the average tourist in Jamaica produces almost four times as much solid waste daily as the average resident (Thomas-Hope & Jardine-Comrie, 2005, p. 3). Land-based pollution is also caused by the sheer urban growth of Montego Bay and Negril that followed their success as tourist destinations, coupled with the failure to expand urban services, like rubbish collection, sewerage lines and treatment facilities, to cope with the growth. With a focus on populations, rather than individual and photogenic fish and coral, these land-based activities and the associated sets of people with their sets of interests would be identified as the significant environmental threat.

In using images that focus on individual fish and coral, parks and ecotourism companies render the coastal waters in a way that conforms to the local thoughts and beliefs of the people that they seek to attract. When taken in their context of websites and promotional literature, these images imply that knowledgeable Westerners can protect the waters from ignorant and heedless islanders. As well, and more subtly, they fetishise those waters (Marx, 1867), removing them and the creatures that live in them from the social and natural contexts in which they exist. To attract fee-paying tourists, parks do not portray the waters in terms of the broader context of the coastal zone, which would raise the point that visiting ethical tourists contribute to the urban growth and pollution that harm those waters. Similarly, coastal resorts appealing to environmentally-concerned tourists do not explain that the sandy beaches that those tourists enjoy often are the result of human engineering rather than natural action (e.g. Duffy, 2002, Chapter 2), which is obviously also true of the airports, roads and accommodation that they use. And, of course, none points to the environmental harm caused by getting from the cities in rich countries where ecotourists live to the poor tropical countries where they spend their holidays (Gössling, 1999). The result of this fetishism is useful for generating revenue: tourists can think that they are ethical environmentally if they follow the injunction to 'take only pictures and leave only footprints'.[8]

I have argued that the national and global political–economic circumstances that confront park management in poor tropical countries lead them to make their parks attractive to tourists. I have also argued that the management commonly seeks to attract tourists by using certain sorts of images to portray the areas that their parks are supposed to protect, which is more obviously true of ecotourism businesses. I do not argue that ethical tourists necessarily respond to these images naively. However, many of these are the images produced by parks that are chartered by national governments and presumably are run by competent and thoughtful staff. It is, then, reasonable to suppose that tourists who wish to be ethical consumers tend to have their perception of the pertinent parts of the natural surroundings shaped by these images. The result, to recall the idea of legibility, is that ethical consumers are prone to misread the evidence presented to them, just as, Pratt (this volume) argues, purchasers of local and authentic foods are likely to misread the labels and images on the package. This tendency is likely to be strongest among those who are not especially knowledgeable about the environment of the parks at issue, or about the social and economic factors that shape park operations and the areas within park boundaries.[9]

In the absence of careful studies of what would-be ecotourists think of these images and of how they respond to them, it is not possible to know how strong those tendencies are. However, it would be foolish to assume that they are insignificant. And to the degree that they shape tourists seeking to be ethical, to that same degree they reduce the chances that those tourists will be able to shape their purchasing in ways that will lead the world closer to what their ethics demand.

THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE

I have argued that the use of purchases as a signalling device in ethical consumption is problematic because systematic processes are at work that make it unlikely that purchasers will be sufficiently knowledgeable to assess more or less ethical states in the world. Such a use of purchases in ethical consumption is also problematic because the market, whether in jeans, coffee or tropical holidays, is not a passive medium through which signals pass from purchasers to producers. Rather, as I indicated at the outset, the interests and orientations of those involved in the market are such that it is better thought of as active.

To a degree, of course, this activity is what I described in the preceding section. What I presented, after all, is the ways that those who produce images of objects for sale, such as tourist activities and destinations, shape those images in ways intended to attract tourists and their money. Other processes are at work, however, beyond just the selection of seductive images. Those processes can lead to the extension of the market and its logic into areas where they did not exist before, even when purchasers' desires appear opposed to that extension.

A simple form of this extension comes from the literature on ecotourism, something called ECOSERV (Khan, 2003). This is a survey instrument intended to assess the expectations that ecotourists have about the quality of the services that are part of their holidays, 'the service level that customers believe they "should get" from the service provider' (Khan, 2003, p. 112). Understanding these expectations is important for companies, we are told, because the ecotourism market is 'becoming more competitive. In order for any ecotourism business to position itself favorably in the global marketplace, it has to deliver high quality service that fulfills the needs and expectations of ecotourists' (*ibid.*, pp. 109–110).

Competitive pressure among firms in the market, then, drives resort and travel companies to conform to buyers' expectations. However, that pressure is not the only thing that extends market rationality into novel areas. The expectations themselves do so as well, in a way that reveals what might be seen as a contradiction in buyers' desires. Recall that one aspect of ecotourism is respect for local cultures and ways of living, which means protecting them from the disruptions that are presumed to follow from becoming incorporated in large-scale market systems, whether in the tourism–market or any other. The contradiction is between the goal of respect for local cultures and buyers' other desires and expectations.

Among those ecotourist expectations are things like staff who are 'Consistently courteous with the customers' (79% of those surveyed strongly agreed that this is important), 'Employees always be willing to help' (72%), 'Employees never too busy to help' (57%), 'Personal attention' (61%) and 'Individual attention' (54%) (Khan, 2003, p. 117). These may seem unexceptionable. However, meeting these expectations requires that staff act in a friendly, attentive and personal way towards people they have never seen before and will never see again, simply because they are paid to do so.

In areas with extensive proletarianisation, which means the places from which ecotourists tend to come, there seems nothing odd about having people act this way as part of their job (but see Hochschild, 1983). However, acting that way towards strangers is not so routine in other parts of the world, which include many of the places where ecotourists go.

For instance, in much of the English-speaking Caribbean there is a strong cultural stress, especially among men in their economic lives, on autonomy (the classic statement is Wilson, 1973; see also Miller, 1994; Olwig, 1993). The corollary of this is a dislike of subordination, particularly of the sort expected of hotel staff, who work at the whim of both their boss and the hotel's guests. This dislike is a recurrent worry for those concerned with service industries, especially tourism. They complain that Caribbeans are reluctant to take on service jobs, because they equate 'service' with 'servitude'. The results of a Google search I did in April, 2005, show how pervasive this worry is. It was expressed in statements by the president of the Barbados Hotel and Tourist Association (Tourism Newswire, 2003), the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce (Chamber Column, 2002), the Guyana National Development Strategy (Guyana, 1996, Chapter 37), the newsletter of the Inter-American Development Bank (2005), the Institute for Hotel and Tourism of the University of the West Indies at Mona (Institute for Hotel and Tourism, n.d.) and the Chief Minister of Montserrat (Montserrat, 1998).

One could argue, of course, that tourists, however ethical they may be, are likely to have certain irreducible expectations, and that those who are not prepared to meet them should not set up a tourism business or take a job in one. To make this argument, though, is only to point to the contradiction in the message that ecotourists are sending through the medium of the market, by taking it for granted that the spread of ethical tourism is accompanied by the expansion of market logic and relations into novel areas.

Of course it is not just the direct expression of buyers' preferences that can lead to the expansion of market logic and relations. The institutionalised anticipation of those preferences can do the same. This is illustrated by what Paige West (in West & Carrier, 2004, pp. 488–491) relates to the establishment of an ecotourism lodge as part of an integrated conservation and development project in a village she calls 'Maimafu', in the Gimi-speaking area around the Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea.

As in many societies in the Highlands, relations among the different clans in Maimafu can be tense, as the members of each seek to maintain their clan's parity with the others. Consequently, gaining community agreement to establish a lodge was a complex process, requiring careful and protracted negotiation overseen by a 'committee of elders', a body stipulated by Papua New Guinea law. Especially, people were aware that the clan controlling the land on which the lodge was built would benefit in terms of wealth and prestige. The Maimafu elders responsible for the negotiations recognised that it would not be wise to locate the lodge near the airstrip that served the village, as this would confer further advantage on the clan whose control of the airstrip land already benefited them more than other clans. Instead, they decided on a hamlet about half an hour's walk from the airstrip. Four of the six Maimafu clans had a significant number of residents there, so the benefits would spread fairly equally. It took two years to secure the assent of all six clans to this plan.

This decision reflected the social politics and cultural logic of these Maimafu villagers, just the sort of thing that ecotourists intend to respect and protect. However, it did not reflect the market rationality of the Research and Conservation Foundation of Papua New Guinea (RCF), which had pushed for the establishment of the wildlife conservation area. The RCF was carrying out this integrated conservation and development project with money provided by the Biodiversity Conservation Network, itself funded by a set of the US government and non-governmental organisations committed to the 'enterprise-oriented' approach of conservation. This approach assumed that if people developed a business that generated money from environmental resources without harming them, then they would support conservation (Biodiversity Support Program, 1997, 1999). That enterprise-oriented approach required a perspective on questions like the location of the ecotourism lodge that stressed commercial concerns, as is illustrated by what happened when the expatriate director of the RCF visited Maimafu. She was told of the communal decision about the proposed location of the lodge and reason for it. She walked to the proposed site, came back to the waiting villagers and told them that the site was not acceptable. She said that it was too far from the airstrip and the view was not as nice as it would be from the airstrip, the site she wanted.

Swallowing their disappointment, the committee of elders agreed to build the lodge at the site she indicated. They then turned to the issue of who would clean and guide for the tourists. These people would benefit financially, so the question of the equitable distribution of the fruits of the project had to be addressed once more. After some months of negotiation the committee decided that as each new group of tourists arrived, people from a different clan would carry out these tasks. Again, their plan would spread benefits relatively equally and so reduce tension in the village. Again, their plan was rejected. The RCF's expatriate advisors said one person should be paid to run the lodge, and a handful be trained by foreign experts to act as guides in ways that would meet potential ecotourists' expectations.

However strongly they are guided by an ethical imperative to respect alien societies and cultures, it is unlikely that ecotourists would be aware of the distinct local nature of their own assumptions about wage labour and service work, just as they would be unlikely to know that the location of their lodge and the identity of their guides were determined by advisers backed by US government money and strongly concerned with the commercial attractiveness of their ecotourist destination. These things of which our hypothetical ecotourist is unaware are the signs that, while the market may be a signalling device, it is not just a signalling device.

For one thing, the market is not a mechanical system of switches and cables that transmits signals. Rather it is full of market actors, people who buy and sell things and seek to do so in rewarding ways. For ethical ecotourists the reward comes from buying things that they had not bought before and even had not been for sale before, like vacations in remote areas of the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, and doing so in ways that will protect and respect local people and their natural surroundings. For those who seek to sell resources to ecotourists, the reward comes from selecting and moulding local resources to make them conform to the purchasers' desires, whether for friendly and attentive staff, easy access to the airstrip or an attractive view from the front door. These market actors are not, then, only sending and receiving signals. Between them, they are also extending the reach of the market, as they buy and sell things that had not been market commodities before, and as they use market logic to shape things that had been governed by different logics before.[10]

This points to the more profound way that the market is not just a device that transmits signals from buyers to those who would sell to them. It is a fact that the market is, in important ways, the message: the use of market transactions, whether for the ordinary purpose of travel from London to Los Angeles or the ethical consumption of ecotourism, tends to strengthen and extend the market. Those who seek only to travel to Los Angeles are likely to be indifferent to that strengthening. The situation is more poignant for ethical consumers, who seek to use market transactions to reduce what many of them see as the harmful effects on Central American coffee growers or Jamaica's coastal waters of market orientation and competition.

That is because those who seek to serve ethical consumers, especially in the current political–economic climate, are obliged to do so in terms of market rationality (Carrier, 1997a), which means among other things assuring a strong demand for what is on offer. It is this rationality that leads those who run tourist hotels to undercut existing understandings of interpersonal relations, and supplant them with impersonal friendliness. It is this rationality that leads those overseeing the establishment of ecotourist lodges to undercut existing ways of deciding where they ought to be built and how they ought to be run, and supplant them with commercial concern for what will attract a full complement of paying guests. It is this rationality that leads Penny Newman, the boss at CafeDirect, to say 'If you want to change the trading system you've got to be on the same terms as the conventional system. You need to make a profit' (Martinson, 2007). It not only means producing something that the ethical consumers want, but also doing so more cheaply than others, by reducing production costs, especially labour costs (Carrier, 1997b, pp. 149–151).

For these reasons, ethical buying is a way in which people can think locally while acting globally. Those people's local ethics shape the value of different objects, making one more desirable than another, and these preferences are transmitted outward from potential buyers to the realms around the world where those objects are produced. But in doing so, what is also transmitted is a more profound message: our ethical ecotourists want to buy, which is to say that they want market relationships and market rationality. They want smiling, friendly service, they want easy access to their lodge, they want nice views; but being prone to local thinking, they want to satisfy their desires through impersonal market relations.

CONCLUSION

Ecotourism is only one form of ethical consumption; I have focussed on it because it is the one I know best (Carrier & Macleod, 2005; West & Carrier, 2004). Even though it is only one form, the points that I have tried to make and especially the questions that I have tried to raise apply more generally. That is because they focus attention on an important element in what I have called the public side of ethical consumption. That is the idea that the market is a signalling device that ethical consumers can use to communicate their values to producers, through buying some objects rather than others.

It should be clear that I do not object to seeing the market as a signalling device. However, it should also be clear that I am sceptical about the assumption that ethical consumers can use it to encourage producers to change the ways that objects are made in order to bring them more into line with the buyers' values. I have expressed this scepticism in terms of two different issues.

The first of these revolves around the concept of legibility. This is an intriguing concept that Scott and others have applied in fairly subtle ways. Here, however, I have used it more as a blunt instrument: we recognise things in terms of the categories that we have. In the case that I described, pretty fish and coral define the category of the desirable state of coastal waters; in other circumstances smiling small-holders may define the category of desirable coffee production (see Luetchford, this volume), production restricted to a locality may define the category of authenticity and quality in foodstuffs (see Pratt, this volume) or Navajo-seeming design may define indigenous craft in artefacts (see Esperanza, this volume). As I suggested, however, the validity of this category definition is dubious. It reflects the influence of a number of forces that shape the images that would-be, but not terribly knowledgeable, ethical ecotourists see and that, I think is reasonable to assume, shape their understandings of what un-degraded tropical coastal waters are like.

The second issue that I addressed was the point that while the market may be a signalling device, it is much more than that. As I indicated, it is populated by actors who affect its operation. Some of these actors are ethical consumers, who have expectations that are invisible to themselves because they are taken for granted, in the sense that they are prior to and independent of their overt ethical concerns. Other actors are the companies who seek to improve their competitive position by finding out and meeting these expectations, whether for friendly and attentive staff, for ease of access to an ecotourist lodge or for attractive views. The satisfaction of these desires, I have shown, can involve decisions and practices, also invisible to the tourist, that influence the production of tourism services in ways that are likely to conflict with these tourists' values.

The first of these issues is fairly familiar, for it is only an instance of the ignorance of consumers. The second of these issues is the more basic. That is because it points out some of the difficulties that can arise when people seek to use buying decisions to influence the ways producers operate in order to bring them into line with the ethics of ethical consumers. These difficulties point, in turn, to a more profound problem. That is the way the market-orientation of ethical consumption aligns with another form of local thought, the form of political-economy commonly called neo-liberalism. It does so when it effectively elevates the economy to the prime vehicle for affecting change, and thus operates as an anti-politics machine, though perhaps not in just the way that Ferguson (1990) intended to indicate with that phrase. In focussing on individuals' market transactions, ethical consumption ignores, and hence implicitly denigrates, the collective action that is part of conventional politics and the regulation that comes with legislation.

Instead, ethical consumption echoes neo-liberalism when it advocates buyer choice in a capitalist market economy as the proper vehicle for expressing preferences. This leads to a 'One £, one vote' democracy, with national and international financial institutions taking the place of governments (Robotham, 2005). The result is the further fragmentation of collectivities into disorganised individuals with their own preferences but without mutual ties or obligations. This is the social poverty of the 'Trade not aid' campaign, with its demand for making trade 'fair', the abolition of barriers to the entry of Third World products into First World markets. In an older and more revealing language, this trade would not be fair, but free, the unfettered operation of the capitalist market that is a key tenet of neo-liberalism. Fair trade in that older language was something different, one that saw commerce as a part of relationships between people rather than as a device elevated to the role of their governor (see Carrier, 1995, Chapters 3, 4).

I said that this is a polemic. I do not intend it, however, as a statement of despair springing from some comparison of existing ethical consumption with an ideal world. Neither do I intend it as a rejection of the idea that people's decisions about what to buy should be based solely on an economistic calculus of thrift. And of course I do not deny that people may see, and engage in, ethical consumption as a form of political action intended to constrain one or another corporation or to encourage the reform of one or another commercial practice.

On the other hand, I do mean this polemic as an assertion that people concerned with conditions of work, economic relations and the natural surroundings seriously mislead themselves if they think that their personal buying decisions are a realistic way to achieve collective political goals. Engaging in ethical consumption may allow people to lead lives that they find more satisfactory: that is why I buy the £25 jeans and the Fair Trade coffee. But it is difficult to see how political action that uses as its vehicle free, individual choice in impersonal market relations can influence in any material way the firms and institutions that populate capitalist market systems, the commercial pressures that bear on them or the ways that they respond to those pressures.

NOTES

1. I use 'objects', and at times 'things', in an expansive sense that includes material objects, services, and immaterial things like names, views, and the like.
2. After all, I do buy £25 jeans and Fair Trade coffee.
3. See: www.mbmp.org

4. See: www.negril.com/ncrps/ncrps_files/page0004.htm

5. Examples of these images are found on various websites for Caribbean marine protected areas. In Jamaica, these include the sites for the Montego Bay Marine Park (www.mbmp.org/snorkeling.htm and www.mbmp.org/scuba.htm) and for the Negril Coral Reef Preservation Society, which runs the Negril park (www.negril.com/ncrps/ncrps_files/page0004.htm). Examples from elsewhere in the region include the site for the Saba Marine Park, in the Netherlands Antilles (www.sabapark.org/marine.html) and the Hol Chan Marine Reserve, in Belize (www.holchanbelize.org). (All sites were last checked on 10 May 2007.)

6. See e.g., www.ncl.ac.uk/tcmweb/tcm/sglinks.htm

7. The main fish-breeding area in the Montego Bay park is in Bogue Lagoon; an important breeding area in the Negril park is just off north Negril Point, in Bloody Bay. Both these were off-limits to all but park staff until recently. However, around 2004 the Montego Bay park allowed a Texan expatriate to start a catch-and-release fishing business in the Bogue Lagoon. At the same time the Spanish firm RIU opened a large all-inclusive hotel in Bloody Bay, its beach within the breeding ground. They decided that guests would not like sea-grass in the swimming areas and removed it, though in 2005 the Negril park was seeking to persuade them to restore it.

8. This fetishism finds parallels in other chapters of this volume. Just as tourists are encouraged to see their ecotourist destinations as being independent of the material and social contexts that produce them, so Luetchford shows how Fair Trade coffee drinkers are encouraged to see its production as being independent of the marginal and unpaid labour that is used in harvesting, and Esperanza shows how purchasers of ethnic artefacts are encouraged to see them as being independent of the buyers, distributors and wholesalers who shape the design of those objects, instigate their production and advertise them for sale.

9. The use of simplifying images to induce people to spend money is not, of course, restricted to the category of ethical consumers. As Stirrat (2006) describes, it exists as well among disaster relief organisations, as do some other aspects of what is described in this chapter.

10. Those who are the subjects of this expansion may end up liking what the market brings. Equally, they may not, as indicated by the continued tendency in the Caribbean to equate service with servitude and by the collapse of the Maimafu lodge because of the social tensions the elders sought to avoid with their rejected plans (West & Carrier, 2004, pp. 490–491).

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FOOD VALUES: THE LOCAL AND THE AUTHENTIC

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ABSTRACT

Concern about the agro-industrial food system has generated movements, which reconnect producers and consumers, either through alternative distribution networks or through providing histories of each quality foodstuff. Although these movements share a romantic discourse, they have a range of objectives and a more complex relationship to the mainstream than first appears. The article analyses particularly the concept of authenticity, first in representations of food, then more widely as a value which links production and consumption. The material illustrates a wider analysis (in Graeber, Harvey) of the co-existence of monetary and non-monetary value in an economy dominated by the commodity form, and following from this sets out the different judgements, which have been made about the transformative political potential of these movements.

It is common to discuss the food systems of industrialised societies in terms of a dichotomy between the mainstream and the alternatives. These two models are found in the sociology of food and of rural development, as well as in the writing of activists in political movements. There are indeed

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important contrasts between different food chains in the way they organise production and distribution, and in terms of the cultural values, which run through them. At the same time, the contrast is over-simplified and confusing. The alternative movements attempt to re-establish practical and discursive links between production and consumption, in doing so they give these foods a history, one which is largely missing (and often for good reasons) in much of the food industry. This history is often constructed within a romantic discourse of the local, the traditional, and the authentic. However, the totalising character of this discourse hides the fact that the different qualities evoked for alternative foods do not in fact entail each other and may pull in different directions. Further, the mainstream and the alternatives do not constitute completely separate economic circuits; they shape each other and often overlap in highly significant ways. It is when we turn to the political dimension that the complex dynamic below the surface of these simple dichotomies becomes a much more serious issue. The labels "organic," "fair trade," or "local" do not in themselves reveal a great deal about the extent to which their producers have resisted or been absorbed by the corporate interests in the food industry, nor much about whether the values they embody are part of a radical or conservative political agenda.

This article is a first step in research on alternative food movements and the compatibility or dissonance between the different objectives they set themselves. It starts with a basic sketch of the agro-industrial food revolution and then uses examples from existing studies to explore the variety of alternative food politics, concentrating on the themes of the local and of quality. This leads into an analysis of the question of authenticity for consumers, which in turn opens up a much larger anthropological problem. How and why do consumers in a capitalist society attempt to gain access to values, which are defined in opposition to monetary value precisely through the spending of money? This is explored using recent work by David Graeber and the article concludes with a discussion of the political implications of the processes revealed.

FOOD CHAINS

The mainstream agro-industrial food system is the result of a number of processes:

(1) A farming revolution that accelerates after 1945. This involves the replacement of rural labour by machinery, the use of oil-derived fertilisers to maintain soil fertility, the specialisation of farms and whole

regions in terms of monocultures, followed more recently by a series of biotechnologies (Goodman, Sorj, & Wilkinson, 1987). This highly mechanised, energy intensive, large-scale farming produces the raw materials for the food industry, often broken down into components – sugars, starch, oils, protein – and then reconstituted.

(2) The development of a national, and then global, market in foodstuffs, which breaks many of the links between local diets and local agriculture.
(3) The rise of transnational corporations in the food chain: upstream supplying fertilisers, machinery, seeds, trading the world's grains and edible oils; downstream manufacturing much of the food that we eat.
(4) Supermarket chains, of which the largest is Walmart, sell more than three quarters of the food eaten in most of Europe and North America. Their rise in other parts of the world is spectacular: in the last decade they took control of 50% of the market in South America, and a similar process is under way in Eastern Europe and Asia.
(5) Changes in consumption, both in diet and eating patterns. Much domestic labour has been transferred to an industrial setting with the rise of convenience foods. In addition, close to half of the average family food budget in the UK, as in the US, is spent in restaurants, bars, and on takeaways. Diets have changed, cooking has changed, and meals have changed, though in highly differentiated ways.

Note that the literature on mainstream food chains (e.g., Goodman & Redclift, 1991) analyses precisely the linkages between all these changes. These processes are interconnected, and this help us understand why France produces so much sugar beet, why so much migrant labour is employed in the packing sheds, why town centres get turned inside out, and why there are campaigns about school dinners.

These developments have generated a series of political conflicts, centreing on five main issues: the environment; the fate of small farmers; the direction of global trade relations; the rise of corporate power throughout the chains; and food quality. If the processes set in motion by agro-industry are all connected, the social movements, which have grown up around the alternatives inevitably tend to concentrate their strategies on one objective: fair trade, the livelihoods of small farmers or the existence of so-called food deserts in inner cities. As a result other parts of the chain are obscured and the impact of these movements is sometimes paradoxical, especially in terms of political economy. The best example of this is organic farming and the best ethnography is Julie Guthman's (2004a) study of Californian organic agriculture, which dominates the US market. She shows that most organic fruit and vegetables is produced on large estates, using intensive methods and migrant wage-labour, is trucked across the continent and mostly sold in supermarkets. What such studies document, is the way mainstream agribusiness can incorporate and appropriate much of the profit, and the values, of the alternative food sector.

At the cultural level a different set of issues emerge. The social movements that produce and promote alternative foods generally have a polarised and totalised set of representations which define their attributes and aspirations in opposition to the agro-industrial food complex. They say non-sustainable, intensive and polluting agriculture produces junk food, *malboef*, fast food. You do not know what is in it, where or how it was produced, it is full of additives, reconstituted. It breaks all the links between production and consumption. By contrast these movements advocate a reconnection, in very different ways, between production and consumption, or producers and consumers. This reconnection is conceived in terms of an opposition between first, a personalised set of economic relations as opposed to the impersonality of the market, and secondly, in terms of a contrast between food, which is artificial or adulterated, and the genuine or authentic. Culturally, this reconnection takes place in a kind of pre-set discursive field, that of the natural, the organic, the local, the rooted, the distinctive, the authentic, this field being precisely that of the romantic tradition. The field is established in opposition to "modernity," it opposes quality to quantity, diversity to singularity, favours metaphors of the timeless, of the circular and recycling to those of innovation and progress. Because the field is "pre-set," the terms can become synonymous, or at least immediately evoke each other (the "local" is "authentic"). This merging of terms makes the alternative movements appear to be as connected, and to address all the same issues, as the mainstream food chains to which they are opposed. The central sections of the article explore this discursive field, starting with one term – the local – that seems to me strategically important, and then move to the question of authenticity, a concept that provides a conceptual link between consumption and production. The final sections examine the co-existence of monetary and non-monetary values in this field of consumption, and then the different political perspectives on food movements that arise when we bring production back into the analysis.

THE LOCAL

Concern with the local is a central theme in many alternative food movements, and one of the ways of reconnecting the producers and the consumers. There is a spectrum of projects, they overlap and often appear inseparable, but as we move along the spectrum we find the objectives in fact shift quite radically.

(1) Some alternative food movements promote local produce for environmental reasons. The environmental movement has a very wide agenda in relation to farming practise, but what matters most in terms of a policy of "buying local" is the quantity of non-renewable energy used in food transport. We buy food from the other side of the globe because it cannot be produced locally, or because it can be produced cheaper elsewhere, or because we want it out of season. In addition, supermarkets have created a complex distribution system, which adds to "food-miles." Food happens to be a particularly profligate user of energy, by buying local we address part of the energy question, but nothing else is guaranteed about the food itself.
(2) Localised food systems may be part of a political project to construct local economies outside the capitalist system. In the older versions, such as the rural anarchist programmes, food was always the most central part of such an economy. In addition, the concept of the locality was not a de-politicised fuzzy notion like the contemporary one of "community." To the contrary, it was sharpened by class politics, as in the Spanish anarchist understanding of the *pueblo* (Pratt, 2003, Chapter 3). These movements predate what we call environmentalism, although the growth of concepts of local sustainability in counter-cultural movements from the 1960s onwards means that the two strands have become increasingly fused and enrich each other. Again, nothing is specified about what you get to eat, beyond it being local, though nowadays it is likely to be called organic and you may have to grow it yourself. The more general claims (especially, in the US) that the localisation of food systems can promote environmental sustainability and social justice are critically discussed by Du Puis and Goodman (2005).
(3) Food sovereignty is a project developed in the alternative global movements. The *Via Campesina* and its component parts (not least the *Confédération Paysanne* led by Jose Bove) are committed to the right of each society to establish its own food supply system. These movements share with the preceding ones a concern with the environment, but it is combined with other issues not mentioned so far. One is the impact of the WTO on economies in the south; a second is a concern with the impact of agro-industry and global markets on small farmers, their livelihoods and knowledge. This is predominantly a small farmers' movement.

(4) "Food system localisation," as it is called in the technical literature has other virtues, which have become the subject of research and rural policy making. One is that the best way to increase farmers' income is by cutting out the commercial middlemen and selling direct to consumers. This is Fair Trade by another name. To that end there has been the growth of farmers' markets, farm shops, box schemes, and initiatives to constrain local councils to source food for schools or hospitals locally. In the US, there are initiatives on community-supported agriculture (Hinrichs, 2000) where groups of townspeople contract with local farmers for food supplies over the year. It combines with other objectives, such as environmentalism and can be extended further by creating markets for local specialities, gastronomic centres, wine routes, or museums of rural life, which all valorise local specificity, and hopefully create rural development.

Food system localisation benefits farmers, but also gives value-added to consumers. People, or at least some people some of the time, clearly value direct contact with those who produce their food. Rural sociologists have rediscovered Karl Polanyi and discuss this in terms of an embedded economy. Such supply routes are more personal: you can see where the apples grow and where the chickens lay their eggs, and the honest hands of the farmer who made it all happen. The "value-added" of all this is fascinating and needs further research. At the same time these are still market transactions, and we should be cautious in assuming that the relationship between customers and producers, however embedded and personal, necessarily create that elusive commodity, trust. In the Italian villages where I used to live, farmers and shopkeepers only had local customers, so who else could they dupe? That is why villagers thought supermarkets were such good news.

(5) The last of these discourses and projects around food and the local requires more discussion: it is the connection between locality and quality. It is hard to present the other four without referring to quality, since almost all food considered high quality (Parma ham or Rioja wine) has a territorial designation. As a result it is easy to reverse the equation and assume that local produce immediately connotes good quality, a logical fallacy encouraged by marketing techniques.

The designation of food by geographical indicators and their regulation is largely a European phenomenon, and was developed first and most rigorously in France. It emerges in the early 19th century in relation to wine, with the use of labels, which specify location of origin, culminating in the French 1855 classifications of growths (*cru*). This built on the concept of *terroir*, an elastic term, which starts with the technical notion of a terrain with its physical characteristics, geology, soil, slopes, microclimate, all contributing to the distinctive taste of the wine. Then it broadens to include the skills and knowledge which have gone into transforming this terrain, and eventually the very character and culture of its inhabitants. The categorisation of *terroir* then extends from wine to a range of other foodstuffs such as cheese, hams and chestnuts. These become reified as historical treasures and their number and popularity are booming. Their significance and political connotations are contested. Apparently in France, it is routine to accuse anyone who celebrates the peasantry and rural traditions with reviving the rhetoric of the Petain era (Barham, 2003, p. 132) and this may be unfair. It is nevertheless striking that this uncompromisingly romantic construction of people, culture, place, landscape, and tradition should reach its most elaborate expression in the avowed society of the enlightenment.

This French construction of the link between *terroir* and foodstuffs was gradually borrowed by other countries, though it remains primarily a phenomenon of the European Mediterranean. In 1992, the EU enacted a regulatory frame, which certified and authenticated products with a guaranteed or protected place of origin, and this subsumed and incorporated national legislation (Barham, 2003; Grasseni, 2003, p. 264). The regulations create International Property Rights, which cover a rising proportion of world trade in foodstuffs, and have created major tensions within the WTO. Locally, each of these products has generated a considerable publicity machine financed by the consortium of producers, flanked by chambers of commerce, the tourist industry, and that sub-species of writers who will compose puff for any foodstuff in exchange for a square meal. These products generate an elaborate body of writing, much of it transferred to labels, all of them hymns to the notion of quality. The formats are standardized: this is a special kind of foodstuff, unique to a locality, where some plant varietal or animal has reached perfection, thanks to the climate and skill of the farmers. And of course all this is steeped in tradition, since history plays the same role in the stories about this food, as do poppy growers in Hobsbawm's theory of nationalism.

Cristina Grasseni (2003), for example, has provided some rich ethnography of the emergence of Valtaleggio cheese in the mountains above Bergamo. She shows how the marketing of this cheese is tied into the sale of a landscape through the use of romantic images of mountainsides and wooden barns. As she puts it, by buying the cheese you are buying the landscape, partly because you are allowing the continuation of the farming practices that produce it. The marketing material actually tells us that these farmers have chosen to stay up on the high Alps for our benefit, so that they can continue to provide us with this very special cheese and allow us to wake up and smell the new mown hay. As with countless other products, the narrative tells us that we are consuming the product of a unique and traditional farming system, surviving in a sea of mass production. Mainstream food manufacturers themselves often tap into the same imagery: the pasta giant Barilla launched a huge advertising campaign suggesting that its wheat was sourced from a rural world of smocks, sickles and windmills. The reality is more complex than that, and not just because most Valtaleggio cheese is produced down in the valleys using milk from stall-fed cattle.

Through this kind of ethnography we can see more clearly what is going on with the concepts of locality and tradition. These speciality products are not survivals as such; they are generated out of sustained commercial activity, state regulatory systems, and international trade agreements. Nor are we dealing with a localised food system except in a very restricted sense, and certainly not one which has survived from some pre-capitalist era. This is, at best, one item in an older farming or culinary system that has been selected out by the market. Such items gain their meanings and their value, from being simultaneously inside and outside the commodity form. Initiatives around quality foods present us with a polarised opposition between an industrialised food system and a more traditional world, but if we counterpoise them to the experience of peasant economies then this opposition appears less radical and more complex. A further example will clarify the point. The *pecorino* cheese of the Val D'Orcia is famous in Italy, but only ever constituted one part of the local farming and culinary practices. The rest of the local system is largely abandoned and unlamented, whether the rough wine or the hard labour of trying to produce vegetables on baked clay soils. When the local food economy broke up in the decades after the Second World War, many kinds of cultivation and animal husbandry became uncompetitive and ended; most food was no longer produced locally. But something did survive: paradoxically, grazing sheep on the land that had been marginal. The local is what the market leaves after it has filtered out everything else.

These issues emerge very clearly in the Slow Food Movement, which was founded in the northern Italy in the late 1980s, and has since spread round the world. It began as an offshoot of the left-wing recreational and cultural circles, ARCI, publishing a food supplement in *Il Manifesto*, a radical newspaper. Its objectives are the celebration of local agricultural traditions and cuisine, protecting consumers and advocating conviviality. Although the starting point was the vindication and preservation of good accessible local food, a middle ground between *haute cuisine* and junk food, it has certainly moved to the glossy end of the spectrum, and the guides seem aimed primarily at tourists.

The Slow Food Movement recognised early on, that the wine trade of Burgundy was better organised than that of Piedmont because of the French concept of *terroir* and its regulatory frames. Through it, they sold not just wine, but a whole world. The *terroir* concept, translated as *territorio*, was borrowed, and frames activity around the valorisation of Barolo wine, cheeses, speciality-cured meats, or threatened breeds of Tuscan pigs. Once again *territorio* is not just a geographical concept, it is also a cultural one: "How is it possible to renounce the practices, the rhythms, the layers of cultural sediment that make up our history and our identity without running the risk of turning into barbarians"? (Petrini, 2001, p. 33). In fact the concept of *territorio* explicitly blends with a representation of Italy, as the land of a thousand bell-towers (*campanili*), each with its distinctive identity and culture. We need to remain critical of the political direction of such movements. Whatever the intentions of founders and the bulk of supporters, all these celebrations of bounded localities, culture, tradition, pedigree, and *terroir*, provide a perfect terrain for the articulation of homelands and anti-immigrant rhetoric, and it is not surprising that right-wing neo-populists come sniffing round the food stands (cf. Du Puis & Goodman, 2005, p. 363).

Slow Food, like the other movements is not in fact advocating a localised food system, but a patchwork of specialities: wine from Piedmont, sheep's cheese from Tuscany, almonds from Sicily. Their existence is made possible only by a wider market, since they are either exported or consumed by galloping gourmets: either the food or the consumer must travel. This does not entirely mesh with the general antagonism to industrial society, something gently acknowledged as a dilemma in their writing ("The Difficult Voyage," Petrini, 2001, pp. 54–59). Even within Italy and amongst long-term supporters of local specialities and local cuisines, there are strong criticisms of the Slow Food Movement, the regulation and the commercial interests which turn all these practices and experiences into commodities (Veronelli & Echaurren, 2003). The Slow Food dilemma is generated because of the concern with authenticity. Unlike Kropotkin, for example, who put some of his energies into sharing knowledge about growing food within the European allotment systems, Slow Food and movements like it are concerned with those specialities which can be produced nowhere else on earth.

Most of the comments so far do not apply to the UK, since few products make the link between territory and quality of the kind embodied in EU regulations. Britain has a ‘‘Last of the Summer Wine’’ country, but no *terroir* of the West Riding. It is generally assumed that this is because British farming was industrialised earlier and more completely than anywhere else in the world, and local specialities were destroyed in the process. Angela Tregear’s study qualifies this argument and in the process throws further light on the issue of authenticity.

Britain does have speciality foods named after the place they are produced or traded, starting of course not with Cheddar cheese but with Stilton. Although generally unprotected by European DOC regulation, on a small scale they flourish and grow, like Cornish Yarg, a cheese invented in the 1970s and named after Mr. Gray, who simply spelt his name backwards (Tregear, 2003, p. 101). Tregear’s argument is that these products are not survivals from a peasant era, but derive from the interaction of traditions and innovations in the new era of mass markets. For example, it is in the 19th century that many farm animal breeds and fruit cultivars are first created or identified and specified: from Jersey Royals to societies for the preservation of Aberdeen Angus cattle (2003, p. 96). The Victorian concern with race and pedigree carried over into the animal and vegetable world.

This study broadens our understanding of the linkages between food, place and quality by looking beyond the more familiar DOC regulatory scheme, and at a longer historical period. Tregear draws attention to the interaction between different production modes rather than a linear agricultural history, and she suggests that artisan production can be as important as *terroir* in the delineation of quality. When we turn to why all this is happening, we reach something of an impasse. She says, ‘‘Permeating such activities is a concern for *authenticity*’’(2003, p. 96, her italics), and this is stimulated by the development of markets. We now need to think about what exactly is this concern for authenticity, and what precisely the relationship between authenticity and markets.

AUTHENTICITY

The concept of authenticity evokes a range of meanings – that which is original, genuine, real, true, true to itself. As so often in these matters we get the sense of a self-confirming semantic field, and also that we will only get a handle on it by spelling out what it is defined against, what precisely is inauthentic and artificial? The short answer is that it is defined against modern, "mass" culture. There is a long history to these themes and to their political representation. In the early 19th century Britain is threatened by commerce, a debased business, run by men who only know value-for-money. Then industrialism pursues the chimera of progress with its infernal mechanisms for moving goods and people round the world at ever increasing speed. At the end of the century Ruskin is still leading a campaign against the way Britain is being destroyed by the building of railways.

The concept of authenticity is central in almost all present day research on quality food, and we find it in many other studies of consumer culture. Authenticity is widely evoked in the analysis of antiques, art objects, vintage cars, and certain kinds of tourism, but not in discussion of kitchen cabinets or washing powder. This immediately suggests that we are in Bourdieu's world of Distinction (1984). The consumption, possession and knowledge about these goods constitutes one kind of cultural capital and are imbricated in a process of differentiation: the creation and reproduction of social boundaries. At one level this is a very valuable kind of analysis, even if this is not always going to play-out the way it does in metropolitan France, and peasant understandings of food fall outside the analytical frame provided by most of the literature on consumption. However, there is something else which slips through the net. It is true that these areas of consumption provide the ground for a particular kind of social differentiation; they are different from the display of chunky gold jewellery, for example. That said where does their appeal lie? Is it arbitrary, in the sense that these are just signs whose meanings are exhausted once it is shown how they are incorporated into class differentiation or is there something else, intrinsic to their real or supposed properties? If there is, we have to look for it in the sphere of production.

Authenticity is a quality attributed to a range of foods and cuisines. In the material above two main themes stand out. First there is food specific to a location; secondly these food products are the result of a craft process. These two themes are normally found together and both rest on an appeal to tradition: this food is the product of a continuous and collective endeavour, it predates industrialised food systems and its value derives from that opposition. In some cases, as with the French elaborations of *terroir*, these linkages between place, people, knowledge and food build into a full-blown conception of a bounded local culture, a claim as over-blown as those of any nationalism.

When analysing farming practise in Tuscany, I used the term "quality" to describe the way some features of the production process are drawn into the value of a commodity after it is marketed (Pratt, 1994, pp. 154–165). The term authenticity carries many of the same connotations, it signifies that some feature of the production process is known, we know where it comes from, what it is made of, who made it. We know its origin, and have conversations about it. We do not have those kinds of conversation about our kitchen cabinets or about the work of the packers who assembled our mixed salad. In addition to the conversations we have labels, which are essential in providing consumers with information about the production process when direct contact with the producer is missing. Only the label can authenticate the foodstuff as organic, fair trade, or a regional speciality, and it is central in a whole apparatus of knowledge and connoisseurship. It appears to provide a benign and transparent link between two worlds, but in the concluding remarks we shall see both that it provides the framework for the extraction of "monopoly rent" and that different political processes may derive from a process of authentication.

For some writers, the issues of authenticity and consumption lie at the core of the condition of modernity:

> I use the term consumer in opposition to the aesthetic ideal of a creative producer. I want to reflect on a condition in which very little of what we possess is made by us in the first instance. Therefore to be a consumer is to possess consciousness that one is living through objects and images not of one's own creation. It is this which makes the term symptomatic of what some at least have seen as the core meaning of the term modernity. This sense of consumption as a secondary relationship takes on particular importance within an ideology, which espouses…the aesthetic ideal of authenticity through creation…. Within such a dominant ideology the condition of consumption is always a potential state of rupture. Consumption then may not be about choice, but rather the sense that we have no choice but to attempt to overcome the experience of rupture using those very same goods and images, which create for many the sense of modernity as rupture. (Miller, 1995, pp. 1–2)

The argument builds into a critique of approaches which privilege forms of culture, which predate the encroachment of global capitalism and ignore the creativity of those whose everyday lives unfold in a world of "mass" consumption (cf. Peters, 1999). Authenticity is a quality of the rooted and ancient, not of the modern, while culture is precisely that which money cannot buy. More specifically the quotation above suggests that in a world where we do not make the things we live by there will be a sense of rupture, since we may still associate authenticity with creation through production. Miller argues that we attempt to overcome this rupture through creativity in the sphere of consumption. His approach is itself based on a rupture, which leaves little room for understanding how the organisation of production shapes consumption. However the point here is to suggest the possibility that consumers may also try to recapture the aura of authenticity through consuming goods, which are valued precisely because their connection to the world of production is known. In that sense, authenticity is not a survival from some prelapsarian world of peasants and artisans, but precisely a shadow cast by an economy organised around exchange value.

In order to take this any further, we need to say a little more about value. David Graeber's starting point is to posit value as the importance actors give to their creative acts, which then become congealed in objects, localities, relationships (2001, p. 45). This is a relative importance: *how much* energy is invested in particular activities. He adds that this creativity is embedded in some larger social whole (2001, p. 67, p. 254), so stressing that there is collective importance and recognition given to this creativity. The values are often embedded in institutionalised or ritualised forms, and a dialectical relationship emerges between these structural forms and individual desires. This also means that establishing value in a society is a political process. One important point that emerges in Graeber's long dialogue with Marx and Mauss is that fetishisation in its most general sense is not unique to a market economy. Value has two moments, the creative action or energy, and the "congealed" result of that action, stored in objects and localities. An actor looking at a valued object, a shell necklace, an heirloom, objectifies, reifies, the creative energy, which has gone into its making or which it symbolizes. The examples Graeber uses are precisely those categories of goods, which are termed "valuables" in anthropological analysis and it is not clear whether the analysis holds more widely. However, he does also suggest that:

> Collectively, human beings create their worlds, but owing to the extraordinary complexity of how all this creative activity is coordinated socially, no one can keep track of the process, let alone take control of it. As a result we are constantly confronting our own actions and creations as if they were alien powers. Fetishism is simply when this happens to material objects. (2005, p. 428)

When we turn to the distinctive features of market economies, Graeber stresses that they are organised in terms of there being one value, with money being the measure of everything, hence everything is "convertible." He then adds that we talk about values in the plural in those contexts relatively insulated from the market – the church, home or museum (2001, p. 78). From a similar perspective Fine argues that:

> Money has the effect of homogenising exchange in the sense that all goods are measurable against one another in the single dimension of money. Whilst commodities necessarily have different use values, they almost appear to lose them in being set against money. In the market everything has its price. As Simmel (1900, p. 134) puts it, money forces an extraneous standard upon things, a standard that is quite alien to distinction. (Fine, 2002, p. 30)

There is a second, and more familiar, strand in the commentary on commodity fetishism (as opposed to fetishism in general): that in our economic world we do not just objectify labour, the labour itself is alienated. Here too Graeber seeks to extend the social significance of this reality:

> When workers agree to work for wages, they place themselves in a position in which for them, money is the end of the whole process. They perform their creative, productive actions in order to get paid. But for Marx this is of special significance, because the value that the money represents is, in the last instance, that of labour itself. What's happening here goes well beyond the fetishization of commodities. And it is even more fundamental to the nature of capitalism… Money represents the ultimate social significance of their actions, the means by which it integrated in a total (market) system. But it can do so because it is also the object of their actions: that's why they are working: in order to receive a paycheck at the end of the week. (2001, pp. 66–67)

Graeber has a great deal more to say about money and its unique capacity to store value, and also about the ideology of the market with its highly individuated notion of human desires (e.g. 2001, p. 257). His analysis opens up an intriguing question. If in market societies money is a measure, a medium and above all an end in itself (2001, p. 66) and value-for-money dominates what we conventionally call the economy, how do other values co-exist with this monetarised realm and its rationality of quantification and self-interest? Graeber points out that in our view of society, market principles can be balanced by family values, altruistic charity (2001, p. 257), but he views these as just "two sides of the same false coin." The phrase is at odds with the celebration of creativity elsewhere in the book and suggests pessimism about the possibility of building alternatives out of these non-commodified spaces in everyday life. Others have expressed a similar pessimism about the effective autonomy of independent producers (artisans or petty-commodity producers) in a capitalist economy (Fine, 2002, p. 51; Guthman, 2004c).

The ethnography on quality food shows another conjunction, the attempt by consumers to realise values which are precisely defined against the economism of value-for-money through the spending of money. Like the valuables of a gift economy these goods have a unique history (at least in relation to mass goods) of congealed action. By contrast, as Graeber says, money offers a frictionless surface to history. Sutton (2004, p. 377) glosses this, "Money is generic, typically it has no history. More importantly it lacks all specificity in the present, but could be converted into anything in the future." We tell stories about these goods, and they are precisely stories about who, where and how they were made, and as such they are marked off from other consumption items where the fact that we are buying the labour of others is invisible. In that sense too, authenticity may be the shadow cast by exchange value. This spiral in and out of the commodity form is not unique to quality food. It is a theme in analyses of tourism (Greenwood, 1989; McCannell, 1999), and from another direction in the analysis of art: Peters (1999) following Walter Benjamin (1955), remarks that the Mona Lisa only became authentic once it had been copied. Similarly, there was nothing authentic about a farmhouse loaf when we all lived in farmhouses.

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

This article has explored the non-monetary values found in alternative food movements, and it has done so from the perspective of consumption. It has emphasised a romantic discourse, which values objects because of their connection to the past and to the act of creation. In the case of food (which is ingested) everything which comes between us and the food's origins creates artificiality or pollution. I have suggested that this is very much a *reaction* to the real and perceived trends within the "mainstream" food industry, and partly because of that, there is a tendency to misrepresent the relationship between the two. The alternative food chains are not simply survivals from a pre-industrial age, they emerged in parallel with the revolutions in farming and processing; their values (such as "organic") are not those of a peasantry, but emerge as a counterpoint to industrial agriculture and commodification. I have also indicated that a simple opposition between a commercial, disenchanted world, dominated by value-for-money, and an alternative domain of the natural or the holistic obscures the complex relationship between the two, where money-value is often precisely the guarantor of quality or authenticity.

The alternative food chains attempt various kinds of reconnection between the worlds of production and consumption. Some connections are organisational: self-provisioning, the preference given to small farmers and producers whose supply lines are "direct" or "fair," and the embedding of market relations. Others are more "discursive," the conversations about how and where the food was produced, elaborating knowledge and expertise which may be based on direct experience, or crucially on labels, which constitute such an emblematic and enigmatic link between two worlds.

If we turn the perspective round and examine the alternative food chains from the point of view of production and distribution, then we encounter a much more heterogeneous reality. This is particularly important if we are concerned with the transformative potential of these movements in relation to corporate power, or in relation to class or social justice. In this context the categories "organic" or "DOC" reveal nothing, and it is essential to distinguish between those quality foodstuffs that have provided some autonomy in the way people gain their livelihoods and those that have been produced and/or sold by the major corporations. The highly exploitative labour relations that provide us with so much of our "cheap" food may equally be found in the quality sphere. There is a further need to investigate the way in which the intensive capitalist production of quality foods impacts on the space for smaller independent producers with a wider social and political agenda, an issue which Guthman (2004a, 2004b) opens up in relation to Californian organic agriculture.

When we turn to the labelling and regulation of foodstuffs similar issues emerge. What may appear to the consumer as a reconnection to the world of production is usually a much more complex process. The labels, and the conversations about authenticity, provide a very variable and sometimes tenuous connection to the world of rural labour, they may continue to reify that labour, and they certainly do not achieve an end of commodity fetishism per se, if that labour is alienated (cf. Bernstein & Campling, 2006). Labels and the branding of goods are also classic ways in which market niches and higher prices are secured. We do not know a priori who in the chain benefits: whether those higher prices reflect higher production costs, greater returns to labour, or increased profit taking. Guthman's conclusion is that "While labels are necessary to set ethical commodities apart, they allow protest to be conflated with consumption choice, by giving centrality to the commodity as vehicle of social change, they resurrect the fetishism of commodities by the back door" (Guthman, 2004b, p. 235).

These comments on the values generated through the production of quality foodstuffs (and their labels) constitute a paradigmatic example of Harvey's analysis of monopoly rent, which occurs where there is "exclusive control over some directly or indirectly tradable item which is in some crucial respects unique and non-replicable" (Harvey, 2001, p. 395). There is a tension between uniqueness and tradability, or as expressed above, a spiral in and out of the commodity form. "If monopoly rents are to be realised then someway has to be found to keep commodities or places unique and particular enough to maintain a monopolistic edge" (2001, p. 396). Harvey's exploration of the ways monetary value is extracted from such objects (including wine and *terroir*) focuses on cultural discourses, since "claims to uniqueness and authenticity can best be understood as distinctive and non-replicable cultural claims" (p. 399). "The problem for capital is to find ways to co-op, subsume, commodify and monetarize such differences just enough to be able to appropriate monopoly rents therefrom. The problem for oppositional movements is to use the validation of particularity, uniqueness, authenticity, culture and aesthetic meanings in ways that open up new possibilities" (2001, p. 410). Movements built around this kind of activity and validation constitutes one of Harvey's "spaces of hope."

For that and other reasons I do not want to end this article on a pessimistic note. It is undoubtedly true that many different aspirations are found in the alternative food movements, that the pursuit of one of them may, despite appearances, do nothing for the others, that not everything is on the label. It is also true that this is a field full of paradoxes, that romantic visions are tied hand and foot to that which they oppose, that the search for alternative values can lead to higher prices and profits; quality may be dissolved back into money. These mismatches and paradoxes reveal, amongst other things, precisely the issues that concern Graeber, the dominance of the commodity form and the way it attempts to recolonise the alternative spaces that emerge. Nevertheless, that does not mean the terrain should simply be abandoned. These movements have revealed to a wider public a great deal about the agro-industrial food system outlined in the introduction and provided a constant critique of its operations. They have also, here and there, to a varying extent, evaded capture and conducted a series of experiments in how to build alternatives. A key political issue is how these experiments are articulated and connected.

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OUTSOURCING OTHERNESS: CRAFTING AND MARKETING CULTURE IN THE GLOBAL HANDICRAFTS MARKET

Jennifer S. Esperanza

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the commercial handicrafts market from Bali, Indonesia to the United States. Using ethnographic examples gathered from research among handicrafts producers, fair trade activists and handicrafts distributors I explore the influence of intermediaries (buyers, distributors, designers) in determining the cultural and economic value of ethnic handicrafts sold in the international marketplace. Over the past two decades, the village of Tegallalang has diversified its crafts industry to specialize in the mass-production of non-Balinese "ethnic art" (e.g., Native American dreamcatchers, Moroccan furniture, and African masks). While Balinese view the global handicrafts market as an opportunity to pursue cosmopolitan, modern, and middle-class identities, this chapter discusses how non-Balinese intermediaries regularly engage in forms of cultural capital that assert their dominance over handicrafts producers in the global South. The work of a Balinese fair trade organization is also examined in this chapter, and their efforts to redirect

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consumer attention away from the ethnocentric categories of authenticity and tradition and instead focus on workers' rights and fair compensation.

INTRODUCTION

> Since the earliest times, voyagers have returned from distant lands inspired by all they have seen and experienced on their travels, bringing with them the exotic and unusual to display in their homes. Colours, textures, surfaces and textiles have always proved a particularly rich source of inspiration, for they are at the very heart of a country's character, inextricably linked to its customs and history…Techniques and designs are still handed down from parent to child, often in the face of great hardship or the increasingly pervasive lure of MTV culture. (Dilcock, 2000, p. 8)

In *Global Style: Exotic Elements and Contemporary Interiors* (2000), British interior designer Leslie Dilcock expounds upon the virtues of folk and ethnic art collected from around the world. Her descriptions of craft production, such as the one presented above, portray indigenous artisans in the global South bravely struggling to keep their handicraft traditions alive amidst an era of globalization. Such narratives, also found in popular travel, home, and garden magazines as well as in shopping catalogs, rely upon Orientalist dichotomies of tradition/modernity, local/global, and handmade/industrial to describe the state of artisanal production in the developing world. This is especially true for the genre of handicrafts known as *ethnic art*: handmade items crafted by indigenous people who are usually in the minority within their nation-state boundaries and who do not wield the political or economic power to determine the course of their lives (Graburn, 1976, p. 3). Depictions of ethnic art as material objects literally plucked from the everyday lives of subaltern groups are especially popular, with particular emphasis on the threat of global and modernizing processes upon traditional forms of esthetic expression and the need to rescue such objects from their vanishing cultural worlds (Barnard, 1991, p. 65; Clifford, 1987, p. 122; Errington, 1998, p. 149).

Although the demand for objects crafted by indigenous people using local materials and traditional techniques continues to thrive, the reality is that a complex network of contract laborers, distributors, corporate representatives, design consultants, buyers, and other "middlemen" help to bring ethnic art from sites of production to the hands of consumers. Masks, woodcarvings, textiles, and other "tribal" objects available for mass-consumption derive from the collective effort of various intermediaries. Because the consumer demand for the exotic has steadily grown over the last few decades (the popularity of *ethnic chic* in the United States is evidenced by the proliferation of retail outlets such as Pier One Imports and World Market), commercial handicrafts – like many other commodities produced and circulated for mass-consumption – are produced in high volumes using industrial or semi-industrial methods (see Fig. 1). Moreover, a glimpse into the "social life" (Appadurai, 1986) of commercial ethnic art – traveling from sites of production, distribution, and consumption – reveals that middlemen not only control the flow of these commodities, but also control their cultural values and meanings in ways that is still rarely acknowledged in public discourse.

This chapter examines business transactions between handicrafts producers and distributors in the global marketplace. More narrowly, I investigate how these transactions have become sites from which middlemen influence and control the social and economic value of ethnic art. I argue that while foreign buyers make concerted efforts to source ethnic arts and handicrafts at the best prices, many are also interested in reinforcing their perceived identities as cultural and economic "gate-keepers" in the global economy. I discuss how intermediaries – designers, wholesale, and buying agents from

Fig. 1. A Handicrafts Producer Uses a Power Drill to Secure the Parts of a Woodcarved Flower.

North America, Europe, Australia, and Japan – position themselves as key figures in the global ethnic arts trade, even in dealing with objects which they have no cultural connection. In the commercialized ethnic arts market, notions of authenticity are obscured and demystified, as cultural objects are produced in larger volumes, over wider geographic expanses and by groups who have little or no cultural relationship to the ethnic objects they are manufacturing for export.

Conversely, for many Balinese, the transnational trade in handicrafts serves as a potentially lucrative avenue from which they can claim to be key players in the processes of global cultural production. More specifically, Balinese handicrafts producers and distributors use the market to perform modern and cosmopolitan identities in ways that the tourism sector rarely allows. While performances of so-called traditional and authentic Balinese culture has sustained the tourism sector for nearly a century, the commercial ethnic arts market calls for locals to expand their cultural knowledge to become more cosmopolitan entrepreneurs; namely through an awareness of various cultural esthetics and marketing trends that do not call upon ahistorical and romanticized representations of local culture. However, the market still ultimately relies upon stereotypical, romanticized images of ethnic "Others" that are not much of a departure from the cultural distillations promoted in the Balinese tourism industry.

What makes the community of Tegallalang a unique site to understand the contemporary ethnic arts market is that over the course of two decades, it has provided the overseas market with reproductions of ethnic arts and crafts from non-Balinese/non-Indonesian cultures. In addition to sales of Garuda woodcarvings and *wayang golek* puppets, locals have garnered economic success and international attention by producing and distributing Native American "dreamcatchers," Australian Aboriginal dijeridu and African masks for export (see Fig. 2). These objects were first introduced by North American and European buyers in the 1980s who found that Balinese woodcarvers were adept at producing facsimiles of many different types of cultural objects (and at the right prices). Armed with sketches, prototypes, museum catalogs and photographs from National Geographic Magazine, an international array of buyers have frequented Tegallalang in search of suppliers with whom they could negotiate business contracts. While the term "outsourcing" has traditionally been used to describe the process by which corporations hire cheap, contracted labor for tasks such as manufacturing, customer service, or distribution in order to lower costs and to make more efficient use of labor and resources, I find this term also useful for describing the contemporary commercial ethnic arts market. While the outsourcing of

Fig. 2. Native American-Style Dreamcatchers Produced and Sold in Tegallalang.

cultural objects are not dictated by the cultural groups themselves (i.e., Navajo Indians, Australian Aboriginals, and the Ashanti are not paying Balinese handicrafts producers to create reproduction of their cultural objects), the esthetics of cultural ''otherness'' are those imagined by retailers based in the industrialized North. I argue that the phrase ''outsourcing otherness'' is useful because it describes a situation in which retailers and distributors in the North rely on the cheap labor of third-party Balinese to produce cultural object and images of subaltern groups largely for their own economic gains. The outsourcing of otherness does not imply that the Balinese have been hired to reproduce traditional objects by the cultural groups from which the objects originate, but rather, they have been contracted to continue the work of imagining *Otherness*; to continue the simulacrum of subaltern culture imagined by those who hold economic and political influence.

In section ''Handicrafts Research'', I will address the research that has already been conducted on middlemen in the global handicrafts and ethnic art trade. In section ''Artistic and Cultural Production in Bali,'' I describe and discuss a business transaction between a Balinese handicrafts producers and an American buyer. I argue that authenticity is an area from which buyers discursively assert their cultural capital, despite the fact that they hold very little, if any real connection to cultural groups represented by the objects. In this section I also present a case in which retailers of handicrafts fabricate stories in order to generate consumer interest, particularly by calling upon romanticized images of ethnic ''Others.'' These stories further underscore the extent to which middlemen control the social and economic value of ethnic art. I will also discuss the work of a locally established NGO in Bali that seeks to reclaim agency for local producers in a market largely dictated and dominated by middlemen from abroad. Yayasan Mitra Bali, a fair trade organization, attempts to challenge the hegemony of foreign intermediaries in the market, not by focusing on issues of esthetics and authenticity, but by redirecting the focus to workers' rights and fair representation in the marketplace.

HANDICRAFTS RESEARCH

Middlemen have had a long presence in the history of commercialized crafts. They have introduced new methods of production, presented artisans with new materials/mediums, influenced local esthetics by privileging certain styles over others and selected the objects that will be circulated in the world market. Nelson Graburn's edited volume on Fourth World arts (1976) was one of the first to chronicle these various interventions; it also included discussions on the influence of colonialism, tourism, and other forms of cross-cultural contact on local art and craft production. The work of Erik Cohen on Thai handicrafts also explores changes in local crafts due to social, political, and economic processes: from the esthetic influences of Hmong refugees who resettled into Thailand after the Second Indo-China War, to the hybridization of styles derived from various regions of the country (2000). Paul Stoller's work among African tradesmen in New York City reveals the truly transnational nature of the textile trade: African-American consumers purchase so-called traditional *kente* cloth from West African vendors. Stoller follows how these Malian, Ghanaian, and other migrant vendors source their cloth from Korean and Chinese wholesalers based in lower Manhattan and New Jersey, who in turn, source the cloth from textile factories in China (2002). Such anthropological contributions to the study of ethnic arts, along with the works of June Nash (1993), Shelly Errington (1998), Kathleen Adams (1997), Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner (1999), Michael Chibnik (2003), and Andrew Causey (2003) reveal the intersections and contradictions of representation, authenticity, and cultural production amidst ever expanding global economies. What have been especially important about these works are their efforts to dissolve the categories of the authenticity and tradition; that ethnic art production has never been static and has always been influenced by outside sources. It is only within the recent era of late global capitalism that cultural borrowing has become more transparent, more quickly recognizable – those who have found the process of cultural borrowing threatening to "traditional" esthetics have been those who must rely on the authentic/inauthentic or traditional/modern dichotomies to reinforce their own cultural capital and positions of power.

For 14 months I conducted fieldwork on Bali's export handicrafts industry, with particular attention to the village of Tegallalang, a community of roughly 7,000 inhabitants located in central Bali. The community recently has shifted its economic activities from agriculture (i.e., rice farming) to the export handicrafts and furniture industry. As mentioned earlier, what makes Tegallalang a particularly interesting case study is its recent foray into the mass-production of "ethnic" handicrafts of non-Balinese cultures. Commercial ethnic art has long been produced by communities that hold very little or no connection to the indigenous esthetics supposedly represented in the objects (Cohen, 1998). The use of entirely original esthetics that are marketed by artisans as "native" designs is not entirely new (Causey, 2003; Meisch, 1992; Steiner, 1999). Yet scant ethnographic research has been conducted on communities that supply the market with as diverse a collection of cultural objects as Tegallalang. Walking through the main artery of this village, one will find hundreds of kiosks or "art shops" as they are locally known, selling objects as varied as Haida masks (see Fig. 3), skeletal statues used in the Mexican celebration of *Dia de los Muertos*, Australian Aborigninal *dijeridu*, and African *djembe* drums (see Fig. 4). In short, the village has become a one-stop shopping resource for ethnic/tribal art of distinctly different and varied world cultures. But while interesting, Tegallalang is not unique: China, the Philippines, and Mexico have also become popular suppliers in the commercial ethnic arts trade.

Since the late 1970s, Bali's economy has expanded from the agriculture and tourism sectors to include a multi-million dollar commercial handicrafts market. What began as small-scale souvenir production for tourism grew to become an independently successful industry in textiles, wood carved statues, masks, and other handmade goods for export. As international consumer demand for these crafts increased, it became readily apparent that the tourism and hospitality industries were not the only paths for locals to

Fig. 3. A Mask Inspired by Northwest Coast Native American Esthetics, Sold in a Tegallalang Art Shop.

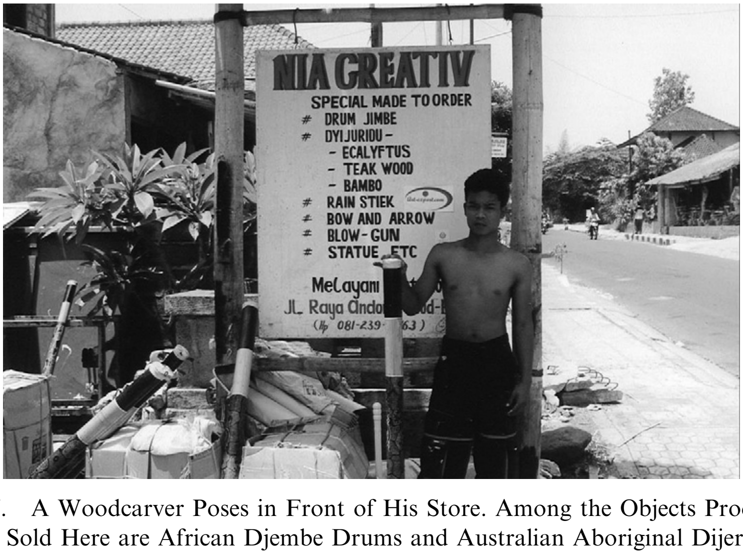

Fig. 4. A Woodcarver Poses in Front of His Store. Among the Objects Produced and Sold Here are African Djembe Drums and Australian Aboriginal Dijeridu.

pursue middle-class, modern, and cosmopolitan identities. Taking out bank loans, investing personal savings and/or venturing into partnerships with other family members, many Balinese began opening art shops in front of their traditional family compounds (see Fig. 5). If woodcarvings are not produced on-site by woodcarvers, they are easily (and now, more commonly) bought in bulk offsite from outlying communities. Thus, a number of Tegallalang entrepreneurs have themselves become middlemen – buying crafts in bulk from woodcarvers offsite and selling them for profit to commercial sourcing agents/buyers from Australia, North America, Europe, and Japan.

Local entrepreneurs display their goods in showrooms that line the main thoroughfare of Tegallalang, awaiting foreign wholesale and retail buyers with whom they can secure business contracts. Buyers travel to Bali during the "buying seasons" (roughly, from February to April and August to October), when they scour the island for crafts, textiles, carvings, and other merchandise for export. Although they were concerned with finding high-quality crafts that posed the most potential for consumer sales, buyers more often expressed interest maintaining low production and shipping costs.

Fig. 5. Construction is Under Way for an Art Shop Located in Front of a Balinese Family Compound.

ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION IN BALI

In order to better understand the role of middlemen in Tegallalang's ethnic arts market, one must first understand Bali's relationship to Western artists and tourists since the early 20th century. For much of the last century, Bali has been used to symbolize Orientalist romanticisms, paradisiacal fantasies, and nationalist mythologies of Europeans, North Americans, Indonesians, and other "outsiders." In the 1920s, the Dutch colonial government devised a policy of *Baliseering* ("Balinization") in which locals were trained in so-called "traditional" Balinese dances, woodcarving, painting, and literature (Picard, 1996, p. 21). Prior to the arrival of the Dutch, Balinese did not have a separate category for *the arts* in the Western sense – select families or individuals were merely known to show unique adeptness or skill at a particular esthetic tradition. Yet these skills did not set individuals aside as "artists" or practitioners of "high culture." The Dutch, however, did make this distinction between art and practice, emphasizing that *Baliseering* would protect the island's traditional culture. It was their belief that the Balinese and their arts were under threat by modernist notions of national independence and by the Islamic radicalism that was gaining popularity in neighboring islands such as Java and Lombok. By secularizing and depoliticizing the expressive arts, the *Baliseering* program was seen as a preventive measure for Balinese from engaging in political protest.

By the 1920s, Bali had gained a worldwide reputation as "the island of artists," and attracted tourists from Europe, North America, and Australia. Tour packages were designed and marketed to Westerners seeking to explore both its natural beauty and the regalia of the local Hindu culture (e.g., cremation ceremonies, temple festivals). It was at this time that hotels began to offer guests staged programs of "native dances" (Picard, 1996, p. 26) in which youths trained under *Baliseering* performed for a paying audience. Wood carved souvenirs were also marketed to tourists, by youths trained through *Baliseering*.

Tourism in the early 20th century also brought Westerners to permanently settle on the island. Painters, musicians, dancers, and scholars came to work not only on their own creations, but with the hopes of preserving so-called traditional culture, as *Baliseering* had set out to do some years before. Many European expatriates settled down in interior villages such as Ubud – where it was believed that tourism had not yet "tainted" the integrity of the local culture, as opposed to the over-commercialized areas of southern Bali. Over time, interior villages such as Peliatan, Ubud, and Tegallalang gained local, national and later, international reputations for producing the most "authentic" dancers, sculptors, and musicians in all of Bali. It is no coincidence either, that these communities have also been settled by expatriate artists, dancers and writers, as well as being researched by foreign anthropologists in search of witnessing a version of Bali "untouched" by outsiders. Yet as anthropologists such as Adrien Vickers (1989) and Michel Picard (1996) have noted, the Balinese culture has always been open to outside influence, which accounts for its resiliency amidst various instances of invasion, colonization, and commercialization.

Among the more famous expatriates residing in Ubud during the early 1920s and 1930s was Walter Spies, a German artist well known for his primitivist style of painting. Spies is perhaps the most famous Western artist to have resided in Bali and is often credited for introducing Western-style painting (on canvas) to the Balinese (Picard, 1996; Vickers, 1989). He showed an interest in "revitalizing" the traditional arts such as dance, drama, woodcarving and literature, as well as transforming skilled dancers, singers, and other performers into professional "artists" who could perform for tourists. Along with the *Baliseering* program and tourism, expatriates such as Spies helped to further Orientalize Bali as a living "Garden of Eden." By the 1930s, Spies' residence in Ubud had become a popular destination for other foreigners (tourists, anthropologists, writers, ethnomusicologists, and artists) seeking a more "authentic" glimpse of Bali and to set themselves apart from other Westerners staying in the commercialized hotels in the south. With the presence of other Western artists, Ubud quickly became the "real center of new art" (Vickers, 1989, p. 113).

By mid-century, tourism had declined due to the outbreak of World War II. Moreover, after the war, violent conflict between the Dutch and Indonesians eager for gaining national independence brought tourism to a halt (*ibid.*, pp. 155–173). Indonesia finally gained its independence in 1949, after the US threatened to cut off the Netherlands from its Marshall Plan funding if they did not relinquish control of its territories. Sukarno became the first president of the newly independent nation-state, promoting principles of a "guided democracy." Sukarno's power lasted until 1965, when anti-communists overthrew the existing government, which they believed had become sympathetic to communist ideology. Throughout Indonesia, individuals suspected of aligning with Sukarno's political party or of showing socialist tendencies were either imprisoned, kidnapped, or murdered. In October of that year, mass-violence erupted in Bali, resulting in the death of 80,000 Balinese – approximately 5% of the island's population (Robinson, 1995, p. 1). Suharto became president in 1967, which was the beginning of a 30-year administration known as the *Orde Baru* or New Order. Suharto urged foreign investment including manufacturing, mining, forestry and in the case of Bali, tourism. Soon, by the 1970s, Bali exploded with the construction of hotels, restaurants, nightclubs, and shops. Unlike the tourism of the 1920s and 1930s which brought wealthy travelers, artists, and academics, tourism during the New Order attracted a more middle-class clientele including large families, traveling students, retirees, and backpackers on low-budgets.

The New Order's aggressive modernization policies also led to many valuable woodcarvings, textiles, antiques, and temple pieces to be sold on the international object market. Catering to Western modernist fantasies of finding treasures in exotic, remote, and unspoiled territories, the tourism bureau often made linkages between tourism and the handicrafts/antiques/souvenir market (Errington, 1998, pp. 122–123). Tegallalang was one community to benefit from this strategy: as Ubud continued to be promoted in guidebooks as a "must-see" for those interested in seeing more authentic, less commercialized Balinese dance and music, neighboring Tegallalang was also promoted to tourists as a source for "authentic" woodcarvings. By the late 1970s, when Tegallalang's famed rice paddies had been added to many tour agendas, souvenir stands were erected throughout the village to sell wood carved statues to tourists as they disembarked from their buses (see Fig. 6).

Historically, Tegallalang has always been a popular site for woodcarving, as several families have garnered attention over generations for their expertize in crafting elaborate statues of Hindu deities and wooden fixtures for local temples. Masks from the Ramayana play, Garuda statues, as well as statues of other Hindu deities sustained a fairly successful run among consumers in the West during the early 1980s, but this demand waned after several years. By the mid 1980s, locals became more dependent on foreign currency for their livelihoods, and as their consumption patterns began to include more high-priced goods (i.e., motorbikes, televisions, telephones), the woodcarvers were desperate to find ways to keep their newly-formed cottage industries afloat. Their answer came in the form of Western expatriates residing in the area.

American and European travelers have made Bali a popular destination for those searching for spiritual and cultural enlightenment since the 1970s. As one of the last stops on the popular "backpacker route" through South and Southeast Asia, Bali served as a permanent or at least semi-permanent home to a large number of expatriates. But because many of the expatriates during those early years were not as financially well-off as their counterparts

Fig. 6. The Famed Rice Paddies of Tegallalang.

from the days of Walter Spies, financing a living in Bali had become a priority. Exporting handicrafts was an easy route for generating income; the island was already abundant with well-crafted textiles, puppets, masks and woodcarvings that could be exported. Thus, expatriates soon became exporters: hiring local artisans to supply them with goods, establishing contracts with overseas buyers and creating an industry that would quickly diversify to include furniture, jewelry, clothing, and coffee. But as interest in Southeast Asian objects turned into fascination for South American, African, South Asian, and Native American objects, these travelers-turned-entrepreneurs realized that the Balinese could also produce facsimiles of what was popular among consumers abroad. They merely had to present the artisans with photographs or prototypes of the desired product.

According to several foreign sourcing agents/buyers whom I interviewed, part of running a successful art shop includes the ability to accommodate constantly changing consumer needs. The most successful art shops in the village, in their opinion, have been those which have quickly responded to sourcing agents' requests, stayed abreast of the latest consumer trends, and changed their product lines accordingly. Yet given the amount of labor, capital, materials, and training that goes into producing a new line of handicrafts, changing to meet buyer/consumer demands poses a serious financial risk that many Balinese producers are not willing to take.

It is not unusual to find art shops that have opted not to change with fluctuating trends, and instead, continued selling the objects that have granted them financial success (or at least, stability) in the past. But many of the middlemen (sourcing agents/buyers) have expressed their disapproval at this, claiming the Balinese's reluctance to stay abreast of trends as "lazy" and "lacking in originality." Buyers complained to me of going from art shop to art shop in Tegallalang, only to find that shopkeepers were selling the same designs that had been popular 3–5 years ago. This is a common criticism foreign middlemen have of the Balinese suppliers, leading to a more general discourse that views Balinese as incapable of becoming a successful economic player in the global economy. Without the guidance and tutelage of outside institutions and individuals like themselves, these middlemen claim that Bali would be left behind in the modernizing goals that characterize late global capitalism. As Peter, an American handicrafts buyer expressed to me during an interview,

> Actually…I have a lot of arguments for globalization. And actually, I feel I'm a little cog in it. And as far as the political correctness side of this business…I actually feel quite good about it. Because I feel people's lives improve…I send all my workers every year to English courses, computer courses…Like I feel they would not have that opportunity had I not been here. Nobody else would've given them that opportunity.[1]

Despite Peter's claims of providing valuable opportunities to the Balinese, some local entrepreneurs, I interviewed, expressed resentment toward foreigners and their business. For example, two art shop owners defended their decisions not to change their products at the request of buyers because they had already taken on a large risk by going into a business with no training in business or management. These art shop owners shared their frustration with me over foreign buyers' inconsistent and dubious practices. Buyers would harass them to produce new designs, promising to make large orders if they complied. After following the buyers' advice, these Balinese entrepreneurs were only given small contracts or the buyers never returned to their shops as promised.

These shopkeepers felt they controlled more in the negotiating process and resented the fact that these foreigners could either make or break their families' livelihoods. Their desire for more agencies occasionally manifested itself in small acts of defiance during interactions with buyers who came into their shops. On one occasion, I witnessed Ary, a 20-year-old Tegallalang shopkeeper tell a foreign buyer to leave her shop after a particularly long bargaining session over the price of baskets. Unwilling to agree upon a price, she had become exasperated. She was not willing to concede to the low offers of the buying agent, nor did she have any more patience for the agent's aggressive approach to haggling. Startling the buyer as well as myself, Ary abruptly ended negotiations and told the woman to find business elsewhere, despite the fact that she had not had had a customer in almost a week.

In the following pages, I present other ethnographic examples that illustrate the uneven distribution of power between producers and middlemen in the global market of handicrafts. From sites of production in Bali to sites consumption in the United States, these cases illustrate the discursive work involved in determining the cultural and economic value of objects.

"NOT MOROCCAN ENOUGH"

During the early months of my fieldwork, I served as an interpreter for a pair of American sourcing agents through Tegallalang. Phil and Vance – Americans whom I met through a mutual friend – were interested in my research and allowed me to accompany them on their buying excursions. They were the first to bring me to Tegallalang, and after several trips, I decided to conduct my dissertation research on this community.

Vance, the main buyer for their business, sources Balinese batiks, textiles, furniture, and woodcarvings while Phil handles the logistical operations of the business (reserving a cargo container, making sure their merchandise complies with US customs rules, etc.). Vance is well known among many established buyers in Bali, mainly for his ability to source successful products that other buyers had previously dismissed as undesirable or ugly. He has also been known to commission local artisans to order merchandise that other buyers deemed too "tacky" or in poor taste, but would, in fact, become popular among consumers in the United States.

As our rented van sped past endless art shops and galleries through Tegallalang's main street during one of their shopping excursions, Vance suddenly ordered the driver to stop and turn back. He said that he wanted to take a closer look at some "Moroccan tables" he had just spotted on display by the side of the road. The van went into reverse, returning to a shop that had laid out its merchandise out front. This is a common practice among handicrafts vendors throughout Bali; merchandise is often brought out to the front stoops of the shops/kiosks in order to attract buyers who window shop from the comfort of hired, air-conditioned vans. Vance stepped down from the vehicle, and immediately began sorting through a collection of short, multi-colored wooden tables; separating the ones he liked from the rest. An older woman came out to assist us, but quickly turned to me and asked (in Indonesian), ‘‘Which [tables] does he like? What can we do so he can order more?’’ I turned to Vance and translated her request. He told me that he had not seen anyone make these types of tables before, and that could bode well for sales back in the United States. He picked out seven tables for immediate purchase. The Balinese woman asked me why he had not bought all the tables – pointing out that there were many other good tables left. I translated her question to Vance, who replied that some of the tables were not acceptable, because they were decorated in color combinations that were ‘‘not Moroccan enough.’’ He asked the woman where she had learned to make the tables. She told us that they were copied from a newspaper ad. She went to the back of the store and retrieved a newspaper, which included a colored picture of the octagonal multi-colored tables, painted with ornate swirls and patterns. I explained to the woman that Vance did not care much for the color combinations on the remaining tables, and soon, I found myself translating what types of color combinations would go well together and looked more ‘‘authentic.’’ He bought the tables for approximately $17 each and promised to come back if she produced more in the color combinations he had advised her to use. She was very grateful and agreed to take his advice. Just as several of my Balinese research consultants described, Vance never returned to the woman’s shop during the remainder of his stay in Bali, although the woman continue to produce more tables in anticipation of his return. Two years later, I found two of the Moroccan-style tables for sale at a furniture and art gallery in the Southeastern US retailing for a little under $200 each (see Fig. 7).

As Shelly Errington notes, the global market of ethnic art has led to a genre of ethnic art in which authenticity is not the concern, but rather, that ‘‘the look is authentic.’’ (1998, p. 150). In this instance, an American buyer of European descent has asserted his power over the Balinese shopkeeper by telling her what a Moroccan table ‘‘should’’ look like (through the translations of a Filipina-American researcher). A person of Moroccan descent was nowhere in sight, yet everyone (including myself) immediately and unquestioningly deferred to Vance’s claims. Yet Vance had just as few qualifications as the Balinese woman in defining the authenticity of the tables, yet this fact was completely ignored during the exchange. Why? I suspect the shopkeeper deferred to Vance’s claims to esthetic ‘‘knowledge’’ because ultimately, the exchange was not about esthetics but about

Fig. 7. A Moroccan-Style Table from Tegallalang, Bali Sits on Display at an Art Gallery in the US. A Balinese Carved Ganesha Statue Sits Atop the Table.

economic power. Vance had the money and the power to establish a potential business contract, and the shopkeeper knew this. As a middleman, Vance asserts his cultural capital and authority upon handicrafts suppliers by claiming knowledge about esthetic authenticity, while the

Balinese shopkeepers are left with little choice to accept their terms for reasons that are more financial than cultural. The discourse of authenticity, in other words, serves merely as a mask or a standard of cultural capital through which buyers, sourcing agents and other foreign middlemen conducting business in Tegallalang indirectly assert their power over local producers.

CRAFTING OBJECTS AND STORIES

Aaron and Matthew – two Americans who own a New York-based wholesale company specializing in Christmas ornaments – came to Bali several years ago in search of a woodcarver whom they could contract out to produce their exclusively designed ornaments. Aaron had previously worked as a wholesale gifts buyer for another company, and had traveled to Indonesia on many occasions. Familiar with skill of its woodcarvers, he and Matthew chose Bali as their base of operations when they decided to go into the Christmas ornament business together. With the assistance of local driver, they located a woodcarver with a staff large enough to produce several hundred ornaments at a price within their budget. After negotiating a contract and providing a down payment for labor and supplies, Aaron and Matthew presented the Balinese woodcarvers with detailed pen and ink sketches of a Christmas ornament they had designed themselves and wished to have crafted.

They returned to the workshop a few weeks later to collect the finished order. After inspecting a few of the finished pieces however, the two discovered that many ornaments were splattered with paint. They quickly inspected the rest of the ornaments and found that every single ornament was splattered with painted black dots. Strangely, however, these dots came in the form of three paint splatters that were located in exactly the same corner of every one of the hundreds of ornaments. Aaron and Matthew demanded an explanation from the head woodcarver, who defended his innocence. The carver claimed that he and his staff had merely copied exactly what was illustrated on the drawing given to them. He handed back the sketch to Aaron and Matthew, and pointed to three splatters of ink on the drawing. Apparently, the woodcarvers interpreted (accidental) ink splatters on the page as intentional features of the ornament – incorporating them into the object as they were on the sketch. Aaron and Matthew had little time and no choice but to take the defective merchandise to New York in time for the Christmas shopping season.

Upon their return to the US, they took the ornaments to a high-end Manhattan boutique, which had already reserved an order. Sure that they would be reprimanded for the defective merchandise and lose one of their most valuable clients, Aaron and Matthew apologized to the manager and explained the misunderstanding with their woodcarver. To their surprise, however, the owner accepted the ornaments immediately and placed them on the shelves in time before Christmas. They became one of the boutique's best selling items that season.

According to Aaron and Matthew, the boutique owner trained his sales staff to tell customers that the paint splatters on the ornaments were "symbolic messages" from its artisans. As a message to promote religious and cultural tolerance between Balinese Hindus and Christians in the West, salespersons were encouraged to explain to customers that the dots were abstract representations of the Hindu deities Rama, Vishnu, and Shiva. Customers were apparently impressed by this story and as Aaron and Matthew boasted, "The customers *ate* it up!"[2]

As sourcing agents and buyers have often told me, their merchandise easily becomes more valuable if they are able to provide a story about its producers and/or the cultural traditions from which the objects originate. Brian Spooner makes the same observation about the international Oriental carpet trade, "It is in the nature of the business of the Western dealer that he has built up a corpus of knowledge of the Other" (1986, p. 202). This corpus of knowledge is especially useful for ethnic art distributors showcasing their merchandise at trade shows or at retail outlets with a more discerning clientele. Aaron and Matthew were not the ones to devise the story, but the boutique owner was quick to do their job for them in capturing the attention (and imagination) of his customers. Thus, not only do some middlemen build capital based on their knowledge of "good design" or authenticity, but they also reinforce their cultural capital by creating or controlling the narratives that may help to sell their merchandise better. Although the Christmas ornaments were not ethnic art, the boutique owner took advantage of the fact that the product was crafted abroad, and that customers might be more attracted to a product if it had an "ethnic" quality to it. What may have originated as a standard wooden Christmas ornament was able to transcend beyond this category to become an object of intrigue and exoticism; whoever was told the story was made to feel that he/she was among a small, select group of people who were made privy to a secret message of peace and goodwill from the Balinese.

Matt and Aaron's story further underscores another type of cultural capital used among ethnic arts distributors and purveyors in order to reinforce their power in the market. While Vance relied on notions of authenticity to assert his ability to control business transactions between himself and his Balinese suppliers, the New York City boutique owner uses discourses of exoticism and exclusivity to gain more control over customer the demand for his merchandise. What could have been a potentially disastrous sales record due to a production flaw, was, instead transformed into a gimmick. The Christmas ornaments producers back in Bali were never informed of, nor were compensated for, the story that was made at their expense.

RECLAIMING POWER AND AGENCY THROUGH FAIR TRADE

Mitra Bali is a non-governmental, non-profit, fair-trade organization based not far from Tegallalang, in the village of Lot Tunduh. Established in 1993 by Agung Alit, a Balinese who was raised in the capital of Denpasar, Mitra Bali has become well known in both domestic and international fair trade circles. Their goal is not only to provide fair wages and representation, but also to ensure safe working conditions for handicrafts producers in Bali. Items crafted under Mitra Bali's label include generic handicrafts (baskets, textiles, woodcarvings with no particular "cultural" markers) but also "ethnic art" such as those found in Tegallalang. Most of their merchandise is distributed through organizations with socially progressive agendas such as Ten-Thousand Villages (US & Canada), OXFAM (UK), Shared Earth (UK), and the Fair Trade Company (Japan).

I visited their offices on many occasions to watch the daily workings of the organization. In general, Mitra Bali relies on three key sources for design ideas: (a) Balinese producers themselves (original designs), (b) overseas buyers' designs, and (c) their own team of designers. Agung Alit told me that his desire is to empower his people by relying on creations generated by locals, and not entirely by foreigners, which is the more common case. In order to accomplish this goal, the organization meets weekly to look at selection of samples (prototypes) devised by their staff. They discuss new designs, ideas from local producers, and target prices at which to sell new items. Over the years, Mitra Bali has also offered monthly workshops for producers, covering a variety of topics such as improving business strategies, introducing new design trends and integrating new materials and techniques. Committed toward social justice and resisting the inequities of the global economy, Mitra Bali has been one of the most prominent voices to resist the uneven distribution of power among producers and middlemen in Bali's commercial handicrafts market.

Through its various activities, the organization works to challenge the notion that success in the global handicrafts trade is exclusively in the hands of overseas buyers and other intermediaries. As a non-governmental and non-profit organization, its goal is to reclaim agency for many producers competing with and losing out to well-established and better-connected competitors. Agung Alit's desire to approach is to demonstrate to local handicrafts producers that the economic issues are also social justice issues. During a visit to his office one afternoon, Agung Alit and I conversed at length about the discipline of anthropology. He asked me about my program of study, and if I was familiar with postcolonial studies. Acknowledging that I had taken graduate courses that covered postcolonial theory, Agung Alit immediately stopped our conversation and began calling his employees to come to the conference room. Once most of the staff arrived, he then asked me to give everyone a short lecture about postcolonialism and its relevance to the plight of Indonesian handicrafts producers! Although surprised at this unexpected invitation, I gladly accepted the challenge. Agung Alit's invitation to give a lecture on postcolonial theory brought light to the fact that organizations such as Mitra Bali are attempting to redefine the parameters from which workers should understand the global economy. Fair trade not only entails the fight for better economic compensation, but also for educating workers about broader socio-political issues that often become obscured by the false markers of authenticity and tradition. The research contributions of Littrell and Dickson (1999), Grimes and Milgram (2000), and Barrientos and Dolan (2006) have discussed how handicrafts, textile, and food producers are increasingly becoming involved in engaging with the global marketplace on their own terms, and it is my hope that I might be able to contribute to this literature by further examining the work of Mitra Bali in the near future.

DISCUSSION

The path of many ethnic art/cultural objects does not always indicate a direct journey from producer to consumer, nor are such objects necessarily crafted by the cultural/ethnic groups from which they are assumed to derive. The global trade in commercial handicrafts is characterized by a multiple series of "hidden hands:" producers, designers, brokers, distributors, and sales representatives spread across the globe who collectively influence the esthetics, authenticity, economic value, and cultural meaning of commodities before finally reaching the consumer. In this chapter, I have discussed some of the tensions between Balinese handicrafts suppliers and their foreign clientele, especially in regards to the forms of cultural capital buyers, who have used to assert power and authority.

For the people I knew in Tegallalang, global economic restructuring has affected the livelihoods of many local families: altering their livelihoods, perceptions of economic success, their patterns of consumption and notions of cultural production. Where rice agriculture was once the most common source of income, many have turned to the handicrafts industry as a primary or supplementary source of cash. But achieving economic success is more difficult in handicrafts entrepreneurship than in agriculture (depending on a family's access to resources, personal connections, etc.), because the reliance on foreign markets is much greater.

One of the unique ways in which local residents have been able to assert a sense of power and agency in this precarious market is by challenging popularized ideas of the Balinese as culturally insular and ahistorical. By displaying the business cards of their international clients prominently in the store, conversing in English or other foreign languages learned (e.g., Spanish, French), and more centrally, by supplying the overseas market with a myriad of "cultural" objects, the local entrepreneurs whom I interviewed for this research believed they were challenging the romanticized, Orientalized, essentialized images of Balinese promoted by the tourism industry. Tegallalang entrepreneurs have forged ahead with presenting themselves as much more cosmopolitan and more connected to the world outside their village. Yet one cannot avoid the fact that the masks, statues, textiles, and other ethnic crafts, the Balinese see as their tickets to a more own cosmopolitan identity, are also stereotypical, romanticized images made at the expense of other subaltern communities. When I asked Gde, a Balinese who owns two art shops in Tegallalang, how he would react if he found out that the Mexican handicrafts producers had been contracted to make reproductions of Balinese *barong* masks, my usually opinionated friend was left speechless. When I urged him to tell me his thoughts aloud, all Gde could comment on was the complexity of the market, saying, "we make more money, we make more problems."[3]

My interviews, informal conversations, and participant observations with the various players in the global handicrafts trade often revealed ambivalent (and sometimes conflicting) sentiments about the market. Buyers, such as, Peter believed that by conducting business in Bali, they were providing important economic opportunities for local residents as agriculture was no longer becoming a feasible endeavor. This belief, however, was often tempered with discourses that underscored the belief that Balinese could never fully participate in the global economy and amass the type of economic, political, and cultural influence that they themselves wielded. Citing the Balinese as being stuck in provincial mentalities, and blaming local spiritual, community and family obligations for poor business practices, foreign buyers and distributors regularly engage in discourses that both consciously and unconsciously maintain parameters that define the extent to which they believe Bali could truly be "global." Yet the validity of these arguments and the cultural capital middlemen engage in may not last very long, especially as fair trade organizations such as Mitra Bali redirect consumer attention toward granting workers more agency in the global marketplace and emphasize the fact that the Balinese have always been global.

NOTES

1. Interview with Peter (last name withheld), October 2002, Denpasar, Bali.
2. Interview with Aaron and Matthew (pseudonyms), September 2002, Ubud, Bali. I personally did not see the Christmas ornaments nor did I meet the boutique owner who devised the story about the Balinese artisans, and so I cannot verify the validity of the story. However, Aaron and Matthew's tale is relevant to this discussion to the extent that they acknowledge that distributors and vendors might be capable of altering and determining an object's cultural and economic value, without producers' consent.
3. Interview with Gde (last name withheld), May 2002, Tegallalang, Bali.

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LOOPING THE VALUE CHAIN: DESIGNER COPIES IN A BRAND-NAME GARMENT FACTORY

Rebecca Prentice

ABSTRACT

This chapter concerns itself with a garment factory in Trinidad, West Indies, producing brand-name clothing for the Eastern Caribbean market. Workers in this factory not only stitch garments for an hourly wage; but also stealthily operate a secondary assembly line, creating precise duplicates of the factory's products for themselves to take home and wear. Manufactured on the shop-floor alongside "legitimate" production, the copied garments are identical in every way to the genuine ones they mimic. In this chapter, I argue that workers have created a "loop" in the value chain: a simultaneous moment in which they are both producers and consumers of the factory's products. While "genuine" garments circulate through market-capitalist networks of exchange, copied garments only circulate through social networks – thereby accruing and representing forms of "value" that are distinct from market value. By looping the value chain, factory workers create non-market values alongside market-oriented ones, showing both sets of values to be interdependent. Workers' own commentary on these processes offers a unique window onto contested meanings of "value" at work on the shop-floor.

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INTRODUCTION

Value-chain analyses have proven to be useful tools for unpacking and analysing the complex relationships associated with the production, consumption, and circulation of mass-market commodities in the global economy. By describing all the economic activities relating to a product from inception to sale, the value chain[1] offers a compelling framework for tracing the journey of raw materials to finished commodities through sequential phases of production (Gereffi, Humphrey, Kaplinsky, & Sturgeon, 2001; Kaplinsky, 2004). A strength of this approach is that it not only allows us to understand the various relationships that relate to an item as it circulates through sites of production, distribution, and retailing, but also how the item becomes imbued with "value" through specific activities and exchanges.

The garment industry – which is now largely comprised of geographically dispersed networks of buyers and suppliers, and fragmented assembly lines that stretch beyond national boundaries – has been hailed as an especially appropriate site for value-chain analysis (Collins, 2003; McCormick & Schmitz, 2001). Indeed, both scholars and activists have used value chains to trace the "concrete actors" and "linkages that bind them" in globalised circuits of garment production, and to explore the implications of these linkages for issues of poverty, inequality, and economic transformation (Sturgeon, 2000, p. 1; Hale & Willis, 2005; Women Working Worldwide, 2004).

The image of the circulating object, acquiring value as it moves through domains of production and consumption, is richly suggestive. Although one of the weaknesses of conventional value-chain analyses is that they deal exclusively with economic notions of value (e.g., market value), Arjun Appadurai's description of the "social life of things," and George Marcus' appeal to anthropologists to "follow the thing" with multi-sited ethnography indicate the potential of anthropologists to seize the "chain" as a conceptual framework (Appadurai, 1986; Marcus, 1995, pp. 106–8). By investigating the value chain ethnographically, we can explore how actors create in objects a diverse set of values, including values that extend beyond market-capitalist categories.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the everyday ways in which factory workers produce and talk about "value" on the shop-floor. I do so in purposeful reference to value chains, an evocative and increasingly widespread methodological framework frequently applied to the garment industry. My ethnographic case study is based on a garment factory in

Trinidad, West Indies, which produces designer, brand-name clothing for the eastern Caribbean market. In this factory, workers not only labour for an hourly wage, they also operate a secondary, covert assembly line, furtively copying garments for themselves within the formal production process. These designer copies – which workers smuggle home for their own use – are identical in every way to the brand-name clothes they mimic.

Whereas value-chain analyses envision production and consumption as spatially and temporally distant, the workers in this factory have created a "loop" in the value-chain by asserting themselves as both the producers and consumers of the factory's products. I suggest that this loop opens a productive arena in which workers reflect upon their relationships to the things they produce. Workers express various, conflicting narratives about the worth of both their labour and the products they manufacture. These numerous and contradictory discourses reveal multiple positionalities and claims to consciousness on the shop-floor. Yet, I argue that rather than attempting theoretical closure – which would seek to resolve these competing notions of "value" – it is worthwhile to probe how shop-floor workers *use* such debates on value among themselves, in narrating and coming to terms with the ambivalent opportunities of a capitalist labour regime.

By examining a case in which production and consumption are simultaneously enacted, this chapter recognises factory workers as both producers and consumers. Thus, it aims to contribute to recent scholarship that emphasises factory workers' consumption practices, rather than solely their employment relationships and workplace activities. Although in recent years we have seen an increasing emphasis on the role of consumption in working-class subjectivities, scholars too often re-inscribe the spatial and temporal distinctiveness of these two spheres (production and consumption) by considering consumption only in terms of what workers do with their wages (Freeman, 2000; Lessinger, 2002; Mills, 1999). I suggest that in the Trinidadian context, garment workers' relationship to the things they produce is inseparable from what they consume; the example of a shop-floor garment-copying operation is only an extreme illustration of what is otherwise a more muted process.

Taking on issues of "value" in relation to industrial production inevitably invokes a debate between capitalist and Marxist theories of value (cf. Burawoy, 1985). However, my goal in this chapter is to look ethnographically at value: to consider its use not within scholarly discussions, but as an everyday category that workers are invested in defining for themselves. The ethnographic research presented in this chapter – based on 9 months' participant observation in a garment factory between 2003 and 2004 – examines everyday conversations about the quality, style, worth, cost, and meaning of garments on the shop-floor. I suggest that the contradictions contained within workers' valuation of factory products represent not a "problem" to be resolved, but instead a legitimate expression of their complex relationships to the things they produce.

THE CONTEXT: "SIGNATURE FASHIONS"

Signature Fashions[2] is a small, brand-name clothing company with a chain of stores throughout the eastern Caribbean. Owned and operated by an Indo-Trinidadian family since its founding in the late 1980s, Signature Fashions makes and markets expensive[3] fashion apparel for the region's wealthy consumers and foreign tourists. In advertising campaigns, shop-front displays, and televised fashion shows, it cultivates its image as a youthful, contemporary fashion brand, artfully merging North American and Caribbean fashion trends.

All Signature Fashions garments are made in Trinidad (other than the blue jeans, which are internationally subcontracted to Chinese producers). The firm maintains strong control over design and production – both of which are conducted under the same roof – and finished products are sold in the company's brand-name retail outlets in Trinidad and abroad. The Signature Fashions value-chain includes fabric imported directly from Asia, or bought from local wholesalers. The fabric is cut, stitched, and packaged according to the specifications of the in-house design team. Completed garments are delivered to Trinidadian retail outlets in the company van, and mailed or carried by the chief retail administrator (via a commercial airline) to the foreign stores.

When Signature Fashions began producing designer-label clothing for Trinidadian consumers in 1990, other garment factories were slowly disappearing from Trinidad's manufacturing sector.[4] An oil- and natural gas-based economy with relatively high wages for the eastern Caribbean, Trinidad (part the twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago) lacks the "comparative advantage" to compete regionally or globally in labour-intensive industries (Hosein, 2006). Under agreements set by three structural adjustment programmes with the IMF and World Bank – and after decades of protecting its domestic garment industry from foreign competition with high-tariffs and import-licensing restrictions – in the late 1980s Trinidad and Tobago opened its trade barriers to ready-made garments from abroad

(Ramsaran, 1992). Trinidad's large-scale garment factories (100–300 workers), which relied on the production of high volumes of plain-style clothing, have been most vulnerable to the vagaries of trade liberalisation (TIDCO, 2003).

The few Trinidadian garment factories that have remained both profitable and possible in the new, "post-liberalisation" environment are those that have been able, in some way, to become "flexible" – able to adaptively respond to a competitive and unstable market (Barclay, 2005). As David Harvey observes, under conditions of heightened competition due to economic liberalisation, firms are driven to pursue various "flexible" tactics, including subcontracting, outsourcing, "acceleration in the pace of product innovation," and "the exploration of highly specialized and small-scale market niches" (Harvey, 1990, pp. 155–6). Some Trinidadian producers have achieved flexibility by decentralising and intensifying production in low-end "sweatshops," hiring and firing below minimum-wage workers in tune with the rising and falling demands of production, or contracting work out to home-workers on a piece rate. This approach, which Mark Holmström has dubbed "indigenous Fordism," places the imperative for flexibility directly on the shoulders of workers, who offset the risks of competition with job insecurity, reduced wages, a loss of employee benefits, or outwork (Holmström, 1998, p. 19).

Other Trinidadian garment producers have adopted innovative, new technologies in order to rationalise production and achieve efficiency with a small, "flexible" workforce. Signature Fashions pursues flexibility through a third strategy: by cultivating a distinctive design sensibility and a recognisable brand-name for its high-cost clothing, which is manufactured in small batches, with a quick turnaround between design, production, and sale. Signature Fashions garments possess an air of exclusivity, because no more than 18 garments in the same style will be sold in a particular store. With control over its own, brand-name shops on Trinidadian high-streets and in shopping malls throughout the eastern Caribbean, Signature Fashions has been able to successfully embody "flexibility" by tying its small-scale manufacturing operations to rapidly changing consumer tastes in the high-end regional market. Signature Fashions is also not unionised; while some workers belong to trade unions in secret, there is no trade union representation in the factory, and no collective bargaining agreement between workers and their employers. In fact, many of the Trinidadians with whom I spoke (of all social backgrounds) were surprised to learn that Signature's clothing is industrially produced – that there is, in fact, "a factory" behind their "exclusive" lines of clothing and sharp designer styles.

The Signature Fashions factory is located in a faceless factory compound near the main highway, marked only by a street number. Approximately 40 people work in the factory floor, including fabric cutters, sewing-machine operators, ironers, trimmers, packagers, inspectors, a production manager, and two section supervisors. The owners' offices are located in the upstairs of the factory, which also includes workspace for two designers and a handful of administrators in an "open-plan" office. Downstairs contains a cutting room, where fabrics are laid out and cut into patterns; a stitching area, where garments are stitched together; and a finishing area where garments are trimmed of excess thread, pressed, and packaged for sale. Workers are generally assigned to one or two machines on the shop-floor, and their work varies based on the demands of production.

Almost all of the workers at Signature Fashions are Afro-Trinidadian and Indo-Trinidadian women aged 35–55. They earn an hourly minimum wages in jobs ranging from cutting, to stitching, to ironing the finished garments. Most Signature Fashions workers are highly skilled seamstresses with a long-tenure in the garment industry. Many trained in the large-scale factories that dominated Trinidad's garment industry during the economic "boom" of 1970s.[5] In those Fordist, mass-production factories, each worker was assigned a single task (like sewing pockets onto shirts, or stitching side-seams), which she would do, repetitively, for months or years at a stretch. At Signature Fashions, owing to its small runs of clothing in a range of elaborate styles, the jobs that workers are allocated change considerably from day to day. A worker may find herself stitching collar-stands in the morning, and by the afternoon be sewing pockets or hemming dresses. As skilled seamstresses, many Signature Fashions workers also supplement their factory wages by sewing for friends and private clients from their own homes.

The flexible, small-scale production regimen at Signature Fashions distinguishes the factory from most others in Trinidad, just as its "high-fashion" clothing lines depart from the staple items that local factories traditionally produce. Although managers and shop-floor supervisors insist that the Signature Fashions factory operates as a neat assembly line – with each worker conducting her assigned tasks autonomously – the shop-floor is actually a busy, social environment, which stands in sharp contrast to the quieter, more regimented garment factories that I visited elsewhere in Trinidad. Working in a fast-paced company on a constantly changing product, Signature Fashions workers find that gaining the aid of fellow workers is an important part of achieving a sense of control over the workday. They often collaborate in illicit and unsanctioned ways: helping one another fix mistakes, sharing skills, or temporarily trading work in order to establish the most favoured "rhythm" to one's workday.

It is within the material space of the Signature factory, where social networks are marshalled in the flexible production of fashionable clothing, that garment copying is an achievable and worthwhile practice. Although workplace theft is a common problem in local garment factories – not to mention a regular source of gossip among supervisors, who wonder at workers' outrageous ingenuity in sneaking things out of the factory gate – the prevalence and complexity of making replicas of the company's own products is unique to Signature Fashions, as the next section will show.

"THIEFING A CHANCE" AT SIGNATURE FASHIONS

"Thiefing a chance" was a phrase I often heard on the shop-floor of Signature Fashions. Thiefing a chance (or simply, "thiefing") is a term workers use to refer to a wide-range of illicit practices that they pursue during the workday – ranging from stitching little items for themselves using company materials and machines, to sneakily trying out a new sewing machine without managerial permission. Workers who independently sew for clients at home might smuggle their "private jobs" into the factory, to give their homemade garments a professional look on the factory's heavy-duty machines. The factory managers often left a box of fabric scraps too small to be used in the factory in the lunch area. While these scraps were ostensibly to be taken home by workers to be used as tea-towels or rags, they would often use them to furtively stitch-up small things for themselves on the shop-floor: patchwork aprons and cotton dust-masks for use in the factory, or doll clothes and pin cushions to take home. Workers might describe *any* of these activities as "thiefing me little chance," which means exploiting the brief moments when a supervisor's back is turned to steal a minute's work on other projects. Like *la perruque*, described by de Certeau (1984, p. 25), these small acts of production simply redirect workers' time and use of factory equipment towards personal projects; nothing material is taken, except a little bit of thread.

In addition to these simple, small-scale acts of appropriation and pilfering, workers at Signature Fashions also used company materials and machines to produce exact copies of the designer-label clothing as it came down the line. *This* form of "thiefing a chance" was a complex and coordinated practice requiring the complicity of workers at every stage in the production process: from the cutting room (where extra "lays" of fabric could be added to the official count), through the stitching area (where extra items of clothing were stitched alongside legitimate work), to the finishing area (where the illicit garments, along with the genuine ones, were given buttons and button holes, and trimmed of excess thread), and finally, to the workers' covert distribution of these garments among themselves (to be smuggled home and worn far from the factory context).[6]

Thiefing is an ethnographically rich and complex practice requiring an intense and covert coordination of social networks, the exercise of skilled craft, and regular contestation over who will do what for whom. Although the products of "real" work and "thiefed" work (terms that workers used) are materially identical, the processes of their production are entirely different. While real work is given to workers through official channels – delivered to them in bundles by their shop-floor supervisors – thiefed work is initiated by an individual worker, who must then manage the whole process of manufacturing the garment herself, by passing its constituent pieces along the shop-floor and asking others to work on it. As I will show later in this section, this fundamental distinction between real and thiefed work underpins the moral justifications for thiefing.

A thiefed garment always begins with someone "begging" a cutting-room worker for cloth.[7] The distinctive social life of thiefed clothing starts the moment scissors are put to cloth to cut a pattern into it. Even when extra lays of fabric were added to the official count – so that the material for thiefed garments could be cut along with the legitimate ones – the thiefed cloth was always tied to the bundle in such a way that it could be distinguished from the real work. By forcing a spatial separation between the two types of garments (even within the same bundle), those workers not interested in thiefing a chance could simply pass the item along. Thus, materially identical pieces of fabric were never perceived to be so by workers on the shop-floor: the separation between "real" and "thiefed" work was always meticulously upheld.

Each "thiefed" item is "owned" by the worker who procures cloth from the cutting room.[8] It is the worker's responsibility to manage completion of the garment, and to smuggle it out of the factory herself. To elicit necessary help of others on the shop-floor, workers constantly whisper to one another – "I thiefing a little chance, you could stitch a pocket?" – and pass half-finished garments back and forth between them. In appreciation of the fact that shop-floor supervisors deliberately turn a "blind eye" to thiefing a chance, workers do not flaunt these illicit activities. A worker is always ready to hide a thiefed garment on a moment's notice – either in the front of her apron or underneath her sewing machine.

While almost all workers at Signature Fashions participated in thiefing a chance at some time or another (either in providing stitches, or in managing the production of their own garments), those who were most involved in it were workers on specialised machines whose operations were necessary to complete most garments. Operators of these machines had the greatest capacity to enlist the aid of others in making their own garments in return, second only to the cutting-room workers who provided cloth. Specialist operators and cutting-room workers may thief as many as 15 items in a year; most other workers would thief far fewer.

Thiefing is given individual, not collective, justification. Workers rarely portray thiefing as a form of retributive justice – a way of recuperating the value that their skill and diligence has infused into garments that are priced far beyond what they can afford – or as "everyday resistance" to workplace hegemony (Prentice, 2008). The few workers at Signature Fashions who took no part in thiefing almost never claimed to do so because of a perception that thiefing is "stealing"; instead, they believed that the garments themselves were not worth the effort of sneaking stitches and carrying the items out of the factory. As one worker, Donna, told me, after recounting a story of how laborious it was to thief a chance: "I does find them clothes ain't worth so much so."

Why is thiefing not considered stealing? Workers do not see thiefing a chance as a form of stealing because thiefed garments are conceptually distinct from the official garments produced in the factory. All workers define "stealing" as taking the "real" or official work of the factory outright. To take a shirt or dress from the assembly line and smuggle it home is universally seen as wrong. In contrast, using the company materials and machines is a fair and legitimate use of the factory as a resource. By begging for cloth, and managing social networks on the shop-floor in order to get a garment made, each individual worker who initiates a thiefed garment has engaged in social action to seize the materials as her own. Glenda, a 52-year-old worker in the stitching section, once explained it in the following terms: "Rebecca, you wanted to know what is 'thiefing a chance'? I'm going to tell you. Some would say it is stealing. *Some* would say. But some would say it's what you could do for yourself."

The quickly-changing work regimen of the Signature Fashions factory, coupled with the luxurious enticement of the garments themselves, make thiefing a chance both possible and desirable. Making, owning, and wearing copies of high-cost garments is perceived as a reward for those workers who are enterprising enough to take a risk in the factory context. While it requires an immense amount of coordination, workers conceptualise thiefing as a series of such individual endeavours across social networks on the shop-floor, rather than a collective enterprise. Their stylistic selections of clothing to copy, daring procurement the necessary materials, and finesse in managing social networks: each of these elements contributes to the interpretation of thiefing a chance as morally acceptable amongst most workers.

By thiefing a chance, Signature Fashions workers have created a loop in the value-chain. At the moment when scissors are put to fabric in the cutting room, either an official garment or a thiefed one is born. Even though they are materially identical, the garments circulate differently on the shop-floor, relate differently to the workers, and accrue quite different forms of "value" in the process of their production. Legitimate ("real") work circulates through the official manufacturing processes. Positioned along an assembly line, workers conduct different operations on these garments for a wage. The garments begin in the form of uncut cloth and design specifications, which gradually gain commodity-value as a finished garment with the inputs of human labour on the shop-floor. Workers themselves cannot afford to buy these garments. Because workers labour over these garments for a wage, the finished products are emblems of their working-class status. In a generalised sense, Signature Fashions workers are "alienated" from the factory's official products, because they only perform one or two operations on the garments on the assembly line (Carrier, 1992). Real garments are bought and sold, based in large measure on market value – what consumers are willing to pay for them.

Thiefed garments, by contrast, represent the ability of workers to engage in craft-style production: managing, if not making, an entire garment of one's own from constituent pieces of cut fabric. As thiefed garments are passed hand-to-hand on the shop-floor, they receive stitches from friendly workmates willing to help one another. Human labour upon *these* types of garments, then, symbolises exchange and social reciprocity. Being able to manage the making of a thiefed garment demonstrates one's ability to coordinate and motivate a social network.

Once "thiefed" clothing leaves the factory – smuggled underneath a worker's clothes, or stashed in the bottom of her handbag – it will be worn at parties and public events away from the factory context: house parties and street fetes, government-sponsored "sports days," or "liming" (relaxing) with friends. As Miller (1994a, p. 223) has noted, in Trinidad the giving of clothing in a romantic relationship is duly expected by many women. By creating and wearing high-status garments themselves, Signature Fashions workers are able to play with the ambiguous signification of their dress in social gatherings outside work, by disguising or leaving open to speculation from where (or from whom) their clothing has come.

Alternately, thiefed garments may be given as gifts to close friends or family members. Thiefed garments are often given to sisters, daughters, or (in some cases) husbands or male partners. When a thief garment is gifted to a friend or family member – whether as a birthday gift, a gift to celebrate the birth of a child, or out of the blue – they mark the closeness of a relationship. Thiefed garments are not given to the private clients for whom workers sew, and clothing that is thiefed from Signature Fashions is never sold.[9] Thus, if thiefed garments can be considered containers of non-market values (reciprocity, mutual aid), as they move through social networks on the shop-floor in the process of production, they similarly exemplify non-market values (friendship, kinship, love) in gift-giving relationships after they are taken from the factory.

We must remember, however, that the allure of a Signature Fashions garment is generated most forcefully *by* and *through* the market. The high-cost of the garments, their exclusivity (small numbers) within a marketplace, and the recognisable brand-name, all contribute to what makes them desirable. Although workers may express sentiments of love and friendship through making and gifting thiefed garments, the desire for the garments on the part of the recipient (i.e., what makes them a "good gift") is at least partly attached to the market value of these items as expensive and popular clothes. The famed "Signature" logo makes its clothing particularly sought-after in Trinidad, where brand-name clothing is a mark of distinction, and issues of style and dress have enormous significance in the performance of identity (Miller, 1994a, pp. 219–226; 1994b). In the next section, we explore the "meaning" of the garments in terms of the social symbols they convey, and the ways in which the loop in the value-chain opens a productive arena for talking about value.

CONTESTING VALUE ON THE SHOP-FLOOR

"This shirt is a man's shirt or for a woman?" asked Shirley. Preston had brought a sample t-shirt for her to stitch up for an upcoming fashion show. The shirt was lime green, light blue, and had a white string, similar to a shoelace, running down the front of it.

"It for a man!" said Preston, smiling, and then looking at me. Preston is one of the designers at Signature Fashions.

"Well I does find it look faggoty for a man," said Shirley. She looked over at me. "Ain't? Ain't it look womanish?"

Each garment coming down the line at Signature Fashions generates some amount of shop-floor commentary about its style, attractiveness, quality, or desirability – as well as the contested meanings of class, race, sexuality, or status that a particular item might signal. Designer clothing has what Arjun Appadurai has dubbed "semiotic virtuosity," meaning the ability to convey complex social messages (Appadurai, 1986, p. 38).[10] Some commentators portray these social messages as an instrument of social hierarchy, a "system of social differentiation" that must be constantly reinvented, as old fashion symbols become diffused throughout the population (Maher, 1987, p. 144). Yet Trinidadian fashion does not move from "the elite" to "the masses" in a unidirectional manner. Trinidadian "fashion" emerges instead from various social contexts and actors, stratified not only by class, ethnicity, and gender, but also by more subtle claims and determinations of "style" (Miller, 1994b). Moreover, Trinidad – a diverse, multi-ethnic, and arguably "transnational" context (due to the prevalence of migratory and consumption circuits in and out of the country) – simply does not have only *one* social hierarchy at work. Criteria for judging the beauty, desirability, and social inflection of dress are commonly contested; both wearing clothing and judging the clothing of others reveal one's status and positionality within this vast web of signification (cf. Weller, 2006).

Working on the shop-floor of a garment factory is an invitation to reflexivity. As distinctive, brightly-coloured clothes pass through workers' hands, they stimulate immediate commentary. This commentary might emerge from technical frustrations, as when Veena complained to her supervisor that the flimsy, gossamer fabric for the blouses she was stitching was "rampling up so," adding under her breath, "I don't see why somebody want to show their bra and t'ing [through their clothing] anyway." Striking styles coming down the line would frequently garner comment. A deliberately crumpled men's shirt trimmed in gold piping might elicit from workers a *steups* (the sound of sucking air through the teeth in disapproval) and the dismissive phrase, "s*ome*body go buy it."[11] Other distinctive styles will generate commentaries of desire, such as: "If you see how *sweet* this one looking, straps go flush against the back and all!"

What makes these discussions about the clothing in production particularly salient at Signature Fashions is that these are not the conversations of interlopers examining products destined for other people. Unlike workers in Mexican maquiladoras who cannot afford the blue jeans they produce (Peña, 1997), or South Asian garment workers stitching western clothes that they do not wear themselves (Lessinger, 2002; Lynch, 2007, pp. 91–120), Signature Fashions workers might immediately produce duplicates of factory clothing, or copy patterns to be remade in different fabrics at home. Statements about "how *sweet* this one looking" might be followed by begging some cloth from the cutting room, or doggedly scrutinising other workers on the shop-floor, to detect whether anyone else is duplicating the garment. The gaze of workers is not only evaluative, it is also selective: identifying and distinguishing garments as they come down the line, choosing some as potential candidates to copy, while rejecting others as undesirable.

In this section, I examine various conversations about the garments in production on the shop-floor at Signature Fashions. Workers in these instances talk explicitly about "value" using a range of concepts such as cost, quality, and meaning. Workers' commentaries about the value of the things they produce are in many instances contradictory and ambivalent. I will show that we cannot understand workers' valuation of Signature Fashions' clothing without seeing them as highly-skilled seamstresses and not simply as garment factory workers.

Shop-floor workers are not easily impressed by Signature Fashions clothing or the imagined consumers of it. Rather than accepting, *prima facie*, the "fashionableness" of the clothing they produce, Signature workers constantly assess the beauty and signification of the clothing – and by extension the aesthetic tastes and sensibilities of its consumers. Signature Fashions generally produces three types of garments: standard – if "stylish" – renderings of popular fashions (basic shirts, skirts, jerseys,[12] jeans, and soft-cotton track suits); "touristy" clothing that evokes a romantic, Caribbean aesthetic (brushed-cotton earth tones and muted linens, draw-string trousers and loose-fitting "peasant" shirts); and "designer" lines devised with innovative and daring style (flamboyant blouses with bright embroidery, military-inspired shorts and micro-miniskirts, and wrap-around dresses in distinctive printed fabrics). All Signature clothing shares the prominent display of the "Signature" logo: cloth labels stitched into the side-seams or pocket. Workers generally copied the staple items, due to their relatively simple construction, appealing colours, and unique but unfussy design features. While the "touristy" lines were often dismissed as dull, unattractive "beach clothes," workers might pilfer patterns from the factory in order to re-create the fashions for clients at home, in brighter, softer fabrics. The designer lines of clothing, however, were likely to garner the liveliest discussion among workers – either in appreciation, or criticism. For example, when we were trimming a set of red trousers with a series of strings hanging off the waistband, Glenda plucked at the strings and commented, "I'd *never* wear that – someone could grab me on the street!"

While Signature's clothing presents a particular aesthetic sensibility, it also references a particular category of persons: a mobile, cosmopolitan elite comprised of foreign visitors to Trinidad (often white Americans and Europeans) and wealthy, multi-ethnic Trinidadians, who take pride in Signature's clothing for its adept rendering of contemporary American and European fashions, giving them a Caribbean "twist." Signature's more flamboyant, colourful clothing is particularly favoured by local television and music celebrities; its prominent logo contributes to the brand's recognition within the population at large as costly and limited ("exclusive").

Signature Fashions workers, in assessing and critiquing the clothes they produce in the factory, often used the clothing as emblematic of elite persons whom they occasionally emulated but often trenchantly criticised. The language of aesthetics – comprising notions of beauty and morality – is a central element of these discussions. For example, tight-fitting, white-cotton trousers were deemed vulgar, particularly by the older workers. Said Bernice, a 56-year-old worker,

> Waist so low and belly way out, navel showing, nah! Why you want to be exposing that? These shirts, they cost $100, did you know that? One quarter yard of cloth and belly hanging out. Tight waist. Tight-tight on the sides. We used to wear our clothes to suit. If you going out you dress *different*. Not always tight-tight.

Although Bernice's criticism of the shirts was ridiculed by some of the younger workers, many agreed that such clothing would appeal to consumers who are "worthless" – a local term connoting moral laxity (Mendes, 1986, p. 165). Similarly, clothing in outrageous styles, particularly for men, was deemed ridiculous and worthy only of a mindless pursuer of "fashion." Special condemnation was reserved for clothing that was deemed transgressive of the gender barrier: "mannish" clothing for women, or "faggoty" clothing for men. Such styles were taken as evidence of not only the frivolity, but also the moral degradation of the elite, who were seen as losing sight of essential, community values invested in a particular gender order. Commentaries about the "worthless" elite, although expressed through a language of aesthetic judgement, asserted a moral superiority of the poor over the rich (for whom it was believed that money could not buy good sense).

If workers use Signature Fashions clothing as a way of discussing elites within Trinidadian society, then they also use the clothing to comment on the terms of their employment. These discussions assert opposing claims about value: first, that Signature Fashions garments are "good quality," and second that they are expensive for "no reason." Positioned as hourly-wage workers in the production of expensive commodities, Signature workers have an ambivalent relationship to the "value" of the items they produce – especially in terms of their retail cost. On the one hand, workers are proud of the high status of Signature clothing within the Trinidadian garment sector. They perceive the clothing's high price to be evidence of their own skills and diligence in producing neat seam lines and a "good fit." As Lata said, "Plenty people will tell you, 'You know what I like about Signature clothes? The fit.'"

Yet, just as frequently as they celebrate their evident skill and diligent labours, workers at Signature Fashions will say that the garments they produce are expensive "for no reason" or "for that Signature name [alone]." More than one worker told me not to ever waste 60 dollars buying a Signature t-shirt, because they are nothing more than a normal t-shirt with the "Signature Fashions" logo printed boldly across the front. As Glenda warned me, lest I be taken in: "Don't let me catch you in a Signature store. You could buy that same shirt on Charlotte Street[13] for ten dollars. It the same; the only thing different is the label on it."

Although workers take pride in the craft of the clothing they make – its stitches and cut, its durability and style – at the same time they critique the frivolous and intentionally exclusionary principles on which such a "high-fashion" brand is based. As a signifier of class and social position, fashion is a means to both project and embody class distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). The consolations of being a skilled craftswoman, infusing *value* into the garment itself (in the form of both quality and beauty), does not remove the sting of exclusion from the "normal" circulation of these garments in society.

Garment workers are savvy observers of the meaning and market value of brand-names. They understand that the "logo" or brand-name confers a value on a garment, which may bear little relationship to the quality of its fabric, stitching, and design. As a working-class discourse about consumption, Signature Fashions workers may argue that the cheap clothing they buy on Charlotte Street is equal in quality – and superior in value-for-money – to the clothing bought in the air-conditioned boutiques in the "other" side of town. Workers assert themselves as aware, prudent shoppers who can find a bargain, while consumers of Signature Fashions are silly-minded and naïve. When a pair of the bright-red trousers that had earned such ridicule during production was sent back to the factory for custom alterations, Glenda brought them over to me, and pointed to the price tag: TT$269. "Someone bought it!" she said, arching her eyebrows in mock astonishment.

I have presented two narrative strands emerging from workers' shop-floor conversations, which seem to represent a contradiction in views: (1) that workers' skill and diligence infuse "value" into the high-cost goods that they produce, and (2) that Signature's brand-name clothing is essentially the "same" as low-cost, non-brand-name items that garment workers might buy in bargain stores in Port of Spain. Both discourses are class-oriented: working-class producers taking pride in factory work (and by implication disparaging the unequal terms of their wages), and low-wage workers taking pride in their abilities to find good value in low-cost shopping areas. The contrary impulses contained within these discourses might be roughly described, for the moment, as commensurate with workers' identities as producers, and their identities as consumers.

When workers express surprise or disdain at the cost of the garments, they discuss by proxy the wage labour system in which they produce clothing that is sold in boutiques for many times their wages. As Jean said to me, "Plenty people see how much [Signature Fashions clothing] does cost, so they think we [workers] must be making [a lot of money] too." As I have shown, workers rarely described "thiefing" as a form of retributive justice that compensates them for low wages. Instead, they conceptualise and describe the practice as the cunning use of factory materials by those enterprising and daring enough to "thief a chance." Yet, shop-floor conversations continuously penetrate the wage labour system, and assert the unfair disproportionality between workers' wages and the price of the garments in Signature's stores. The greed and "worthlessness" of the factory bosses was a common topic of shop-floor gossip and joking.

Workers' description of Signature Fashions garments as being "high quality" due to their skill and diligence as stitchers, and workers' assertion that Signature garments are "no different" from the non-brand-name garments for sale in shops on Charlotte Street, appear as mutually irreconcilable valuations of the clothing that they produce. Yet, workers demonstrate a profound willingness to embrace both perspectives concurrently, holding in tension the complexities of both stances. In order to understand why garment workers do this, we must examine two elements of their perspectives: garment workers' relationship to the informal economy, and their understanding of "the logo" as ruse.

Many garment-factory workers in Trinidad – particularly those employed by Signature Fashions – are also highly-skilled seamstresses. While factory work often consists of conducting one or two basic sewing operations day after day, their initial training and practice at home renders them able to earn additional income in the out of work hours by sewing clothing and home draperies for private clients. More than half of the Signature Fashions workers maintained their own businesses, designing and stitching clothing for friends and neighbours in the evening; almost all of the workers had done so at a previous time in their careers. This extra work contributes to workers' income, provides a measure of status in their home communities, and also plays a role in self-identity not as a mere "garment worker" (which carries connotations of deskilled, factory work) but as a woman "in the sewing" – making and taking opportunities as an independent seamstress. The job of an independent seamstress is to design and draft patterns in cloth (glossed as "cutting"), and to stitch the constituent elements together. In doing these things for clients at home, Signature Fashions workers participate in an informal ("off the books") economy in which they are the sole or primary authors of the clothing they produce.

Because they are not only hourly-wage workers, but also home-based, petty commodity producers, Signature Fashions workers read into the factory's clothing a range of possibilities, including exposure to new and varied design sensibilities (most importantly those worn by the local celebrities who eagerly consume Signature's garments). Garment workers make productive use of the factory in their own home enterprises in a vast number of ways: sneaking a stitch on the "professional" machines, pilfering patterns and ideas from the factory, trying out new machines, and picking up new skills in the flexible, chaotic environment of the Signature shop-floor. As designers and small-scale producers of clothing themselves, Signature Fashions workers bring both curiosity and shrewdness to the factory. Because they see themselves not merely as "stitchers" (garment workers who can only stitch on a machine "in a straight line"), but also as designers and creators of garments themselves within the sphere of their home production, Signature Fashions workers are willing to give weight to "design" as a feature of the garments – conferring value upon it, which can attract a high price. While they assert that their "minimum wages" are miserly and low, they also accept the factory owner/designer's entitlement to a greater portion of the financial returns.

Signature Fashions workers also considered the "Signature" logo to be an important, if absurd, element of the brand: a fantastic ruse executed by the owners of the company. Workers understand that the Signature Fashions logo has become popular by repetition: the logo indicates the clothing's high-cost, which imbues the clothing with high status, which justifies – as a mark of "distinction" – the clothing's high cost. Necessary to this cyclic process is the intervention of local elites, willing to purchase and wear the clothing. They recognise this value imbued in the clothing largely because the distinctive, designer lines have been adopted by public figures and a highly visible Caribbean elite. Workers, whose technical knowledge tells them that the clothing's "style" may be appealing, but that it is not necessarily higher quality than non-brand-name clothes, find this to be an excellent ruse perpetuated at the expense of the wealthy consumers who buy – and buy into – the Signature Fashions brand.

Although Signature Fashions workers mock the absent individuals who buy the most outlandish clothing, they also appreciate the importance of protecting the "logo" in order to secure the value the Signature Fashions clothing that they "thief" from the factory to wear in their own social circles. This is demonstrated in the fact that when Signature workers re-create factory designs at home with their own fabrics, they never stitch the "Signature" logo into them. To do so – by taking a handful of brand labels from the factory – might grant them the short-term benefit of more customers for their homemade garments, at a higher price. Yet, to do so would also mean putting into circulation mock-Signature garments, diluting the power of the brand-name. The solvency of the Signature brand-name benefits workers in two ways: first, through their identity as "Signature Fashions" workers. Workers are invested in the meaning of the logo, because it confers value on their jobs as Signature Fashions workers. As Lata said, when you tell people you work there, they say, admiringly, "True?" Second, by owning and wearing their own Signature Fashions clothing, workers enjoy the brand's association with high-cost, high-status garments, which would surely be eroded by the proliferation of multiple, convincing though fake Signature Fashions clothing throughout their social circles or in society as a whole.

Thus, workers hold in tension two readings of the Signature Fashions garments:[14] that they are indistinguishable from low-cost garments that merely do not have a logo, and that they are high quality. If we believe that these two things represent entrenched, dichotomous positions – consumers vs. producers, a labour theory of value vs. a capitalist theory of value – we may fail to appreciate how workers manage to hold in tension and productively use the seeming contradictions of these positions. Signature Fashions workers understand that multiple, conflicting discourses of value underpin the fashion project: status hierarchies (or consumers' attempts to embody them) could not be sustained without diversity and distinction. The workers believe that conflicting discourses of value contain different, but equally important, *opportunities* for them – although they are not explicitly articulated in such terms. Wearing Signature Fashions garments that they have "thiefed" from the factory is meaningful only within a particular web of signification, in which such brand-name garments have accrued a high-status valuation. Copying garments and partaking in their innovative design sensibilities – which are assessed, critiqued, and re-worked in their home-sewing enterprises – represents the opportunity to act as a professional who knows "the industry" well. These are not positions to reconcile, but instead demonstrate complex interests, desires, and sources of both identity and income.

CONCLUSIONS

Whenever Signature Fashions workers thief a chance in the factory, they participate in making two kinds of (identical) garments: "real" garments and "thiefed" ones. "Real" garments are made through the official relations of production on the shop-floor. Workers are paid an hourly wage to work on the constituent components of these garments (e.g., stitching the side-seams, attaching collars, or hemming). Once completed, real garments are sold in Signature's stores. Although workers continually comment on real garments as they pass through their hands on the shop-floor – debating their quality, style, beauty, and cost – workers are in a broad sense "alienated" from them. Because Signature Fashions workers believe that real garments do not belong to them, they all agree that to take them from the assembly line is morally wrong: "stealing."

The second set of garments (thiefed garments) are not made through formal relations of employment, but instead through social relations of mutual aid. These garments are not sold in Signature Fashions stores. Instead, they are smuggled home by workers, to be worn far from the factory context, or gifted to close friends and family members. Workers insist that thiefing a chance is not "stealing" because workers do not take the products of other people's labours; instead, they simply use the materials and machines of the factory to make garments for themselves. In this view, the factory is a resource; its materials, machines, and design ideas are there for the taking by the daring individual. Workers engage in social action to procure cloth from the cutting room, thereby claiming the cloth as their own.

This case study shows that while garments are produced in the factory, different forms of "value" are also in the making. As real garments move through sequential phases of production (e.g., from design, to cutting, to stitching, to packaging) they accrue increasing market value. Uncut fabric, of course, is worth less than finished garments sold in Signature Fashions stores. Thiefed garments, while materially identical to real garments (and therefore have the potential of sharing the same "market" value), are containers of different sorts of values that go into making them: mutual aid, reciprocity, and trust. Thus, in thiefing a chance, garment workers create values that are separate from monetary value – the values of skill, social embeddedness, and mutual aid. While these may be seen as alternative values to the market, they are not pitched as "resistance" or "opposition" to those values by workers themselves.

When thiefed garments leave the factory, and are given as gifts to close friends or kin, they further become an emblem of non-market values like friendship and love. Thiefed garments, while materially identical to the official products of the factory, are different kinds of objects to the workers who produce them. They are not created for a wage, but are instead made for use by the workers themselves. While they are made on an assembly line (like the official garments are), they are made outside the market and waged relations. When they become gifts to close friends and family members, the garments become containers of other non-market values, such as friendship and kinship.

Ironically, when the clothing is gifted to a sister or friend, the desirability of a garment is partially measured in relation to the market. The fact that Signature Fashions apparel is brand-name, expensive, and "exclusive" is part of what makes the clothing such a desirable gift. Thus, Signature Fashions workers express non-market values through gifts that are themselves deeply tied to market meanings.[15]

By looping the value chain – simultaneously asserting themselves as both producers and consumers of the factory's products – Signature Fashions workers show that the factory is a site for producing many kinds of value. By looking ethnographically at value as a local rather than an analytical category, we can see how people "use" notions of value. In muting the intra-group debates among workers about the meaning, quality, beauty, and "style" of the garments they produce – which is often stratified along the lines of ethnicity and age – I have sought to emphasise the central tension at the heart of such shop-floor debates: garments as having "high quality," and garments as having "no value." I have demonstrated in this essay that workers at Signature Fashions do not see such evaluative debates as a contradiction that must be ideologically resolved, but instead as a complex web of signification that can be productively *used*. Through "thiefing a chance" (in all its varied meanings) workers attempt to make the most of the material opportunities in the factory.

Signature Fashions workers reveal individualised and individuated relationships with the things they produce. In sizing-up and being savvy about factory opportunities, workers assert themselves as independent actors, both on the shop-floor and in their home-sewing enterprises. For workers, "value" is a fluid, contingent concept. They recognise the market value of the clothing they produce (its price in the shops), and its relationship to the logo as clever ruse. Workers' status as small-scale garment producers in the informal economy of the home certainly shapes how they read value on the shop-floor, penetrating and "using" such discourses to instrumental ends. Thus, the tangled discursive web of "value" at Signature Fashions – the creative "loop" in the value-chain – cannot be neatly ordered. Workers demonstrate a nuanced appreciation of the politics of value, and a willingness to sustain complex and contradictory stances. Workers do not push for unity or resolution between these stances, but instead – perhaps as neo-liberalism's pre-eminent "flexible" subjects in a quick-changing industry – try to "make the most" of the various opportunities contained within them.

A garment-copying operation in the heart of the factory represents a unique opportunity to investigate the relationship between workers and the things they produce. In this chapter, I have presented the ways in which shop-floor workers create and talk about "value" as an everyday category, rather than a specialist, analytical one. Shop-floor discussions about value take different, sometimes contradictory forms. Yet, rather than pursuing theoretical closure by resolving these competing notions of "value," we have seen how shop-floor workers not only hold contradictory positions in tension, but also make productive use of those tensions in their economic lives.

NOTES

1. The term "value-chain" is inconsistently defined in the scholarly literature (Kaplinsky, 2004, pp. 111–112; McCormick & Schmitz, 2001, p. 8; Sturgeon, 2000, p. 2), but is closely allied with a number of conceptual frameworks for investigating sequential linkages of commodity production and exchange, including global commodity-chains (Gereffi, 1994) and supply-chains (Collins, 2003, pp. 18–9).

2. "Signature Fashions" and all of the names in this chapter are pseudonyms.

3. At the time of fieldwork (2003–2004), a t-shirt with the "Signature" logo would sell for TT$60 (US$10), and a dress for up to TT$350 (US$60). With the minimum

wage at TT$8 per hour (US$1.30), Signature clothing, like imported brand-named clothing, was priced far beyond what garment workers could afford.

4. Although Signature Fashions began as a Trinidadian clothing company, it quickly expanded its retail operations to neighbouring Caribbean countries.

5. In the 1960s, the price of oil was TT$1.57 per barrel, which rose to TT$21 by 1975, peaking at US$35 in 1980 (Munasinghe, 2001, p. 101). Trinidad and Tobago's "oil boom" reportedly generated US$10 billion income for the country over a 10-year period (*ibid.*), which ended in recession in the early 1980s.

6. Given that so much of what I write about in this chapter is purposely hidden from the "public scripts" of daily life, there is a risk of exposure accompanying this account. I have worked to limit such exposure by concealing the particular identities of workers throughout the text, by changing names, and by swapping distinguishing features when it would not confuse or undermine the larger narrative account. Mostly, in writing about illicit practices in the Signature Fashions factory, I focus on those workers who are no longer employed there. As I have argued elsewhere (Prentice, 2008), the management at Signature Fashions always knew a great deal about "thiefing a chance," despite the fact that both workers and managers scrupulously hid from each other both what they did and what they knew. I suggest that this mutual complicity derives partly from the fact that thiefing a chance often worked as lubricant to the smooth functioning of "flexible" production, rather than posing a challenge to the official manufacturing process.

7. Not every garment down the "line" is an appropriate candidate for thiefing a chance. Garments that required extensive work – like a blouse with ruffles on the collar and sleeves – might be deemed too complex to bother trying to copy. Also, cutting-room workers would not provide the cloth for garments made from costly fabric, and stitchers would not ask for it.

8. Reciprocity dictates that while cutting-room workers provide stitchers with cloth, stitchers will sew the cutting room workers' thiefed garments in return.

9. However, workers do copy patterns at Signature Fashions clothing in the factory, and experiment with remaking and creatively altering popular styles in different fabrics at home. These garments do not bear the "Signature Fashions" logo.

10. Karen Tranberg Hansen makes a similar argument about clothing in general that its particular materiality and social meaning renders it "not just any commodity but a very special one" (Hansen, 1999, p. 346).

11. "Somebody go buy it" means "somebody is going to buy it."

12. In Trinidad, a "jersey" is a t-shirt, with or without a collar.

13. Charlotte Street is one of the main retail areas in Port of Spain, catering specifically to the working-class budget.

14. For the purpose of this chapter, I have muted intra-group disagreements about Signature Fashions clothing, which is more nuanced, and often stratified along the lines of age and ethnicity.

15. Daniel Miller argues that when Trinidadians consume foreign commodities, they sometimes project local identities and meaning onto the materials they consume (a process he calls "objectification"). This means that foreign commodities, ironically, can play an important role in making and defining the "authentic" local self (Miller, 1992; cf. Halstead, 2002). While considerations of space prevent me from exploring

this argument in any depth here, my debt to Miller's work in thinking about the relationship between consumption and sociality should be clear: thiefed garments – even though they are identical to market commodities in a material sense – are used to express values of love, kinship, and friendship in the Trinidadian context.

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"LONGING FOR THE WEST": THE GEO-SYMBOLICS OF THE ETHICAL CONSUMPTION DISCOURSE IN HUNGARY

Tamás Dombos

ABSTRACT

Building on an ethnographic study of ethical consumption discourses and practices among activists and entrepreneurs in Hungary this chapter looks at how actors reflect critically on the current state of the Hungarian society by contrasting it to an image of Western Europe as a locus of consumer consciousness, civic activism, and sustainable economic practices. Such an opposition allows for the expression of various hopes, desires, and frustrations about the seemingly never ending process of post-socialist transition and at once provide a chance to mediate the contradictions inherent in contemporary practices of ethical consumption. While ethical consumption might offer itself as a global phenomenon, it is always practiced in local contexts with their particular struggles, histories, and trajectories. This chapter tries to contribute to the literature on ethical consumption by tracing the various meanings and values that are being attached to it in a "newly born consumer society."

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Although the recent explosion in discourses and practices of ethical consumption so prominent in contemporary consumer societies is slowly starting to gain academic attention, anthropologists have not been at the forefront of this emerging new field of study. What is painfully missing from existing studies of ethical consumption is a closer investigation of how a seemingly clear notion of ethical consumption turns out to be much more complicated upon looking at its actual operation in concrete local contexts. This chapter uses the case of contemporary post-socialist Hungary to illustrate this point and argues that in this particular context ethical consumption is just as much about becoming Western, as it is about protecting the environment, complying with labor standards or helping the developing world.

Theoretically this chapter starts from the argument that commodities that travel from one social context to another acquire new layers of meaning as a result of this process of geographical movement. Following Appadurai's and Koptyoff's seminal pieces in the volume *The Social Life of Things* published in 1986 a growing number of social scientists and especially anthropologists took on the task of mapping and exploring the circulation of commodities between different social contexts – or as Appadurai put it between different "regimes of value" (pp. 14–15). As Foster (2006, p. 285) in his engaging review of this now vast amount of literature nicely summarizes it, these researchers "trace the social relations and material linkages that this movement creates and within which the value of commodities emerges." Despite the richness of this approach Graeber (2001) is right in pointing out that the connection between movement and value is far from being clearly explicated. Although this chapter cannot undertake the task of coming up with a general solution to this problem, it does draw attention to one possible way in which the value of a commodity is directly linked to its circulatory past: value can be the result of a person's normative identification with the (imagined) source of the object. And the emphasis is on imagination here, for source, rather then being objectively given, is constructed through the myriad of processes that affiliate a commodity to a geographical location or a group of people.

The consumption of Western goods can and has been understood within this theoretical context (see, e.g., Carrier, 1995; Orlove, 1997; Stearns, 2001) and this argument is also present in the now growing literature on consumption in socialist Eastern and Central Europe. Historically minded sociologists and anthropologists in the 1990s argued that the widespread claim that consumption was secondary to production under socialism – attributed to Kornai's (1992) highly influential book – is too schematic, and that although the claim might be true for the Stalinist era, it does not hold for the period starting from the 1960s, when the legitimacy of the communist system came primarily from the promise to provide people with a better standard of living than in the capitalist West (Róna-Tas, 1997, p. 85; Stearns, 2001, pp. 80–81; Vörös, 1997). Verdery argues that the double tendency of promising material well-being but being unable to deliver it created a social milieu, in which consumption itself became an oppositional strategy against the regime: "the arousal and frustration of consumer desire and East Europeans' consequent resistance to their regimes led them to build their social identities specifically through consuming. Acquiring consumption goods and objects conferred an identity that set one off from socialism. To acquire objects became a way of constituting your selfhood against a regime you despised" (Verdery, 1992, pp. 25–26). Merkel (1998) follows this logic when she makes the point that part of the reason for the fall of communism was this permanent discontent resulting from the growing number of occasions that Easterners were able to compare their consumption patterns to Western standards of living.

Further research of socialist consumption (Hammer & Dessewffy, 1997 and the special issue of Cultural Studies (2002) on shopping tourism under socialism) shows that the purchase and public display of goods of Western origin were accentuated versions of this practice of resistance. As Fehérváry (2002, p. 385) puts it: "Such western commodities became displaced metonyms of another world, as the opposition between the state-socialist system and the capitalist system became embodied in their products." The change of the system in 1989, however, brought spectacular changes not only in the political and economic life of Eastern Europeans, but also transformed what, how, and where they consumed. Goods of Western origin became widely available and the question was no longer how to distinguish oneself through the consumption of Western goods, but how to "normalize" their presence (see Fehérváry, 2002; Rausing, 2002). As a result of this normalization, commodities gradually lost there symbolic status as signifiers of a desired Western way of life.

This chapter shows how this process of symbolic dilution is partly impeded by the introduction of a new cluster of goods with markedly Western connotations. At the center of its interest are the practices of production, distribution, and promotion that construct ethically loaded products as "Western." The chapter is divided to two sections. The first one familiarizes the reader with the immediate context of my research and contains a short introduction to the history of two typical forms of ethical consumption – the organic and the fair-trade movement – in the Hungarian context. The second one analyzes the structural necessities and strategic practices that associate ethically loaded commodities with Westernness. The chapter ends by discussing how this discourse of ethical consumption is embedded within the overarching discourses of post-socialist transition.

THE CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

The research underlying this chapter is my ongoing Ph.D. project entitled *Ethical Consumption in Hungary: Discourse and Practice*. This ethnographic study using methods of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and discourse analysis investigates how different actors in the field co-construct the market as a politicized space. The research uses case studies to bring together various types of actors – entrepreneurs, activist, and consumers – under one frame of analysis. The three cases – the daily operation of an organic food store, the introduction of fair-trade products to the market, and collective branding of locally produced goods – reflect the diversity of ethical considerations and ideological positions present in the discussions about ethical consumption, as well as show different levels of embeddedness in the Hungarian context. For reasons of space and clarity of the argument, in this chapter I will focus on the first two of these cases, on organic consumption and the fair-trade movement.

Before entering into the discussion of the ethnographic material, some theoretical clarifications have to be made. First, I propose to conceptualize ethical consumption in a relational manner that builds on actors' differentiation between socially detrimental and socially beneficial forms of consumption. As opposed to an objectivist definition, which assumes a social consensus on what is ethical and what is not, and categorizes acts of consumption based on this substantive conception of the good, the relational approach recognizes the plurality of often contradicting ethical norms that might guide consumption practices, but also recognizes ethical consumption as a particular social phenomenon, the particularity of which is that in case of ethical consumption actors make a link between individual consumer choice and its social consequences. Second, a distinctive feature of contemporary forms of ethical consumption is that its ethicality no longer depends solely on the consumer who has to behave in a certain way to be considered ethical, but there emerges a new cluster of goods and services that is invested with the meaning of being ethical: ethical consumption is increasingly identified with the consumption of this particular cluster of goods (which I will refer to as "ethically loaded commodities"), rather then with forms of behaviors such as temperance, informed decision making, or charity giving. It is the production (not only material, but also symbolic) of this category of ethically loaded commodities that makes the study of actors beyond consumers so crucial. Third, much of the existing literature on the issue is trapped in the fruitless theoretical debate on whether ethical consumption is "viable" and/or "truly transformative," a feature resulting most likely from the activist orientation of most of the researchers publishing on the topic and the reactions these "semi-academic" contributions provoke from others. What Miller writes about the academic treatment of consumption in general seems to hold particularly true for this segment of academia: "the central role taken by morality within consumption research…has led this branch of studies [to become] largely a site where academics can demonstrate their stance towards the world, rather than a place where the world stands as a potential empirical critique of our assumptions about it" (Miller, 2001, p. 226). This insight warns us that what is needed is not jumping to fast conclusions about whether ethical consumption works or not or whether its proponents are motivated by authentic concerns or other factors, but rather a detailed empirical analysis of how it operates in particular socio-historical contexts.

A Short History of the Organic Movement in Hungary

Although the organic movement (bearing the name "bio-" in Hungarian) dates back to the early 1980s in Hungary, in the first decade it was limited to a small number of farmers interested in organic agriculture centered on the club/association Biokultúra (Bioculture) founded in 1983. In terms of farming, the breakthrough came with the change of the system in 1989, when the rapid demise of the socialist agricultural system meant that the newly-independent farmers had to reorientate their economic practices; organic agriculture seemed an appealing alternative to a growing number of producers. However, until the end of the 1990s – with the exception of a few specialized shops in remote parts of Budapest – these organic products were not available on the Hungarian market, but were produced exclusively for export, predominantly to Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and the Netherlands (OszKő, 2002, p. 56).

The growing importance of organic agriculture resulted in increased institutionalization of it. Authorized inspection agencies were set up, a governmental decree regulating the production and labeling of organic products was passed in 1999, the *National Agro-environmental Program*, offering support for farmers ready to make a switch to organic production, was started in 2000, and a special division was set up within the state-agency *Agrarian Marketing Center* to deal with the promotion of organic production for the first time – not only among agricultural producers, but among consumers as well.

Parallel to the advancement of state regulation, a significant shift occurred in the availability of organic products on the Hungarian market. Previously domestic consumption was limited to the closed circle of activist-producers, and only a handful of shops selling organic products were in operation, mostly in the outskirts of Budapest or in dim cellar-shops buried in the residential districts of the downtown area. This picture has radically changed in the last ten years. Organic food stores mushroomed in larger cities and now are present even in smaller towns.[1] These organic shops are concentrated in the more prestigious commercial spaces such as downtown shopping areas and shopping malls. The distribution channels also became diversified, several organic food markets came into operation; organic products appeared on the shelves of mainstream supermarkets; and since the takeoff of the first home delivery service in 1998, more than a dozen other businesses have begun to offer similar services.

The growing availability of organic products resulted in changes in the social composition of its consumers as well. Although market research[2] shows that middle-aged people of higher education levels and above average salaries tend to have a greater likelihood to buy organic, this data has not been confirmed by empirical field research. A study by Füurediné (2007) shows that rather then being a homogenous group of well-off, well-educated urbanites, the social composition of organic consumers is very heterogeneous and internally stratified: organic food markets are nearly exclusively frequented by upper class consumers; organic shops and supermarkets, on the other hand, draw consumers of all income groups. What remains unchanged is that the clear majority of organic consumption is concentrated in urban environments, especially in the capital.

In my research I focus on the operation of the first home delivery service. It started originally as side-activity of a foundation operating an organic model farm and promoting environmentally conscious living. Initially, the delivery was limited to the so called ‘‘bio-box’’ (in its official name ‘‘communal organic vegetable box’’) in which a pre-set selection of seasonal vegetables from the model farm could be ordered, and the distribution worked through communal pick-up points to minimize harm caused by motorized transportation (and delivery costs). During the first reform phase in 2002, the ‘‘bio-box’’ idea became optional – consumers could order anything currently available in the amount they wanted. The selection of products was also widened, bringing in several producers and processed products as well. The delivery service was taking up too much effort on the part of the foundation, so in 2006, it was sold to a family enterprise that has been a major source of products during the last years of operation.

This family farm is one of the early birds of organic agriculture in Hungary, created in the early 1990s when its owner – co-founder of the first Organic Agricultural Co-operative – broke away from the co-op. The farm is located 40 km east of Budapest, and its products are predominantly sold through the delivery system, which alongside the fresh vegetables and fruits produced largely by the farm itself offers a great selection of processed organic foods acquired from a wholesaler. Beside the obvious advantages of being a pioneer and a stable player in the organic market with an extended set of regular clientele, this case offers a fascinating example of the intertwining of business and activism so characteristic of organizations linked to ethical consumption.

A Short History of the Fair-Trade Movement in Hungary

If one follows the "official historiography" produced by civil society organizations working on the introduction of fair trade to the Hungarian public, the fair-trade movement in Hungary is only 3 years old. Some awareness of the notion of fair trade was present before in academic discussions and it was mentioned several times in the limited circulation publication of the Association of Conscious Consumers (Tudatos Vásárlók Egyesülete, TVE). Also, a French documentary film produced by director of Hungarian origin, Zsuzsa Körösi, which talks extensively about the fair-trade movement in France, was shown in movie theaters and aired late at night by one of the public TV channels in early 2005. However, the first organized steps to familiarize the Hungarian public with the idea of fair trade came in April 2005, when several NGOs opened a temporary Fair-Trade Café at the yearly green festival *Ökofeszt*. The Café offered information brochures and free fair-trade coffee, the latter brought to Hungary from a world shop in Vienna, in the trunk of the private car of one of the organizers.

By the time of this first public appearance of the movement, and reportedly "the first time Hungarians ever had the chance of tasting fair-trade coffee" (Greenfo, 2006), the NGOs put together an application and won a small grant from PHARE[3] to organize a workshop on fair trade. The aim of the workshop was to prepare for the introduction of fair-trade products to the Hungarian market by drawing on the experiences of Western colleagues. To the surprise of Hungarian activists, most of the Western fair-trade gurus – rather then being social activists of the usual kind – arrived wearing suits and ties, and talked about business strategy, market positioning, and financial plans. Upon the suggestion of the Westerners, the Hungarian activists compiled detailed action plans with different time frames (one to be completed in 3 months, another in a year, and two others in 2 and 5 years' time, respectively) and practical and theoretical goals. Based on the action plan various strategy documents (communication strategy, volunteer management strategy) were adopted, a multi-step market research was planned and executed, an umbrella organization of interested NGOs[4] was set up to coordinate the tasks, and the NGOs initiated an intensive call for volunteers among their members and associates. Although the official documents aimed at opening an online store within a year and a regular one in two, based on personal talks with activists at the time, I can say that they had actually hoped to be able to open the first Fair-Trade Shop within 4 months.

Meanwhile, the temporary Fair-Trade Café was turned into a Mobile Fair-Trade Café that has been traveling from festival to festival and participating at all major "protest events"[5] for the last two years. The Café, which is operated by volunteers and financed by the NGOs and offerings collected in a box next to the coffee counter, gives away fair-trade coffee and tea for free, accompanied with fair-trade sugar and organic milk, all combined with an intensive promotion campaign of brochures and personal persuasion.

The market research suggested by the Western experts, commissioned and financed by an independent ecological foundation and implemented by a professional market research agency was completed during the summer months of 2005. Although the results were "devastating" for the movement – "We have to conclude that based on the segmentation [of quantitative data] the consumer group that would be the ideal target group for the introduction of fair trade is not detectable in any measurable quantity" (Capital Research, 2005, p. 70) – the NGOs decided to get media attention by publicizing the results of the research. The idea worked; most national daily and weekly newspapers bought the story. In these articles, the study that was originally meant to convince entrepreneurs that there is a market demand for fair trade – and to answer the question of to whom, and through which retailing channels, to sell fair-trade products – was re-contextualized as a study showing the disastrous condition of the Hungarian consumer society, where people are not receptive to the idea of ethical consumption and are not "mature" enough to appropriate the ideas that so successfully captivated the imagination of contemporary consumers in the West.

Media reports on the fair-trade study fit well in a series of similar newspaper articles that have appeared in recent years in various sections of the Hungarian media discussing phenomena linked to ethical consumption. These journalistic accounts follow a well-established script: (1) they contrast the image of the "modern," "progressive," "concerned" societies of the West with the "poor," "parochial," and "self-centered" Hungarian society; and (2) they explain the differences in the socio-cultural dispositions of Hungarians and Westerners by the country's poorness and backwardness. The title of one of the articles on the fair-trade study sums up the argument very well: "Fair Trade is Still a Luxury for Us." The term "luxury" implies both being unaffordable as well as being redundant. Another regular feature of these articles is to give voice to activists, who contrast their high enthusiasm and restless heroism with the "true Hungarian reality": a gloomy picture of Hungarian consumers, at best indifferent or even hostile to the idea of ethical consumption.

Partly due to the disheartening results of the market research, the lack of expertize, and the quitting of activists most committed to the idea of the movement operating a store of its own, the priority of opening a store was abandoned in favor of awareness-raising and convincing already existing wholesale and retail businesses to carry fair-trade products in their profiles. To the surprise of activists, a small café in downtown Budapest close to a large office building had already been offering fair-trade coffee for a year and a half, although without any publicity surrounding its "fairness." (If anything, the café was actually carving out its niche by emphasizing its Finnishness.) The strategy to mediate between foreign distributors and wholesalers and retailers worked well; by the end of 2005 fair-trade products had appeared on the shelves of some selected organic food stores (although only partly as a result of the NGO activism – some stores simply started placing the products on their shelves because the organic brand they had been carrying before came out in fair-trade version as well). In addition, an upscale Budapest supermarket chain also started selling fair-trade coffee and tea in its organic sections, and the first café (and English language secondhand bookshop) to emphasize its fair-trade affiliation opened in the spring of 2006.

The priority of the movement, however, clearly shifted to public awareness raising and education. Part of the reason for this was the growing discomfort of some of the activists about getting too involved in business activities and being associated with profit motives. The education program developed by the NGOs focused on secondary education and universities. A colorful, professional-looking brochure aiming at high school students was compiled and information about introducing fair-trade education to school curricula was sent to all schools. Meanwhile, activists joined several international campaigns (White Band Day to mark the UN summit on global development, Red Card campaign against child labor, International Fair-Trade Day, IFAT Global Journey campaign, etc.), and by this time they had no problems receiving media attention: the events were covered in the largest newspapers, were discussed several times in the prime time live cultural entertainment program of Hungarian public television and activists were invited for interviews on various programs aiming at economic actors. The biggest media response surrounded the press release by the Office of the President of the Hungarian Republic, in which it was announced that from fall 2005 onward the Office would only serve fair-trade coffee and tea to its employees and guests.

The most recent development was the opening of the first fair-trade-only world shop in Hungary. Located 3 min away from the capital's fanciest shopping street in a commercial space that used to be occupied by the only American Express office in Budapest, two young entrepreneurs who were unaffiliated with the activist movement before, opened their store in November 2006. The store sells a great variety of fair-trade goods: handicrafts, ornaments, clothes, and foodstuffs. The products are imported exclusively from a fair-trade corporation in Austria. The store is operating as a limited liability company connected with a foundation, which in the long run is planning to reinvest part of the store's profits in third world development projects and which currently works as a promotional tool for fair-trade sensibilities. Due to the novelty of fair-trade products on the Hungarian market and the limited number of people and organizations affiliated with it, I am able to incorporate in my research all channels of distribution and actors involved in the movement.

ETHICALLY LOADED COMMODITIES AS EMBLEMS OF WESTERNNESS

In this section I would like to focus on the various aspects of the fair-trade and organic movement that contributes to its image as foreign/Western. Rather then seeing this process as solely a strategic activity on behalf of the actors involved (some of the factors clearly arise from the biographical background of actors involved or the structural limitations of the Hungarian market) or a pure misapprehension of facts by the general public (there is a clear factual basis to this idea of foreignness), I would argue that a variety of factors contribute the construction of these ethically loaded commodities as emblematic signifiers of a particular notion of the West. During the analysis I will use the term "import" to refer to a set of practices related to the influx of various kinds of entities (people, commodities, images, procedures, norms, organizational structures, know-how, and communication tools) that are marked by their foreign origin.

Importing People

First, a remarkable number of people affiliated with the two forms of ethical consumption movement are of foreign origin or have spent a substantial part of their lives in a foreign country. David,[6] the owner and manager of the first markedly Fair-Trade Café and bookshop, is American – although has been living in Hungary for more than a decade. Tiffany, who first started to work on the issue of fair trade within one of the NGOs (but who has since moved on to other topics within the same NGO) is also from the US. Michael, the founder and leader of the model farm responsible for initiating the delivery service, is from the UK and according to their website prefers to be called "the Crazy Englishman." András and his wife, current operators of the delivery service, talk about their life in the Netherlands as seminal in their identity as organic farmers. Mária has a Finnish life partner, and attributes much of her choice of a Finnish coffee supplier and her success in obtaining unprecedented contractual terms with them by her family links to Finland. Pál, one of the two entrepreneurs who opened the world shop, dropped out of school to start a decadelong journey in Western Europe and Latin-America. Renáta and Krisztina, two among the most enduring activists/volunteers around the fair-trade movement both lived and studied abroad, this is where they met with the fair-trade movement for the first time.

Not only is it the fact that these people happen to be of foreign origin or spent time abroad, but they publicly affirm this information linking their personalities to their activities. Take for example the following extract from an interview published on a website about cafés in Budapest:

> He introduces himself as Stein Dávid,[7] but his accent gives him away at once… David is from the American [state of] Maine, and came to Hungary 16 years ago together with the wave of missionaries, democracy-promoting liberals and ecological activists… The

> owner of the shop offering English language books and organic fair trade coffee proudly tells the story how he opened the first Greenpeace office in Hungary.

András does the same: when describing the history of the farm on his website, he proudly claims to have moved to a farm in the Netherlands with his whole family before switching his farm to organic. The way the parts of personal biographies linked to abroad have been made public results in consumers associating these businesses and organizations with their "foreign" operators.

Importing Knowledge

I have not met one activist or entrepreneur who was not keen on "learning from the experience of the West." Fair-trade activists equate the takeoff of the movement with a workshop featuring the participation of some 13 experts of fair trade from organizations such as the Finnish world shop Uusivaihde, the Belgium Branch of Civil International, FLO, Worldshops Germany (NEWS), Green Liberty, Fairtrade Austria, etc. They describe the occasion as having been "extremely helpful," "eye-opening," "stopping us from making huge mistakes," and emphasize the very different and professional approach the guests showed to them. The World Shop was also conceived and practically put into motion in Vienna. It was a relative living in Austria who proposed that the two young entrepreneurs move into fair trade. The "Austrian connection" was important in the actual start-up of the enterprise as well. Pál and Csongor first turned to Fairtrade Austria for preliminary advice and networks. They were forwarded to the major Austrian fair-trade distributor. Pál recounts their first visit to the company in the following way.

> They were very-very enthusiastic and open. We haven't felt for a second that they were against us – they supported us in every way. By support I mean moral support, but also advice… [We have received] plenty of positive advice from them…They have 30 years of experience, they have three world shops in Austria. They had the experience. What products, where, to which shelf – details like that. They also instructed us to rent an open space of 50–60 sq.m., with a large window, at a frequented spot.

András also talks about how much he learnt from his Dutch experience and how important it is to keep in touch with current trends in the West.

> We arrived, and looked around and saw that it [organic farming] works; they produce everything without chemicals…We could bring home technologies [we thought]. Most importantly, we talked with them every night, to the extent that we could, about how

> they do this in practice, what special tools unknown in Hungary exist to realize this. We learnt about Rudolf Steiner[8] there, the ideas behind it all… The whole idea of the box, for example, was based on what this Dutch friend of ours who worked in the UK as a consultant saw there. He did this same boxing system there, because it is very widespread there. So the box itself – its design – was brought here and suggested to Michael by my husband. It can be opened and closed, reused... At the time we saw this in England, we didn't know we would wind up using it. But in the end we implemented this idea coming from the UK here in Hungary.

It is not only practical knowledge like the examples above that is imported. Much of the NGO's activity is centered on making documents in foreign languages available in Hungarian, and there is a special translation working group within the volunteer network. Materials put together by activists (brochures, flyers, educational material) very infrequently carry a strong notion of authorship; they are translations, compilations that reproduce text prepared abroad always with a clear reference to their source. Beside understandable concerns for intellectual property rights, these complimentary notes and attributions of authorship send the message that what one reads is foreign knowledge, which is available out there, and only needs to be brought home.

Importing Products

The factors mentioned above, however, contribute only indirectly to the "Westernization" of ethically loaded commodities in the eyes of consumers, since such information is only partially available publicly and only at the disposition of the actors involved. Far more important is the fact that the majority of products are relayed through the "West" in their commodity chain. At this point, the two stories separate, we will first follow fair-trade products then organic ones.

At first sight, fair-trade products inspire geographical associations linked to the Third World. In the official slogan of the movement "Fairtrade – Guarantees a better deal for Third World producers" the link is explicitly made, but not much more difficult to decode is the imagery of smiling dark-colored coffee growers or beautiful landscapes of Central America. But equally hard to miss is an added layer of origin, that of the West. Fair-trade products available in Hungary – without exception – come to the country through Western European packaging and distribution. This is completely understandable, since the Hungarian market is not large enough to provide for a separate distributor/wholesaler. This is an economic reality, the rationality of which is hard to question. Anyhow, this structural necessity creates far-reaching symbolic consequences. Let's trace what signs of "Westernness" an average pack of fair-trade coffee bears on itself. First there is the Fair-trade logo, containing the text "fair-trade" in the English language. Although the NGOs struggle hard to always use the complicated Hungarian equivalent (méltányos kereskedelem) in public appearances, the two terms are always used together, performing the act of translation itself, the need to domesticate something foreign, rather than using the Hungarian term without any further specification. The rationality of this practice is unquestionable; it is an established "brand name" simple enough to be understood by any Hungarian even without extensive knowledge of the English language. Still the "alienating" effect is undeniable.

Then there is the brand name. Clipper and Cafedirect are neutral enough to not signal any kind of national imagery, but English enough to signal something Western. Then there is the whole range of information available on the packaging (country of origin, ingredients, best before, etc.) not to forget the compulsory – sometimes surprisingly text intensive – "producer story" that became the de facto international standard of fair-trade packaging. Of course state regulations prescribe that every important piece of information be available in Hungarian translation on the product itself, which is usually achieved by adding a white sticker with the information in plain print, adding the same "performing translation" dynamic mentioned above in relation to the term fair trade itself. We also cannot forget about how a certain national character is added on top of fair trade as a promotional tool. Mária's coffee is proudly Finnish; David's coffee is award-winningly Italian.

Although similar in its symbolism, the foreignness of organic products, is much more complicated on the practical level and is also partly historic. As mentioned earlier in the historical introduction, production of organic food in Hungary antedated its general availability for Hungarian consumers. Júlia, the owner of the first shop selling organic vegetables, recounts her personal experience of problems she faced when she tried going organic in 1990.

> In 1990 there were no organic vegetables or fruits available, although they were produced, since the Biokultúra Association had been in operation since 1986. It was a regulated, accredited organization accepted in the whole of Europe, but you could not get organic produce in Hungary. Wholesalers got their hands on it all, and exported it for good money… I had big fights with wholesalers – they were convinced these things could not be sold here.

Part of the reason why producers never became interested in selling on the Hungarian market was the unlimited demand abroad for organic products.

Producers and wholesalers entered into commodity networks that were able to absorb whatever was produced, without the need to look for new markets. These established networks provided comfort and security the producer were not willing to risk by entering the Hungarian market. Another fear was that they would not be able to charge the same price for their products, a fear not only supported by the economic realities of Hungarian consumers, but also by a moral economy that would have made such levels of extra profit illegitimate when reached at the price of "fellow countrymen."

But market demand grew and even if it was just a small niche, it was big enough for some entrepreneurs to open shops of their own. And where to get the products? Organic food networks in Western Europe were willing to sell whatever was asked for. So these early organic food stores ended up importing products that might have been produced by Hungarian farmers, exported to the West, and undergoing minor or major processing (minor most of the time – processed food is relatively infrequent among organic food compared to that of the mainstream), but most often only packaging. The items then reappeared in their foreign packaging on the shelves of Hungarian stores. Although such commodity loops are largely features of the past (their overall economic rationality being close to zero and still the result of rational calculus on behalf of all actors involved), these early years of organic consumption have far-reaching consequences: in the eyes of the average consumer organic shops are places where one finds imported goods for exorbitant prices.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I explored how the production, distribution, and promotion of ethically loaded commodities become tools for some entrepreneurs and activists in Hungary to experience day-by-day their identification with the West. Rather then being limited to a small number of involved actors, this identification has far-reaching consequences: it establishes a strong symbolic linkage between ethically loaded products and Westernness among the general public. By capitalizing on the existing desire for a Western way of life this linkage can be instrumentally used as a marketing tool for ethically loaded products, similar to how nostalgia for an authentic life is invoked in alternative food movements (see Pratt, this volume), or the image of the small family producer is utilized in advertisements for fair-trade coffee (see Luetchford, this volume). Advertisements do play an important role in offering a repertoire of meanings based on which consumer identifications are built upon. But that is not all. In a world of consumption where Western goods are indistinguishably mingled with the ones produced locally or imported from other parts of the world (most importantly, Asia), ethically loaded commodities due to their novelty and low availability are able to materialize a sentiment of longing for the West among Hungarian consumers that no other group of products can. Forgetting about this dynamic of longing would be just as problematic as denying the role that marketing plays in providing the interface for connecting desires and commodities by investing products with symbolic meanings.

The chapter has also shown how the linkage between ethical consumption and Westernness is reinforced by the fact that the majority of ethically loaded commodities are relayed through the "West" in their commodity chains – either coming to Hungary from third world countries through a Western intermediary or being looped through the West by exporting and then re-importing. This movement attaches an added layer of meaning and value to these commodities; the value being the result of a normative identification with the imagined "source" of the commodity: the West. This ideological identification is built on a normatively charged opposition between East and West, a disposition described by Antohi (2001) and also Melegh (2003) as "internalized Orientalism" or "Occidentalism." It is through this disposition that discourses of ethical consumption become embedded in the overarching discourse of "post-socialism" and "transition." While the social scientific relevance of these terms can be questioned (see the debate in Hann, 2001), the incompleteness of the "post-socialist transition" is still an ever-present colloquial topos ordering popular knowledge about contemporary social processes. The transition appears as a long journey with both a spatial and a temporal dimension, the spatial being the process of reintegration into Europe, the temporal a permanent feeling of lagging behind. The public discussions on ethical consumption are embedded in this powerful discourse of desire and shame.

Part of the reason why the East-West opposition is so prevalent is that "the West" is an empty-enough signifier to be filled up with quite wide-ranging normative anxieties. Sure it is about being "Western," "European," and "Modern," but as to what exactly it is that these notions refer to is much less clear, even if limiting the scope of the inquiry to the question of ethical consumption. Some interviewees saw the "West" as a locus of rational modesty as opposed to the irrationality of consumerism in the East, while others talked about the "West" as the triumph of ethicality and emotions as opposed to the cold rational self-interested calculus of the

Easterners. For some it symbolizes transnational solidarity, for others unashamed patriotism. There were people who emphasized the wide range of products and brands to choose from, while others focused on the presence of clear and observed state regulations. The inconsistencies of these various notions linked to Western consumption mirror the ambivalences that are present in ethical consumption discourses in general.

By placing ethical consumption within the existing frame of reference that is built on the identification of material well-being with the West, the two become inextricably linked: the desire to consume ethically becomes embedded in the quest for material well-being, while the desire for material well-being is legitimized by the higher level of ethicality it enables. The way the classic opposition between the push for material well-being and its limitations by ethical and environmental considerations so widespread in contemporary discussion of ethical consumption is overwritten by an apparent harmony of the two claims, shows the extent to which the local contexts tame and transform a seemingly global phenomenon.

NOTES

1. The organic food store database operated by the Association of Conscious Consumers contains 227 shops.
2. The market research agency *GfK Hungária* publishes the main findings of its corporate-commissioned research activities on its website (http://www.gfk.hu).
3. PHARE is one of the pre-accession donor programs set up by the European Union to support countries in the region to prepare for joining the European Union.
4. The founding partners include an influential NGO active in ecological, international trade and sustainability issues. This particular NGO was able to make prime time news for months by protesting against the placement of a military locator – a NATO radar – on top of picturesque Mt. Zengő, and by convincing political parties to support their ''outsider'' candidate for the position of the President of the Republic. The founding partners also include a semi-political green youth organization, and two associations/foundations that assist people in going abroad as voluntary workers.
5. These protest events include local actions against particular investment projects, as well as Hungarian versions of international initiatives, like the Living peace sign demonstration or the Critical Mass bicycle demonstration (drawing some 30,000 bikers in the fall of 2006.)
6. All names used in the chapter are pseudonyms.
7. First and family names come in opposite order in the Hungarian language, by using the Hungarian order, he plays with his foreignness/Hungarianness.
8. Steiner (1861–1925) is an Austrian philosopher born in Hungary who is considered one of the intellectual founding fathers of the organic movement. Although he wrote in German, he had a strong group of Hungarian followers in his

time, but was then completely forgotten in Hungary until his recent rediscovery in the early 1999s. Being a reimported local, his story mirrors the journey of products described in the next section.

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THE HANDS THAT PICK FAIR TRADE COFFEE: BEYOND THE CHARMS OF THE FAMILY FARM

Peter Luetchford

ABSTRACT

Fair trade commonly focuses on the figure of the smallholding peasant producer. The effectiveness of this as a strategy lies in the widespread appeal of an economy based upon independent family producers trying to secure livelihoods in impersonal and exploitative global commodity markets. But the attempt by fair trade to personalise economic relationships between coffee producers and consumers diverts attention away from aspects of the political economy of production for the market. This chapter examines a rural Costa Rican coffee economy that has supplied fair trade markets since the 1980s. Documenting differences in landholdings, the range of activities farmers engage in, and the relationship between landowners and landless labourers, women, and migrant harvesters from Nicaragua reveals differentiation and tensions that are obscured in the "smallholder" model invoked by fair trade.

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INTRODUCTION

The marketing of fair trade emphasises and plays upon an association with small farmers and families. This strategy is effective because it evokes populist images of smallholders working on their own land and struggling to remain independent and autonomous, as the market inexorably draws them and their labour into commodity markets. In Europe, Costa Rica, and elsewhere, coffee economies are taken as representative of such small-farm enterprises, compromised by depersonalised and exploitative global exchanges. This chapter examines this culturally appealing morality tale by documenting key aspects of the political economy of coffee production in northwest Costa Rica. Attending to land ownership patterns and diversity in economic activities, and the bearing this has for labour, with particular reference to the role of landless labourers, women, and migrant harvesters from Nicaragua, exposes differentiation in this "smallholder" economy.

The primary data come from 14 months of anthropological fieldwork carried out between 1998 and 1999, and in 2003, in the rural Tilarán Highlands of Costa Rica, Guanacaste Province. Protracted involvement in coffee picking allowed an understanding of the labour process and practices in the harvest. In addition, interviews with about 150 coffee farmers revealed their reliance upon migrant Nicaraguan labour, and the anxieties attached to this dependence. Further sets of data on economic activities and land ownership were collected on two areas with similar sized populations. Campos de Oro has a total of 67 households, of which 17 are recorded as landless, although 10 of these have sharecropping agreements that gain them access to land. Of the 60 households with land available to them, 58 produce coffee, sometimes in conjunction with beef production. In El Dos there are 84 households, 32 of which have no land. Of the 52 landowning households, 16 specialise in coffee, 18 combine coffee with livestock, 16 concentrate on beef or milk production, and 2 do not use their land commercially. These differences in the kind of agriculture practiced, the class structure of the two settlements, and availability of work, have significant impact on the social relations of production. Migrants gravitate towards Campos de Oro where remuneration is higher; in El Dos farmers rely more heavily on the labour of residents, but often experience problems gathering the crop as the harvest peaks, because they have difficulties attracting outside workers.

All the coffee growers in the area are members of the Coopeldos coffee cooperative, which was founded in 1971 by a group of producers seeking better prices for their crop. Although there is a second processing plant in the vicinity, it is not seriously competitive, and even farmers who occasionally deliver coffee to this private operation retain cooperative membership. The principle remit of the cooperative is to process and market the members' coffee, but it also pursues a wide range of development goals. The cooperative has supplied northern fair trade markets since the mid-1980s, and certified organic coffee since the late 1990s. Vital to accessing these niche markets is the membership Coopeldos maintains with a second level cooperative, known as Coocafé. Interviews with managers of other cooperatives in this group, as well as with functionaries of Coocafé itself, and supplementary archival research, showed how these administrators actively pursue niche markets, and project a particular image of their members as marginal, small-holding, family farmers. One outcome of their work is that a percentage (around 30% in 2003) of all the producers' coffee goes to fair trade markets, for which they receive a premium. Other niches, such as organic, are only accessed by a small number of "elite" producers (Luetchford, 2007).

The first section of the chapter suggests how and why the social relations of coffee production remain hidden in popular representations and policy initiatives. In fair trade the marketing of the small farmer to northern consumers is exemplified by packaging and data drawn from websites, and reproduced in fair trade certification policy. This emphasis is echoed in a populist social model of Costa Rica as a nation of smallholders. Together these representations indicate the romantic cultural appeal of peasant economies in Western culture, which fair trade draws upon (Kearney, 1996).

The small farmer model is then "deconstructed" by reference to three related areas of political economy in the fieldwork site: landholding, income strategies, and the labour process. Whereas the smallholder economy allows us to imagine an undifferentiated and unproblematic rural economy, the evidence is that significant differences and tensions need to be taken into account. Firstly, farmers are shown to engage in a range of on-farm and off-farm economic pursuits. While smaller landowners tend to concentrate on coffee and combine this with wage labour or small commercial enterprises, farmers with larger holdings diversify to produce milk and beef, often in conjunction with coffee. In areas more suited to coffee production, as is the case here for Campos de Oro, there is a tendency towards more extensive coffee holdings, especially by larger landowners. Since the fair trade premium is calculated and disbursed in accordance with the quantity of coffee delivered for processing, the greatest benefits fall to those producing most coffee: farmers in better production zones and with more land.

Secondly, the issue of differentiation is examined in relation to wage labour. A crucial issue is the points at which coffee producing households sell their own labour, or conversely need to buy outside labour in. This depends on such factors as the area under coffee and its position, the fluctuating demands of the agricultural cycle, the size and composition by age of the household, and external social relations that can be mobilised for support. The ethnography shows how property relations, changes in demography and agricultural practice, and the nature of work in the coffee industry frame the labour process. A key issue is negotiation and contestation around fluctuations in labour, in which respect the harvest is a crucial time. For the vast majority of these "small" farmers involved in fair trade, migrant workers are a prerequisite for engagement in coffee commodity markets. This raises the problem of how farmers deal with and confront conflicts of interest, and how these are managed (Braverman, 1974). For workers the main variables are the form of their social relations with landowners, and the zones where coffee picking is most profitable. In any case, requirements for labour and the way it is organised lead to tensions and resistances between farmers and workers that are played out in the micro-politics of everyday life.

In recent literature, pursuing a value chain perspective on coffee, it is understood that higher profits can be generated by advertising qualities, such as fair trade and organic, and converting them into quantities, measured in money. By this means the value imbued in commodities by specific production practices and locales is extracted further down the chain by exporters, industrialists and retailers (Daviron & Ponte, 2005). But following the chain in the other direction – towards production – there are other areas of potential exploitation and profit-making. Whereas the national government and cooperatives have pursued measures to return higher proportions of profit to farmers (Cazanga, 1987; Paige, 1997; Williams, 1994; Winson, 1989), there is a silence when it comes to waged labour.

FAIR TRADE AND THE CHARM OF THE FAMILY FARM

Fair trade focuses upon small farmers, families, and households and collapses them into one another. An unintentional outcome is to mystify the conditions of production in economies such as coffee that frequently combine family and wage labour. This obfuscation can be identified and is reinforced by certification requirements, statements by alternative trade organisations, and the merchandising of fair trade.

The main certification agency is the Fair Trade Labelling Organizations International (FLO). For coffee, the principle criteria for certification are a guaranteed minimum price plus a premium for social development (in Costa Rica this amounts to $121 with a $5 premium); availability of advance credit; long-term trading relationships with democratically-run producer groups representing small farmers; financial and technical support for farmers; transparency and public accountability; and environmentally sustainable production (Jaffee, 2007, p. 2). FLO makes a basic distinction between standards ''for Small Farmers' Organizations organised in a democratic way (such as cooperatives or associations), and for situations structurally depending on hired labour'' (FLO, 2008). So in certain industries, such as cut flowers (see Dolan, this volume), certification also considers wages and labour conditions. However, in the kind of coffee production certified by FLO labour standards are deemed unnecessary ''because the majority of their labour is considered to be family labour'' (Valkila, 2007, p. 6).

Other fair trade initiatives, such as the Rainforest Alliance, allow coffee produced on large plantations to be certified, and take wage labour into account, but only to the extent of insisting on the national minimum wage. Given the informal employment conditions in coffee harvesting this is difficult if not impossible to enforce even in countries where such minimums exist; Jaffee is justified in calling this a ''notoriously inadequate standard'' (2007, p. 162). Hence in fair trade certification wage labourers are either considered structurally insignificant, or they are offered little to no protection. Before turning to the question of the significance of wage labour in a small farmer economy, let us consider the way producers and production is represented to consumers of fair trade.

In published materials, campaigns, merchandising, and web sites that seek to raise awareness of the relation between exchange and ethics, fair trade identifies exploitation in conventional markets and pitches itself in opposition to the mainstream.[1] In coffee, and other industries, the iconic figure through which it does this is the small producer; frequent reference is made to people working on their own land, family labour, wives, husbands, and children.[2] The intended effect is to ''personalise'' exchange relations, but the idioms feed into a populist imaginary.

In my kitchen are two examples of fair trade packaging. The first is a tin from France; Café Malongo has a photo of a smiling group of Latin American women and men, surrounded by sacks. The words alongside the picture tell us the content is "Arabica from the culture of small producers."[3] The second is Equal Exchange Organic Fair trade Tea. Again, there is a charming photograph, this time of women picking tea, with folded umbrellas strapped to their heads. In one corner is the fair trade logo, which "guarantees a better deal for Third World producers". In the small print, we learn the tea comes from smallholder farmers with many years of experience, who send their product "from the garden to the cup." Under the words "another step forward" we read "small-scale farmers from the Sahyadri Farmers Consortium grow tea and manufacture it in their own modern factory". On-line, the message that links fair trade to small farmers, and families is reiterated. Taking the case of Costa Rica, for example; we can meet Isabel and Rudolfo, who are "passionate about their children" and education, and farm two hectares of coffee.[4] On another link we are introduced to Francisco, William, and José from Coop Montes de Oro, Costa Rica.[5] They are "all married with children," and "appreciate the freedom of being small producers."

While I do not wish to question these statements, we would do well to interrogate what the term small farmer evokes, and what is hidden behind it. Advertised on merchandise is a particular vision of a world in which production is linked to consumption, and producers to consumers, in an effort to deny the exploitation embodied in the commodity form. Like "authentic," and "local" (see Pratt, this volume), the power of the idea of the small producer lies in its ability to carry a range of overlapping culturally appealing meanings.

Firstly, there is the idea of independence – to own land is to have the capacity to produce one's own livelihood. The opportunity to sell the products of one's own labour in markets is attractive to the right, since it avoids the proletarian trap and its socialist undertones, and conjures up the independent, self-determining businessperson. Secondly, although they are landowners, small farmers are also labourers who produce directly by working the earth, which appeals to the left. Thirdly, small farmers hold a cultural association with a specific social order. As in the Costa Rican case detailed below, peasant existence implies formal equality, based upon common status as owners of productive land. What is more, production from the land suggests localism, a world in which reproduction is based upon social ties within and between families. Either families exchange what they need, or they directly consume what they produce and so guarantee their own subsistence. In both cases, needs are satisfied through direct and known relationships and people are imagined to enter un-alienated relations with the means of production, with their product, and with other people.

Fourthly, there is an underlying political message; namely, consumers can reach out to, and support, forms of social and economic organisation that are geared towards procuring livelihoods, rather than generating profits.

By linking to ideas such as these, which hold a cultural association with peasant forms, political movements draw popular support from across the political spectrum (Guthman, 2004; Kearney, 1996; Pratt, 2003). The idea of peasant production conjures up a society in which exchange value is not extracted by unknown intermediaries; instead, people generate, reproduce and relate to one another through the production and consumption of use values. Rather than exchanging things for profit, the economy and exchange can be imagined as furnishing necessities, and therefore guaranteeing livelihoods. The idea of use value provides, for Marx at least, an idealised avenue to escape the distortions and extortions of capitalist exchange.[6]

In localised circuits we discover the advantages of the artisan mode of production. Peasants own their labour power, they control the means of production, and since we can imagine local and immediate exchange relations (such as self-provisioning from nature) we glimpse through them a world in which producers also control the distribution of their product, and do so not to maximise profits but to distribute the necessities of life. If the attractions of the artisan class lie in the capacity to capture the fuller value of what is created, then fair trade foods are an avenue to think this possibility through. Tellingly, as consumers, we realise use value in its totality at the moment of consumption (Baudrillard, 1975, pp. 96–97). Not for nothing are many of the most successful fair trade products flavoursome stimulants such as tea, coffee, sugar, fruit juices, honey and chocolate; they enliven our senses, allow us to momentarily escape alienation and realise ourselves, as we consume use value as pure pleasure (Stewart, 2005).[7]

The above observations are intended as a contribution to understanding cultural factors driving fair trade. But what of the more political agenda, which seeks trade justice for exploited, marginalised, small farmers? My intention is to show what the model obscures, not celebrate it, and trade justice campaigns are in danger of being complicit in this obfuscation as and when they reproduce the smallholder model. The generic small farmer is useful since it provides an appealing and idealised motif for fair trade. On the other hand it hides differences in landholdings, masks the range of livelihood strategies different people engage in, and leaves no room for the labour process in coffee economies. This includes understanding the way labour is mobilised and organised, tensions and uncertainties between different interests, the opportunities and constraints people face, and the strategies they employ. Although the data refers to one particular place, I surmise similar conditions and contradictions will hold in many if not all "smallholder" coffee economies.

COSTA RICA AND THE SMALL FAMILY FARM

The inspiration behind fair trade is the desire to reveal the social and environmental conditions of production. A number of recent studies have discussed this as a process of de-fetishisation, while remaining alive to the potential for re-fetishisation (Hudson & Hudson, 2003; Luetchford, 2007; Lyon, 2006). How effectively fair trade exposes social and environmental factors in production to consumers is an important question, but one outcome of the focus upon the consumer–producer relationship is to mystify social relations of production in coffee growing. That is, there is a tendency for consumers and purveyors of fair trade to fetishise the small farmer. Evidence from anthropologists, and others, interested in labour issues and power in coffee economies suggest a need not only to question, but also interrogate the small farmer model (Ortiz, 1999; Paige, 1997; Roseberry, Gudmundson, & Samper Kutschbach, 1995; Seligson, 1980; Williams, 1994; Winson, 1989). Several factors combine to empower the small producer model, and to make wage labour invisible.

Firstly, there are methodological issues. Landless people, women harvesters, and migrants in particular, constitute the most marginalised and invisible part of the coffee sector. Interviews with landless residents and women were carried out, but they were often less forthcoming or harder to find than the more voluble landowners. Such difficulties multiplied for seasonal visitors. Although I met Nicaraguan migrants during chance encounters in the field, their peripatetic existence and informal status made systematic data collection difficult. For the most part they disappear into the hills and trees as mysteriously as they melt over the national border. As the chapter will show, migrant harvesters are elusive, partly because this suits their purposes; they often have no papers and follow work opportunities as and when they arise. On the other hand, they are forced into this position by lack of official representation or secure employment. Their very marginality makes it difficult for them to exert any kind of political leverage (see De Neve, this volume).

Secondly, landlessness, and reliance on migrant labour, contradicts the central place afforded to the small landowning farmer in Costa Rican national identity. The dominant tradition of the yeoman farmer, self-sufficient and independent, living in dispersed settlements, utilising simple technology on privately owned plots of land, and involved in limited local markets, is a recurring though much contested theme in the literature (Edelman, 1999; Rodríguez, 1993; Seligson, 1980). This version of history is often associated with the work of C. Monge Alfaro (1980), who argued that shared isolation and rural poverty lies behind the distinctive political culture, for which Costa Rica is renowned. Monge connects the democratic tradition of the country with the yeoman farmer; for "a great love of democracy lies in his soul" and "(t)o understand the special concern for liberty that Costa Ricans have always shown, the respect of the country's leaders, for law and for human life, one must know the yeoman who laboured upon the land. This is the axis, the backbone of our history, the nucleus of Costa Rican society" (cited in Edelman & Kenen, 1989, p. 12). In sum, there is a close association between the smallholding, independent, peasant farmer, living in a classless rural society, and national identity.

It is by now accepted that this representation of history is at best partial. One area of research has challenged the dispersed settlement pattern and "equality in poverty" thesis, the so-called "white legend" of a society based upon families producing on small areas of land (Gudmundson, 1986). Statistics also challenge dogma; Colombia and El Salvador, for example, have long had a much higher percentages of landholdings under 10 hectares than Costa Rica (Winson, 1989, p. 95). Another reason to question historiography is that processes of proletarianisation have been shown to have been deeper and more advanced than was once imagined, reaching 71% by 1888 (Seligson, 1980, p. 23). In the case presented here proletarianisation had important effects on migration patterns. According to their own testimony, and documentary evidence, many of the subjects of this study had moved out of the Central Plateau into highland Guanacaste in the early part of the last century in search of new lands to cultivate (Samper, 1990). A further important set of data undermine the rural equality thesis by focusing on differentials in land ownership. For example, in the case of Guanacaste, the legacy of a policy to sell land cheaply to wealthy individuals meant that vast tracts of the often underused lowlands were concentrated in the hands of a few families. However, and also important for the present case, landless and land poor peasants were able to move into the Tilarán Highlands and claim areas of primary forest to farm (Gudmundson, 1983). It is precisely this class of "peasant-proprietor" that national and international development efforts, including fair trade, have sought to help.

These qualifications not withstanding, the idea of the yeoman farmer is nevertheless alive and well in national discourse. In effectively debunking what he calls "one of the most attractive and widely disseminated national mythologies of any Latin American nation", Gudmundson seeks to correct serious flaws in the model of pre-capitalist Costa Rica. Nevertheless, in the same passage he goes on to admit that the model is not without foundation, and that the "historical and historiographical origins, ideological variations, and major hypotheses of the rural democratic model are complex and worth exploring" (1986, p. 1). The yeoman vision indicates a historically continuous national identification with small landowners, "a common culture" shared by peasantries and elites that is specific to Costa Rica (Edelman, 1999, p. 47). In the face of this sense of shared destiny, landlessness and reliance on migrant labour remains an under-examined anomaly. For example, an important study by Sick focuses explicitly on landowning families and dedicates only two pages to wage labour, even though almost 25% of households in the two sites were recorded as landless at the time of research (1999, p. 41).

Landlessness and reliance on migrant labour is also problematic for cooperatives and associations of small producers seeking to capitalise in markets on the basis of this identity. The Costa Rican cooperatives that deal with northern fair trade organisations emphasise their small farmer status in bulletins, histories, and interviews. Linked to this is repeated reference to an historical experience of marginality and relative poverty. Such self-representation is central to these cooperatives; it is what they have long struggled against in the modernising mission to "sow progress".[8] These efforts began in the 1980s, and were designed to lift the members of marginal cooperatives out of poverty. For example, Juan Carlos, the manager of Coopeldos, describes the Guanacaste of his childhood as "one of the most marginalised and economically underdeveloped parts of the country." Likewise, in 1998 the manager of Coocafé in his 10th anniversary address spoke of "resolving with valour and solid and practical plans, the problems of the small and marginal coffee producer." The background to these statements is a history of struggle between coffee growers and elite processing families, in which farmers accused the coffee oligarchy of systematic exploitation that reduced them to poverty (Acuña Ortega, 1985, 1987; González Ortega, 1987). What is more, the Coocafé cooperatives can justly represent themselves as marginal in the national coffee sector since they are situated away from the premium production zones in the Central Valley.

What cannot be denied is that agricultural households are based around nuclear families with a division of labour in which men engage in agricultural activities of various kinds, while women focus on the domestic space and economy. However, just because a family owns two hectares of coffee does not mean that they rely solely on that for income. Rather, the pattern is one of mixed agriculture and diverse sets of activities. A survey of all households in the two adjacent areas of the Tilarán Highlands recorded land ownership, land use, and economic activities by households. In one part of the fieldwork site, El Dos, only 3 of the 52 households with land are recorded as gaining cash income solely from coffee, and in two of these cases family members also at times take on wage labour. In the other area, Campos de Oro, there is greater conformity to the idealised coffee economy; 12 of the 60 households with access to land are recorded as living from coffee production alone and in many other cases the extra income comes from small-scale on-farm activities such as egg, chicken, pork, or beef production for local or regional markets.

In families with smaller holdings coffee cultivation is usually combined with wage labour, small businesses, and subsistence cultivation. For example, the man will maintain the coffee grove, but also work on other agricultural tasks such as clearing undergrowth, milking, or coffee picking for neighbours, and sometimes combine this with commercial ventures such as building work, basket weaving, running a repair shop, or have "financial interests." Those over 65 can combine agriculture with a basic state pension. In addition to running the household, women will pick coffee and work in the service industry running a shop, cleaning houses, selling home-made cheeses, or cutting hair. In families with bigger landholdings, the farm is generally run as a business, with small areas of coffee commonly combined with raising livestock. In these households the women often work as housewives, though they sometimes also take on paid employment.

When it comes to land use, half the farmers who grow coffee in El Dos combine this activity with more extensive beef and dairy farming. In Campos de Oro 2 out of 3 coffee growers specialise in the crop, while the remainder combine coffee with livestock. For coffee specialists the average farm size is 1.5 hectares in El Dos, and 1.8 hectares in Campos de Oro. For non-specialists growing coffee in combination with milk or beef production the average area under coffee is 1.4 hectares in El Dos, and 2.8 hectares in Campos de Oro. However, these variations, which show coffee to be a preferred activity in Campos de Oro, are complicated by two further distinctions. Firstly, while the total land owned remains the same for cooperative members who specialise in coffee as they dedicate all available land to the crop, it rises to 28 hectares in El Dos and 73 hectares in Campos de Oro for those who combine coffee with livestock.[9]

Table 1. Distribution of Farm Size by Production Zone and Activity (%).

	Area Under Coffee	El Dos (%)	Campos de Oro (%)
Farmers growing only coffee	Less than 2 hectares	73.3	72.7
	2–5 hectares	26.7	21.2
	5–10 hectares	0.0	6.1
	Total (%)	100	100
Farmers combining coffee with livestock	Less than 2 hectares	66.6	40.0
	2–5 hectares	27.8	48.0
	5–10 hectares	5.6	12.0
	Total (%)	100	100
All coffee farmers and cooperative members	Less than 2 hectares	70.0	58.6
	2–5 hectares	27.0	32.8
	5–10 hectares	3.0	8.6
	Total (%)	100	100

Source: Data collected by author during fieldwork.

The second qualification lies in the distribution of land dedicated to coffee. Table 1 separates out farmers into locally significant categories of small, medium, and large producers; those who cultivate less than 2 hectares and can therefore be expected to work alone outside the harvest, farmers producing on 2–5 hectares who are likely to require some help throughout the year but especially at harvest time, and those with more than 5 hectares who will be reliant on outside labour throughout the year. All farmers in the area dedicate less than 10 hectares to coffee, the minimum proposed by the Costa Rican coffee institute as sufficient to support a family (Cubero, 1998). While this justifies their classification as small coffee farmers, it tells us little about off-farm incomes or land ownership. The table demonstrates that farmers in Campos de Oro work slightly larger areas than in El Dos, and significantly larger when coffee is combined with livestock. As we shall see below, this reflects the greater suitability of Campos de Oro to coffee, and the comparative ease with which labour can be managed there.

The important point to take from the figures is that half of cooperative members in El Dos and one-third in Campos de Oro are not constrained in their coffee growing activities by limited landholdings, since they could transfer land dedicated to dairy or beef over to coffee. Coffee specialists, on the other hand, are more constrained by lack of land, and many take out loans or enter sharecropping agreements to access or increase available land to cultivate. So, while limited landholdings can sometimes be a problem for farmers, alongside factors such as experiences in markets, investment costs to start a dairy, and family expertise, the overriding concern is labour. Indeed, in El Dos, which has a more favourable position and climate for milk production, farmers with sufficient land have historically tended to grow coffee to generate capital and then convert to dairy, a move they attribute to problems managing harvest labour. Conversely, in Campos de Oro where conditions are more suited to coffee, farmers who have land available tend to dedicate more of it to the crop, and less to livestock, especially dairy.

In understanding labour requirements, the crucial point is when and why a farmer needs to employ wage labour. It has been estimated that 2 hectares under coffee are manageable for a single male worker, apart from the harvest when extra help is required (Sick, 1999, p. 53). Similarly, Evans (1999, p. 47) gives figures of 130 working days per year per hectare for coffee, and only 6 days per hectare per year for cattle. These figures are borne out by data from the Costa Rican Coffee Institute (Icafé, n.d.), which records 128.67 labour days per hectare of coffee, of which 80.29 days are needed to harvest. On these figures a single worker could manage 4 or even 5 hectares outside the harvest season. On the other hand, although it appears that the same individual could also harvest over 2 hectares this is not the case. As we see below, the timing and distribution of the work means that even farmers with less than one hectare often cannot manage this phase of production alone.

For this reason almost all producers must turn to the family, to wage labour, or find some other resolution to the labour problem. Data on use of wage labour demonstrates the reliance of farmers on paid workers for the harvest. Out of 73 households in one survey, only 8 managed with family labour alone for the harvest, and 34 also employed labour at other times of the year.[10] Such data suggest that, despite certification standards and the images we are presented with as consumers, wage labour is "structurally significant" in small farmer coffee economies. What is more, as employers, farmers become embroiled in tensions in labour management. Since the harvest is the most common time that farmers turn to wage labour, it is to the contradictions, and the different and sometimes opposing interests in the labour process of the coffee harvest that we now turn.

THE COFFEE HARVEST

In the commercial coffee industry, scarcity of labour in the harvest months sets up a series of problems specific to the industry, yet many writers miss or ignore this aspect.[11] The technification and intensification of production through the introduction of hybrid varieties and industrial inputs, which in the Tilarán Highlands is attributed to the activities and initiatives of the cooperative and is traced back over the last 30 years, means higher yields. More coffee to be picked in turn exacerbates the problem of labour and its management.

Coffee growing is specifically tied to an annual cycle, with tasks associated with, and prescribed for certain months. The flowering and the fruiting of the bushes, and the rains that accelerate weed growth, dictate the rhythm of production. The harvest is a crucial time. It is when farmers learn how much coffee they have, which gives an indication of potential income, and allows them to compare with previous years and assess their attempts to negotiate the intricacies of production. It is also critical for social relations of production. Since even farmers, with only a hectare or two, struggle to manage the entire harvest using family labour, hired workers must be bought in. After the harvest the pruning is carried out, usually by the owner but sometimes with one or two paid assistants. In the dry summer months from March to July the bushes flower and begin to bud, less work is required, and many farmers do without wage labour. This is a time for maintenance work, socialising, and recuperation in preparation for the intense activity of the next harvest.

The tempo of ripening of the fruit is dependent on antecedent blossoming. Coffee comes into bloom repeatedly, and with escalating and then decreasing intensity, and each florescence produces buds that will eventually turn to fruit that contains the bean. The frequency and profusion of the flowerings therefore prefigure the timing and intensity of work in the harvest. Bushes producing many flowers at once will later have larger quantities of ripe fruit appearing at one time. Conversely, frequent flowerings spread over a longer period will require repeated visits to the grove (or *cafetal*), but provide poorer pickings on each visit. By such criteria harvesters characterise coffee as "bad" or "good," a judgement that refers to how much ripe fruit appears simultaneously, and so how quickly they can fill their baskets.

The pattern varies from year to year, but maturation is partly dependent on environmental and climatic conditions. In El Dos up to eight flowerings occur, which farmers say relates to the cooler, wetter climate, as the occasional and unseasonable rain showers in the dry season encourages blooming. On the hills to the south-east, in Campos de Oro, where it is hotter and drier, the coffee tends to flower more intensively over a shorter period, and so reaches maturity slightly later, but in greater abundance at one time. Farmers say the coffee here is "more level" or "even." Meanwhile, away to the east, at higher altitude, the fruit ripens even later, and the season continues long after producers in El Dos have finished picking.[12] These broad differences in climate mask more subtle variations in light and shade, exposure and shelter; cropping varies between neighbouring *cafetales*, between rows in the same field, and even between adjoining bushes. In addition to the influence of climate and position several farmers observed that coffee in a well-worked *cafetal* ripens more slowly than one in which the plants are insufficiently nourished or infrequently pruned. Stressed bushes flower and fruit more quickly and old wood is less productive, so labour requirements at harvest depend upon previous inputs and agricultural practices. These variables behind the timing and size of the crop present pickers with a range of work options; when the season has ended in one area it is peaking in another part of the highlands, and harvesters can take the opportunity to migrate.

The owner of the *cafetal* takes decisions about when and where to pick, depending on the amount of ripe red cherries on the bush. Although this is not of concern from a financial point of view, because pickers are paid piecework, it is vital in attracting harvesters and keeping them; the better the picking, the more workers earn. A farmer who sets a team to work on a poor patch will soon see the labour force dwindle, as they move away to richer fields. In the early part of the harvest little or no help is required, but as the season gathers pace the farmer must be able to attract and retain a workforce. Personal judgment is exercised to assess how many labourers will be needed at a particular time. But landowners must also develop a reputation for providing good pay and conditions to workers in order to secure them in the first place.

The picking season extends over a lengthy period, roughly from September to February, but peaks in the middle months.[13] Whilst the majority of farmers manage with family labour outside of the harvest, thereby reducing costs and ensuring more of the value remains within the house, almost all require some help to gather the coffee. In the early part of the harvest the landowner's family and local residents can generally fulfil labour needs, but attracting workers becomes increasingly problematic as the season gathers pace.

The first port of call when mobilising labour is the immediate family, so family size and composition are key variables in the labour process. When carried out within the household, problems of labour management are less overt. Wives pick coffee in between domestic chores, while daughters and sons are mobilised as long as they remain at home. Often sons work as labourers on the parents' land, and increasingly take charge of production.

Children are also expected to help in the harvest after school or in the holidays, or are kept out of school if work is pressing. Coffee picking is one agricultural task that is considered particularly suitable for women, and possible for children, as manual dexterity rather than strength is required. A report prepared for the Ministry of Education by the school in El Dos records 44% of women residents pick coffee. When the family owns the coffee the husband "sends" his wife and children to harvest, whilst he combines picking with overseeing the work and undertaking the heavy task of transferring the sacks of coffee from grove to cooperative for processing. Payment to family members for picking is open to negotiation, depending on the relationship and whether they still live in the parental home. Some families pay relatives to come and work, whilst extended families sometimes avoid employment costs by working as a group, exchanging labour, and moving from one grove to another. This system of labour exchange is said by residents to have once been more prevalent. It is a particularly satisfactory resolution of the labour problem since it avoids cash payments and obviates the need to rely on outsiders.

But increased production has, according to evidence and common testimony, coincided with a trend towards smaller families. The average family today has four or five members, whilst it is common for older residents to have had 10 or 15 siblings, all of whom could have laboured in the harvest. The combination of increased production through technification and dwindling family size means the vast majority of farmers must look elsewhere for help with harvesting.

Landless residents generally have long-standing work agreements with a particular *patrón*, and so the structure of work is part of wider social relationships. These ties can be informal agreements to provide harvest labour in return for protection from unemployment at other times of the year when work is scarce. Otherwise more formal sharecropping agreements are arranged, whereby the farm is run under an *a medias* agreement. In this case the labour is "put out" to landless or land poor residents who organise and execute all the work, become members of the cooperative and receive a 50% share of the income from sale of the coffee. Here the farmer renounces half the income to resolve the problem of labour; the landless partner gains the right to join the cooperative and so ensures a coffee income and work for his family, but takes on the problem of labour management. In Campos de Oro there are about 10 such "*a medias*" arrangements, but none in El Dos. Since these sharecroppers are recorded as "farmers," it helps account for the lower number of *péon* households in Campos de Oro compared to El Dos.

At the time of fieldwork a third of households in El Dos and one quarter in Campos de Oro were recorded as landless. Many of these are permanent, though some are more temporary. The permanent residents generally have extended family connections in the area, and usually own or have use rights to a permanent home. Often they have long-term labour agreements with landowners. Others, especially the young, have a more transitory life style and may best be described as semi-resident; they move frequently, often only short distances, from house to house within the locality, as they attach themselves to different employers. Eventually, especially if they have family elsewhere, they may move on to another part of the country in search of work or land. At the same time others move in to take their place as part of a pattern of shifting migration.

The harvest is a key time for landless locals; they must earn as much as possible to tide them over the remaining 5 months of the year, when less work is available. The ability to find employment during the rest of the year depends on personal ties and reputation, particularly the capacity to work hard. Occasional work may be found in pruning coffee bushes or applying fertiliser, in clearing land, or as a *peón* in a dairy. Promising to help in a future harvest is a useful point of leverage for gaining employment during leaner times. If little demand for labour puts workers at a disadvantage in the dry summer months, then during the harvest the tables are turned and pickers have an upper hand; as formally free agents they can move from one *cafetal* to another. Because picking conditions and requirements vary, and agreements are made informally, there is room for manoeuvre. One picker refused to work a particular grove, even though he was employed on a daily basis in the owner's dairy. As he said, "No one can tell me who to pick for."

Harvesters work in teams, which in the smaller *cafetales* of El Dos usually vary from between 3 and 4 individuals, up to about 10. Each worker is assigned a row of bushes and removes all ripe fruit from one plant, before moving on to the next, and so on, down the row. Picking is dirty work, and can be cold and wet, so old clothes are worn, with waterproofs or black bin-liners, as well as rubber boots and a hat for protection from sun and rain. The fruit is collected in a large basket (*canasta*), which is secured to the waist of the picker by means of a rope padded with an agricultural sack. Most harvesters also carry a wire hook (*gancho*) attached to a length of string. The hook is placed over a branch, which is then pulled down towards the picker who holds it in place by standing on the end of the cord, leaving the branch steady and both hands free to work.

The harvester removes all the red fruit as well as that which is "coloured" yellow or orange (*pintón*), and therefore ripening. In theory all green coffee needs to be left for future rounds. In practice some of this unripe coffee unavoidably falls into the basket, as do leaves and other detritus. The aim of the picker is to work at speed but to minimise the amount of unwanted material to a level acceptable to the owner. The coffee in an individual's basket is scrutinised by the producer and assessed as to how clean (*limpio*) or dirty (*sucio*) it is. For the farmer the purity of the work is of primary interest, but the picker is concerned with volume, and talk among harvesters centres upon how much coffee is available on the bush, how "good" or "bad" it is, and how fast (*rapido*) or slowly (*lerdo*) they work. In this respect coffee picking can be described as semi-skilled; the work itself is repetitive and monotonous, but at the same time it requires dexterity, and speed improves with practice. The trick is to maximise return (by way of quantity picked), but at the same time meet the minimum requirements for purity. The grower's interest in the quality of the coffee is maintained by the cooperative, which measures the percentage of green coffee and dross in a sample, and sanctions those delivering unacceptably impure loads.[14] Since green coffee is paid at a lower rate than the ripe product, the system of surveillance practised by the cooperative over farmers' consignments encourages growers to monitor and control the work of the pickers.

From the basket the coffee is transferred to a sack, and finally measured in a box (*cajuela*) at the end of the day in order to calculate payments due to the pickers. In the 1998–1999 season the rate paid per box fluctuated around 275 *colones* ($US 1.00), although I heard reports of one farmer paying as much as 400 *colones*. A poor day's picking would yield only 4 or 5 boxes, but on a good day a fast picker can gather 12 or 15, and legends abound of individuals picking up to 20 boxes in one day. Income during the harvest therefore depends on the dexterity and experience of the picker, not least in judging where to pick next, and managing the social relationships such movement requires. Information on harvesting opportunities is an important topic for conversation; I was often given advice about where to work next, and the rates being offered by different farmers. Some owners pay a higher price to compensate for poor pickings early and late in the season. Others argue that keeping the same rate throughout the season is fair as it balances out in the long run. Although farmers claimed to come to an agreement about rates of payment for the coming season, workers and landowners generally negotiate before work commences. The agreed price per *cajuela* is said to be a reflection of the current market, so pickers bear some of the brunt of price falls. In 1999 prices were hovering at around $US 100, and farmers were predicting a drop in the rate they would pay. The relation between coffee prices and harvest payments may be one way that fair trade deals "trickle-down" to the landless. Since all coffee growers within the area of this study receive premiums for the quota sold to fair trade buyers through the cooperative it is not possible to compare wage rates within and without the fair trade system. The effect of fair trade on labour rates is an important area for comparative study but the evidence here remains circumstantial. Only two farmers of the 150 interviewed made the unsolicited point that higher prices ensured by fair trade meant they could afford to pay pickers a higher rate.

In this section we have seen how the fluctuation in labour requirements ties landowners, and particularly coffee farmers, into economic and social relationships with the landless, permanent and semi-permanent residents. Reciprocal agreements to offer work and accommodation and provide labour involves a degree of strategising, yet those who identify, are identified with, and can activate a sense of social responsibility always appear to gain access to sufficient work to satisfy basic needs. Many of the more industrious claimed there was always work available, while even people not known for hard work seemed to find occasional labour when they required it. One semi-retired individual was particularly renowned for being work-shy, but he was able to get odd jobs outside the harvest season, and sometimes took part in community work projects. As one landowner put it, "He is not a good labourer, but he needs money, so I give him work."

MIGRANT WORKERS

As the coffee harvest gathers momentum towards the end of the year, the labour problem intensifies to the point that local workers cannot satisfy demand. However, from September onwards, temporary workers come to the Tilarán Highlands from Nicaragua. Most immigrants have no work permits, and many walk long distances to avoid border controls. These arrivals form part of a larger picture of economic migration into the country.[15] Because of their transient and informal status it is difficult to estimate numbers entering the El Dos area, but two separate farmers gave a figure of "around 300" for Campos de Oro, with its 58 coffee farms.

The first Nicaraguan migrants were brought into the area 20 years previously by the owners of the private coffee enterprise and processing plant in nearby Turín. To run a large estate requires a considerable workforce, and even today the Turín operation employs about 30 Nicaraguans for the harvest season, as well as a dozen or so on a permanent basis. The influx of migrants has escalated over the years, and was exacerbated by the Sandinista-Contra war of the 1980s. A number of farmers recalled finding workers in refugee hostels in nearby Tilarán, and although these no longer exist, the Nicaraguans continue to arrive in search of work. Sometimes they come as a family, or, more commonly, as most are young men, friends join forces and make the trip together. Many visit year after year, and some stay to work, and can eventually gain citizenship by taking advantage of government amnesties.

What remains beyond doubt is the reliance of the small coffee farmers on these temporary visitors. The cooperative continues its ambitious expansion programme, and in discussions many residents would rhetorically question who would pick the new coffee coming into production. The answer, of course, is Nicaraguan, or *nica*, migrant labourers.[16] The *nicas* are valued for their strength of constitution and capacity for hard work. They are considered "good workers" and "valiant" when it comes to facing the elements, and they continue to pick through the worst storms and winter squalls. The ability to work hard is esteemed; manual agricultural labourers "work the hardest, but earn the least," and Nicaraguans are not exempted from this judgment. Yet the central role played by these temporary foreign workers in the economic life of the coffee farmers creates a series of tensions and uneasily resolved problems. Nicaraguans come "in need of work" and have the necessary qualities, but they are also feared and mistrusted, and their position is an ambiguous one; they are indispensable to the local economy, but come and go as they please, and so are almost impossible to trace or hold to agreements. A house near my own contained three migrants at the beginning of one week, then five, followed by eight, then five again, only to be left empty before the week was up. It is not therefore surprising that a number of rather fraught opinions circulate as regards these dangerously necessary visitors. Not only do judgments vary considerably from one person to the next as to the merits, or otherwise, of *nicas*, but also distinct and apparently contradictory views are often voiced by the same person.

On the negative side, Nicaraguans stands accused of being unreliable and untrustworthy. When they begin work, verbal agreements are made and they are provided with shelter, usually a wooden shack, which is generally purpose built to house harvesters. In return they are expected to pick for the provider of the lodgings, as and when they are needed. In slack periods, between pickings, they are at liberty to work elsewhere. However, since they do not intend to remain after the harvest, when work is scarce, they have little incentive to keep these agreements, and in practice tend to follow the harvest as it peaks in different places. One farmer was incensed at a group of

Nicaraguans. He had collected them from town and given them accommodation, only to see them leave after a few days to work on the other side of the valley where the picking was purported to be better. Compounding the problem of the Nicaraguan is their perceived association with barbarity and danger. Traits easily juxtaposed to the qualities of peace, harmony, tolerance, and temperance claimed by resident *ticos*. To a degree the propensity towards violence is attributed to the war, whilst in part it is claimed that those who come from Nicaragua are the criminal element on the run from the law in their own country. Others say that violence is a result of drunkenness; although some locals do drink, alcohol is generally viewed in a negative light, and the Protestant converts (*evangelicos*) are strong advocates of temperance. A number of brawls and machete fights occurred outside the village bar, and sometimes involved confrontations between guest workers and local youths. Whatever the cause, stories abound of *nica* involvement in violent clashes and deeds, and they are generally feared and avoided. Many women will not walk out alone if they know Nicaraguans are in the area, and one farmer claimed to always carry a pistol when dealing with them.

However, the wild reputation of the Nicaraguan has its compensations. They are renowned for their hardiness; they are said not to need beds, and it is claimed they sleep happily on the floor, "like dogs." Some I met had walked for days over the mountains, without money or possessions. In their own country they generally constitute the dispossessed rural poor, and when they can find work there it is often only for food, or a dollar a day if they are paid. They can earn this in one hour working in the coffee harvest in Costa Rica. Some have land, or a house, in their own country, which encourages their return; others remain peripheral visitors to the Costa Rican economy, floating between work opportunities, rural and urban contexts. Fernando is one such marginal migrant who stayed rather longer than his compatriots. He left his own country when his house was burnt down by Sandinistas, and had worked cropping pineapples in the south of Costa Rica, as a labourer in construction in San José, and then found his way to El Dos for the 1998–1999 coffee-picking season. He remained afterwards as a semi-employed day-labourer, but always talked of returning to his own country, and by 2003 he and his family had moved on.

Nicaraguans are drawn into the social relations of production and their role is indispensable. Some growers do manage without resorting to employing the visitors, particularly in El Dos, where conditions for coffee are not so favourable and less ripens at one time. There is also more waged work in dairies and at the cooperative to support resident landless, who can then be mobilised for coffee harvesting. In Campos de Oro, by contrast, more coffee is grown and more comes to fruition at any one time, increasing the pressure on labour at harvest time. Nearly all residents either own a *cafetal* or are tied into an *a medias* agreement, which gives them effective rights and responsibilities with respect to a particular grove; it also means most permanent inhabitants have coffee to attend to, and there is less of a floating labour force. It is here many of the migrants end up working; they pass through El Dos and may even stay a few days, but they soon learn of more lucrative harvests across the valley, and disappear as suddenly as they arrived.

The migrant is an elusive figure, and the limited ability of farmers to control them at harvest time increases the uncertainty of coffee production. In addition to agricultural expertise, growers need to be able to manage the labour process successfully. Landowners and more permanent residents may strategise and negotiate, but their interests are long-term and therefore more predictable. The temporary migrants need have no such allegiance. Their aim is to maximise return over the 2 or 3 months they are required, after which they melt back over the border, or are absorbed into the informal economy in another part of Costa Rica. Although they are necessary to pick the coffee, their informal status, specific interests, and contradictory position compromise the ability of farmers to manage the social relations of production. Hence the small family farmer becomes engaged in the antagonistic relations of capital; the opposing interests of those for whom the labour process is carried out and those who carry it out (Braverman, 1974, p. 57).

CONCLUSIONS

A major benefit associated with coffee farming, and one often referred to by growers, is the employment it generates. As a labour intensive industry with a high rate of return per hectare it is suited to small landowners with large families, and said to encourage equity in the social distribution of wealth and resources. This is where Costa Rican "coffee culture" meets the rural democratic model of national mythology. As many people around El Dos pointed out, a farm of 30 hectares supports only one household involved in milk and beef production, but could potentially supply a livelihood for 10 coffee farmers and their families.

Largely unquestioned in this representation are structures of power. The yeoman model, with low intensity methods and returns per hectare, and large family units for satisfying labour needs is complicit in this. We need to understand how our cultural assumptions about economic forms, specifically those attached to peasant production, are maintained, reproduced, and commercialised. The cultural and romantic association of peasant modes of production diverts attention away from obvious inequalities between parties with different interests and capacities (Stolcke, 1995). To be specific, what is obscured in this representation of the coffee industry, small farming families, the cooperative, and, by extension, fair trade, are inequalities between landed, land poor and landless, women and men, residents and migrants.

A number of points are forthcoming. Looking at the organisation of production, and specifically the harvest, shows our assumptions about "small farmer" economies need to be qualified. Firstly, farmers with little land commonly work for others on piece rates as pickers to earn extra cash. In this way synthetic categories break down and imagined communities of independent family producers melt into air. Secondly, farming families, even those with small areas of land, are frequently forced to rely on external labour as their own is not sufficient. The chapter therefore questions the idea that small coffee farmers are not structurally dependent on wage labour. An outcome of this dependence is that farmers are often embroiled in contestation around interests in the labour process, characteristic of the capitalist economy generally, but which takes a specific form in the coffee industry. Thirdly, there is considerable variation in the size of landholdings in this "small" farmer economy, with a range of less than a fifth of a hectare up to 600 hectares. Larger farmers grow coffee as one agricultural option, alongside milk and beef production. These farmers with more land are likely to grow more coffee, especially in premium areas such as Campos de Oro, and so benefit more from cooperative membership and niche markets such as fair trade and organic.

Much of the fair trade literature to date focuses "up" from "producers" (which usually, somewhat bafflingly, refers to cooperatives and administrators) and their relations with NGOs and consumers. But we also need to focus "down" on relationships between growers and their cooperatives (Luetchford, 2007) and, as in this chapter, between farmers and workers. If fair trade seeks shorter circuits between producers and consumers then they also need more information on production regimes in specific industries in order to guard against easy stereotypes.

NOTES

1. See, for example http://www.fairtrade.net/producers.html, and http://www.maketradefair.com/en/index.php?file = issues_coffee.html (last accessed 25/06/07)

2. The emphasis on small farmers is made more prominent in some accounts, and in relation to specific industries (bananas, coffee, and cocoa). Other products and websites are more concerned with labour issues and plantation workers (cut flowers and tea). For examples of the representation of small farmers in coffee see http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/suppliers_growers (accessed 15/03/07) and http://www.fairtrade.net/producers.html (accessed 15/03/07)

3. My translation from the French: "Arabica issu de la culture des petits producteurs".

4. See http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/suppliers_growers_coffee_isabel.htm

5. See http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/suppliers_growers_coffee_three_men.htm

6. Marx gives three examples of un-alienated labour, though he rejects their revolutionary potential. Firstly, Robinson Crusoe is taken by Marx as representative of the total realisation of use value, since he produces everything he needs for himself, so that "the relations between Robinson and the objects that form the wealth of his own creation, are here so simple and clear as to be intelligible without exertion…yet those relations contain all that is essential to the determination of value" (2000, p. 477). Yet Marx recognises that the problem with Crusoe is that he is alone on his island and is not properly social. He consequently turns to feudal society. Marx contrasts this with capitalism, not because it was non-exploitative, but because "the social relations of individuals in performance of their labour appear at all events as their own mutual personal relations, and are not disguised under the shape of social relations between the products of labour" (*ibid.*). That is, goods are not fetishised, and economic relations are first and foremost social relations, albeit of an exploitative kind. The third case is the peasant household, which Marx objected to because he saw it as patriarchal, historically regressive and inefficient, and he rejected ownership of personal private property since under capitalism it presupposes and results in the alienation of labour from the product. However, he does recognise that peasant production as a social relation is a function of the family; individual labour power is part of the overall labour power of the group, and so its social character is stamped upon it (*ibid.*).

7. This section draws upon Baudrillard's insight that "the moment of consumption remains of the artisan type even in the system of our political economy. The user who consumes enters into personal relationship with the product and directly recovers its "use value," just as the process of artisan labour preserves the use value of the labour power of the artisan. But this personal exchange in consumption is restricted for us to the level of the privatised individual. This also remains the only moment that seems to avoid exchange value, hence it is invested today with a very strong psychological and social charge" (1975, p. 97, Note 2).

8. "We sow progress", or "*sembramos progreso*" is the motto of the Coopeldos cooperative.

9. The higher figure for Campos de Oro is largely explained by the presence of one very large landowner with about 600 hectares.

10. This survey included all households south of the River Cañas: all 67 households in Campos de Oro, plus 6 otherwise included in El Dos.

11. The notable exception is Ortiz (1999). Many of the arguments central to this chapter, such as attitudes to migrants, surveillance and quality control, and power differentials in bargaining over wages and conditions, are to be found in this detailed work on rural labour markets and the coffee industry in Colombia.

12. The peaking of the harvest in different areas at different times around Coopeldos was initially explained by growers, but was later checked against Cooperative records of coffee received from different areas over the season. (See "Coopeldos R. L., Departamento de Contabilidad. Sistema de Control de Recibo de Café; medidas y remedidas por fecha, 1999").

13. As in Note 12, above, the harvest pattern is revealed by the cooperative's records for coffee delivered to reception points (*recibidores*) in each zone of production (Sistema de Control de Recibo de Café, medidas y remedidas por fecha, Departamento de Contabilidad, Coopeldos R. L.)

14. Systems of surveillance are only partly implementable and effective; like all processors Coopeldos engages in an ongoing struggle to improve quality.

15. Estimates at the number of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica vary, but most put the number at around 500,000, about half of whom are classified as illegal (see *Tico Times*, October 9, 1998, p. 4)

16. The term *nica* is not necessarily pejorative; it may be compared to the equivalent term *tico*, which Costa Ricans use as a form of self-identification. The name *paisa*, which is also used with reference to Nicaraguans, has more negative connotations.

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MAKING OR MARKETING A DIFFERENCE? AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF THE MARKETING OF FAIR TRADE COCOA FROM GHANA

Amanda Berlan

ABSTRACT

This chapter contrasts the representation of Third World farmers in Fair Trade marketing campaigns with data drawn from long-term fieldwork involving cocoa producers in Ghana and evidence provided by older anthropological monographs on these communities. In doing so, it practically illustrates the disparity between global assumptions and local perspectives on production and consumption. The key contention underlying this chapter is that the representation of producers as needy, helpless, and disgruntled with multinational corporations is deeply problematic. Such a representation reveals a significant and somewhat concerning discrepancy between the lives of farmers and the narratives displayed in Western campaigns for trade justice. By using fieldwork data

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and earlier anthropological literature showing the determination, ingenuity, and far-sighted strategies of cocoa farmers in Ghana, this chapter demonstrates that producers in the Third World are not the passive and helpless individuals they are sometimes portrayed as.

INTRODUCTION

The Fair Trade movement has achieved considerable success in recent years. Many sources describe its development in the closing decades of the twentieth century and the way it has gone from marginal to mainstream (Goodman, 2004; Nicholls & Opal, 2004; Oxford Policy Management, 2000). The success of Fair Trade extends beyond its sales figures, as it is also credited with having put pressure on mainstream manufacturers to be more ethical and to adopt more of a stakeholder approach in business transactions (Litvinoff & Madeley, 2007; Nicholls & Opal, 2004).

However, beneath the apparent success remain some fundamental questions and tensions, some of which have provided the impetus for this chapter. On a personal note, while I support Fair Trade and have done so for many years, contradictions arise when attempting to reconcile my field experience in Ghana with the promotional messages of Fair Trade organisations. The narratives of the farmers I met in Ghana are strikingly different to the narratives contained in some of the Fair Trade marketing literature. As a result, I share Wright's feelings of being "intrigued and sometimes troubled by [Fair Trade] marketing" (2004, p. 666). This chapter will detail this perceived divergence; firstly by discussing some of the key notions underpinning the marketing of Fair Trade before contrasting them with data gathered during anthropological fieldwork in Ghana. The discussion will then examine how the material fits older anthropological literature relating to cocoa farming and discuss issues such as the strategies used by farmers for optimising economic returns. This will provide a long-term perspective on the view that the farmers play an active role in shaping and negotiating their economic circumstances.

The chapter is based on two research projects. Firstly, it draws on a study examining the socio-economic impact of Fair Trade in a village in the Ashanti region of Ghana and the growth of the Fair Trade movement in the UK. The research included cocoa farmers who were members of the Fair Trade co-operative, Kuapa Kokoo, and cocoa farmers who were not. It was carried out in the summer of 2000 using anthropological research methods such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews. In addition to this, the analysis draws on a more extended ethnography of a different cocoa-producing community in Ghana, which took place in a cluster of villages in Ashanti over a 15-month period from 2001 to 2003. The farmers who were involved in the research in both 2000 and 2001–2003 have been "followed up" by repeat visits since the initial research was carried out and a longitudinal perspective therefore underpins this analysis. Although the focus of the second project was child labour and education rather than Fair Trade, fieldwork on this subject required engaging with closely related issues, such as the way in which farmers produced and sold cocoa, and how they experienced the different channels of trade available to them. The community on which the research was based included cocoa farmers who were members of Kuapa Kokoo and farmers who were not. The primary research method, just as in the first research project, was participant observation although a range of other qualitative research methods were also included, such as semi-structured interviews, and child-focused participatory research methods.

Many of the insights included here are derived from the observation of processes which are unquantifiable but valuable in gaining a comprehensive picture of a particular cultural context (such as household decision-making, which involved many parties to varying degrees at different times). Qualitative long-term research methods are well-suited to research on Fair Trade as many of its benefits, such as increased producer self-esteem and female empowerment, are notoriously difficult to measure or quantify (Nicholls & Opal, 2004, p. 204). Through the process of participant observation, farmers were able to share ideas and experiences freely and on their terms. This resulted in discussions on issues such as the role of government, pesticide application, or the state of roads (included in later sections of this article), which I had not anticipated prior to commencing the research. These issues are far removed from the "typical" Fair Trade marketing narratives discussed below and they also affect farmers who are not members of Kuapa Kokoo but because they are clearly central in the farmers' lives they have been included in the present discussion.

THE MARKETING OF FAIR TRADE

The academic literature on Fair Trade that has emerged in recent years has begun to question some of its marketing (Goodman, 2004; Wright, 2004) and underlying assumptions. New's (2004) discussion of ethical supply chains attributes the incoherence of debates regarding business ethics to the oversimplification involved in common understandings of market processes. Regarding who has responsibility for making a supply chain ethical, New rightly demonstrates the complexity of the issues involved and casts doubts on the assumptions (which are inherent in many activist campaigns) that firms (and by extension consumers) are responsible for the producers' actions. In the case of Fair Trade cocoa from Ghana, the marketing not only implies that buyers are responsible for the producers' actions, but for their entire lives, their happiness or hardship, their children's health and also education. This is illustrated in the following Oxfam quote:

> We rely on the money we get from cocoa for everything: for food, clothes, medicines and school fees. …Kuapa Kokoo [the Fair Trade co-operative] pays all its farmers a fair price for their crop, in cash, and on time. I am very happy: since I joined Fair Trade I can afford to send my children to school. (Oxfam, 2003, quoted in Goodman, 2004, p. 900)

Many sources advertising Fair Trade cocoa from Ghana show farmers being "saved" by Fair Trade, expressing gratitude to the Western consumer and pleading for continued support. The Oxfam Make Trade Fair website and describes how:

> Women and children (…) used to walk for miles to fetch water from river and waterholes, which were also used by animals. Disease caused by dirty water was common, and many children missed out on school because they had to spend so much time collecting water. Now, thanks to wells that have been built with money from the Fair Trade premium, people have safe, clean water right at the heart of their village.[1]

On the Co-operative website a farmer recounts that:

> After losing my husband I had many worries. I had to struggle to feed my children and pay for their education. Before I joined Kuapa Kokoo and Fairtrade nobody cared for us. I now have money to send my children to school and to buy clothes (…) I hope for a good future.[2]

Another farmer had the following message for UK consumers: "Thank you to all you in the UK who buy chocolate from Kuapa Kokoo beans. Now I can look after my grandchildren. Please buy more and God Bless You!" (*ibid.*).

These testimonies illustrate that cocoa has been repositioned through marketing to meet the increasing demand from consumers for goods which connect them to communities across the globe. This shift towards a more explicit morality of consumption is also reflected in the case of other tropical commodities such as coffee (Roseberry, 1996; Wright, 2004), fresh vegetables (Dolan, 2005) and shea butter (Chalfin, 2004). Furthermore, the narratives of poverty and gratitude from Ghana typify broader tendencies within consumption and ethical trade. This marketing relies to a large extent on what Wright describes in relation to newspaper advertisements for Cafédirect coffee as a "'once upon a time' narrative of arduousness and inequality that becomes a 'happy ever after' once consumers commit to fair trade" (2004, p. 671). More broadly, Dolan argues that "images of impoverished African workers are commodified by supermarkets and NGOs to peddle ethically produced wares" (2005, p. 370), a tendency which was illustrated by the Co-operative supermarket during Fair Trade fortnight in 2007. Promotional cards showing the Fair Trade logo and a picture of an unhappy-looking African child sitting in front of an almost empty bowl were displayed in each aisle. The caption accompanying the picture read "YOU CHOOSE… because he has no choice" (capitals in original).

Presenting Fair Trade as "a modern-day market-based 'Robin Hood'" (Goodman, 2004, p. 897) and the use of such images in marketing is problematic. Dolan (2005, p. 369) argues that the images and narratives, which present Africa as destitute and desperate for Western-led redemption through ethical trade, are modern counterparts to the early traveller accounts, colonial discourses, and imperialist propaganda showing Africa as steeped in backwardness and needing imperial salvation. Such an ideology is clearly at odds with the explicit goal of Fair Trade to bring about parity between the developed and developing world and misconceptualises agency in the supply chain. At present, much of the marketing of Fair Trade attributes agency to the Western consumer and emotion (in the form of desperation or gratefulness) to the Third World producer. By contending that these narratives of transformation and gratitude appeal to the emotions of consumers, rather than reflect those of the producers, and that the nexus of agency and control is not solely in Western hands, this chapter argues for a reconfiguration of these ideas.

Given the obvious economic disparities between Ghana and the UK, the "givers and recipients" balance of power, which is evident in the marketing of cocoa, may seem inevitable. However, this is not the case. Divine chocolate bar wrappers, now richly adorned with the traditional Ghanaian *Adinkra* symbols, present an alternative view. The inside of the wrapper details the history of how Divine chocolate was set up, giving equal weight to the achievements of the farmers (whose initiative it was to set up the co-operative) and to their Western partners. Although the marketing of Divine chocolate has implied aid rather than trade in the past (Berlan, 2001), the promotional messages shown on chocolate bars, and contained in leaflets and magazine advertisements (which unfortunately cannot all be discussed in the scope of the present article) have considerably evolved in recent years, and they now convey a sense of partnership and mutual benefit to a much greater extent. This likely reflects how the relationship between the farmer co-operative Kuapa Kokoo and UK partners has consolidated over time and the fact that the farmers now own a significant percentage of Divine.[3] Irrespective of these factors, the case of Divine practically illustrates that Fair Trade marketing, which does not involve pleading or grateful farmers *is* possible.

Interestingly, there is now a greater openness about the idea that Fair Trade advertisements are not meant to be taken literally. One of my local supermarkets currently displays a large poster advertisement for Fair Trade bearing a farmer carrying a large bunch of bananas. The small print beneath the photograph reads: "Photography is representational and may not depict or relate to the actual Fairtrade farms or farmers who supplied this product. This photograph has been supplied courtesy of the Fairtrade Foundation." Whereas no one would assume that the characters in mainstream advertising, be it a happy family whose life has been "transformed" by a particular brand of washing powder or the purchase of a particular car, were *real* people, consumers expect that Fair Trade advertisements literally capture the lives of individuals. This results from consumers' pre-existing expectations of Fair Trade[4] and from the explicit emphasis in many campaigns on "meeting" and "knowing" the farmers (see Wright, 2004 and also Goodman, 2004). However, as previously argued, efforts to establish links between producers and consumers can distort understandings of the commodity chain (see New, 2004) and the following section will show that marketing is not necessarily representative of local perspectives.

FAIR TRADE IN PRACTICE

At the outset of this discussion, some of the basic features of the Fair Trade and non-Fair Trade sales channels for cocoa in Ghana must be outlined. A majority of cocoa in West Africa is grown on small-scale family-owned farms rather than on commercial plantations. Cocoa farmers in Ghana have the option of selling their cocoa to any of 20–25 different Licensed Buying Companies (one of which is Kuapa Kokoo), depending on which ones operate in their community. The Licensed Buying Companies (LBCs) sell the cocoa to Cocobod (the government-run Ghana Cocoa Marketing Board), which then sells and exports it to international markets.[5] Unlike many other Fair Trade products, in the case of Ghanaian cocoa, irrespective of whether farmers are members of Kuapa Kokoo or not, "the production process is virtually identical in all cases" (Larbi-Jones, 2001, p. 6). Indeed, Kuapa Kokoo has high labour standards and is keen to educate farmers on issues such as child labour (see Berlan, 2004) but even farmers who have no links with Kuapa Kokoo would in most cases satisfy these standards.[6]

In my study, receiving a higher price was never cited as a reason for being a member of Kuapa Kokoo. Ronchi describes farmers as having "a low awareness of Kuapa as the source of their cocoa pricing benefits" (2002, p. 36). Larbi-Jones' study of Fair Trade in Ghana states "Payments and bonuses are not the primary incentive for farmers to sell to Kuapa (only one farmer mentioned them)" (2001, p. 64). When asked directly if there was any price difference between LBCs, "many categorically stated that there is no difference" (*ibid.*). The reasons given for this is that the difference is very small and that farmers do not sell their cocoa in full 65 kg bags but rather in smaller portions as soon as it is ready, thus making it less easy to compare LBC prices, which are for full 65 kg bags. Furthermore, low literacy levels compound the difficulty of comparing LBCs on the basis of price. A premium of $150 is paid for every tonne of Fair Trade Ghanaian cocoa but this is not given directly to the farmers; it is invested in community projects such as water wells or palm oil projects. Therefore, farmers earn significantly more corporately but not individually. The small supplement, which individual farmers receive – and which most of them do not even realise – is as a result of the co-operative nature of Kuapa Kokoo and not the Fair Trade premium (Larbi-Jones, 2001).[7] The fact that individual farmers selling to Kuapa Kokoo do not receive a significantly higher price is contrary to what some Fair Trade organisations assert (Berlan, 2001, 2004; Larbi-Jones, 2001; Ronchi, 2002). The small increment, which farmers receive, is certainly not enough to pay for healthcare and medical bills, as is often claimed. For example, the Oxfam website states:

> When the government was buying her cocoa, Lucy was rarely paid on time. As a result, she was unable to pay her children's school fees, and they went without an education. Now, through the Fair Trade bonus she gets from Kuapa Kokoo, she can send her children to school. (quoted in Nicholls & Opal, 2004, p. 17)

Such marketing does not intend to deceive consumers. A representative from one of the organisations making claims about farmers receiving bonuses enabling them to send their children to school (who did not wish to be identified) said in an interview "this [was] not the sort of advertising that [the organisation] should be aspiring to." He attributed the discrepancies to the fact that communication was not always effective between staff responsible for marketing and staff knowledgeable about local realities.

Due to the relatively low demand for Fair Trade cocoa in the West, only 3% of the cocoa produced by Kuapa Kokoo is bought by Fair Trade organisations,[8] and 97% of their cocoa is bought by mainstream multinational companies (via the government intermediary Cocobod). As the number of communities who produce cocoa certified "fair" is so disproportionate to the volume of Fair Trade sales, the premium generated by these sales simply cannot fund projects in all the communities involved.[9] As a result, there are many communities that have not yet received any practical benefits such as water wells as a result of Fair Trade, even though their farmers produce Fair Trade cocoa. This is not due to a failure on the part of the co-operative or the farmers but to an insufficient demand for Fair Trade cocoa in the West. It is ironic that in order for all Kuapa Kokoo farmers to reap the full financial benefits of Fair Trade, their cocoa would have to be bought on these terms by large-scale multinationals and thus lose its "special" status as an ethical alternative to mainstream chocolate manufacturers. Furthermore, Kuapa Kokoo has not only worked with Fair Trade companies but also collaborated with mainstream companies to help communities. For example, between 2000 and 2006, 375 water wells were funded by Cadbury Schweppes working in collaboration with WaterAid and Kuapa Kokoo, and this provides clean water to an estimated 50,000 people.[10] Opinions are divided as to how much of an achievement this constitutes. Some Fair Trade campaigners argue that such interventions cannot be taken seriously as they are disproportionate to the profits of mainstream chocolate companies. However, when asked about this, a representative from the chocolate industry pointed out that the number of water wells funded by multinational companies had in some years exceeded the number funded by Fair Trade organisations, once more suggesting that the impact of Fair Trade depends on its absorption into mainstream channels.

The data presented here may appear much more complex than one might expect. This is because Fair Trade *is* more complex than one is led to believe by marketing and awareness campaigns;[11] it is not simply a matter of "consumer pays more; producers get more." In addition to Fair Trade being more complicated in practise, in many ways it may appear less morally satisfying to the consumer, as individual Fair Trade cocoa farmers do not receive a significantly higher income and many of them have not yet received a community benefit from the cocoa sales. So why buy Fair Trade? Is it worth it? In order to answer this question, some foundational explanations must once more be provided. Larbi-Jones (2001) argued that the benefits enjoyed by farmers derive from Kuapa Kokoo's principles and its co-operative structure rather than from its sales to the West. Indeed, although there are many other LBCs and they also give farmers benefits (as will be explained below), Kuapa Kokoo is the only cocoa-buying organisation with farmer ownership and a democratic organisation. Individual villages have voluntary Kuapa societies, which elect regional representatives for the five main cocoa- producing regions (Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Western, Eastern, and Central). They all form part of the Farmers' Union (represented by a National Executive Council), which owns the trading company responsible for the onward sale of cocoa, as well as the Farmers' Trust Fund responsible for community development projects. Crucially, the Farmers' Union has a shareholding in the chocolate company Divine, which is significant as it is unique for a group of African farmers to own part of the company processing their produce.[12] In addition to this, Kuapa Kokoo is committed to gender equality and funds many projects, such as palm oil projects or soap-making facilities, in order to supplement the incomes of women members. The commitment to gender equality is also reflected in the running of the village societies, and in at least one of the villages I visited, the president of the village society was a woman. However, one of the most frequently cited benefits of Kuapa Kokoo was their provision of loans to help maintain or develop the farm. When talking to one farmer about co-operatives he said that he did not trust any co-operative other than Kuapa Kokoo as "They begin well but they become corrupt." He did, however, believe that Kuapa was different from other co-operatives and said he had become a member because they gave farmers loans to help with farm maintenance.

From the perspective of the Western consumer, the question of whether Fair Trade is ultimately "worth it" is one which only the consumer can determine, and which may require a change of perspective rather than simply more information. Fair Trade may not achieve the things a Western consumer may wish for, such as a much higher income or schools in every village. However, empowerment is not simply about income. The provision of loans, gender equality, and participatory democracy are working successfully and they matter considerably to the local communities, as reflected in the substantial growth of Kuapa Kokoo in recent years. This is in keeping with Ronchi's claim that cocoa producers are "as concerned with the strengthening of their communities and the organisations which represent them" (2002, p. 10) as with receiving a greater income, adding that the overemphasis on income "leads to a narrow view of the impacts of

Fairtrade and may overlook much of the Southern organisations' valuable work'' (*ibid.*). They also substantiate Larbi-Jones' contention that ''issues of trust, participation [and] control (…) are central to the farmer's evaluation of fairness in trade'' (2001, p. 72). Therefore, it seems clear that Kuapa Kokoo is benefiting farmers, although not necessarily in ways that consumers may expect or wish for.

FAIR TRADE: VIEWS FROM THE VILLAGE

During my fieldwork in Ghana, I never heard testimonies of the sort described above, even though many farmers were members of Kuapa Kokoo and we frequently talked about growing and selling cocoa. Had I asked the farmers if they enjoyed having a clean water supply, explained that it had been made possible by the purchasing actions of ethical Western consumers, and pressed my informants for a response, I might have obtained similar testimonies. However, as previously outlined, my research methods deliberately avoided ''guiding'' farmers in such a manner. Furthermore, I think such a conversation might have elicited some blank looks and confusion for a number of reasons. Kuapa Kokoo is the only Ghanaian cocoa-buying company, which is a co-operative operating along Fair Trade principles. However, it is not the only company that offers benefits to farmers and the other LBCs for cocoa also frequently reward farmers. Their rewards include farm improvement schemes, free pesticide and pesticide application, agricultural training, cash bonuses, scholarships for farmers' children, radios, bicycles, protective farming gear, farming equipment, high-quality cloth, and many other things which are greatly valued by rural communities.[13] If I had told the farmers that their water well was due to ethical trade, they would likely have questioned how I could assert that other companies, who also offer incentives, were acting ''unethically.'' Although Kuapa Kokoo's practical benefits are valuable, the co-operative is extending a well-established tradition, rather than breaking new ground, by giving farmers rewards. As a result, grateful farmer testimonies could also probably be gathered by other LBCs and narratives that imply the uniqueness of Fair Trade benefits must be placed in the broader context of local trading relations.

When I asked farmers why they sold their cocoa to a particular LBC, the reasons given were varied. Some sold to a certain company because they had done so for many years and were satisfied with this arrangement. Others said that they were related to someone in an LBC and therefore sold to them. One farmer cited a close relative working for Kuapa Kokoo as the reason for selling to them. When I asked if there were any other reasons for selling to Kuapa Kokoo he said no. Some farmers had been cheated by a particular LBC in the past and this influenced their choice; others cited reasons of payment, credit access, the provision of farming equipment or the fact that they were employed in some capacity by one of the LBCs (e.g. to weigh cocoa). Many of them sold to different companies, depending on the proximity of the LBCs' buying stations who had given them credit or who they had had a good experience with in the last cocoa season.

Although some patterns emerge according to reasons cited above (such as the provision of loans), no two-farmer narratives are the same, and their reasons for selling to particular LBCs can vary considerably. This does *not* mean that Kuapa Kokoo is not a good organisation. It means that Fair Trade is more than the sum of its narratives and that the judgement of its efficacy must not be based on them. Given the amount of competition from other LBCs, if Kuapa Kokoo was not an effective farmer organisation, it would have collapsed long ago. Instead, since it was set up in 1993, it has become the fastest growing farmer organisation in Ghana, reaching 45,000 members in approximately 1,300 village societies,[14] and it remains the only LBC operating on co-operative principles. The experiences of women in the co-operative, the loyalty of farmers towards Kuapa, its growth and the high retention rates of its members (especially given that farmers have a degree of choice regarding LBCs and are often cynical about them) are far more effective markers of the achievements of Kuapa than enthusiastic but confusing marketing narratives making claims about increased incomes and a sudden ability to pay for healthcare or education.

One of the cocoa farmers, who was a member of the Kuapa Kokoo co-operative and who was employed to record the cocoa purchases at village-level, told me that he had been visited by people from London, who had explained the supply chain to him and given him giant cardboard bars of chocolate. These were to help him educate other farmers about how the cocoa they grow is used in the UK. He had since lost the cardboard bars of chocolate and apparently forgotten many of the explanations he had received about the supply chain. He did, however, stress that he knew Kuapa Kokoo offered a better deal than other cocoa companies. He did not appear to be actively disseminating this message, although he may have been more active in the period immediately after the visit from London. Neither he nor the other farmers ever appeared to be concerned about the upward uses of the cocoa in any way, except in as much as they were concerned to maintain its high quality. Precisely because the farmers work extremely hard to produce premium cocoa, the narratives of gratitude appear surprising. If trade is an exchange satisfying mutual needs (according to Aristotle's definition of the "domestic economy") and the Ghanaians have more than adequately fulfilled their side of the bargain by producing premium quality cocoa, why would they also be grateful? Imagine a UK farmer who works hard to produce a particular crop. Would he or she be grateful for its purchase or would they expect this as the logical outcome of their hard work? Would they see the consumer as their saviour, or simply be concerned to continue to work hard in order to remain competitive in a particular supply chain?

COCOA AND THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

The testimonies of gratitude quoted regarding the marketing of Fair Trade above are in many ways at odds with some of the attitudes of the farmers, which are linked with the way they perceive the government. As was previously explained, sales of cocoa (even if Fair Trade) have to go through a chain of key intermediaries including the LBCs and Cocobod (which is government-run). Farmers do not sell directly to Western companies and it is the Ghanaian government – not the Western companies – which sets the price individual farmers receive for their cocoa (see Berlan, 2004, pp. 160–161). In addition to this, the government carries out the vitally important spraying of the cocoa crops with fungicides and pesticides and provides basic infrastructure such as roads. As the Ghanaian government mediates sales, sets prices, provides spraying, and other vitally important services, the farmers quite reasonably see themselves as being in the hands of the government, rather than in those of multinationals or of the Western consumer. Therefore, a conversation of the sort described above which attributes the agency for positive change in Western hands would be difficult for the farmers to conceptualise given the fact that in so many ways, it is the government which most directly determines their fortune or hardship.

When discussing trade-related issues and Western consumption, the farmers' main concern was to produce high-quality cocoa so that it would generate a substantial revenue and Ghana could prosper. As a result, they were anxious to protect cocoa crops from insects and other pests, diseases and bush fires, and they were infuriated by the poor state of many rural roads, the quality of which affected farmers' ability to sell their crops by limiting or facilitating travel. These issues came up immeasurably more often than any other in discussions of trade, and blame for their problems, if any was apportioned, was directed at the government, which they felt should be doing more to assist them, rather than at multinational corporations or Western consumers. Tensions between cocoa farmers and the Ghanaian government have increased over time. As will be explained below, changes to the structure of the cocoa industry brought in by the colonial government in the 1940s resulted in increased farmer protests and this consolidated a shift in the farmers' antagonism away from firms towards the government, which continued even after independence (Beckman, 1976).

In the cocoa village where I first carried out research in 2000 and in the main village where I was based until 2003, I have witnessed many improvements over the course of the last few years. This has included a new school, a much-improved road, better housing, water wells, and the laying of infrastructure for electricity. These have been largely funded by local and national government (although this may have been as a result of foreign aid) and made possible by the initiatives and determined efforts of the local communities, who have campaigned for better facilities, provided cash, time, labour, and materials (such as timber and roofing sheets) for communal projects, and shown great commitment to democracy, education, and socio-economic development in numerous ways. There have also been benefits as a direct result of Fair Trade for some communities, and these are of course important, but they are not as significant as the benefits brought about by democratisation, government policy and local resolve. Fair Trade is *not* a panacea; it is a positive thing but it is not the sole or most effective means of achieving socio-economic development.

PAYBACK TIME: HOW FARMERS GET EVEN BY NOT PAYING BACK

Reports of abuse and exploitation in the cocoa industry abounded in the UK during my fieldwork in Ghana. For example, the Co-operative report *Chocolate: A Campaign for Fairtrade Chocolate and an End to Exploitation* (2002) quoted Linda Gilroy MP as stating "The cocoa growers in West Africa are amongst the most exploited in the world" (The Co-operative, 2002, p. 1). The report also stated "Where Fairtrade is not present, growers are often exploited and cheated by unscrupulous middle-men" (*ibid.*, p. 3). Even the *Daily Mirror*, not usually associated with trade justice, made the following claim: "Certain big-name chocolate companies have been known to cheat [the farmers] by 'fixing' the scales which weigh the bags of beans" (Foster, 2002). Given the fact that multinationals do not buy directly from farmers, as explained in the previous section, this is a puzzling claim. At any rate, having been made aware of these reports, I expected throughout my fieldwork to find evidence that farmers were routinely being cheated. As regards local cocoa buyers, there is clear evidence that cheating occurs. One of the farmers told me that he had tried to sell a bag of cocoa to a particular cocoa LBC and had been told that his bag did not contain the required 65 kilos of cocoa. He protested that he knew he was being cheated and refused to sell his cocoa on these terms. When Kuapa Kokoo weighed his bag they agreed it was the correct weight. This shows that farmers can be badly cheated and that this results in considerable frustration and anxiety. However, this example also shows that they have some bargaining power. Because there are many different LBCs the farmers have some degree of choice and are not cheated as a matter of course, as is often implied.

Much Fair Trade marketing literature about cocoa in Ghana states that Kuapa Kokoo is the only LBC which does not rig scales or cheat farmers in any way. While I have considerable faith in the co-operative, one should be cautious about making certain claims as two of their cocoa buyers were arrested in 2004 for cheating cocoa farmers by rigging the scales (Daily Graphic, 2004). The co-operative is clearly committed to eradicating such abuse but, like any other organisation, it cannot offer absolute guarantees that every one of its staff will act with integrity at all times. Again, Fair Trade should not be conceived of or marketed as a miracle cure; it aims to improve working and living conditions for farmers but the practical implementation of this goal will take time and include setbacks. The promotion of Fair Trade as morally and practically blameless sets a dangerously high standard, which could easily be shattered by the necessary process of trial, error and improvement which it must necessarily undergo. As such, campaigners for trade justice may be well-advised to "tone down" some of their messages – or at least be more forthright about the possible disparities between aspiration and reality.

One of the unexpected findings of my fieldwork was that farmers cheated LBCs just as readily as LBCs cheated them. The relevance of this issue to this chapter is to illustrate that farmers are not the passive victims they are sometimes portrayed as in campaigns for trade justice. Indeed, many of them typified Hill's statement that "Farmers in the rural tropical world are commonly not the docile, subservient or 'angry' peasants portrayed in many textbooks and official publications" (1986, p. 1). To my knowledge, the only farmers' subversion which is well-acknowledged in academic literature (and which considerably antagonises their government) is the illegal practise of smuggling cocoa to the Ivory Coast in order to receive a higher price

(Baker, 2000; Bulir, 2002; Brydon, 1985; Gibbon, Havnevik, & Hermele, 1993; Mikell, 1989).[15] In a more constructive way, the farmers' resilience and ingenuity is reflected in the fact that largely on their initiative that Kuapa Kokoo was initially set up. Prior to 1992, no LBCs existed and Cocobod was the only channel for buying cocoa. Following Structural Adjustment Programmes, the government was forced to relax its monopoly and allow for the existence of LBCs. A Cocobod employee, Nana Frimpong Abrebrese, saw this as an opportunity for the farmers to join forces and profit from their cocoa. Based on his idea, Kuapa Kokoo was set up in 1993 with assistance from Twin Trading.[16] As both the smuggling of cocoa and the setting up of Kuapa Kokoo are well-documented in other sources, they will not be discussed further in this chapter. The practise of cheating LBCs, however, is much less known and provides an excellent illustration of the farmers' degree of agency, determination and ingenuity in shaping the trading relationships they enter into, as will now be shown.

Many farmers accept pre-payment from LBCs because they need loans to maintain or expand their farms and this enables them to avoid debt by helping their cash flow in-between harvests. These loans are given on the understanding that the farmers will sell their cocoa to the LBC, which has helped them. However, it is very common for farmers to "forget" this agreement and sell their cocoa to another company as soon as it has been harvested and dried. When the representatives of the LBC, which has provided the loan, come to purchase the cocoa, it has often already been sold and the recovery of funds is virtually impossible. This happens routinely at village-level but also on a bigger scale. For example, Cashpro, one of the Ghanaian LBCs, announced in September 2000 that it would release 27.7 billion Cedis in loans to cocoa farmers,[17] and that it would provide them with pesticide, fungicide, fertilizer and spraying assistance to boost their yields (The Ghanaian Times, 2000, September 7, 11, & 18). This programme, known as the "Farmers' Hi-Tech Programme," aimed to help farmers maintain their farms and increase their productivity and "hence increase the farmers' income and improve upon their standards of living" (*ibid.*, September 18). The managing director of Cashpro said at the launch of the programme that his company was establishing a partnership with the farmers and reminded them of their obligation to sell their harvested cocoa to Cashpro in order to pay back their loans and also enable others to benefit (*ibid.*, September 7). The two banks, which provided the funds for this initiative, SSB Bank Limited and the Agricultural Development Bank, did so with the "guarantee" that the funds would be paid back by beneficiary farmers after harvesting their crops. The programme failed, largely (though not exclusively) because the farmers took the loans but sold their cocoa elsewhere. Indeed, Cashpro made the following statement in Ghana's biggest selling daily, *Daily Graphic*, a few months later:

> The company wishes to acknowledge that due to a combination of circumstances, Cashpro has indeed run into temporary but resoluble financial difficulties (…) Investment in the novelty Hi-tech Cocoa Project has especially proved unfortunate for the Company (…) Cashpro invested a lot of time, money and other resources to ensure that the company and its farmer-clients benefited from the scheme. Unfortunately, the farmers who were assisted under the project and who realised the anticipated increased yield, reneged on their undertakings in their agreement with Cashpro and instead sold their cocoa to other competing Licensed Buying Companies (LBCs). This reduced Cashpro's share in the industry and also made it difficult to recover the credit assistance extended to these farmers. Cashpro is currently in discussion with its bankers and has proposed measures to restructure the Company's debts and restore the Company to sound financial health… . (Daily Graphic, 2001, July 11)[18]

FARMER AGENCY AND RESISTANCE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Cashpro's unfortunate experience with the Hi-Tech programme is not an isolated incident and there is much evidence in older anthropological literature that farmers are not passive and helpless victims of the cocoa trade. They are more ingenious and far-sighted than contemporary literature, especially in the area of Fair Trade, gives them credit for. This will be illustrated with reference to three particular examples: land purchasing arrangements; the protests of the 1940s; and the farmers' swindling of the colonial authorities out of millions of pounds.

Cocoa was introduced to Ghana in 1879. It was planted in the Southern forest belt of Ghana and rapidly drew a significant population of migrants from the North who saw how potentially lucrative the new crop was. Hill (1963) argues that it was migrant workers who built up the cocoa industry in the first half of the twentieth century. In order to maximise their bargaining power and economic potential, individual migrant farmers organised themselves into companies or kinship groups (depending on whether they were patrilineal or matrilineal) for the purpose of buying land in new areas. Hill describes these two distinct types of grouping as the ''company system'' and the ''family land'' system. The family land system was mainly developed by matrilineal groups and consisted of a certain number of kinsmen (male and female) coming together to acquire land under the leadership of a senior male. Although a block of land was the property of a group, farmers farmed plots of land individually and the arrangements of these plots were not strictly set. This arrangement enabled farmers to enjoy the individual and corporate benefits of land ownership by letting them have freedom over their plots while also having group bargaining power through the joint ownership of the soil. It did not place any restrictions on a farmer's use of land (except not being free to sell it) and meant they were able to withstand the various upheavals and changes in the cocoa industry (Hill, 1963).

The other form of social organisation described by Hill is the "company" whereby a group of men from the same (normally patrilineal) community, but who were not necessarily kinsmen, came together to buy a block of land for cocoa farming. The allocation of land depended on the level of financial contribution made by individual members and land was allocated in strips from a common baseline. The underlying principle of this arrangement was fairness and equality, and farmers made every attempt to guarantee this by paying the proper price for portions of land, making careful measurements and preferring land that would be easy to divide up. Hill states: "If a company land is reasonably rectangular, then the area of a strip-farm is determined by its width and the farmers' great ambition of achieving 'fairness,' as between themselves, is achieved" (1963, p. 44). In this system, members of the company worked on the understanding that the land purchased was bought for individual farmers and that this arrangement was solely for the purpose of buying land and did not extend to anything else.

The relevance of these particular arrangements for the purpose of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, by successfully balancing individual and corporate concerns, such arrangements provide a coherent group structure, which, regardless of whether it involves close kin, enables the farmer to benefit from increased bargaining power and security when buying land. Farmers retain individual freedom and economic gains but are also able to enjoy the advantages of being part of a corporate body. Kuapa Kokoo was founded on similar principles. It was set up to give farmers more bargaining power by joining forces to become a corporate unit while also retaining full autonomy over their individual farms. This further illustrates that the farmers are resourceful and that they have agency in determining their economic circumstances. Both in the case of buying land and of setting up Kuapa Kokoo, they have clearly been able to devise successful strategies for pre-empting adversity, increasing their bargaining power and mitigating risk on their own terms and on their own initiative. Secondly, in both cases, the concept of fairness and of farmers profiting equally is central. This shows that there is a well-developed and widely understood indigenous concept of fairness. Whereas many well-intentioned advocates of trade justice believe that Fair Trade has benefited farmers by "educating" them about fairness or about how to obtain rights, it is clear such understandings existed already and the farmers were able to take steps to secure these without the need for foreign interference.

There is further evidence of the farmers' agency and determination predating the examples cited above. The Great Slump of the 1930s caused such drastic falls in the world price for cocoa and economic hardship that farmers and traders decided to overcome their conflicting interests and organise collectively against the Europeans by withholding their cocoa from the market (Larbi-Jones, 2001, p. 15). By 1938, this had virtually bought trade to a standstill, so the British authorities were forced to take action to improve the Ghanaian cocoa trade. Fearing further "organised peasant resistance" (Berry, 1981, p. 25) and its destabilising effects, the colonial government introduced the Gold Coast Cocoa Marketing Board and a new cocoa price policy guaranteeing farmers a fixed price for their cocoa, irrespective of world market fluctuations. Although these changes were officially instituted to benefit the farmers, farmer resentment soon grew as it became obvious that although they were receiving a stable price, they were still being grossly underpaid. Indeed, post-war recovery and the higher world market price for cocoa meant that the Cocoa Board was making huge profits.[19] As a result, the share of the world market price that the farmers received went down and farmer protests increased in the 1940s. Communities appointed farmers to represent them in dealings with the colonial government. In 1945, a delegation of cocoa farmers travelled to London to discuss the farmers' grievances over poor shares of the world market price and lack of control over the profit of the cocoa trade. It is during this period that the farmers' frustration with their economic predicament shifted away from commercial firms and became directed towards the government (Beckman, 1976), which, as previously shown, remains the case today.

Although the farmers did not obtain entirely satisfactory outcomes from the colonial government, these events illustrate that the farmers had been able to organise collectively, force the colonial government to respond and at least achieve pricing security. This was not their only victory over the authorities perceived to be oppressing them. Hill in *How the Farmers Outwitted the Bureaucrats: A True Tale* (1986, pp. 1–7; see also Beckman, 1976) described how the cocoa farmers, through their local farmers' committee and the system of farm-pledging – which is unfortunately too complex to explain here – swindled the Gold Coast Cocoa Purchasing Company (CPC) out of almost three million pounds. To summarise the case, the CPC wished to use its assets to relieve the indebtedness of cocoa farmers, which was widespread and had resulted in many of them pledging their farms to creditors as security for a loan. In actual fact, these creditors were often also cocoa farmers, as opposed to "proper" moneylenders, and were commonly friends with their debtors (Hill, 1986, p. 3). The parties involved saw the arrangement as mutually convenient rather than detrimental or exploitative. However, because the bureaucrats believed that "indebtedness was 'bad' and ought to be 'relieved'" (Hill, 1986, p. 2), it was decided that the debt would be transferred from the creditor to the CPC itself, which would notionally assume charge of the cocoa farm which had originally been pledged as security for the loan. Knowing that the CPC would not be able to investigate every request for debt relief, the farmers made false claims of indebtedness, which resulted in some of them obtaining as much as £1,500 from the CPC. In the words of the Jibowu Commission of Enquiry into the affairs of the CPC, the Promissory Notes used to support the farmers' claim were apt to be "false, antedated and prepared purposely for obtaining CPC loans" (cited in Hill, 1986, p. 4). Just as the farmers did not repay loans to Cashpro detailed in Payback Time: How Farmers Get Even by Not Paying Back, the farmers "outwitted the bureaucrats by neglecting to repay the great bulk of the sum of nearly £3 million that had been granted (i.e., loaned) in this way before the scheme ended in 1956, as a result of the critical attitude of the Jibowu report" (*ibid.*).

Further evidence of the farmers' contempt towards the authorities can be found in Okali (1983, p. 17), where she describes how the farmers took the grants given by the government to replace trees affected by swollen-shoot disease and used them to set up new cocoa farms. The government, incensed at not having succeeded in getting the farmers to honour their pledge to use the money for replacing trees, was finally forced to undertake the task of replacing the trees itself at great cost.

The farmers have evidently been extremely good at turning various opportunities to their advantage and have had no qualms about cheating the authorities in order to achieve this. This is not to say that they do not have high standards of loyalty and fairness towards each other. Furthermore, while one cannot endorse their deceit of the colonial administration, there can be no doubt that they would have acted differently in a system which helped and supported them rather than routinely exploited them and made enormous profits at their expense. Contrary to the perceptions of farmers as needy and helpless, they exhibit an ingenious, far-sighted and entrepreneurial spirit. In particular, the capacity to unite as farmers who face the same predicament and have a common purpose, and the strategy of pooling assets in order to form a more viable economic unit, has been a successful strategic response to change and opportunity both historically and in the present day. In this respect, it is easy to see how the Ghanaian cocoa farmer has been cited in the past as the classic example that man in Africa behaves rationally and can think just as strategically as the economic man of classical theory (Hill, 1970; Okali, 1983; Schneider, 1974).

CONCLUSION

The present article does not intend to understate the poverty of the farmers, and *some* form of assistance to them is obviously necessary in order to remedy the endemic poverty in their communities. However, poverty does not necessarily equate to helplessness and dependency on Western partners, as is implied in much Fair Trade marketing. In Ghana, the farmers' agency and their handling of the structures and institutions that have a bearing on their lives (both now and historically) clearly illustrate that they do not rely on external aid. Presenting Africans as dependant illustrates a degree of paternalism, which has long been identified in ethical trade more broadly (Blowfield, 1999, p. 767) and which is at odds with the broader goal of Fair Trade to bring parity in trading relationships. While it is often thought that communities in the Third World struggle unequally against multinationals or global markets like David and Goliath, the truth is much more complex, and farmers are ill-served by the propagation of simplistic discourses emphasising neediness and poverty. Thus, while the onus in Fair Trade has traditionally been on Southern partners to evaluate themselves and be evaluated (Ronchi, 2002, p. 9), the gap between marketing and local experiences shows that there is also a need for Northern organisations to examine their practices. Marketing need not be unrepresentative in order to be persuasive, as Divine has shown. Furthermore, neither the impact nor the potential of Fair Trade should be overstated in its marketing, as this could result in a loss of consumer confidence if representations prove to exceed reality. On a more positive note, although Fair Trade obviously faces many challenges, these should not detract from the progress and successes that have been achieved in recent years. These are especially reflected in the way in which partnerships have developed and new avenues for development have been created. If the tensions identified in this chapter can be resolved, one can be optimistic that Fair Trade will continue to grow and achieve its goals.

NOTES

1. See http://www.maketradefair.com/en/index.php?file = 28032002151049.htm (last accessed 9th April 2008).

2. See http://www.co-operativemembership.coop/en/food/fairtrade/ourfairtrade products/chocolate/producers/kuapakokoogrowers/ (last accessed 9th April 2008).

3. Since the Body Shop donated their shares in Divine to the farmers in 2006 the co-operative owns nearly half the company. See http://www.divinechocolate.com/about/kokoo.aspx (last accessed 9th April 2008).

4. Dolan (2005) provides a fascinating discussion of the way in which contemporary ideas about ethical trade and consumption are rooted in a historical legacy of considerations of morality and progress in which the African worker is an object of duty and obligation.

5. The scope of this chapter does not allow for a comprehensive overview of cocoa growing and export procedures. For more detailed explanations on the cocoa market, see Baker (2000, pp. 117–149), Chalfin (2004), and Berlan (2004, 2005).

6. There have been many reports of labour abuses on cocoa farms in Cote d'Ivoire, and in West Africa more broadly, in recent years. Based on long-term fieldwork, my research suggests that labour conditions on cocoa farms in Ghana are very good overall, and that much of the criticism directed at the farmers, especially as regards child labour, was unrepresentative of local practices (Berlan, 2004, 2005).

7. Farmers sometimes receive bonuses but this is not exclusive to Kuapa Kokoo and Kuapa Kokoo bonuses are partly funded by their profits through conventional trade (see Ronchi, 2002, p. 36).

8. See: http://www.divinechocolate.com/about/resources/facts-figures.aspx (last accessed 9th April 2008).

9. Receiving funding from the Fair Trade premium for community projects requires a village-based Kuapa Kokoo society committee to make an application to the national Kuapa Kokoo Trust Fund for community development projects (which is run by elected members of the co-operative). It requires a village society to meet certain eligibility criteria and to demonstrate the ability to execute the project satisfactorily (e.g., by showing that there is enough local support for it, that the community can provide labour and other resources if necessary and that it will not incur any debt). These procedures are designed to ensure fairness, transparency and efficiency in the allocation of funds from the Fair Trade premium. One of the villages where I stayed had a borehole which had been provided by Kuapa Kokoo, but this had been installed prior to my arrival so I did not experience the process of obtaining it.

10. See http://www.cadburyschweppes.com/EN/EnvironmentSociety/CaseStudies/BuildingWells.htm (last accessed 9th April 2008).

11. The consumer testimonial in Goodman (2004, p. 900) is an example of this.

12. For reasons which cannot be expanded on in the present chapter, giving farmers ownership of a Western company making chocolate is more efficient and beneficial to them than setting up chocolate manufacturing facilities in Ghana.

13. See, for example, Daily Graphic (2001, January 16, 2001, September 17, 2001, October 5, 2001, December 28, 2002, October 12).

14. See http://www.divinechocolate.com/about/story.aspx

15. This issue has even received coverage in the UK media. See, for example: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/2263247.stm (last accessed 9th April 2008).

16. For further details see http://www.divinechocolate.com/about/story.aspx

17. At the time £1 was roughly 12,000 Ghanaian Cedis. The Ghanaian Cedi has since been re-denominated.

18. There are examples of such practices for other commodities. For example, Chalfin (2004) provides an interesting example of shea nut traders acting collectively to manipulate buyers in order to secure more favourable terms of trade.

19. By 1946, the Cocoa Marketing Board had amassed over £20 million. By 1951, this sum had reached almost £200 million (Foster, 1965, p. 179).

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PRODUCE(ING) EQUITY: CREATING FRESH MARKETS IN A FOOD DESERT

Lisa Markowitz

ABSTRACT

In the United States, the increasing availability of hormone, antibiotic, and pesticide-free food is largely limited by price and proximity to the upper and middle classes. Similarly, the burgeoning of urban farmers' markets and other direct marketing venues tend to benefit those who can afford locally raised food. Attempts to rectify this disparity are underway in the movement to link small farmers with residents of low-income neighborhoods in Louisville, Kentucky's largest city. Incipient commercialization and processing channels are intended to aid area farmers as they make the difficult transition out of tobacco dependency, and simultaneously to provide people living in Louisville's food deserts with affordable, locally produced foods. In this activist marketplace, symbiotic and trusting relationships are essential. I explore these issues through a case study of a new farmer–owner food distribution business, one designed to profit while growing the local food system.

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INTRODUCTION

Farmers, chefs, food writers, policy analysts, essayists, and activists have for some time been promoting the myriad ecological, social, culinary, and economic benefits of eating locally produced foods and advocating a profound shift to the local as the basis for the (re)creation of alternatives to the current system of industrial, capitalist food production, and distribution (see, e.g., Halweil, 2004; Henderson, 2000; Lappe & Lappe, 2003; Pollan, 2006; Wirzba, 2003). In *Eat Here*, Brian Halweil's survey of global efforts to promote local foods, he quotes Jack Kloppenburg's observation that there needs to be "something between SYSCO [a North America food distribution firm] and CSAs [community supported agriculture]" (2004, pp. 113–114). In his comment (to which I will return), Kloppenburg evokes a contrast between two agro-food landscapes – one, industrial and oligopolist, with well known inequalities and dangers to environmental and human health, the other, a constellation of initiatives such as producer cooperatives, community gardens, local food councils, farm-to-school-projects, and CSAs. In the United States, the latter landscape has emerged over the past three decades through the swelling of food and agricultural activism, fueled by the participants' desires to create alternatives to certain dimensions of the former. This complex of efforts has increasingly (especially as disenchantment with the scale and production practices of organic agriculture has spread) become oriented toward encouraging people to eat closer to home and to build the social and economic relationships and institutions, which will make this possible.

The processes of developing locally based food systems raise a series of instrumental and conceptual complications in regard both to the organizational demands of bringing diverse activists and activist traditions together (Allen, 2004; Campbell, 1997; DeLind, 2006; Feenstra, 2002; Stanford, 2006) and to the very notion of a coherent, definable (and preferable) "local" (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Goodman & Goodman, 2007; Hinrichs, 2003). Pratt (this volume) cautions that the common rubrics of alternative food movements – local, traditional, authentic – while linked discursively may signal little about either food origins or participant agendas. Hassanein (2003), addressing a crucial question about the ultimate potential of the incremental steps characteristic of agro-food activism to affect substantive, widereaching change in the food system, sees the significance of small initiatives deriving from organizational praxis. Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, and Stevenson (1996) also stress the new relationships that may emerge from such work, with their use of the image of the "foodshed," an analog to watershed, to capture this notion of a place constructed by the attributes of the physical environment and by social and economic relations. Foodshed in their vision is not an "isolated entity" but rather a metaphor signaling the "unity of place and people, of nature and society" (*ibid.*, p. 34). In this concept of place, geographic proximity matters, because politically it counters the economic concentration (Hendrickson & Heffernan, 2002) of the agro-food industry, which has propelled the separation of people from the sources of their food. Reducing this separation also brings to light the interests rural and urban dwellers share in preventing land loss and contamination. The realization of a foodshed is an imminently social process, in which food becomes a kind of vehicle through which community connections may be built and bolstered, and social relations which transcend the marketplace may be created and recovered (see also Allen, 2004, pp. 146–147).

This vision is indeed appealing. My aim in this chapter is to examine close-up some of the relationships, which, while not exactly transcending the marketplace, do surround, challenge, and use it to construct a locally integrated food economy, one which may indeed provide a serious counter to the inequities and disconnections of the dominant food system. In particular, I am concerned with the market-based mechanics of scaling up systems of food provisioning, the creation of that "something between" in a way that furthers rural and urban prosperity and well-being.

To date in the United States, the most visible manifestations of emergent linkages between farmers and eaters are the proliferation of direct marketing venues. Farmers' markets, for example, have nearly doubled since the late-1990s; the current USDA estimate stands at 4,600 nationwide (Barham, 2008). CSAs also continue to grow in number; McFadden (2004) estimates that 1,500 to 1,700 are in operation. Sales to restaurants have also increased as chefs celebrate the specific regional flavors of their ingredients, and identify the contributing farmer by name on their menus. Yet the increasing availability of locally produced food is too often limited, by price and proximity, to upper and middle classes. Food marketed with a local appellation may garner price premiums, affording greater security for producers, but rendering it too expensive for low-income people (Allen, 2004). Indeed, as Halweil notes, the higher cost to consumers is "one of the stubborn critiques of the entire local food movement" (2004, p. 151). At present, aside from some isolated although inspiring examples, local food feeds a niche market.

Attempts to reconcile and transcend this tension within the alternative agro-food movement have come about over the past decade, often under the rubric of Community Food Security. This formidable task draws together strains of diverse activism – the anti-hunger work associated with improving household and individual food security, and practices of sustainable agriculture associated with environmentalism and family farm survival (Bellows & Hamm, 2002; Allen, 2004). Community food security offers an integrative vision, "a community-based food system grounded in regional agriculture and local decision making" (Allen, 2004, p. 46), one inherently consonant with the notion of a foodshed.[1]

Here's the rub: in this formulation, providing high-quality fresh food to low-income consumers falls to (at present, at least) smallholding farmers, who are in many cases, themselves economically struggling. Is this contradiction resolvable? Building a local food system, an endeavor animated by hopes of achieving environmental sustainability and social justice, requires painstaking organizational work to create economic institutions that will be themselves sustainable, in that they will function without the continual nurturing of nonprofits and research centers. Must moral imperatives gird participation, and is this enough, and, given the realities of farmer livelihood, is it fair to assume or even ask this? In short, how do we make sustainable food linkages economically viable?

In my case study, I look at one small example of farmers, eaters, and activists attempting to address this conundrum. The protagonist, Grasshoppers, is a very newly launched farmer owned food distribution business located in Louisville, Kentucky. The existence of Grasshoppers results from a convergence of organizational work underway in the city, the particular circumstances of agriculture in the state, and the vision and talents of the four farmers comprising Grasshoppers. Each farmer brings a particular set of perspectives and talents to the mix; what they share, explains one "is an interest in doing things differently." In what is, to date, an amalgam of imagination and what they hope is sufficient economic grounding; they see their entrepreneurial success as intertwined with and incumbent upon their effectiveness in creating and expanding local food markets. Both the challenges and possibilities facing Grasshoppers derive from an intersection of rural and urban interests, outlined in the following sections.

KENTUCKY AGRICULTURE AT A CROSSROADS

Since the late 18th century, tobacco has been the foundation for the state's agricultural economy. Historically, family farmers in Kentucky have relied on tobacco production for a significant proportion of their livelihood. The relatively steady remuneration provided though the tobacco price support system, established in the 1930s, which stabilized the price of tobacco, buffered Kentucky farmers to some degree from the farm crisis of the 1980s (van Willigen & Eastwood, 1998). As a result, according to the 2004 USDA Census of Agriculture there are about 86,500 farms in Kentucky, which puts the state fourth in the number of farms nationally (NASS, 2004b). However, with the sharp decline in demand for Burley tobacco (the predominant variety grown in the state), in the late 1990s, tobacco quotas (the amount of tobacco a farmer had the ''right'' to sell) were cut by 66% between 1997 and 2005, the last year of the program. Farm income fell accordingly. In other words, tobacco producers have lost about two-thirds of their major cash crop. With the Tobacco Buy Out, or as it is officially known, the Tobacco Transition Payment Program, signed into law in October 2004, the future of the sector has become even more unsettled.

Tobacco is a high value per acre crop. Through the early 1990s, before the quota cuts began, an acre of tobacco grossed around $4,000; in comparison, the returns on corn or soybeans were about $300 to $600 (Snell & Goetz, 1997). The figures from the USDA underscore both impacts of the quota cuts and Kentucky's continued dependence on tobacco. Since 1997, the number of tobacco producers has fallen by 38% – from nearly 47,000 to just over 29,000 in 2002, while tobacco income fell by half during that same period (NASS, 2004a). Tobacco traditionally represented about a third of Kentucky farmers' income, but without tobacco, farms don't flow cash (CFA, 2003). However, even with the decline, the state has by far a greater share of the country's 57,000 tobacco farms than any other state (NASS, 2004b). In consequence, today people talk about Kentucky agriculture being at a crossroads.

The collapse of the burley support system has left Kentucky farmers searching for alternatives to tobacco, and in many cases, alternatives to conventional agricultural practices. These have included, with varying levels of interest and success, catfish, blackberries, *edamame* (immature soybeans to be boiled and eaten from the pod), freshwater shrimp, vermiculture, buffalo, vineyards, and hydroponic vegetable cultivation. Farmers are also seeking new commercial outlets, including direct sales to consumers. These have exceeded the national trend, doubling in reported value between 1997 and 2002 (NASS, 2004a). Farmers' markets now number 108 (Markowitz, Jones, & Webb, 2007) and can be found in every tobacco dependent county in the state (CFA, 2003). The potential to expand instate markets, especially for fruits and vegetables, is high since most of these – whether fresh, canned, or frozen – consumed in Kentucky are produced somewhere else (CFA, 2003). Kentucky is unusual in that state support exists for pursuing diversified agriculture. Under a singular piece of legislation, House Bill 611, half the funds Kentucky will receive from the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement,[2] a total of $1.75 billion over 25 years, are to be directed to the development and diversification of the state's agriculture. Thus funds, through grants to individuals and organizations, are available for a range of initiatives supporting new production endeavors and marketing approaches. Innovative farmers and organizations have availed themselves of grants for such purposes as farm-based salsa making, mushroom marketing, wool processing, and sorghum production. The funds have also been used by communities to establish farmers markets and certified kitchens.

Instrumental in the design and passage of HB 611 was Community Farm Alliance (CFA), a statewide grassroots organization that emerged in 1985, in response to the farm crisis. CFA now has 2,000 members in 87 of Kentucky's 120 counties.[3] From its early days of fighting farm foreclosures, CFA has evolved over the past two decades in response to the needs and the development of its membership. In tandem with its legislative work to support agricultural diversification, CFA has focused efforts on the creation of new markets, as part of a broader plan of developing a locally integrated food economy. While the analytic unit evoked is the state (CFA, 2003), what members generally emphasize is the key role of food in building connections between people, and between people and place, at a variety of levels – from region to county. Concomitant with this conception of a local food economy has been organizational work to create and strengthen rural-urban commercial channels, and to promote awareness of the multifold benefits of eating locally.

CFA members and organizers have recognized that building an alternative food system requires a distributive infrastructure to support ongoing agricultural transitions and innovations. The aforementioned community and farmer initiatives are autonomous steps in this direction. However, CFA has taken on the role of catalyst for instigating some of the more difficult economic development strategies necessary to support a local food economy. For this reason, CFA began its work in Louisville, which has a population of nearly 700,000 or roughly 20% of the state's population. The organization has concentrated its efforts in the city's low-income neighborhoods, developing partnerships with a range of community-based and public agencies and institutions.

THE URBAN SETTING

West Louisville, home to about 83,000 people, has unemployment rates well over double the regional average, a median household income 46.5% of the regional average, and a poverty rate of 42%, close to three times the regional rate (ICIC, 2001). West Louisville, like many other predominantly African-American urban areas can be characterized as a "food desert" replete with limited access to shops, high prices, poor quality, and narrow variety of food items, especially fresh produce (Curtis & McClellan, 1995; Eisenhauer, 2001). A recently issued community food assessment found that in West Louisville the ratio of customers to full service supermarkets is 25,000 to one, while the citywide average is about 13,000 (CFA, 2007). Existing shops, mostly convenience outlets, charge about 50% more than do supermarkets for basic grocery items, and fresh produce is notably absent on their shelves (Raskin, 2006; Thurman, 2005). Further limiting access to stores is the low rate of household vehicle access. The absence of a viable food retail sector in West Louisville results from the convergence of several historical factors typical not only of this locale but African-American urban communities as a whole: restrictions on capital and credit; municipal ordinances restricting occupations and commercial ventures; segregated residential patterns; and a culture of racism, in which notions of pollution were reflected entrepreneurially in black owned laundries, restaurants, funeral parlors, beauty salons and barbershops, and food and retail stores (Jones, 1988; Markowitz et al., 2007).

City health professionals and activists have linked limited access to food to poor health outcomes. Health indicators statewide and citywide are distressing – Kentucky ranks among the states with the very highest rates for cancer deaths, smoking, lack of exercise, cardiovascular diseases, and obesity. In Louisville, mortality rates for heart disease, stroke, and diabetes are higher for African-Americans than Whites and nutritionists comment that the difficulty and expense of eating fruits and vegetable contributes to these health problems (Halbach, 2006). Additionally, Louisville ranks second nationally for fast food consumption as measured by the number of visits per person per month to fast food restaurants (Davis, 2006). The single most concentrated strip of fast food outlets in the state (24 in 2.8 miles) connects West Louisville with East Downtown, another poor, mostly Black neighborhood (Raskin, 2006). In the insidious geography of food deserts, procuring healthy food at reasonably low prices is most difficult for those in most need.

FARM TO CITY

Promoting a local food economy by connecting consumers in low-income neighborhoods with small farmers in the counties surrounding Louisville is a challenging undertaking, and one that has encompassed a large number of activities. In 2003, CFA began working with business people and community leaders in West Louisville neighborhoods. CFA also established a Louisville office and created a Louisville chapter, with membership that as of early 2008 had grown to about 250.

To date, the most obvious additions to the local food economy are two new Farmers' Markets, opened in 2003 and 2004, the first in the state established in low-income neighborhoods. As mentioned above, enormous interest exists among Kentucky farmers to find new marketing outlets. Farmers seek to, at minimum, replace the income formerly generated by tobacco; an acre of tobacco cleared about \$2,500 and, statewide, a conservative earnings estimate for a market season is \$3,000 to \$5,000; some producers take in much more. However, because most farmers were generally unfamiliar with Louisville, and in particular its African-American neighborhoods, CFA leaders and staff needed, initially, to recruit producers to come into town for the two Saturday markets.

Certainly for farmers selling at these markets involved dealing with a different clientele than that present in the city's more affluent neighborhoods. Data from customer interviews not only reveal some of these contrasts, but underline the aforementioned class differences in current consumption patterns: about 70% of the shoppers at the city's largest and oldest market have a college degree; in the first West Louisville market, the figure is 19%. The reported median day's spending at each market diverged as well: \$20.00 versus \$5.00 (Markowitz, 2005). Over the past three years, market organizers have worked to bolster the new markets, coordinating with community groups and city agencies to sponsor special events and festivals. Building on relationships developed via the market-building work, farmers and residents formed with substantial impetus from CFA, the West Louisville Food Working Group (WLFWG).

Guided by a vision of greater food access and self-sufficiency, the group aspires to provide the opportunity for collective "ownership" of part of the economy by creating new alliances that reach across racial and social barriers. By 2005, the group had expanded to include some 20 farmers and 15 entrepreneurs with food-related businesses interested in cooperatively marketing in west Louisville. The entrepreneur group participated in food handling and licensing classes as a prelude to joining the markets as vendors. The farmers and entrepreneurs are strengthening their working relationships in anticipation of collaborating through new business models, in which the entrepreneurs will source their ingredients directly from the farmers and the groups will share facilities for marketing their goods. This team of area residents and farmers has explored many possible options for the development of a local food infrastructure in the city. Much of the discussion has centered on how farmers and residents could create wealth together (Markowitz et al., 2007).

CREATING THE SOMETHING BETWEEN

This discussion of wealth creation may be rephrased as the search for the elusive something between SYSCO and CSAs. How do farmers, urban entrepreneurs, civic organizations, and activists begin to construct the bulking, distribution, and commercialization systems that will bring healthy, fresh food to a wide customer base? And, how can this be done in ways that both stimulate community development and bolster farm incomes? Farmers' markets offer a visible starting point, but what comes next?

The next step emerged from a series of conversations between members of the WLWFG, area farmers, city chefs, and grocers about the logistics and economics of local food distribution. Both buyers and producers expressed their frustrations and concerns about making connections with one another. For individual farmers, finding buyers willing to pay an acceptable price for high quality fresh food can be a daunting, time-consuming process of visiting restaurants, and specialty markets, a task which for many holds little appeal. Chefs and grocers for their part, require a reliable volume of properly processed (washed and packed) items. The creation of some sort of intermediary institution emerged as the solution, one which would allow farmers to farm, not sell, and chefs to cook, rather than source and worry. A distribution facility would centralize offer and demand by bulking food from area producers and delivering it to urban end-users.

Thus plans for a distribution center, located in West Louisville were born. Originally 22 farmers were interested; as discussions proceeded over 2005 and 2006, the number fell to its current group of four partners who late in 2006, incorporated themselves as Grasshoppers, a limited liability company. The partners, who openly voice the uncertainties of this undertaking, are nonetheless excited and optimistic about their new business. They secured a USDA value added grant, the only one of its kind awarded for a business in West Louisville, which provides start-up capital for the enterprise and recently leased warehouse and office space. The four farmers had to match the grant, with a commitment of an in-kind contribution: their labor. CFA also joined in the match by providing business planning assistance from one of their (very few) staff members, a contribution supported by grants from the Ford Foundation and the United Parcel Service, a major area employer. After many long discussions about how to get started (a process which seems to have left them rather grateful not to have had to negotiate the opinions of all twenty-two "originals") they now plan to begin bulking foods (eggs, produce, cheese, poultry, beef, sausages, and herbs among other items) to sell to five local restaurants and five local (nonchain) grocery stores. The idea, for the first few months, is to perfect the mechanics with a small client base and then expand.

In the discussion of expansion, the mechanics as well as the underlying imaginary of a sustainable local food economy unfolds. As one of the four partners explained, the distribution system will serve as a cog to bring farmers and consumers together. The commitment to purchase food from small producers, most of whom employ low-input practices, facilitates their access to the urban market (and rewards environmentally friendly resource use). Simultaneously, Grasshoppers can offer a steady supply of many foods to cooks and grocers, who currently depend upon large distributors, which source nationally and globally. Institutional purchases by city agencies and institutions also become feasible when large volumes are available; such contracts in turn generate reliable demand for producers.

The distribution center, in principle, can also stimulate small urban enterprises, especially in West Louisville, where unemployment rates are high. The WLFWG includes some 15 food entrepreneurs, individuals interested in developing businesses based on elaborating food – prepared meals, candy, baked, and canned goods. They aim to establish a certified community kitchen (another infrastructural project in the works) where such items can be prepared safely on a larger scale than is currently possible. The presence of Grasshoppers will allow food processors to source high-quality fresh ingredients with relative ease. Another enterprise has been developed by West Louisville youth, who with the support of the Mohammed Ali Institute at the University of Louisville have formed Urban Fresh. This small group of socially minded young people has begun to sell food bulked by Grasshoppers at one of the two new urban farmers' markets. They are also developing plans to create mobile markets and a home food delivery service, appropriate given the high number of households lacking access to a vehicle. This business model has long antecedents in West Louisville, where in the absence of grocery stores, a parallel system of food distribution based on mobile grocery peddlers developed (Jones, 1988). Urban Fresh is poised to reinvent this tradition of decentralized and customized food distribution and is working with Grasshoppers to coordinate supply and pricing.

BEYOND BUSINESS AS USUAL: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As conceptualized, the Grasshoppers' plan emerges from the partners' frustration with and dislike of the dominant food system – "big food is so nasty," as one succinctly put it – and concern with their fellow farmers, especially those who are struggling – "helping out the little guy" – and young alternative producers who need outlets right away. It also emerges from their recognition of a huge marketing opportunity, generated both by the demand for quality and growing panache of "the local," as an alternative to big organic, and by the needs of a large underserved urban population. The partners are clear that food they sell to Urban Fresh for delivery in West Louisville has to be affordable. I am not sure, at this point in my fieldwork, if this concern is better characterized as a commitment to food security or as recognition of market practicalities. However, during the first meeting of Grasshoppers and Urban Fresh, the partners eagerly solicited the young peoples' views about viable products and pricing.

Something that struck me during the conversations I had with the Grasshopper partners and the meetings I sat in on, is the lack of reference to their enterprise as "doing good." Rather, they are concerned with getting the business up and running. "Gotta take care of yourself before you can help anyone else out," said one. This reflects their immediate concerns of setting up the business (on the day of that conversation, they were also interviewing the soon-to-be hired office manager, who would, to their relief, arrange for an internet connection and set up a filing system). Nonetheless, implicit in their business planning are elements of economic relationships, which in other contexts are explicitly linked with expanding social equity and ultimately, creating alternative spaces inside or alongside capitalism. To illustrate this, I conclude by considering Grasshoppers with respect to two related social movements: Fair Trade and Solidarity Economics.

Jaffee, Kloppenburg, and Monroy (2004) suggest that the precepts and criteria of Fair Trade associated with South-North producer-consumer linkages pertain, as well, to connections established through alternative agro-food networks *within* Northern countries. They argue that sympathy for family farmers and farm workers could be harnessed through the "moral charge" of fairness to generate greater support among consumers for commodities produced under equitable and sustainable conditions.[4] Such a move, they add, would generate much needed discussion about structural inequalities (farm subsidies, wages, and corporate concentration) in the US agro-food system. While Grasshoppers have thus far not referred to themselves in any way as fair-traders, the practices they have established conform to some of the Fair Trade criteria (italicized below) that Jaffee et al. (2004, p. 174) have compiled from a review of international organization.

Fair Prices to Producers. In their business plan, Grasshoppers add a 20% markup to the items they purchase from farmers. They anticipate that with the right product mix this will allow sufficient margin to set viable prices for end-users while covering their costs. As they have calculated on the basis of their own experiences and interviews with some 20 farmers, this means they can pay producers prices which while lower than those of the direct sales, would still be much higher (100% more, in the case of conventional tomatoes) than those received through sales to wholesale brokers.

Advance Credit or Payment to Producers. Grasshoppers is adamant about the need to pay farmers on delivery. They see this as necessary to establish themselves as a desirable business partner, and as recognition of farm cash flow issues. Although the partners worry about their own cash flow, covering purchase costs is the priority for their limited start-up funds.

Long-term Contracts and Payment Relationships. Establishing trusting, regular relationships with producers is essential for the business to thrive; the partners must ensure high-quality volume to build similar relationships on the purchase side. They plan, in fact, to designate suppliers as ''associate partners'' or ''associate members.''

Environmentally Sustainable Production Practices. The farmers already on the supplier list use low-input techniques; a couple of them are organic producers. The partners are reaching out to farmers they know through a range of networks, particularly CFA members, who tend toward alternative agricultural practices. The partners are in the process of establishing quality criteria for produce and meats, which will, ideally, reinforce and reward sustainable production among their suppliers.

Public Accountability and Financial Transparency. While I cannot yet assess this one, I will say that they have not hesitated to share numbers with this anthropologist and the members of Urban Fresh.

What stands out in the Grasshopper business model is the congruence between fair practices and the aims of establishing a sustainable local food network. In this case, accepting the terms of market rationality (in contrast to the dynamics James Carrier describes in his account of ecotourism, this volume) may bolster the partners' success. What will draw farmer participation and commitment is fair prompt remuneration and the security of a reliable outlet, one that rewards the innovative agricultural practices many producers have already developed or would like to expand. In this vein, the partners have asked farmers about the crops they would like to produce or to increase production of, but for which local markets are limited. For example, area farmers raise a lot of grass-fed beef, which is difficult to sell at farmers markets for regulatory and logistical reasons. As such, it offers an opportunity for Grasshoppers to extend their offerings to chefs and food processors, or even, as one partner suggested, helping to stimulate a new local venture for a food entrepreneur – a burger joint. Grasshoppers' desire to accommodate and even nurture producer interests is part of their process of inventing a new kind of business. While the partners worry about their own bottom line, in their vision of entrepreneurial practice, they seek to serve their suppliers instead of merely profiting from them. Exchange, in this context, becomes part of building symbiotic and trusting relationships, rather than garnering a better deal. While such relationships, something between the personal and impersonal, obtain in many commercial contexts (Plattner, 1985), the dealings here are not only socially embedded but pertain to participation in a larger political project. While I do not want to claim that all the suppliers see themselves as participating in the construction of an alternative food economy, by creating a new farm income stream, the trading practices outlined above make such engagement feasible.

The notion of using the possibilities of the market to affect social change rather than simply replicating standard modes of profit-taking invokes the second social movement: solidarity economics. This movement, which emerged in Latin America in the 1990s in the wake of structural adjustment policies and is expanding internationally, embraces building connections and solidarity among a diversity of innovative economic projects – worker-run businesses, cooperatives, community currency initiatives, neighborhood gardens, among many other examples (see Boulianne, 2006, for food-related undertakings).[5] There is no fixed image of a singular alternative model; rather, the idea that as different communities or organizations develop new practices of livelihood generation based on their own needs and possibilities, such groups can offer one another the mutual support that will make such projects viable (Miller, 2006). This image of a network of collaboration corresponds to the alternative food landscape the Grasshopper partners are trying to cultivate, locally, as they work with other nascent enterprises and with social change organizations like CFA and regionally, as they contemplate purchasing food from groups like the Federation of Southern

Cooperatives, to expand both the seasonality of their offerings and their relations with other small farm supporters.

This framing of Grasshoppers as a fair trading solidarity economic project, I must stress, is my own and I look forward to continued discussions with the partners as they develop, fine-tune, and reflect upon their trading practices as their business expands. The vision they articulate as entrepreneurs and enact as farmers is one of bringing fresh, delicious food to the city (on my first visit to the center I was gifted with four squab) while providing a ''commercial conduit for the little guy.'' As they acknowledge, repeatedly, the distribution center is an experiment. It may falter before succeeding and the definition of success is itself subject to change along with the weather, commodity prices, and a host of other unknowns. The elements that ground and are the most likely to sustain their uncertain undertaking are knowledge and experience of regional agriculture and market conditions, and the relationships established and furthered through ongoing community organizing. Building the ''something between'' that feeds a city rather than just a niche market will rely on both.

NOTES

1. The Community Food Security Coalition, an umbrella organization with a membership of 325, calls for ''building strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems that ensure access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all people at all times. We seek to develop self-reliance among all communities in obtaining their food and to create a system of growing, manufacturing, processing, making available, and selling food that is regionally based and grounded in the principles of justice, democracy, and sustainability'' (http://www.foodsecurity.org/).

2. This was an agreement reached between most US states and the four major tobacco companies, requiring these to compensate the public for the costs of tobacco-related health problems.

3. Full disclosure: I have been a member since 1996. The ethical and epistemological complications of doing the ethnography of the social movement in which one participates are, of course, huge and beyond the scope of the present account.

4. In their sensitive critiques (this volume) Peter Leutchford and Catherine Dolan point out the less than equitable social dynamics associated with, respectively, the production of coffee and discursive governance, within Fair Trade value chains.

5. Antecedents for the creation of alternative arrangements for the production and distribution of food as a part of broader political movements can be found, in, among other settings, Republican Spain (Pratt, 2007) and the US counter-culture in the 1960s and 1970s (Belasco, 1989).

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GLOBAL GARMENT CHAINS, LOCAL LABOUR ACTIVISM: NEW CHALLENGES TO TRADE UNION AND NGO ACTIVISM IN THE TIRUPPUR GARMENT CLUSTER, SOUTH INDIA

Geert De Neve

ABSTRACT

Almost on a daily basis newspapers and magazines tell us of the exploitative circumstances under which workers produce garments for the global market. While local trade unions, international NGOs, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) officers claim to act in the interests of garment workers, the latter continue to lack voice and representation in their everyday struggles for better and fairer employment. Focusing on a South Indian garment cluster, the article explores the reasons why key labour rights, such as the freedom of association, keep being violated, and why local trade union and international NGO activists fail to prevent such violations. Through the lens of a major labour dispute, we consider the decline of a once successful trade union and the challenges of emerging

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local–international activist collaborations. The article concludes that for union, NGO, and corporate interventions to be successful in the context of a liberalising state, the political economy of labour has to be taken into account, and labour struggles have to be understood within their political and historical context.

Two labour activists killed, independent union's bargaining rights rejected and union members threatened by management. (December 2006, Cavita Export processing Zone, Philippines)

Global buyer diverts orders from a unionised factory in the Dominican Republic to non-unionised facilities in Bangladesh and Vietnam. (February 2007, Dominican Republic)

Court denies Indian labour organisations and international labour activists' right to speak about working conditions in garment factory. (July 2006, Bangalore, India)

Union officials arrested and allegedly beaten and tortured following garment factory workers' protests. (May 2006, Dhaka, Bangladesh)

Source: Clean Clothes Campaign articles. (www.cleanclothes.org)

INTRODUCTION

Freedom of association is perhaps labour's most threatened right in the post-quota era of textile and garment production. Enshrined in the core labour conventions of the ILO and reproduced in a plethora of global labour standards and company codes of conduct, the right to organise and bargain collectively is at risk in garment producing regions across the world. The right to organise is not only a core labour right in itself, but it is also a crucial facilitator and guarantor of related labour rights. Wherever workers are prevented from exercising their right to unite and express concerns about conditions of work, other labour rights, such as minimum wages, overtime payment and non-discrimination come under threat.

Although trade unions, international labour activists and global buyers have all been concerned with the fate of garment workers at the sites of global production, little is known about how labour activism operates in the era of economic liberalisation or about how different forms of activism – some explicitly local while others decidedly international – combine to protect the rights of workers. In this article, I examine discourses and practices of labour activism in Tiruppur, a garment cluster in southern India, in order to reveal the social processes of labour activism and the new challenges that such activism faces at a time of rapid economic integration. In sectors such as textiles and garments, especially since the phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Agreement on 1st January 2005 and following intensified global competition, flexible and cheap labour has become a major comparative advantage of producing firms. Such cheap and flexible labour is subjected to new pressures and forms of discrimination, such as long working hours and poor overtime payment, and in particular to threats to freedom of association (see also Dolan, this volume).

THE TIRUPPUR GARMENT CLUSTER

Let me introduce the empirical context of this research before setting out the theoretical concerns that I seek to engage with. Today, more than ever before, garment workers' lives everywhere are as likely to be shaped by the attitudes of their immediate employers as by those of distant retailers and marketers, whose sourcing strategies often change overnight, whose codes of conduct reflect constantly changing consumer moods, and whose audits on the shop-floor become ever more intrusive and directive.

This is also the case in Tiruppur, probably the best-known garment town in India, and one of the largest garment manufacturing and exporting clusters in South Asia.[1] Located only 45 km east of the city of Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu, Tiruppur has boomed almost without interruption since the early 1970s when the first garment manufacturers began to experiment with export orders. During the 1980s and 1990s, the town transformed itself into a leading centre of garment production and export for the world market (Chari, 2000, 2004). Today, Tiruppur is one of India's leading industrial clusters and a significant foreign exchange earner, with a total export value of more than 1 billion US $ in 2004 and with a post-quota growth of more than 20% predicted for the period thereafter (see Table 1). Tiruppur has been – and still is – a success story, with manufacturers and exporters convinced that the growth rates will not only persist but even increase over the next decade.

Most industrialists and exporters are confident that the post-quota era will offer a wealth of new export opportunities even if competition with China gets more strenuous and downward pressures on prices more severe. This confidence is buttressed by steeply rising orders since January 2005. On the whole, the major export companies, of which there are over 300 in Tiruppur, share a vision of "India Shining," and of Tiruppur as benefiting

Table 1. Knitwear Exports from Tiruppur (In Value and as a Percentage of All India Knitwear Exports).

Year	Value in Million $US	Percentage of All India Knitwear Exports
1996	544.3	38.29
1997	604.6	37.77
1998	616.8	37.91
1999	689.7	36.58
2000	761.6	37.28
2001	718.6	40.30
2002	666.7	41.78
2003	793.5	43.62
2004	1005.2	45.81

Source: Apparel Export Promotion Council, Tiruppur, 2005.

from a deregulated national economy and a global free trade era that finally gives them unrestricted access to the world market.

Before embarking on a discussion of the changing politics of labour in this "Town of Export Excellence," we first need to learn a few things about the place itself. Firstly, in Tiruppur today's factory owners and exporters were yesterday's workers. All major manufacturers and exporters have agrarian and working-class roots, and they made it from factory-hand to industrialist within the span of a lifetime. Secondly, the cluster is today dominated by a single caste, that of Gounders (traditionally agriculturalists and land-owners), who expanded the industry through the mobilisation of close networks of co-operation and mutual support (Chari, 2000). Today, Gounder industrialists control the industry and its many institutional bodies (such as TEA, the Tiruppur Exporters Association). Thirdly, the route of capitalist accumulation taken has been that of networked subcontracting in which smaller units became large through collaboration with already established firms. Finally, Tiruppur's industrial boom since the 1970s has radically transformed its labour force. The image of Tiruppur as a place of prosperity has attracted a massive influx of migrant labour from across south India, some of whom have settled in Tiruppur over the last three decades while others form a steady flow of temporary migrants (and commuters) who may settle in Tiruppur for anything from a few weeks during a peak season to several years before returning back to mainly rural homes (De Neve, 2003). While informants repeatedly remind me of the fact that Tiruppur of the 1960s was a small town with about 30,000 inhabitants, people's estimates today speak of a population of 300,000 permanent residents with a further 300,000 temporary migrant settlers. Tiruppur's transition from a small textile town – at the periphery of Coimbatore's larger textile and engineering industries – into a rapidly expanding and globally exporting garment district has been truly astonishing.

Given its long trade union history, present international labour activists' concerns with garment workers, and increasing CSR interventions, Tiruppur lends itself well to a study of labour representation in the garment sector. In this article, I trace the history of Tiruppur's unions in order to show how a long-standing trade union movement in a booming garment cluster has been deeply affected by ongoing processes of globalisation since the 1970s. In particular, I document the new challenges of representation that the expanding cluster has produced for the local trade unions and their leaders. Then, I use the description and analysis of a major labour dispute to reflect on the weaknesses of new collaborative initiatives between trade unions and NGOs in the fight against labour rights violations. First, however, I introduce the theoretical concerns of this article.

REPRESENTING GARMENT WORKERS

At a broad level, this article concerns itself with the fate of workshop-based forms of resistance to new work regimes in the context of a liberalised market for textiles and garments. Global value chain analyses have been weak in looking at labour and in particular at workshop-based labour politics within global commodity chains. On the whole, discussions evolve around questions of inter-firm linkages, upgrading of smaller firms and their activities, and the institutional contexts of industrial development (Dolan & Tewari, 2001; Gereffi, Humphrey, Kaplinsky, & Sturgeon, 2001; Kaplinsky, 2000). These are questions of structure rather than agency, and of economics rather than power and politics. Commodity chain analysts have introduced a concept of "governance" but this leaves crucial questions of labour organisation and resistance buried (Humphrey & Schmitz, 2001). Whereas "governance" may cover the broad spread of economic power, it cannot capture the everyday politics and struggles of labour at the sites of production. Here I want to recover the social politics of labour at a key node in the global garment chain.

At a more immediate level, I engage with three issues that shape the politics of representation across much of India today: (1) the decline in traditional trade union activism, (2) the potential for new forms of collaboration between trade unions and NGO activists, and (3) the ability of corporate interventions, through labour standards and company codes of conduct, to protect labour's key right of freedom of association.

Firstly, I explore the decline in trade union activism and the new challenges to trade union movements reported in a range of labour-intensive export industries across the globe (Hale, 2005; Zhu, 2004). Many garment factories were opened in special industrial zones – known as export processing zones (EPZ), free trade zones (FTZ), etc. – or in similar spaces where usual labour legislation often does not apply and trade unions are strongly resisted if not legally banned, as is the case in Bangladesh (Hensman, 2005; Hurley, 2005). In addition, deepening processes of global outsourcing and industrial restructuring pose new threats to the organisation of labour, even in regions such as Tiruppur where trade unions have a long tradition of activism. In what follows I will illustrate how new pressures evolve in the Tiruppur region where the trade union movement has been losing much of its influence over the last decades and where trade unions have failed to take new groups of workers, such as migrants and women, under their wings.

Secondly, I engage with the idea proposed by several authors that classical forms of worker organisation around shop-floor based unions may no longer be adequate to tackle the new challenges posed by different actors in the global commodity chain. As Jane Wills and Angela Hale argue, to be successful in their struggles, "workers in buyer-driven supply chains need to be part of a new kind of political organisation…" (2005, p. 9) that will have to extend beyond the workplace and involve a wide group of networked activists. Much of the literature focuses on whether new forms of collaboration between trade unions and NGO activists can provide a platform from which to tackle the challenges of global, networked capitalism (cf. Braun & Gearhart, 2004; Wills & Hale, 2005). Following the failure of both states and corporations to address the negative effects of outsourcing, and under pressure of consumer campaigns, international NGOs now seek to protect labour by bringing together various "stakeholders," not in the least local activists and trade unions. But these relationships do not necessarily lead to a happy marriage, and, as recently pointed out by Merry (2006) in relation to human rights, intermediaries and knowledge brokers play a crucial role in connecting transnational activism with localised practices. While some evidence has been provided of the potentially successful collaboration between trade unions and NGOs, optimism is mainly to be found in activist literature that often collapses actual achievements with normative statements about the shape of such collaboration (Braun & Gearhart, 2004; Hale, 2004, 2005). Others, however, such as Lipschutz (2004), are more critical of international activist interventions in labour issues and have expressed considerable scepticism about the potential of NGO-union alliances to address labour issues in a systemic and lasting manner. What I present here is an empirical contribution to our understanding of emerging collaborations, with reference to a labour dispute that erupted in Tiruppur in May 2004.

Thirdly, labour rights feature centrally in the emerging corporate social responsibility (CSR) agenda of multi-national companies that source globally. Yet, CSR makes for a broad discursive practice covering a wide-range of specific corporate practices that differ according to commodity chain, type of industry, and geographical location. CSR policies may refer to issues as wide-ranging as child labour eradication (Nielsen, 2005), ''local'' community development and indigenous rights (Hamann, 2004; Hamann et al., 2005; Rajak, this volume), environmental protection (Tewari & Pillai, 2005; Lawrence, this volume), ethical trade (Barrientos & Dolan, 2006), and labour rights (Dolan & Opondo, 2005). As far as the garment sector is concerned, CSR's overwhelming preoccupation lies with labour. To counter some of the worst impacts of global production networks on workers across the globe, a series of standards and ''regulatory mechanisms'' have been designed, many of which take the form of corporate codes of conduct or voluntary labour standards (Nadvi, 2004; Nadvi & Wältring, 2004). However, very little is known about what these standards cover, how they are being implemented and what their impact is on local industries and workers (for exceptions see Barrientos, Dolan, & Tallontire, 2003). While some are optimistic about their potential to improve the quality of employment (Kearney & Gearhart, 2004), others have expressed serious concerns about a ''corporate care'' for labour, not in the least because it risks undermining state monopoly on labour legislation and its enforcement (cf. Compa, 2004; Kaufman et al., 2004, Nadvi, 2004).

Company codes of conduct as well as generic social standards, such as SA 8000 and WRAP,[2] have found their way into Tiruppur, and a growing number of suppliers are under pressure from buyers to comply with them. The codes and standards imposed on manufacturers typically cover working hours, prohibition of forced labour, minimum wages, etc., as well as the crucial issue of freedom of association and collective bargaining. However, while compliance with minimum wage legislation or health and safety requirements can be monitored and audited in fairly systematic ways (see Dolan, this volume), freedom of association is a much more complex matter that can neither be checked or enforced in a tick box manner nor be reduced to a technical issue as is the case with health and safety. I suggest in this article that the right to organise and speak out, and people's ability to exercise this right, are anything but a technical matter. They are part of social relationships that are deeply embedded in the history and politics of localised labour struggles, and can only be understood within the context of local trade union history, NGO activism and evolving worker–employer relationships. I return to these points in the conclusion.

What follows consists of two parts: first, a history of recent trade union organisation in Tiruppur and, second, a description and analysis of the new challenges facing trade unionism in the garment sector, presented through the lens of a labour dispute that erupted in May 2004. This dispute gives us a flavour of how a "local" union sought to link up with international networks of labour activism in order to gain support for a localised struggle. In conclusion, I assess the potential of international labour activism to influence localised labour struggles and build bridges between actors located at different levels.

EARLY TRADE UNION ORGANISATION

Tiruppur's trade union history is nearly as old as the textile industry itself. In 1940, there were only three textile mills in town that specialised in spinning and weaving and a handful of *banian* (vests, underwear) companies, as the first garment manufacturers were called in those days. By 1940, the first mill workers union had been established which united the nearly 4,000 workers employed in the three textile mills. Ganapathy, a now long retired CPI union leader who was at the forefront of Tiruppur's early trade union development, recalls that in those days "there were no working hours, no fixed times for food, no canteen and the workers were often ill-treated."[3] It was under the influence of communist activism in nearby Coimbatore and across the border in Kerala that the union ideology began to find a foothold among the early Tiruppur mill workers. Sharad Chari writes that when the communists started organising in Tiruppur, "their movement spread like wildfire" and by the early 1940s "about 90% of workers were unionized in sectors in which the union was active" (Chari, 2004, p. 174). The first communist union specifically for garment workers became active after the war in 1946, and most *banian* workers, who were at the time almost all Muslim, joined the union.[4]

A first point to emphasise is that unlike what happened in other garment centres across South Asia, for example, in Sri Lanka or Bangladesh, Tiruppur's garment workers have been able to organise themselves in opposition to employers from the early stages of industrial development. Trade union formation was relatively straightforward during these early days for a number of reasons: communist activists in the area were a driving force behind the first unions and were pro-active in raising awareness among the first mill hands; workers could fairly easily be informed and united on the shop-floor as they worked in only a handful of relatively large mills; mill workers used to be employed on a permanent basis, working for wages rather than piece rates; and, perhaps most importantly, until the early 1970s, an undivided union united all garment workers within a single organisation, the CPI (Communist Party of India) union. Union leaders rose from the ranks and were usually active garment workers themselves. The success of this labour movement transpired from a series of general strikes and several achievements around minimum wages, a living wage and annual bonuses. Militancy developed around notions of fairness, dignity and entitlement, and union activism was intent on protecting those entitlements and extending them wherever possible (Chari, 2004, p. 177; see also De Neve, 2005).

Following a successful early start, the nature of worker mobilisation began to change in the decades that followed. By the late 1970s the picture already looked quite different: while the industry boomed, union membership declined. Exports had taken off in a grand way and made the industry flourish more than ever before. Larger firms were no longer able to manufacture their export orders in house and began to farm out to relatives and friends whom they encouraged to set up production units of their own. These were the high days of subcontracting in Tiruppur.

Against this expanding industry, the picture of union organisation soon began to look grim. Despite ongoing activism and a number of strikes in the 1970s – not all of which were successful – union membership began to fall drastically. Chari mentions that "union strength dropped from 100 percent under the undivided communist union to less than 60 percent with the spread of contracting in the 1970s" (Chari, 2004, p. 231). A number of reasons explain this changing picture. Perhaps the most important initial outcome of increased exports was an industry-wide transition to subcontracting, which in turn led to a series of transformations that affected workers' willingness and ability to join unions. First, it entailed a shift away from large, integrated factories to smaller workshops that mushroomed in and around town. Workers could no longer easily be approached and united, and given that they worked in increasingly diversified workshops, their interests became more varied too. Second, manufacturing for exports was accompanied by a significant shift in payment methods: from wages to piece rates. Ganapathy, the ex-president of the CPI union, explained to me how piece rates were at the root of a number of downward developments:

> From then onwards, employers began to talk directly to the workers and fixed the rates directly with labour contractors. ... Payments thus began to differ from factory to

> factory and from design to design. … The union could no longer fight for a general minimum wage. Workers were no longer willing to follow a system of 8-hour shifts. In order to earn more, they began to work for one and a half or two shifts continually. … We were no longer able to control what went on in the factories. …

Increasingly, when workers were unhappy with one workshop they shifted to another, and if they found the piece rates of their employer inadequate, they approached the one next door. Ganapathy explained how the unions began to lose what they call their "control over workers," but it essentially meant that workers were no longer interested in their unions and saw no reason to join them:

> There was no co-operation anymore between the union and the workers. … Because of the competition and the high export quality demands, the workers had been convinced that they had to do overtime and deliver good work, for otherwise the company would lose orders. Also, as workers became dependent on their employers, the union was no longer of use to them …

Another union leader explained that relationships between employers and workers in small factories became *parasparam*, literally "thick," or "with mutual understanding." Workers are said to be very "co-operative" and the English phrase "close understanding" is frequently used when describing their relationship with employers. It is precisely this close relationship between workers and employers that undermined workers' loyalty to their unions. By following the labour contractor who negotiates the best piece rates and by working long hours on the shop-floor to make more money, garment workers essentially designed their own strategies to make the best of a rapidly changing industry. Unions became progressively more marginal to these strategies.

It would be wrong, however, to depict workers' closeness to employers as purely a matter of choice. In fact, the opposite is true: employers cultivated relationships of dependency and patronage in which workers were effectively silenced. Two relationships of dependency stand out: that between local Gounder employers and Gounder workers, and that between local employers and migrant workers. In the former case, Gounder workers depend on their employers not only because the latter are usually their friends, neighbours or relatives, but also because they might one day set up their own unit and need the support of "close" employers. Ganapathy made an astute comment on the nature of this relationship:

> In this industry owners are themselves workers. They started their business with the support of their own employers, so they know the situation of their workers and are close to them and good for them, so that the latter will not complain. The owners say: "I was a worker before, I know your concerns, I still have a union card myself!" and they will pull their old union card out of the pocket of their shirt!

Through such idioms of "understanding" and "proximity," employers convince their workers that unions are no longer required as employers "know workers' needs" and can deal with them face-to-face. Workers began to steer away from unions in order to avoid the disapproval of their employers, whose support they needed to establish themselves as manufacturers later on. Chari has precisely described how this Gounder "brotherhood" was key to the development of the industry in which Gounder workers became owners through various forms of partnership and collaboration with established fellow caste members (Chari, 2004; De Neve, 2003). While caste provided the basis of this brotherhood between Gounder employers and employees, kinship links further endowed their collaboration with moral obligation and mutual reciprocity.

The second case, of migrant workers, is similar yet with a different balance of dependency and patronage. Long-distance migrant workers began to swell Tiruppur's workforce from the 1970s onwards and, as a vulnerable labour force, they became directly dependent on their employers from whom they received free factory accommodation, food at reduced prices and money to make visits home. Such forms of support effectively tie migrant workers to urban employers and create close relationships of dependency, of which Ganapathy complains: "we simply cannot intervene in these relationships." Interviewed in 2000, the Tiruppur AITUC president admitted that given the high-demand for labour, employers began to give higher piece rates whenever workers asked for it and so they met the latter's immediate demands. This translated in dwindling support for the unions in Tiruppur and in reduced political activism all around.

Ironically, workers became increasingly removed from their unions and representatives at a time that working conditions worsened, hard-earned employment benefits were replaced with short-term hikes in piece rates, and permanent mill work gave way to casual forms of informal employment. Moreover, the landscape of union organisation itself underwent major transformations. These include the rapid multiplication of unions and their fragmentation along political party lines from the 1970s, which had a divisive impact on union activism. In 1970, following the earlier split of the communist party at the national level, the communist union split into the AITUC (All India Trade Union Congress) affiliated to the CPI (Communist Party of India), and the CITU (Centre of Indian Trade Unions), affiliated to the newly formed CPI(M) (Communist Party of India, Marxist). In Tiruppur, the local garment workers' branch of the CITU grew steadily and by the 1990s, it had become the largest garment workers union in town. In 2006 it had over 9,000 members, while the local branch of the AITUC remains the second largest union with around 8,500 members in the same year. In addition, since the 1970s three more garment workers unions were started up in town (LPF, ATP, and MLF), each affiliated to a Dravidian political party (DMK, AIADMK, and MDMK), which further added to the fragmentation of labour activism.[5]

LABOUR POLITICS: 1984–2006

How did this fragmentation of the trade union movement affect labour politics in Tiruppur? Competition over members became fierce and internal rivalry a constant feature of inter-union relationships. While a Joint Action Committee occasionally manages to unite all unions behind a common purpose, relationships among the unions are rife with mutual suspicion and antagonism. The leaders of the communist unions AITUC and CITU, for example, continue to see themselves as the only "true" and dedicated leaders of the working classes, blame other union leaders for being selfish and accuse them of undermining union activism by collaborating with employers. On the whole, the fragmentation of Tiruppur's union movement has dampened down to the militancy of the unions and contributed to a general weakening of a labour movement already affected by the global restructuring of the garment industry.

By the early 1980s, the industry had undergone several changes, discussed above, and wages had fallen behind the rising cost-of-living. Under the leadership of CITU, the unions demanded an increase in DA (dearness allowance)[6] in order to provide the workers with something closer to what is known as a "living wage." In 1984, however, the unions called a general strike, lasting for 127 days, which Chari rightly refers to as the "longest and most intense working-class action in the history of Tiruppur" (Chari, 2004, p. 247). After more than 4 months of striking, a government order granted the workers the right to achieve DA (for a more detailed discussion, see Chari, 2004, pp. 247–255). The 1984 strike was not only the longest, but also the last general strike to be organised in Tiruppur.

Today this strike is remembered with pride and nostalgia of what trade unions were once capable of, and past successes are contrasted with the dire situation of activism today. Balamani, the current AITUC union secretary in Tiruppur, explains: "Tiruppur had about 20,000 workers in those days and the strike kept going for nearly 5 months because we were all local workers, whose parents had worked in the mills and who were used to unions. We all had a high level of awareness at that time!" Anandhan, the current ADMK union secretary proudly recalls, "The ADMK party was in power then and we fought hard for the workers and in the end we were successful in getting the DA!" When interviewed in 2000 and 2006, union leaders, without exception, admitted that union organisation is weaker than ever before and currently only 10–20% of the garment workforce is unionised. By my estimation, the combined membership numbers of Tiruppur's unions, however, adds up to no more than 30,000 members, which forms an all time low of well below 10% of the garment workforce.

Over the last 20 years, trade unions have been unable to incorporate two major and growing constituencies: migrant workers and women workers. Without exception, union leaders mention the massive influx of migrant labour since the 1970s as one of the main causes of falling membership rates. One union leader explained:

> We tell the workers to work only 8-hour shifts, but they work 16 hours and even 20 hours … Why? It's the workers own fault … they shouldn't work that long, but they want more money and keep spending and therefore they have to keep working longer hours. Here, we have no control over labour anymore.

In a curious way, union leaders' loss of grip over the labour force has turned into bitterness towards migrant workers. In their attempt to shift the blame away from the unions, migrant workers are not only accused of ignorance, and of lacking a workers' consciousness, they are also blamed for undermining union solidarity by indulging in the selfish and individualistic pursuit of material wealth in the short run. Another union leader put it this way:

> Most workers in Tiruppur come from outside. They've been brought up in agriculture and don't know about co-operation and unity (*ottrumai*) with other workers, and they don't understand what unionisation is all about. As a result they 1) have no faith in union leaders and 2) believe that when you are good to your employer, he will be good to you.

In a slightly more sympathetic voice, Ramkrishnan, the secretary of the local LPF trade union, explains about migrant workers that they "just come, work and go! Poverty brings them to Tiruppur and they know that if they join a union, their employer will dismiss them, so they don't join for they can't afford to lose their job … Their only reason for coming to Tiruppur is to work and earn money." And, indeed, migrant workers can rarely afford to go on strike for days or weeks on end – let alone lose their jobs – as a loss of wages would make it impossible for them to remain in town for any length of time.

Anandhan, the secretary of the AIADMK union, blames the unions' inability to reach out to migrant workers on the tight control that employers have over migrants in Tiruppur, a control they find increasingly hard to break:

> We cannot control the migrant workers. They are afraid of losing their job when joining a union, so they think 'our wages are enough' … Employers tell their workers: 'look, we'll give you good wages, but don't join the unions! Employers even take their buses to the south where they get 500 workers or more, whom they bring to Tiruppur and keep in their factories. For festivals they'll bring them back to the villages…

Employers' control over migrant workers and the latter's almost slavish dedication to employers is further explained by union leaders in terms of wage differences between garment work in Tiruppur and agricultural work in the villages they come from. Balamani, the AITUC secretary, illustrates this as follows:

> In no district of Tamil Nadu can one earn like here in Tiruppur. In the South, girls work in a petrol station for Rs200 per month, whereas when they arrive here, they can earn Rs700 per week. So, they don't join the unions, they see no need for it, they only come to us if there is a problem…

Women workers, many of whom are also migrants, are the second group that unions have been unable to bring under their wing over the last two decades. While women are currently the preferred labour force in several sections of the garment industry, their union participation is extremely low and is estimated below 5%. Not a single woman can be found among the union leadership. Unions explain the situation in the same way: because women workers are kept under close supervision by employers, unions are unable to reach them. Krishnaraj, another trade union leader, conveys a view often heard in Tiruppur today:

> In many export factories they now have a canteen and a hostel and they only allow the girls to leave the compound for a few hours on Sundays. So, there is use of force, but it's invisible force, we can't see it. As a result, the workers of these companies can't get in touch with the unions at all; they can't even meet the union activists … Now there is also the *Sumangali Thittam* or marriage scheme in which young unmarried girls from Kerala are brought to Tiruppur on 3-year contracts with the promise that they will be paid Rs30,000 at the end of it …Those big companies dismiss workers who get in touch with the unions.

While it is difficult to gauge the extent to which new forms of forced labour have re-entered the garment industry over the last years, there is little doubt that freedom of association is the most seriously threatened labour right in Tiruppur today. Large companies do not hide their aversion to unions and go to great efforts to keep their workforce away from trade unions and their activists. To this aim they establish factories outside the town, often up to 20 km away from Tiruppur, they encourage factory-based workers' committees whose activities they can easily monitor, and they are known to dismiss workers who approach trade unions with complaints, as is shown below. While trade unions' attitudes towards women and migrant workers are ambivalent, to say the least, any attempt to reach out to this new labour force is without a doubt hampered by the immense power that employers hold over their workers.

WORKERS AND THEIR UNIONS

But what do the garment workers themselves make of their trade unions? Apart from an older group of workers who have long been involved with trade union activism, the majority of young migrant workers have little time for trade unions, whom they consider politically compromised and demanding in several ways. The comments of a non-unionised printing press worker summarises an often-heard view:

> If we become a union member, they also ask us to join for rallies and meetings, and our work will suffer as a result. All unions are political, so we will be called to party meetings too. The unions won't come to us, and so it is only through friends that we can find out and join. Also, union representatives will only come and give us support if we pay them money.

Whether such a statement truly reflects union attitudes or nor, it certainly echoes many workers' perceptions of unions, which includes the overwhelming impression that unions constantly demand money and time from labourers who are already hard-pressed to work long hours and spend with care. This applies particularly to migrant (and women) workers, who – against general union advice – prefer piece rates to wages, shift from factory to factory in search of the best deals and opt for companies where plenty of overtime work allows them to maximise weekly earnings. Or, as one tailor contractor put it:

> It is especially people from the South who come here and they come for money only; so, when there is a strike, their work and income is affected, and therefore they are not very eager to support the unions and their actions; they prefer to be close to the employers and labour contractors.

Yet despite widespread aversion towards unions, and even suspicion about their true agendas, workers continue to approach them for support on an *ad hoc* basis. If a company fails to pay the annual bonus at the time of Diwali or dismisses workers in an apparently random way, the workforce may turn en masse to the unions, as happened in the Camtex[7] case below. The unions usually seek to mediate between workers and management or to organise a demonstration in a visible public space or in front of the company. Rarely, however, do such actions involve workers beyond the unit or result in more than a 1-day strike. General strikes or prolonged action is unheard of in Tiruppur today.

In sum, what I have recounted here is the history of a trade union movement at risk in a rapidly globalising industry. Once militant and effective, Tiruppur's trade unions are today politically coloured and highly fragmented, while their conservatism, both in outlook and in organisation, has lost its effectiveness. Union organisational structures have hardly changed since their inception in the early 1940s, and their *modus operandi* has remained defensive. Union leaders have risen from the ranks, are on the whole poorly educated, have scant knowledge of English, and are without exception male. As organisations they have remained extremely hierarchical with a president and secretary at the top, often appointed for life, and a wide base of union workers below them. The unions' public accountability is low and their democratic credentials are poor. Moreover, the current trade union leaders are almost all in their fifties or older, were born in Tiruppur or its close surroundings and the majority belong to the dominant caste of Gounders – the community from which also the leading manufacturers and exporters hail. They are poorly equipped to represent a rapidly diversifying labour force (of migrants and women, and different castes), or to challenge capital in its globalised and networked form (Wills & Hale, 2005).

I now move on to the unfolding of an industrial dispute that erupted in May 2004 and in which a range of actors became involved in an attempt to stem recurrent violations of basic labour rights, including freedom of association. The dispute and its aftermath give us an indication of how labour struggles are becoming increasingly complex and how an international network of actors can become involved in a so-called "local" labour struggle.

AN INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE, OR LABOUR ACTIVISM GOING GLOBAL?

On 15th May 2004, 300 workers of a sub-unit of Camtex, a large garment export company, stopped work and started a demonstration in demand of wage increases in line with the 2003 Tiruppur wage settlement,[8] signed by trade union and employer representatives. In response to this agitation, workers were threatened by management, and it is alleged that some were beaten up by supervisors for their role in the demonstration. A good number of these workers were members of trade unions. On the subsequent payday, 1st July 2004, the company dismissed 20 workers, who were forced to sign a resignation letter, allegedly because of their involvement with the unions and their role in the demonstrations. This dismissal led the 300 workers of that unit, including about 50 women workers, to stage a second demonstration in front of the company that same day. The 20 dismissed workers immediately informed their trade union representatives. The six leading unions wrote a joint letter to the president and secretary of the Tiruppur Exporters Association (TEA) asking for an intervention by the association of exporters. But the TEA did not respond to this request.

On 14th July 2004, the trade unions jointly organised a demonstration in front of Camtex's head office as this was one of the few places for which the court had not yet issued a "ban order," which prevents unions from demonstrating in front of the company. The unions repeatedly expressed their anger about the complicity of courts with the employers and felt powerless on realising the court's support for their opponents. Allegedly, in an attempt to counteract this public demonstration, members of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh)[9], with support of Camtex management, had organised a religious prayer meeting in front of the company on the same day. They set up large sound systems that blasted music, which overpowered the much smaller speakers of the unions, and installed large posters carrying statements expressing workers' support to the management of Camtex. Anandkumar, the secretary of the MDMK garment workers union, put it this way: "the employers had mobilised some rowdies of the RSS to organise a meeting that would make our demonstration appear as a disturbance." Around the same time the Hindu Munnani State Secretary condemned workers' agitations in the vernacular newspapers and blamed workers for spoiling Tiruppur's name.

By the end of July, the inspector of factories conducted an inspection of Camtex and concluded – in line with an inspection by Provident Fund (a national pension scheme) in September – that the company did not fully comply with local labour laws in a number of areas, including legal overtime payments, maximum working hours, statutory holiday benefits and so on. By the end of October, Camtex representatives had failed to turn up at conciliation meetings with workers and their representatives organised by the department of labour 11 times since the dispute began. Despite instructions from the department of labour to pay the pending wages of the dismissed workers, nothing happened. Filing a case in court was the only option left for the dismissed workers.

But the story did not stop there. Anandkumar, the secretary of the MDMK union which counted 3 of the 20 dismissed garment workers among its members, had been leading the actions so far and decided to take the case further. Anandkumar is in many ways an interesting person. Born in a village 10 km from Tiruppur, he came to work in the garment industry in Tiruppur after having finished 8th class in 1980. He soon became involved with the then DMK union and by 1982 he was a full-time union worker, by 1993 he became the president and by 1996 the union secretary. After marriage his wife encouraged him to continue his studies and by 1995 he had completed a BA and MA in Education by correspondence. His knowledge of English, albeit limited, and his levels of education distinguish him from all other union representatives I met in Tiruppur. In his early 40s, Anandkumar is a dynamic person. He had set-up new branches of the MDMK union for power loom and dyeing workers and always appeared keen to collaborate with others for the cause of labour. In particular, his close links with SAVE – an influential local NGO that campaigns for labour rights in Tiruppur and is well connected to the international Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) and Fair Wear Foundation (FWF) – would prove crucial in his struggle against Camtex.

Having earlier attended a gathering for textile and garment union representatives, organised by CCC in Cambodia, Anandkumar was already familiar with CCC's global networks and activities. With the help of the director of the local NGO SAVE, he put together an urgent appeal case, which was sent to CCC at the beginning of August 2004. The CCC is an international organisation, with headquarters in the Netherlands and branches across Europe, which campaigns for more ethical conditions of production in textile and garment commodity chains. Through a system of urgent appeals they seek to bring cases of extreme injustice to the attention of the public and attempt to mediate between all parties involved in labour disputes. The production of an urgent appeal case took the dispute to an entirely new level, effectively giving it a global dimension by seeking to involve a series of international NGO actors. On submitting the urgent appeal to CCC, a flow of communication (emails and faxes) followed between CCC activists in Europe and SAVE, who effectively mediated on behalf of Anandkumar of the MDMK union in Tiruppur. CCC network members in Europe contacted a French and Swiss retail company who sourced from Camtex in Tiruppur and requested them to take up this issue with their Tiruppur supplier. They urged the two buyers to carry out social audits in the Camtex production units and report on the labour conditions found in those units, including minimum wages, freedom of association, overtime regulation and payment, etc. Neither of the buyers took any immediate action.

In early October 2004, CCC Switzerland sent Anandkumar an email with the invitation to nominate Camtex for "The Public Eye on Davos Award," which is an award annually given to a company that has excelled in socially or environmentally *irresponsible* behaviour. The Public Eye on Davos, an international coalition of NGOs, has been present at the World Economic Forum (WEF) since 2000, where they monitor and challenge the WEF activities from an alternative platform. Its aim is to draw attention to the mis-behaviour of "big players" in the world market by putting their harmful economic activities in a global spotlight. In response to this invitation, Anandkumar formally nominated Camtex for the award by submitting a nomination form in October 2004. Although his nominated candidate did not "win" the award in January 2005, the nomination's listing on the Berne Declaration website once again gave Camtex a considerable dose of bad publicity. Moreover, by the end of October 2004, CCC had processed the urgent appeal case and also placed it on its website alongside a series of similar cases from across the world.

In November 2004, the FWF, another labour campaigning organisation based in the Netherlands, got involved as well. They were concerned that one of their member companies were sourcing from Camtex, and visited Tiruppur at the end of November to clarify the situation. On this visit, a FWF representative spoke to Anandkumar of the MDMK union, the owners of Camtex, and two local partner NGOs, including SAVE. Anandkumar later admitted that he was wholly disappointed with this visit and the ensuing report which stated that FWF was unable to take any action in the dispute because (1) their member company was not sourcing from Camtex in Tiruppur and (2) the union and the employer had given entirely different versions of what had happened, the only common episode being that 20 workers had lost their jobs in the dispute. From his perspective, Anandkumar drew the following conclusion: "that guy from FWF cheated us, he simply wrote in his report that he had been told different version of the story and that he couldn't take any action because the Camtex buyers were not a member of the ETI (Ethical Trade Initiative, UK) … he cheated us… I showed him all the evidence but he took no action whatsoever …"

By the end of 2004, Anandkumar had expended a great deal of time and effort on this case and began to lose heart by the lack of impact his international connections seemed to have. He nevertheless went to a CCC meeting in Bangkok where he brought the Camtex dispute once more into the public arena. In the meanwhile, Labour Behind the Label (LBL), a UK based network of organisations concerned with the rights of workers in the worldwide garment industry, also got involved. LBL wrote to Camtex urging its management to honour the rights of labour, in particular the right to freedom of association, and insisted that local labour laws be implemented. LBL's communication contained mild threats in the form of references to the increasing preference of Western buyers for garments produced in companies that respect labour rights and implement labour laws. However, Camtex dismissed the allegations and claimed to comply with Indian laws as well as global labour standards, as required by their Western customers.

In February 2005, a local newspaper, the *Dhina Thandhi* (Daily News) published an article in which the directors of Camtex criticised CCC and its local NGO partner SAVE for "driving jobs out of Tiruppur." CCC responded vigorously and warned Camtex that Western buyers, under increased consumer awareness, seek to source from socially responsible suppliers and are increasingly intolerant of the violation of labour laws by supply companies. In the meanwhile the Paris branch of CCC had contacted the French buyer informing them of their supplier's activities and requesting them to support the reinstatement of the dismissed workers. There seems to have been no reaction from this buyer at all.

It was not until March 2005, however, that further developments took place. CCC Switzerland renewed its pressure on the Swiss retailer buying from Camtex: they asked the retailer to support the right of Tiruppur's labour to organise and urged them to take steps to help resolve the case. They urged the buyer not to "cut and run," i.e., not to simply move out of Camtex and Tiruppur and start sourcing elsewhere. With the encouragement of CCC, the CSR officer of the Swiss retailer instigated an enquiry into the case and carried out a special social audit in Camtex. The Swiss retailer proposed opening a dialogue to mediate between SAVE, the MDMK union and Camtex in order to find a solution for the dismissed workers. They seemed willing to help to solve the dispute, while retaining existing supplier relations with Camtex. However, not much came of these intentions and no direct mediation took place. The Swiss retailer withdrew in the end and suggested that new employment be found for the dismissed workers in the units of some of their other suppliers in Tiruppur. The unions, however, rejected this solution wholeheartedly, considering it a travesty of workers' rights. While apparently willing to intervene, this buyer's actions in terms of a special audit and a proposed mediation exercise contributed little to solve the dispute and did not even begin to address the more structural power struggles between labour and capital at the heart of Tiruppur's industrial world.

By the time I interviewed Anandkumar at the end of 2005, he was pretty disappointed by the whole case and in particular by the zero impact of "outside" interventions in the dispute. While initially keen to mobilise a wider network of global activists, Anandkumar seemed to have lost faith in the potential role of NGOs and international buyers in supporting a local cause. His final assessment of the case is informative. "The CCC is okay," he concludes, "but in the end they aren't doing much here and they can't do much here. The buyers too won't listen [to our concerns] as they ultimately need the business. ... In the end it is only at the ground level that we can do something, not from abroad."

This "ground level" work includes the activism and mutual co-operation of the local trade unions as well as the role of the local court. He emphasised that while he had taken the lead in pursuing this dispute, the other unions had given him their support throughout and joined in the actions and demonstrations that he initiated. "In the end," Anandkumar explains,

> The FWF visit didn't have any impact. Ultimately, however, it was the court that spoke in favour of the workers and the unions. This itself is proof that we were right. The court finally ordered Camtex to reinstate the dismissed workers, but of course none of them wanted to go back there...

In fact, after Diwali 2005, a festival time when garment workers receive their annual bonus, most of Camtex workers left the company. Since then Camtex is said to have been recruiting labour from villages further away from Tiruppur, a strategy which is today increasingly used by large export companies in an attempt to find labour untainted by trade union ideology and activism.

TAKING IT UP FOR LABOUR: STATE, TRADE UNIONS, NGOS OR CORPORATIONS?

The above case study raises an immediate question: to what extent is the case of Tiruppur representative of contemporary labour politics in subcontracted industries across the globe? I believe that while the labour struggles described here may have different outcomes in different contexts, they are certainly not unique to Tiruppur. As I write this conclusion in May 2007, the City Civil Court in Bangalore just extended a restraining order, effectively forbidding trade unions and labour organisations from speaking out on labour rights violations in Bangalore-based garment factories. Sustained international activist pressure on the town's garment manufacturers to lift the ban and enter a dialogue with local stakeholders has been less than successful so far.

Furthermore, the study reveals an increasingly typical attitude of the state under economic liberalisation. India has not yet ratified the core ILO conventions on freedom of association (No. 87) and on collective bargaining (No. 98), with severe implications for workers' rights of organisation and freedom of expression. A recent report by the International Trade Union Confederation on core labour standards in India concludes that although Indian workers have the right to organise and to collective bargaining,

> (E)mployers are not obliged to recognise a union or to enter into collective bargaining, and high representation levels are required to form a union. … The right to strike is restricted through prior notice and the Essential Services Maintenance Act. Current proposals for amendments to the labour legislation would further restrict trade union rights. There has been an increase in contract labour, and there is a general repression of freedom of association, varying from state to state, which has included police violence (ITUC, 2007, p. 6).

A recent amendment to the Trade Union Act of 1926, has made union formation more challenging by stating that "a trade union has to represent at least 100 workers or 10 percent of the workforce, whichever is less, compared to a minimum of seven workers previously" (*ibid.*, p. 3). Current proposals to amend labour laws largely aim to make labour more flexible by facilitating contract labour arrangements and by making special economic zones exempt from usual labour legislation (*ibid.*, pp. 4, 5). Both the Tiruppur and Bangalore court rulings restricting the right to strike and speak out about labour rights violations are further witness to this general threat to the right of association. In areas such as the EPZs in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, where trade unions are legally banned and normal labour legislation does not apply, labour rights are even more easily violated.

This attitude towards labour is typical of states that are complicit in what Chopra has termed the establishing of "neo-liberalism as *doxa*" (Chopra, 2003, p. 421). Chopra argues that neo-liberalism has established itself in India "as a *doxa* – an unquestionable orthodoxy that operates as if it were the objective truth – across social space in its entirety" (*ibid.*, p. 421), from the individual to social groups to the state. What Chopra, drawing on Bourdieu, essentially posits is that neo-liberalism as a political programme has become so pervasive in India that it has been internalised as an unquestionable truth by both individuals and groups within society. Neo-liberalism is what globalisation essentially stands for in the subcontinent.

Moreover, the Indian state, in its attempt to ensure competitiveness in a global economy, has been central to the reification of neo-liberalism, as a dominant discourse and a worldview that not only depicts globalisation and liberalisation as self-evidently positive transformations, but that also presents itself as a "dehistoricized and desocialized" programme (*ibid.*, p. 423; Bourdieu, 1998, p. 95). By relaxing labour laws and supporting foreign currency-earning businesses, the state effectively consolidates neo-liberalism as the basis of its engagement with citizens. The main consequence of this is the withdrawal of the state as welfare agent, the rapid rise of a group of successful entrepreneurs and industrialists, and the fall of labour from the political agenda.

Given the complicity of the state in the production of this neo-liberal political order and the decline of labour's traditional representation in the form of trade unions, who else is left to represent labour? Wills and Hale (2005), and others such as Eade (2004), suggest that the future of labour activism lies in the close collaboration of local union organisations with global NGO activism. Stakeholder collaboration is frequently presented as the way forward, and international NGOs are extremely pro-active in stimulating stakeholder interaction. While this approach cannot be critiqued on the grounds of principle or intention, and while international NGOs engage in formidable attempts to build bridges, their efforts in Tiruppur unfortunately seem to have yielded only limited results so far. The evidence I have presented here and comparative material from across garment production regions (Eade, 2004; Hale, 2000; Kaufman et al., 2004) suggest persistently weak linkages between local trade unions and international labour activists, even when pro-active trade unions reach out for international support in their localised disputes, as was the case in Tiruppur. What obstructs more constructive collaboration, I suggest, is on the one hand state repression of any criticism of the neo-liberal *doxa* and of any action that may obstruct the consolidation of this neo-liberal order, and on the other hand a lack of understanding (by both international activists and in academic scholarship on such activism) of the wider political economy of labour at the sites of struggle. This political economy includes the historically contingent and culturally located politics of labour representation, the internal competition between politically coloured unions, the antagonistic stance of unions towards NGOs and the immense power imbalances between industrial capital (exporters and factory owners) and labour (including unions and NGOs) in contemporary India.

In the light of abating union activism and state unwillingness to protect labour under the neo-liberal regime, the corporate sector has come to present itself as a major "carer" of the rights of workers in developing countries. The expressions of "corporate care" in the garment and textile industry predominantly take the form of company codes of conduct and global labour standards, through which western buyers and chain stores seek to improve the conditions of labour in the firms from which they source. There is considerable debate about the ability of such corporate regulations to bring about substantial change on the ground and to improve labour conditions in a lasting manner.

While codes and standards may contribute to the solving of technical issues affecting garment workers such as health and safety standards – by providing better lighting or sanitary facilities, for example – not all matters concerning labour are technical or can be reduced to technical problems for which practical solutions can be offered. Freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike, for example, are first and foremost political questions that are deeply embedded in the political economy and history of labour struggles, as discussed in the first part of this article. They are anything but technical problems for which technical solutions can be presented. However, company codes and labour standards usually consist of a fixed list of check points that place "freedom of association" and "non-discrimination," for example, at par with "health and safety" as issues of a similar nature, for which similar practical solutions are to be found. I suggest that by listing freedom of association alongside health and safety, and suggesting a company-based "workers committee" as a practical solution to labour's right to organise, codes and standards effectively seek to "de-politicise" labour rights by turning them into merely technical issues (Carswell, 2007; Barrientos & Smith, 2007; Ferguson, 1990). Solutions can then be quantified, monitored, audited and certified in systematic ways (see Dolan, this volume). This "technicalisation" of workers' rights and struggles not only denies their political content, but also de-historicises them (by obliterating their localised histories) and dis-embeds them (by ignoring their location within a political economy of power and inequality).

In this article I have argued for a reverse movement: the re-politicisation of the rights of garment workers in the era of economic liberalisation. This can only be done by locating garment workers within their historical and political context, and by unpacking the ever-changing processes of labour representation and activism. The outcome of such a critical focus is far from "technical." Rather, it points to the complex political and social processes underlying labour activism, and to the need for any actor involved with the rights of garment workers to take this complexity into full consideration.

NOTES

1. This article is based on field research carried out in Tiruppur in 2000 and in 2005–2006, totalling 7 months. The ethnographic research consisted of participant observation, and extended interviews with garment workers and their representatives, NGO activists, garment manufacturers and exporters, subcontractors and representatives of employer associations. In total, more than 150 interviews (both structured and unstructured) were conducted in Tiruppur. The material presented here derives predominantly from interviews with past and current leaders of Tiruppur's garment workers unions, trade union members, non-unionised garment workers, NGO activists, and employers. The names of all informants have been anonymised to protect their identity. Information was also obtained from the web, local newspapers, leaflets, brochures, statistics, and written documentation provided to me by informants and the Tiruppur branch of the Apparel Export Promotion Council.

2. SA 8000 (Social Accountability 8000) and WRAP (Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production) are currently the two most widespread global certified labour standards.

3. CPI, Communist Party of India; CPI(M), Communist Party of India (Marxist).

4. AITUC, All India Trade Union Congress, a national federation of trade unions, affiliated to the CPI. Local unions can affiliate themselves to one of the national trade union federations, see below and Note 5.

5. In 1970, the LPF, the union wing of the DMK party (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam or Dravidian Progressive Party) started its own garment workers union in Tiruppur and soon became an important player among the unions. This union enjoyed considerable support from the DMK party, especially during the long DMK rule in Tamil Nadu from 1967 till early 1980s. Yet, as Chari has pointed out, local links between DMK (union) leaders and industrialists also contributed to the weakening of union militancy in Tiruppur (Chari, 2004, p. 235). Today, the DMK union has about 3,000 garment worker members. In 1972, the DMK's rival party, the AIADMK (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) set up its own garment workers union in Tiruppur, the ATP, which currently counts 5,000 members. Finally, in 1991, the DMK itself split, and the new MDMK (Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) set up yet another garment workers union, the MLF, to which the DMK union lost many of its leaders and members, and which currently boasts a membership of 5,000.

6. In India, dearness allowance, commonly known as DA, is a variable allowance that is added to an employee's basic salary and based on the cost-of-living index. It aims to enable employees to meet the rising cost of essential commodities.

7. All names are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the companies and workers.

8. The Tiruppur Wage Settlement is a wage agreement between employers, unions and labour officers that fixes the payment rates, allowances and wage increases for garment workers for a 3-year period.

9. The RSS is a conservative right-wing nationalist organization in India.

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NGO CAMPAIGNS AND BANKS: CONSTITUTING RISK AND UNCERTAINTY

Rebecca Lawrence

ABSTRACT

This chapter analyses the private financial sector's policy responses, lending practices and various forms of engagement with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), communities and institutional clients involved in controversial commodity industries. The chapter demonstrates that secrecy plays a constitutive role in this engagement. For investment banks, client-confidentiality is the ultimate limit to transparency. At the same time, NGOs campaign to make public and reveal links between investment banks and clients in commodity industries. The chapter also explores techniques within the financial sector for the assessment of social and environmental risk. The chapter argues that these techniques combine both practices of uncertainty and practices of risk. For civil society organisations, NGOs and local communities, these techniques remain problematic, and various campaigns question both the robustness of the financial sector's social risk screening methods as well as the sustainability of the investments themselves.

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> If you're the proponent of a project it's one thing. But if you're one step removed as the financier, how do you ensure that social risks are being managed? (ANZ Representative, Interview, 2007)

This chapter discusses the novel ways in which global investment banks are governing environmental and social risks in the context of a new emphasis on sustainability. Traditionally, the assessment of risk, through what the finance sector calls *due diligence*, has focussed on the *financial* or credit risk of clients, projects and financial services. Increasingly, however, the financial sector is expected to engage clients outside the traditional realm of finance to include questions of environmental sustainability, stakeholder engagement, Indigenous peoples' rights and human rights. While these so-called non-financial risks, or externalities, were once considered *external* to the market and beyond the realm of finance, they are now apparently of central concern to major investment banks. As such they are to be identified through 'social and environmental due diligence' and managed through 'social and environmental risk management' systems. The investigation and management of risk is thus seemingly ever-expanding, and now also to include the potential down-stream impacts of financial deals and services on the environment and society.

In this chapter, I explore the constitution of environmental and social risk through the interaction between banks and those non-governmental organisations (NGOs) mobilising campaigns against banks. NGO campaigns against the financial industry's involvement with controversial clients in commodity industries, and the financing of controversial resource development projects, are numerous, and have had a considerable impact on the way in which banks respond to environmental and social issues. We might say that dialogue between banks and NGOs, and the attention on social and environmental issues (traditionally considered peripheral or extraneous to the market), reveals the negotiable and contested nature of the boundaries of markets (Barry & Slater, 2005, p. 6; Callon, 1998). In this chapter, I explore two aspects of the relationship between banks and NGOs: expertise and secrecy. The first concerns *practices of expertise* or techniques for the assessment of social and environmental risk. I argue that techniques within the financial sector for the assessment of social and environmental risk combine both practices of uncertainty and risk. Rule of thumb, gut-feeling, instinct and intuitive judgement remain as much a part of assessment procedures as do 'calculative' techniques that involve matrices, risk categorisation and so forth. But for civil society organisations, NGOs and local communities, the expertise of banks remains problematic, and various NGO campaigns question both the robustness of the financial sector's 'social risk screening methods' as well as the sustainability of the investments themselves. The second aspect of this relationship concerns practices of secrecy. Here, I argue that dialogue between NGOs and banks is, to a large extent, constituted by a relationship based on secrecy. For banks, client-confidentiality is the ultimate limit to transparency. In dialogues with NGOs banks claim they can neither confirm nor deny current or historic client relationships. At the same time, NGOs campaign to make public and reveal the links between banks and clients in controversial commodity industries.

The broad aim of this chapter is not to claim that the world in which we live is constituted by increasing risk *or* increasing uncertainty, as mainstream sociologists such as Beck (1992) have done. Instead, the chapter seeks to explore the various configurations of risk and uncertainty (O'Malley, 2004) that are emerging as banks try to tackle the environmental and social impacts of their investments and financial services. The chapter explores the overlaps between what is *thought* to be calculable and what is *thought* to be incalculable. In short, it looks at *how* social and environmental risk is governed both through technologies of risk and the government of uncertainty and explores how '…technical work is much more an untidy, practical, uncertain and collective business than is often imagined' (Barry, 2001, p. 5). How is knowledge about social and environmental issues produced through assemblages that combine apparently rational calculative models with more marginal ways of knowing such as intuition, gut-feeling and rule-of-thumb?

Take, for example a bank client proposing a mine in a region with weak governance, or close proximity to an Indigenous community dependent upon local ecosystems for traditional land-use practices. Or, a client with forestry operations in tropical rainforests, which procures timber from non-Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)[1] certified forests, and is accused of unjust acquisition of lands from Indigneous people. In undertaking 'social and environmental due diligence', what questions should bank representatives ask of such a client seeking project finance, corporate loans, underwritings or other financial services? 'Who makes the call on how a project is impacting on indigenous people'? (ANZ Representative, Interview, 2007.) 'How do staff working in bank branches know what kinds of questions to ask'? (Greenpeace Representative, Interview 2006.) How do they ensure that clients do not simply present a 'best case scenario' of their operations? (ACF[2] Representative, Interview 2007; ANZ Representative, Interview, 2007.). And, how do bankers manage delicate client relationships at the same time ensuring that proper due diligence is undertaken and all risks are assessed?

In short, from their decision-making chairs in London, New York, Sydney and elsewhere, bankers are rethinking how they can assess and manage the impacts of natural resource developments in resource peripheries. This poses a considerable challenge as banks deal with complex issues concerning human rights and environmental controversies in regions far from global financial centres (HSBC Representative A, Interview, 2007). In tackling these issues, banks are experimenting with new ways of assessing the potential social and environmental impacts of the activities of their clients. Here, as in other sectors, we are witness to a phenomenon where business is increasingly governed at a distance through 'ethical assemblages'. These assemblages 'define new material, collective and discursive relationships' (Collier & Ong, 2005, p. 4) by combining discourses bound-up in the protests and campaigns of communities and NGOs with techniques of audit and risk (Larner & Walters, 2004, p. 14).

The current focus on sustainability within the investment banking sector is thus not an industry initiative conceived in the vacuum of the boardroom or in the corridors of investment banks in London or New York. Nor does it indicate a corporate absorption of moral philosophy, as some corporate social responsibility (CSR) gurus would have us believe.[3] Rather, it should be seen as a part of a broader discourse of 'corporate responsibility', formed through the grassroots critiques of corporations by NGOs and local communities – that banks are responsible for the ethical conduct of their clients and responsible for the impacts of providing financial services to resource development industries – and the intersection of these critiques with some rather novel and inventive corporate responses.

THE INVESTIGATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS

This chapter focuses on the activities and policies of four global investment banks that have been the target of NGO campaigns.[4] All four banks are signatories of the Equator Principles,[5] now a recognised industry code of conduct for the social and environmental assessment of project finance deals (Wright & Rwabizambuga, 2006). The research has included in-depth interviews with key people in public relations, sustainability and risk management at the head offices of four major global investment banks – ANZ, HSBC, Barclays and Citigroup – and with NGOs including Greenpeace, BankTrack, Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) (2007) and Forest Peoples Programme (FPP). The research has also included attendance at various corporate conferences,[6] where informal discussions have taken place with corporate and NGO representatives.

The research began with ANZ, an Australian investment bank with considerable markets in the Asia-Pacific region. ANZ has several 'thorns in its side' (ANZ Representative, Interview, 2006), two of which concern NGO campaigns that have targeted and implicated ANZ in debates over forestry in Tasmania, Australia and in Papua New Guinea (PNG). In the first instance the Wilderness Society and Rainforest Action Network have mobilised protests at the ANZ financing of the forestry corporation *Gunns Ltd*. in Tasmania. In the second case, a coalition of Australian and PNG-based NGOs have mobilised a campaign against ANZ's financial involvement with the Malaysian logging company *Rimbunan Hijau* and their allegedly unsustainable logging practices and human rights abuses in PNG.[7] While ANZ has argued that it 'has no capacity to direct or control RH [Rimbunan Hijau] operational decisions' (ANZ letter to OECD contact point, 12 September 2007) NGOs have seen ANZ as directly imbricated in the resource conflicts. In August of 2006 the ACF and other NGOs lodged a 'specific instance' (i.e. filed a complaint) with the Australian National Contact Point for OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises concerning ANZ's involvement with Rimbunan Hijau. When the OECD specific instance was dismissed in early 2007, the AFC mobilised more public forms of campaigning. This has included interviewing ANZ retail customers who have concerns over ANZ's provision of financial services to Rimbunan Hijau, and posting the clips on YouTube[8] (ACF Representative, Interview 2007). ANZ has also received critique from BankTrack, a global network of NGOs monitoring and campaigning on commercial banks, for its financing of the Lafayette Mine on Rapu Rapu Island, and the Nam Thuen 2 Hydropower project in Laos (BankTrack, ANZ Bank Profile, 2007).

The second bank included in this research, HSBC, has received considerable critique during the research process from NGOs (and Socially Responsible Investors) for its involvement in the public listing (Initial Public Offer) of *Samling* on the Hong Kong stock exchange (Dueck, 2007). Samling is a Malaysian logging company allegedly involved in serious human rights abuses and unsustainable logging practices (correspondence between FPP and HSBC, 22 February 2007). Prior to this, Friends of the Earth have also critiqued HSBC for financing 'companies destroying rainforests in Indonesia and oil companies linked to human rights atrocities in Sudan' and backing the controversial Three Gorges Dam in China (Friends of the Earth, 2003). HSBC, like ANZ, has also come under critique from Greenpeace for being a principle financier to Rimbunan Hijau (Greenpeace Representative, Interview, 2006).

The most notorious NGO campaign thus far, however, was co-ordinated by Rainforest Action Network (RAN) against Citigroup, the third bank included in this research. Among other strategies, RAN took to university campuses in the US in the early part of this century and encouraged students to cut up their Citigroup credit cards in protest against the bank's alleged financing of forest destruction (Citigroup Representative, Interview, 2007). Since then Citigroup has also received similar critique from NGOs for its financing of the controversial BTC pipeline.

The fourth bank, Barclays, has been targeted by NGOs for its financing of a gas pipeline between Thailand and Malaysia, allegedly 'beset by human rights abuses' (Friends of the Earth, 2005). In its defence, Barclays has emphasised that the 'Trans Thai Malaysia project due diligence and impact assessment work predated the Equator Principles launch in 2003' (Barclays Representative A, Email Correspondence, 14 September 2007). Barclays has also been targeted by Friends of the Earth and local communities for providing advice on the financing of the Omkareshwar dam in India and for providing a corporate loan to the National Hydropower Power Corporation, responsible for building the dam (Friends of the Earth, 2004). In both these cases local community representatives were flown to London by NGOs and met with Barclays to discuss the environmental issues and human rights abuses associated with the projects (Ethical Corporation, 2004).

During the research process, gaining access and meeting with key people in sustainability and CSR divisions in the world's largest global investment banks was not difficult per se. This may be partly attributable to a desire by the banks to 'provide the other side of the story'. Perhaps there is also a sense in which CSR and sustainability representatives of banks are positively *obliged* to make themselves available and accessible to researchers, in order to demonstrate a level of transparency and accountability, and a willingness to be tested on those things. But gaining access to key people does not necessarily mean access to information. The frankness and openness with which people at the banks spoke to me varied greatly. Some focussed on explaining bank policies, procedures and committee structures (which were otherwise publicly available on the internet), some presented the organisation as in a process of learning, but were unable to say exactly how challenges were specifically being addressed and one bank interview in particular was quite frank and open. In this instance detailed conversations with clients and NGOs were recalled and internal challenges within the bank received critical reflection.

In general, several factors seemed to limit bank representatives' willingness (or possibility) to be entirely frank. Firstly, a commercial interest to protect the banks internal knowledge, systems and procedures. It was unlikely that any bank would willingly reveal its internal sustainability training module for bankers or reveal a full and detailed Environmental and Social Risk Management (ESRM) system to a researcher (a researcher who was also speaking to 'competitors'); there is value in protecting internal knowledge and capacity.[9] Secondly, the traditional public relations concern to present the organisation as coherent whole, without internal conflict. Yet, as we know, '[d]espite a shared governing ethos, many organizations experience, at the same time, entrenched factional 'warfare' between constituent parts' (Gellner & Hirsch, 2001, p. 4). Banks are no more a homogenous entity than any other kind of organisation. They face geo-political challenges in rolling policies out to regional offices, and face internal challenges across divisions within head offices. Indications of this became apparent in the opaque references made by most sustainability managers of the need to come to credit risk teams with suggestions for mitigation, rather than simply vetoing the financing of a project or client. For by rejecting a project as unsustainable the sustainability team risks being ignored: 'we are not necessarily about saying no to particular projects; it is about persuading the client to be sustainable. If we go the credit team and say 'don't finance this' they may not listen. We need to come with suggestions for how to improve the project through mitigation or conditional measures, along the lines of the Equator Principles for example' (HSBC Representative A, Interview, 2007). The solution to this problem has, in part, been an attempt to mainstream sustainability. One advisor recalled how in thinking about how to set up the management of sustainability in the bank he specifically avoided setting up a specialist advisory team for fear that it would 'become a loop in the organization that is often bypassed by credit teams' (HSBC Informant B, Interview, 2007). Yet while tension between constituent parts of the organisation was acknowledged in terms of how it was *avoided*, little detail was given throughout formal interviews in terms of how conflict permeated the sustainability mainstreaming process per se. One banking representative, not included in the formal research interview process, confided during a lunch that a major challenge for their sustainability division concerned internal resistance by client managers to the questions that the sustainability division requested they ask of particular clients. For client mangers, asking difficult questions about environmental and social issues was apparently seen to undermine a positive client relationship.

The third factor, related to the above point, was the question of client-confidentiality. A company is 'potentially a highly sensitive and litigious organization' (Chapman, 2001, p. 31) and client confidentiality is of paramount concern in both the UK and the US. HSBC, Barclays and Citigroup thus all strictly avoided mentioning instances of specific client transactions (both present and historical) during interviews. In one case, where the relationship between a bank and client had been made public through an NGO campaign and since terminated by the bank, I was directed to 'the public sphere' (i.e. the Internet) for details. I was advised that considerable information could be found by 'Googling' several suggested key search words, which included the name of a controversial company and the bank in question. While unable to publicly state that the bank had terminated the relationship with the client (apparently for reasons of client confidentiality), my informant was keen for me to understand that, in this case, the bank 'had done the right thing'. This, and other 'public secrets', remained secret insofar as details were never discussed, but throughout interviews hypotheticals were often used as code for clients and campaigns known to both interviewee and interviewer. A code of 'at other banks' was also often used to describe challenges commonly faced within the sector, without admitting the bank's own weaknesses.

During the research process it became apparent that one sensitive issue for banks is the circulation of draft sector policies, and the release of complete and final versions for the public and stakeholders. Sector policies provide exclusions and guidelines for bankers in various commodity industries. Most major investment banks either already have, or are in the process of developing, separate sector policies for mining and forestry. Several issues are noteworthy here. Not all NGOs are invited to participate in dialogues concerning the development of these policies. Apparently trust is an issue here, as one HSBC representative remarked: 'we need to be careful about who we circulate drafts to. We trust WWF' (HSBC, Representative A, Interview, 2007). Indeed, WWF seems to be the NGO of choice. Greenpeace, an arguably less 'corporate-friendly' NGO, while active in sending information to all of the banks, has been permitted to comment on Barclays forestry policy, but not on HSBC's or Citigroup's (Greenpeace Representative, Interview, 2007). Some NGOs critique banks for selecting which NGOs to include: 'banks tend to cherry-pick who they share their forestry policies with, but it is self-defeating. If you are open with your policy initially you are going to be able to deflect a lot of the criticisms' (FPP, Representative, Interview, 2007).

BankTrack has 'in some instances been a part of draft policy discussions. And then we sign a confidentiality agreement. If you want to have a serious open discussion you have to do that, you have to play the game'

(BankTrack Representative, Interview, 2007). In short, to produce the kind of open forum required for debate, the process of that debate itself needs to remain closed. But, if that space is occasionally opened to (some) privileged NGOs, it remains closed for many of the local communities who are affected by commodity industries. As the same BankTrack representative remarked:

> In the case of the Rapu Rapu mine – the mining policy itself is not public. We have seen it, I have seen the policy. But it's not available to the communities. So the bank [ABN Amro] says everything is OK because this is in-line with our mining policy, but the community can't hold the bank accountable because they haven't seen the policy themselves. (BankTrack Representative, Interview, 2007)

Throughout the research process I too became curious to see the banks' sector policies for the mining and forestry industries. This investigative research process ironically placed me in the position of 'participant–observer' (Riles, 2006, p. 94) as I encountered similar challenges as those NGOs seeking to 'test' the transparency of the banks' policies. At Barclays, I was told: 'We provide them [sector policies] on request' (Barclays Representative A, Interview, 2007), and upon formal request was provided with a copy of Barclays' complete forestry policy. At HSBC, the bank was 'happy to discuss some of the finer detail in private meetings, but prefer[ed] to restrict circulation of the internal policies themselves' (email correspondence HSBC Representative A, 14 June 2007) and thus denied access to the full HSBC policy.[10] Moreover, sector policies were argued by HSBC to be 'so detailed and intended for internal use' (HSBC Representative A, Interview, 2007). Indeed, Greenpeace, having seen Barclay's forestry policy, argued that both stakeholders and bank staff had little chance of understanding the policy: 'The Barclays policy is very detailed, and it is highly unclear how bank managers will understand it in order to enforce it. [It is] [w]ritten by experts for experts' (Greenpeace Representative, email correspondence, 26 February 2007). Barclays, however, saw that their forestry policy was 'detailed but [...]supported by a central advisory team which is accessible to lending managers for advice and guidance' (Barclays Representative A, Email Correspondence, 14 September 2007).

At Citigroup, while one representative argued to 'believe very strongly in transparency' he also conceded that sector policies were kept internal and that 'a lot of it has to do with competition [between the banks]' (Citigroup Representative, Interview, 2007). Citigroup has, for example made a three page forestry policy available on the internet, which it refers to as 'the full version'. Yet at the same time the bank has 'a lot of guidance material that is internal/for our bankers only, and this is not publicly available'

(Citigroup Representative, personal email correspondence, 28 March 2008). In the case of ANZ, where the complete draft forestry policy has been published on the internet, NGOs continue to question the transparency of the draft policy *process*: 'It's great that they [ANZ] have got it [the forestry policy] up there [on the net]. But it's quasi-transparent. They've said they'll report and publish all the comments they've received on the draft but I wonder whether ANZ will include the full detail of the lobbying they have received' (ACF Representative, Interview, 2007). Here, politics is seen to interfere with a genuine demonstration of transparency.

For organisations committed to principles of CSR, transparency is the demonstration of visibility. Yet in having to *demonstrate* transparency, corporations implicitly acknowledge the opposite: the demonstration of visibility and act of revealing also assumes mistrust that some things are not yet visible, and are still to be revealed. NGOs are also engaged in this game; their fact-finding missions aim to uncover what is kept from view (Barry, 2006, p. 6). They put a corporation's commitment to transparency to the test: 'If the assumption is that much of what is invisible is what is simply *not yet made* visible, then there will always be more to learn about the organisation, further realities to uncover' (Strathern, 2000, p. 312, original emphasis). The implicit promise of transparency thus incites a seductive desire to test that commitment, both for NGOs and as a researcher.

EMERGING SPACES OF DIALOGUE

While engagement between NGOs and public finance institutions, or multilateral finance agencies, such as the IFC and the World Bank, has received considerable coverage in the academic literature (see Fox & Brown, 1998; O'Brien, Goetz, Scholte, & Williams, 2000 for just two examples) relatively little research has been undertaken on NGO campaigns that focus on private financial institutions (see Wright & Rwabizambuga, 2006 for one such example). This may be partly due to the fact that the engagement between NGOs and private financial institutions is a relatively new phenomenon, which took-off in the mid–late 1990s, and seemed to reach a peak in the beginning of this century. But as private financial institutions are moving into new geographical territories in less developed parts of the world (known in the industry as 'emerging markets') they are increasingly becoming the target of NGO campaigns. While I do not have the space to discuss the issue in any depth in this chapter, there are considerable parallels between the NGO campaigns emerging against the private financial sector, and the kinds of NGO claims that were made on public multilateral finance institutions such as the World Bank, IFC, Asian Development Bank and Inter-American Development Bank during the 1980s and 1990s.[11] There are parallels also in the frameworks being developed in response to such campaigns. The Equator Principles, for example designed as a framework for the assessment of the social and environmental risk of project finance deals, were developed by private financial institutions off the back of IFC guidelines for social and environmental assessment. The principles were themselves developed in close consultation with the IFC. Most of the banking representatives interviewed in this research process either personally know one another, have heard of one another, and some have previously worked at the IFC together. And, as one NGO representative commented, those from the NGO sector working on private finance campaigns often have a history with public finance campaigns:

> If you look closer you will see many of the same people involved… The PFI [private financial institution] campaigns [are] built on experiences and assessments of public bank campaigning by some campaigners who realised that they structurally overlooked the role of PFIs in dodgy deals. This was in the making around 2000–2001 and BankTrack is a direct result of these internal evaluations by NGOs. (BankTrack Representative, personal email correspondence, 24 September 2007)

However, differences are seen to exist between the public and private finance sector. As one NGO representative pointed out 'there's a difference in the expectations of transparency between private finance institutions and multilateral finance agencies. Multilaterals have to demonstrate their transparency; they have to be accountable.' Private finance institutions, on the other hand, are not required to demonstrate 'transparency' (FPP Representative, Interview, 2007). Furthermore, whereas the IFC and World Bank have a 'development' mandate that prioritises environmental and social sustainability, poverty reduction and so forth, private financial institutions are argued to be accountable only to their shareholders (FPP Representative, Interview, 2007).

So, why then should banks concern themselves at all with NGO campaigns and the deeper issues of social and environmental justice such campaigns claim to highlight? Explanations range from reputational risk – sustained NGO campaigns will affect bank profits – to a business case – that long-term environmental and social sustainability equals long-term financial sustainability. The business case 'asserts the happy coincidence of economic imperative and moral injunction – the convergence of economic value and ethical values' (Rajak, this volume). Here, corporations can claim to 'make money off doing good' (Citigroup, Representative, Interview, 2007). For banks, this has implied some shift from a discourse of risk to one of 'opportunity' (ANZ Representative, Interview, 2006; HSBC Representative B, 2007). The business case, with its moral underpinnings, is, however, 'at odds with a Kantian tradition in business ethics that regards self interest and moral action as inherently at odds' (Blowfield, 2005, p. 177). As Blowfield further argues, 'It also represents a significant shift from the view (dominant in post-Great Depression government policy in much of the developed and post-colonial world) that business cannot be relied upon to behave ethically, and must therefore be subjected to a variety of external regulations and surcharges'. Tempting as it may be to interrogate the real moral commitment corporations have towards environmental and social sustainability, I want to leave aside the desire to question what actually motivates banks. As Osborne has argued, the contemporary concern with corporate ethics has very little to do with moral philosophy, and more to do with the *visibility* of ethical conduct (Osborne cited in Barry, 2004, p. 196). And, as a part of making visible their ethical conduct, banks are developing new forms of expertise to assess the social and environmental risks of their activities.

RISK, UNCERTAINTY AND EXPERTISE

> …there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don't know we don't know….It is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones. (Rumsfeld, 2002)

While Rumsfeld's quote won a foot in mouth award,[12] and has in many instances been dismissed as tautological, it highlights well the common distinction made between risk and uncertainty. Here, risk – the *known* knowns and *known* unknowns – is separated from uncertainty – the *unknown* unknowns. Rumsfeld's quote also points to a common discomfort expressed around 'uncertainty'. The *known* knowns and *known* unknowns can be measured and managed as risks. The *unknown* unknowns, on the other hand, are 'the difficult ones', considered difficult to measure and manage. Here, uncertain techniques, such as rule of thumb, professional judgement and case by case scenarious are employed, where risk calculation cannot be. Uncertainty is thus 'given a rather negative value, for it is made to appear as the poor cousin of risk calculation' (O'Malley, 2004, p. 3).

Yet as Holmes and Marcus have shown, in their study of the use 'anecdotal data' by the Federal Reserve Board for its assessment of the US economy, practices of uncertainty permeate even the seemingly most calculable and technical spheres. In their study Holmes and Marcus refer to the chairman's reliance on 'his 'intuition,' his 'instinct,' his 'feel' about what was 'really' happening in the U.S. economy' (2006, p. 39). Similarly, the assessment of social risks also includes practices of uncertainty. Here, professional judgement (Barclays Representatives A & B, Interviews, 2007) case-by-base decisions (ANZ Representative, Interview, 2007), rule of thumb and 'gut-feelings' (HSBC Representative B, Interview, 2007) are recognised by banks as methods that remain connected to the assessment of risk. But when faced with the suggestion by this researcher that such methods were 'integral' HSBC responded that:

> Subjective judgment based on experience forms part of our thinking but not all of it by any means. We are constantly using and researching new criteria to ensure that our assessment of both social and environmental risk is as objective, accurate and consistent as possible. This is much the same way as banks have developed their approach to other areas of risk management over the years. (HSBC Representative A, personal email correspondence, 19 October 2007)

Thus while uncertain techniques are certainly valued by bankers, the view does exist by some that they will eventually be replaced by more 'technical' forms of risk assessment. The aim here for banks, in constituting social risk, is to make it a manageable, technical field. This is done in various ways and may include sustainability matrices, human rights matrices,[13] due diligence procedures that include environmental and social impact assessments and monitoring reports, and risk analyses that categorise project along a continuum of environmental and social risk. This vision of a teleological progression was explained by one banking representative thus:

> I think you can say that credit risk originally used to rely a lot on judgement calls. But it wasn't really a judgement call, because people applied different pieces of logic to the decision.... It was a way of compartmentalising risk. Then people had computers and you were able to analyse where things went wrong. You could put codes in for particular activities... you were taking away the subjectivity [of the decision]. You can still get it wrong, but you're less likely to statistically. (HSBC Representative A, Interview, 2007)

Within this common narrative, since environmental issues have now been 'successfully' included in the risk assessment process – an inclusion based on the accumulation of experience and so-called statistical probability – the next step for banks is to solve the problem of how to include social issues into models of statistical probability. Arguments about replacing subjectivity with science and intuition with neutrality were also present during the inter-war period in the UK, as Peter Miller has shown in his study of the debate concerning net present value calculations in investment evaluation (Miller, 2004, p. 184). Similar problematisations are apparent in the calculation of social issues:

> …to start with, you don't know what the social risks are. You don't know what kinds of questions to ask… there are differences between social and environmental issues. Environmental pollution is covered by the IFC, the World Health Organisation – WHO has regulations stipulating the maximum allowable amount of pollution into a river for example. Have we got those standards on social issues? (HSBC Representative A, Interview, 2007)

A plethora of business codes and standards have, however, been developed to deal with the social impacts of the activities of multinational corporations. This includes the Equator Principles (a financial industry initiative and specific to private finance), the Business Leaders for Human Rights Initiative, the Draft UN Human Rights Norms for Business and the Global Compact, among many others. NGOs also challenge banks to take regard to existing international human rights covenants and declarations such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, ILO 169, NGO sector standards such as the Framework for Responsible Mining and the principle of Free Prior Informed Consent (BankTrack, 2007). In an attempt to tackle the emerging demands by NGOs and communities Barclays has been actively involved in the Business Leaders for Human Rights Initiative: 'In 2003 questions were being asked by NGOs and communities using a language we didn't recognise. The issue has been getting to grips with that' (Barclays Representative A, Interview, 2007). And indeed, 'getting to grips' with complex issues such as community consent to projects raise what banks see to be difficult questions of definition, calculation and evidence:

> NGOs are always referring to the Free Prior Informed Consent of local communities or Indigenous peoples. But how do you measure consent? We talk about consultation – Free Prior Informed Consultation – because consent might mean different things for different communities. Does consent mean that the chiefs of a community get together and agree? Does it mean that 80% of the community agrees? Banks say – what do you mean by consent? On the case of indigenous people, NGOs will say these indigenous people have not consented, but if you have one group of the community wanting to advance their living standards, whether that be through employment or the trappings of modern life…a few may want to stay as they are. It is impossible sitting on a chair in London to say. If NGOs are coming to us saying the community is against a project we try to find *evidence* where we can, it is an investigative process. It's not that easy. (HSBC Representative A, Interview, 2007)

The extent to which a community has been properly consulted (or not) features significantly in debates between banks and NGOs. One particular project on which ANZ has received considerable critique for its client's poor-management of community relations concerned this very issue, as the ANZ sustainability director described: 'The thing with [project X] was that it was predicted. When the due diligence was done it was done very well. They had an independent technical consultant do the due diligence and *one* thing was flagged: they thought there was inadequate community consultation. But no-one understood what that meant. And so a few environmental incidents occurred – not major – a few spills and that kind of thing. The environmental problems have been small, but they have acted as triggers for community issues to boil over… They have 'rio-tintoed' the mine. They have over-engineered it. They have over-engineered tailings dams and treated the problems as technical problems because they are engineers, when really the problems have been social ones; the real challenges have been the community relations' (ANZ Representative, Interview, 2007). But this view was disputed by BankTrack. For them the issue was not primarily one of expertise, but recognising that the mine was not socially acceptable for the local community: 'the problem wasn't lack of community consultation, although that is true too, but failing/refusing to accept the conclusion that even a miserable consultation produced: people did not want the mine on their island'. (BankTrack Representative, personal email correspondence, 24 September 2007).

Whereas multilateral finance agencies such as the World Bank have considerable in-house social science and environmental expertise, private financial institutions generally outsource social and environmental risk assessments.[14] Both NGOs and banks acknowledge that the outsourcing of risk expertise is itself a risk. The same ANZ representative reflected upon the bank's involvement in another controversial project: '[that project has] been on our books for years. And when I went back through that I asked people how they had made that decision to finance. And people said 'the World Bank said it was okay'. And so the question is if a bank can actually outsource its risk management to a third party? That the World Bank had okayed it gave us some comfort. But what is *our* framework for making that decision'? This 'uncertainty' surrounding social issues seems to be a common issue for other banks too:

> (T)here is a distinction between environmental and social risks, let me take the example of a power plant. It is scientifically proven that pollution abatement equipment will reduce emissions… however when dealing with social issues there is less certainty that mitigating actions will work. If you hire a team of consultants-to look at compensation, grievance procedures, making sure the local community has access to the benefits – you can never say that there will not be an issue. You are dealing with human beings… . (Barclays Representative B, Interview, 2007)

And as one HSBC representative remarked:

> (S)ocial issues are not the easiest to manage. If relationship managers are managing a client in the forestry sector, there are no standards for social risk. There is no certification process for human rights abuses the way the FCS exists for forestry. We can have reporting on human rights abuses by security personal on a mining site, but there are no certification processes. (HSBC, Representative B, Interview, 2007)

In response to this apparent dilemma, banks are themselves busy creating CSR divisions, knowledge and talent is being head-hunted both from within financial organisations themselves and NGOs, 'environmental champions' are being nominated at regional offices (Barclays Representative B, 2007; Citigroup Representative A, personal email correspondence, 23 October 2007), and bankers themselves are being trained in environmental and social risk assessment procedures, as banks aspire to 'mainstream sustainability'[15] through developing internal Environmental and Social Risk Management Systems (ESRM).

Within ESRM clients and financial deals are categorised along a risk continuum through the assessment of social and environmental risk factors. The aim here is to improve upon 'uncertain' prognoses techniques used by bankers; to 'take it out of the sphere of guesswork' (ANZ Representative, 2007), to train bankers in social risk assessment and to give them processes to follow. Bottom lines on sector industries (HSBC Representative B, 2007) and ESRM policies and procedures attempt to govern risk and 'seek to make objective, standardised and exact predictions to replace subjective expectations based on such non-quantitative modes of calculation as rules of thumb, experience, foresight, estimation and professional judgement' (O'Malley, 2004, p. 4). However, the distinction between technologies of risk and practices of uncertainty is not clear cut. There are continual overlaps: 'There are value judgments to be made on social risk… but at the same time we don't want each individual banker relying solely on their own set of personal ideas about these things. It is important that such judgments are evaluated within a consistent framework' (Barclays Representative A, Interview, 2007).

And so the focus is on training bankers to understand the magnitude of social risk and mainstream sustainability through intensive internal training underlined, at HSBC, by the mantra of 'Policy, Process, People': 'We do a lot of training – training our people on these processes and policies. We have bottom lines on sector industries. Without these policies they [bankers] are in the dark' (HSBC Representative B, Interview, 2007). For Citigroup:

> It's a huge challenge for Citigroup, because we are so global and with a global footprint. We have day long training sessions for bankers. It's a big part of our internal capacity building…we're trying to get bankers to understand that if this is a category A type

> project[16] they need to contact the sustainability team. They hardly ever make a mistake in terms of categorization. (Citigroup Representative, Interview, 2007)

Here, for banks, the 'use of a theoretically based valuation formula rather than simple intuition' gives both respect and legitimacy to the methodology (MacKenzie, 2004, p. 105). But for NGOs, the question of continued mistakes due to lack of expertise, is a serious issue: 'Risk departments have limited knowledge of those sectors engaged in activities in forests. They are being inundated by consultant reports, but do they understand those reports'? (Greenpeace Representative, Interview, 2007).

While there is an attempt to embed social and moral distinctions into 'this apparently 'technical' framework' (O'Malley, 2004, p. 8), there is a clear acknowledgement that some things still lie outside policies and procedures. Even where social and environmental analysis is an integrated part of the credit risk assessment process 'instinct' remains central: 'A lot of if is about looking into the whites of the eyes' (ANZ Representative, Interview, 2007). Even if all checks and balances are accounted for, if 'suspicions' arise over what the financing might be used for, or, 'if you know you're in a high risk area and high risk sector and you're not hearing anything – take for example mining on a pacific island – or you smell something fishy – you better approach the situation to look at what is really happening' (HSBC Representative B, Interview, 2007). The risk that clients might intentionally conceal things from banks was also highlighted by NGOs: 'you can have clients on paper passing on the tests. But if something doesn't feel right… The client has perhaps misled them [the bank]' (ACF Representative, Interview, 2007).

Despite these challenges, there is reluctance by banks to impose external audits on clients. While the Equator Principles require that discrete projects are independently reviewed for social and environmental issues, other financial links between banks and clients (i.e. general corporate loans etc.) do not have a rigourous process of review. 'We have a general client risk diagnostic – they're very general questions – if it's not going to a specific transaction they (the client) are not going to put up with an internal audit [commissioned by the bank]. They'll say bug off, we'll go to a different bank. We will see that the client has an effective internal environmental system' (Citigroup Representative, Interview, 2007).

TRANSPARENCY, SECRECY AND LINKS

It is at this conjecture that NGOs, the information they reveal, and the role they have as 'amplifiers' for local community concerns (HSBC

Representative B, Interview, 2007) becomes centrally important. Banks tap into NGO expertise because as a part of the due diligence prior to engaging with clients banks should know *as much as possible* about their clients. It is apparently in the best interest of the banks to know every possible risk involved in a transaction. This includes financial, environmental and social risks. The aim is to reveal 'all the skeletons in the closet' of a potential client. Yet banks find themselves having to make decisions and risk assessments in the absence of all the necessary information: 'It's become apparent that there is now recognition of the explicit tension between the need to make a decision today in the absence of all the necessary information, versus the desire to get it right to make a contribution to longer term sustainability' (ANZ Representative, Interview, 2007). This involves both 'deliberate non-knowledge' (Barry, 2006, p. 3) and issues of expertise. Where due diligence and the uncovering potential risks are concerned, secrecy plays a constitutive role.

Banks claim to welcome any information NGOs are able to provide them. Indeed, banks may perceive it to be in the interest of their reputation and brand-image that they should avoid doing business where the risk profile is high and mitigation is judged to be difficult or impossible (Barclays Representative A, Interview, 2007). But this information is procured, received and dealt with through a variety of secretive practices. BankTrack argue that banks are happy to receive information from NGOs 'as long as they do not have to acknowledge receiving this as this may embarrass potential client. I once wanted to give a document to a [bank] person [concerning a bank client] but she said that she could not accept it – like taking it in her own hands – but also could not help it if it ended up in her mailbox' (BankTrack Representative, personal email correspondence, 24 September 2007).

Banks too admit that they are involved in a tricky balance of triangulation (HSBC Representative B, Interview, 2007). They argue that client confidentiality prevents them from publicly seeking information or NGO expertise on particular clients. But this raises considerable ethical issues. Is client confidentiality absolute? (Parker, 2004, p. 51). For banks, it would seem that limits to client confidentiality are recognised to apply where 'there is a higher form of law (such as an anti-terrorism or money-laundering law with which a bank must comply)' (HSBC Representative A, personal email correspondence, 19 September 2007). Otherwise, for banks, their highest duty is to the client (HSBC Representative B, Interview, 2007). But for NGOs, banks are argued to 'have taken bank secrecy to an unwarranted extreme' (ACF Representative, Interview, 2007) and in doing so they apparently shirk their responsibilities to those local communities affected by their financing:

> When banks say that secrecy laws prohibit them from discussing a relationship, what they are really saying is this: 'When we negotiated this transaction, we decided not to make our financing conditional on us retaining the right to discuss the financed activities with the communities affected by them'. (ACF Representative, personal email correspondence, 27 August 2007)

Arguments about client confidentiality are a cause of considerable frustration for NGOs: 'We cannot have any serious conversation because it is a one way conversation. They say 'we will take this into account,' and I don't doubt that they do, but we never know. We need to have a more enriched conversation with the banks in regards to clients' (BankTrack Representative, 2007). Banks too express their frustration over the apparent constraints of client confidentiality (Barclays Representative A, Interview, 2007; HSBC Representative B, Interview, 2007). As one HSBC representative, with extensive professional experience within the NGO sector, explained: 'client confidentiality is an immutable part of the banking sector. And this is something I've come to appreciate since working in the industry. It makes dialogue with NGOs very difficult. We cannot disclose any information about our clients, or even confirm if we still have them as clients' (HSBC Representative B, Interview, 2007).

One solution to this apparent conundrum has been for banks to discretely express their interest in information on clients. Barclays, after being approached by Greenpeace over numerous clients, suggested that Greenpeace provide 'case studies' on those clients they had concerns with. Greenpeace did so, but never received a formal response on the issues raised and if, or how, they would be addressed. Similarly with HSBC, information has been given to the banks on specific clients, but NGOs are left in the dark as to how, when and whether action has been taken. This raises questions within the NGO sector as to how NGOs can benchmark *their* success in various campaigns (Greenpeace Representative, Interview, 2007; BankTrack Representative personal email correspondence, 24 September 2007). In some cases NGOs are unsure as to whether the banks have clients on their books at all and so efforts may be wasted where financial links no longer exist.

Another investigate technique used by banks, to access information NGOs may have on potential and existing clients and projects, involves internet research. Many of the banks interviewed explained that they regularly used the internet to follow what projects NGOs were following and campaigning on. But this too may be carried out in secret. One sustainability representative, not formally interviewed, confided in me during a conference that she did not 'Google' controversial projects or clients from her work computer because NGOs were apparently known for checking the IP addresses[17] of hits on campaign sites. Instead, she undertook this kind of research from her home computer, where the IP address could not be directly traced back to the bank.

For NGOs, tracing the links from banks, to clients, to resource controversies, requires both skill and luck. Many NGOs acknowledge the significance of insider 'tip-offs', leaks and serendipity in their investigative processes:

> ....How do we investigate the links? Revealing is a very opaque set-up. There can be all manner of sources. Sometimes a leak pops up. Initially, that's how we found out about ANZ's involvement with Rimbunan Hijau[18] in PNG. We found scanned documents on an anonymous website, showing the foreign exchange transaction between ANZ and RH. We then did some additional research. Once you know what you're looking for it's easier... . (ACF Representative, Interview, 2007)

Considerable labour and expertise is thus required in tracing the links between banks and clients. For NGOs experienced in negotiating with multilateral agencies there is a considerably 'different dynamic' when dealing with private financial institutions: 'you can get your hands on many more documents from multilateral agencies. There is a lot less fishing with multilateral agencies [than with private finance institutions]' (FPP Representative, Interview, 2007). This kind of 'fishing about' involves not material artefacts, but electronic, financial and administrative links: 'In the financial sector we are dealing with administrative links. The transactions are electronic. Wood is a material product that can be followed. We can follow trucks, photograph wood piles, get chain-of-custody documentation and track the wood' (Greenpeace Representative, 2007). Financial and administrative links, on the other hand, can prove much more difficult to trace.

The difficulty of tracing the links between banks and clients or projects varies for the kind of financial service involved. Thus far, the majority of CSR efforts of the investment banking sector have focussed on Project Finance. Even though some banks aspire to apply the Equator Principles to non-Project Finance financing, the Equator Principles themselves were specifically developed for Project Finance deals. Project Finance is a unique form of financing for several reasons. First, it is a form of financing in which the financier has no recourse except to the project itself. The bank cannot make any claims on the proponent or client company if the project goes 'belly-up'. Nor can the bank be seen to interfere with the company itself. Any direction or influence the bank has can only be directed towards the project, and not the client company (ANZ Representative, Interview, 2007). Moreover, they are a form of financing in which the end use of bank proceeds is *known*. For this reason, banks argue that project finance deals have been a popular target for NGO campaigns: 'projects are sexy because they are high profile and a discrete entity. Sometimes it is easier to get people motivated around a tangible project than a more general theme' (Barclays Representative A, Interview, 2007). But for BankTrack, NGO attention on Project Finance deals is not because they are more or less difficult to draw attention to, but because 'they are also the preferred means of financing for the sort of things that tend to cause huge problems, and that this in turn mobilises NGOs' (BankTrack Representative, personal email correspondence, 24 September 2007).

But increasingly, both banks and NGOs are highlighting the limits of a focus on Project Finance. Project Finance may account for only a very small percentage of transactions with institutional clients (Barclays Representative B, Interview, 2007). A fundamental difference between Project Finance deals and other financial transactions is that non-Project Finance deals are much more difficult to trace. Banks are under no obligation to reveal if they are providing foreign exchange services, general corporate loans, underwritings or the like for institutional clients in commodity industries. (And even if the links are *known* by NGOs, banks will often argue that the actual end use of the proceeds *is not known*, and their responsibility is therefore limited.) NGOs accuse banks of hiding behind 'client confidentiality', and creating frustration by avoiding confirming their financing or not of particular clients (BankTrack Representative; ACF Representative; Interviews, 2007). NGOs are thus increasingly undertaking the kind of fact-finding missions described by Barry (2006, p. 6), to reveal and expose the connections between financiers, and '*rogue* clients' (Greenpeace Representative, Interview, 2007) or, to undertake 'a check up on whether polices are indeed applied as being prescribed by the banks own policies', as was the case in BankTrack 'fact-finding mission' to Rapu Rapu (BankTrack Representative, personal email correspondence, 24 September 2007). A metaphor of 'unveiling' pervades NGO discourse – they are on constant 'fact-finding' missions to uncover and unveil links between the big banks and 'shady' projects and 'dodgy deals' in the resource sector. But the revelation of relationships and links leads to the suspicion that there will be ever more to uncover.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has raised two aspects of the relationship between NGOs and banks. The first has concerned the productive role of secrecy. In their work, NGOs undertake practices of revelation in exposing financial links from banks to clients, and from clients to the social and environmental impacts on local communities. But this raises in turn a new question. Is it ever possible to *reveal* everything? Even if NGOs can prove the actual *links* between banks and particular controversial clients, there is something about secrecy that is in fact constitutive of that relation. And to what extent do banks actively seek to reveal all 'the skeletons in the closet' concerning their clients? For, after all, there is a certain kind of position organisations create through being 'unknowing'. Perhaps knowing too much is as ethically difficult as knowing too little is risky? As Barry argues, '[i]f transparency involves a commitment to make things public, then it is necessary to not investigate or know about matters if they are not to become public. Discretion involves more or less deliberate non-knowledge' (2006, p. 3). And, there may also be practical liability issues: 'The obligation to act on information known –or be complicit in case a crime has occurred that could have been prevented if the bank had acted – may be a reason to not push the investigation to its limit' (BankTrack Representative, personal email correspondence, 24 September 2007).

But if banks *are* publicly made aware of their clients' activities, to what extent can they then be held accountable for governing the conduct of their clients? This responsibility is limited, according to banks themselves: 'There is a perception that banks invariably have huge influence; that you can simply tell clients what to do and they will do it. This is not the case in a competitive market. We cannot tell clients how to run their business. We can highlight good practice and standards and may refer to relevant NGO research and dialogue' (Barclays Representative A, Interview, 2007). But for NGOs, this apparent client dilemma makes the case for direct accountability from banks to communities even stronger: 'banks…[should adopt]…an accountability mechanism [as a part of the Equator Principles] allowing communities to deliver complaints directly to the banks' (BankTrack Representative, personal email correspondence, 24 September 2007). Yet while companies in the commodity industries are now expected to earn the trust of 'society' through taking responsibility for their activities and developing these kinds of community grievance procedures, and banks too expect their clients to do so, the environmental and social responsibilities of banks remains opaque as many of their policies and assessment procedures are simply not made public. A discourse of transparency and responsibility thus conceals the fact that the banks' *own* policies and ethical behaviour remain concealed.

Practices of secrecy thus play a constitutive role in the relationship between banks and NGOs. But this chapter has also dealt with how banks *have* attempted to respond to NGO and community critique through the development of social and environmental risk assessment practices. Despite attempts to make objective the various subjective practices of judgment and rule-of-thumb employed in so-called 'calculative' risk assessment by banks, these practices and techniques themselves become an object of critique. The point of this chapter has simply not been to show that apparently technical assessments of risk are embedded in social relations. The danger of such an argument presumes that we can get around the problem of the 'rational economy' by adding a 'cultural filigree to what in the end is still held to be an economic core' (Amin & Thrift, 2004, p. xiv). Instead, the chapter has shown that technical expertise and non-technical forms of judgment are overlapping, mutually constitutive, interwoven in complex ways (Downey & Fisher, 2006) and continually contested. At one level, the robustness of the financial sector's 'social risk screening methods' is continually challenged in debates concerning the technical limitations of accounting for social risk. At another level, broader questions of social justice, ethics and corporate responsibility feature significantly in these spaces of contestation.

As this chapter has shown, the ways in which banks approach risk are a focus of considerable debate between NGOs and banks. But for banks, risk is not 'all bad'. On the contrary, without the perceived existence of risk, banks argue that there would be no opportunity to 'get ahead' of other banks: for the financial sector *risk presents opportunities*. Risk is not to be eliminated entirely, because it is *through* risk-taking that an organisation accumulates wealth. As modern classic economic textbooks argue: 'The point of risk management is not to reduce risk but to add value' (Brealey & Myers, 2006, p. 1014). Indeed, the banking sector is one in which risk-taking is rewarded. The language of the 'risk/reward' relationship permeates every facet of banking culture (ANZ Representative, Interview, 2007). The risk/reward relationship is, however, also tied to a responsible form of risk-taking. There is a long history throughout liberal thought of the relationship between risk-taking and responsibility. For classical liberals, for example the entrepreneur was a special category of citizen: one privileged with the license to take financial risks and 'engage in creative uncertainty', but a risk-taker who was required to behave responsibly by investing within their means (O'Malley, 2004, p. 34). Today we are witness to a new articulation of this discourse whereby banks pronounce 'a restricted appetite [for risk] in environmentally sensitive areas' (Barclays Representative A, Interview, 2007). It is thus the responsible risk-taker that is rewarded and *knowledge* of risks that gives an organisation a competitive advantage over others (Ericson, 2005, p. 669). Uncertainty then is to be reconstituted as risk, so that it may be calculated, known and managed.

But to what extent are these 'new' areas of risk simply uncertainty renamed? (O'Malley, 2004, p. 7). And at what point are questions of ethics considered to lie outside the technical assessment of risk? As one NGO pointed out:

> We say that there are projects that cannot be mitigated…they [banks] have this endless belief in their ability to mitigate whatever. An open-pit on an island, seven by three kilometres wide, and a tropical bay with 8000 people who are dependent upon the fishlife, the possible extinction of an entire whale species, the possible introduction of diseases into indigenous communities etcetera, etcetera – you cannot manage those risks… The risk logic or risk argument only gets you so far. At some point you have to go beyond assessing and managing the risk… At some point there is also ethics. And out of pure decency you should not want to be involved in certain things, even if the reputational risk is low because no-body knows about it. If it is some small Indigenous community on a remote island…you should still not be involved in that. (BankTrack Representative, Interview, 2007)

Banks are thus increasingly expected to demonstrate their own ethical conduct *and* govern the ethical conduct of their clients. In doing so, banks are attempting to transform uncertainty into risk. But the attempt to innovate new risk technologies also invites contestation over how complex social issues are constituted as 'risks', and generates the claim that some things lie *beyond* risks. Thus, the proliferation of techniques for the calculation of risk serves not only to both extend the reach of new forms of expertise, but also 'to amplify and multiply the points at which doubt and suspicion can be generated' (Rose, 1999). These doubts, in turn, produce further uncertainty over what actually constitutes ethical corporate behaviour.

NOTES

1. FSC is an international organisation that provides certification for wood, to ensure that it is procured in an environmentally and socially sustainable fashion. The

organisation is made up of forestry industry representatives, NGOs, Indigenous people organisations and other stakeholders. FSC is the most rigorous wood certification scheme currently accepted by the forestry industry and majority of global financial institutions funding forestry operations. See http://www.fsc.org for further information.

2. Australian Conservation Foundation.

3. See *Rewarding Virtue* (Business in the Community et al., 2005) for one such example.

4. The research presented here began organically as a tangent to previous research on campaigns by Saami people and Greenpeace in the Finnish forestry, paper and pulp market (see Lawrence & Raitio, 2006; Lawrence, 2007). That research sought to understand how Saami organisations, and environmental NGOs (such as Greenpeace), were strategically using the market of ethical investment as a point of leverage in negotiating with the forestry industry. It embraced a multisited and organic research process and recognised the 'need to adopt a curious kind of cross-eyed vision, one eye roving ceaselessly around the general context, any part of which may suddenly reveal itself to be relevant, the other eye focusing tightly, even obsessively on the research topic' (Gellner & Hirsch, 2001, p. 7). As my research eye 'roved', the research expanded to include the lobbying that Greenpeace, and other environmental NGOs, were co-ordinating on the investment banking front. This included contact with Rainforest Action Network (RAN), who then provided contact details with key sustainability people in the banking sector. In addition, during my stay at Macquarie University, Sydney as a guest researcher at the Department of Human Geography I was introduced to a key person of ANZ, who was involved with NGO engagement, client engagement and sustainability issues, and with whom I met and interviewed twice at the ANZ Sydney office in late 2006 and again in early 2007. In early 2007, on a trip to London, I met with and interviewed key sustainability people at HSBC and Barclays in Canary Wharf, London, and conducted a telephone interview with a key sustainability person at the New York Head Office of Citigroup. I again met with HSBC and Barclays in April 2007 for further discussions. Conversations with forest campaigners at Greenpeace International (London) and Forest Peoples Programme (London) have been on-going and less formal, including face-to-face interviews and discussions as well as telephone calls and email correspondence. A representative from Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) was interviewed in person in January in Sydney, and the head of BankTrack was interviewed via telephone also in January of 2007 and well as a meeting in London in September 2007 and on-going email correspondence. RAN have provided contact names with key people in the banks and assisted with background information on RAN's campaigns. What is striking about this research field is that a select few people are involved in the issues, both within the banks and within NGOs. Most of the research participants either personally knew one another, had heard of one another or some had previously worked at the IFC together. For this reason, securing anonymity throughout the research process was not possible. Personal anonymity was desired in the publication process and specific job titles have therefore been removed. My informants at the banks included Directors, Senior Managers and Advisors in Public Issues, Sustainability Risk Management, Social Risk Management, Institutional and

Corporate Sustainability and Corporate Affairs. My NGO informants included Forest Campaigners, NGO Coordinator, Legal Advisor and Policy Advisor.

5. The Equator Principles are 'a benchmark for the financial industry to manage social and environmental issues in project financing' (http://www.equator-principles.com/). The principles have been subjected to considerable critique both for intrinsic-shortcomings in relation to social justice issues in project financing and the perceived overdue emphasis, which has been placed on project financing, and the consequent failure to address the social and environmental impacts of other financial instruments and services such as underwritings, credit notes, general corporate loans, etc.

6. The research included attendance at The Responsible Business Summit 2007, 9–10 May, London, and the 2007 Sustainable Finance Conference, 18–19 September 2007, London, both of which were organised by Ethical Corporation.

7. During May 2008 ANZ announced in a short public statement that ''ANZ will not be participating in the provision of project finance for Gunns Limited's proposed Bell Bay Pulp Mill in Tasmania. Due to client confidentiality, we are not in a position to comment further on this decision. Any further queries should be directed to Gunns Limited.'' Downloaded http://www.anz.com/aus/About-ANZ/Corporate-Responsibility/pdf/ANZGunns.pdf on June 1st, 2008.

9. See [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = PL9QFUUmCyw] for the ACF and ANZ campaign link.

8. I would like to thank Richard Boele for highlighting this during our discussions in February 2007 in Sydney, Australia.

10. FPP, an NGO focused on the rights of Indigenous people dependent on forests, preface their engagement with banks by stating their own commitment to transparency. If the content of a bank's policies (e.g., regarding forestry), or FPP's own comments on a policy or the extent to which a particular bank activity does or does not adhere to the policy, cannot be revealed publicly, FPP will not engage in a dialogue with that bank. This became an issue for FPP during their discussions with HSBC over the extent to which the bank's listing of Samling on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange was in-line with HSBC's forestry policy. In correspondence and meetings with HSBC over HSBC's listing of Samling, FPP was careful to explicitly state that its participation in a dialogue was dependent upon the above principles of transparency and that its participation should not be ''seen as substituting for that of the [affected Indigneous] peoples' themselves'' (Letter to HSBC from Forest Peoples Program, 27 April 2007). And despite requests by FPP for HSBC to make its ''full forest policy'' of 19 pages publicly available, HSBC's two page summary remains the only publicly available version (Letter to HSBC from Forest Peoples Program, 27 April 2007).

11. I would like to thank Jock Stirrat for drawing my attention to these parallels.

12. Rumsfeld's quote was awarded a Foot in Mouth Award in 2003 by Britain's Plain English Campaign. See [http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/12/01/rumsfeld.english.reut/] for further information.

13. See *A Guide for Integrating Human Rights into Business Management*, by Business Leaders Initiative on Human Rights.

14. Citigroup views itself as an exception to this as noted by one representative: ''I would point out that Citi was one of the first private banks that hired actual social and environmental specialists to direct their ESRM Policy and programs… I am a social risk expert and worked with the IFC for 8.5 years and I have hired an

environmental risk specialist to work on my team: we can identify impacts and risks, we can propose mitigation measures, etc. So, there are banks (such as Citi) that acknowledge in-house expertise is very important, and have put up the resources to hire and develop such expertise'' (Citigroup Representative, personal email correspondence, 23/10/2007).

15. To ''mainstream sustainability'' commonly refers to the incorporation of a sustainability perspective, that is to give consideration to environmental and social issues, in the everyday core business practices of banks.

16. The Equator Principles set out a categorisation of projects according to the perceived risk. A ''category A'' project is considered to be the most risky form of project, ''with potential significant adverse social or environmental impacts that are diverse, irreversible or unprecedented'' (Equator Principles, 2006).

17. An IP address, internet protocol address, can be used to identify which computer has accessed particular sites on the internet.

18. Rimbunan Hijau is a Malaysian listed logging company, which has received extensive critique from Environmental NGOs and Human Rights activists for unsustainable logging practices, corruption, abuse of workers, and denial of Indigneous peoples rights to traditional forests, etc.

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ARBITRATING RISK THROUGH MORAL VALUES: THE CASE OF KENYAN FAIRTRADE

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the Kenyan Fairtrade flower as a site of value making, one that provides a constructive lens into how moral obligation and ethical accountability are shaped by risk perceptions and become visible through the process of transnational commodity exchange. Specifically, it argues that while Fairtrade labeling responds to the risks of corporate capitalism through consumption practices predicated on extending care and compassion to distant communities, it is also embedded within commodity chains that advance liberal ethics as a mode of "governmentality" over African producers. These ethics are associated with new technologies of information gathering, regulation, and surveillance that simultaneously assuage consumers' anxieties and channel their sympathy-based humanism into new forms of ethical normativity. Fairtrade's relational ethic, for example, is accompanied by a private regulatory assemblage that authorizes certain knowledge forms, thereby circumscribing the social and economic rights available as well as the form of personhood through which they can be claimed. Thus, although Fairtrade is cast as morally unproblematic, it can also serve as a

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mechanism through which specific interests are naturalized and circulated through a benevolent vernacular of economic and social rights.

So, this Valentine's Day, you can be a romantic, reduce your environmental impact and help make poverty history.

(Hilary Benn, UK international Development Secretary).

INTRODUCTION

I am crossing a marketplace animated by hawkers, street vendors, and men exchanging news of the day. The afternoon winds are strong and papers are strewn along the ground, flapping in clouds of dust that reduce the brightly colored mélange of goods to the same hue of pale gold. Salons prepare women for Sunday services with retouches, blow-dries, and braiding while the pulsating beats of hip hop emanate from bars whose names (*Small World* and *Casablanca*) and drinks (Vienna Wine and Obama Beer), signal the mobility, circulation and flows that comprise the urban space of Naivasha.

I have come to this emerging shantytown to speak with Jacinta, one of the thousands of "flower girls" who have entered the social worlds of plantations and processing plants that comprise Kenya's cut flower industry. Jacinta, now a Fairtrade producer, has been living in a one-room house of corrugated iron and mud bricks since she migrated to Naivasha with her three young children 2 years ago. The house is wanting. A tattered net serves as the door, and both the ceiling and walls are covered with old newspapers "to prevent cold wind especially at night," she explains. Jacinta, like many others, is seeking a better life in the "red gold" industry that lines the shores of Lake Naivasha, the fabled playground of the Happy Valley set whose lavish lifestyles were memorialized in the colonialist fantasy *White Mischief*. But today Happy Valley, as a recent headline proclaims, "is happy no longer" (Pflanz, 2005). Once an oasis of colonial decadence, a source of lush grazing land for Masai pastoralists, and host to Africa's most prolific riparian wildlife, Naivasha is now marked by the familiar contradictions of neoliberal capitalism:[1] fresh tracks of global capital tainted by stories of carbon emissions, toxic pesticides, and labor abuses. There is, according to the *New York Times*, "Trouble in [this] Kenyan Paradise" (Lacey, 2006).

In recent years, the ubiquity of this trouble – what Callon (1998) terms a "hot situation" – has transformed the Kenyan European horticultural commodity chain into an economy of moral production where ethical values, interests, and meanings are registered and enforced through a cadre of standards, protocols, and performance indicators. These tools of accountability, the grist of neoliberalism, not only "perform the economy" (Callon, 1998) through new bureaucratic processes and technologies of transparency, but also convey and transpose modalities of value that affect the subjectivities and material lives of producers in Kenya.

In this chapter, I consider the Fairtrade flower as a site of value making, one that provides a constructive lens into how moral obligation and ethical accountability are shaped by risk perceptions and become visible through the process of transnational commodity exchange.[2] I base the analysis on three multi-sited qualitative studies of ethical trade in African agriculture (2000, 2004, and 2006), each of which have considered the interplay of economic relations and ideological processes in global commodity chains. In Kenya the research consisted of 100 semi-structured interviews (SSIs) and 14 participatory focus group discussions with flower workers, and over 50 "key informant" interviews with company managers, government officials, trade associations, NGOs, and union representatives. In the UK, it comprised SSIs with all leading supermarkets and 40 in-depth interviews with UK consumers and NGOs selected through a snowball sample. I also draw from 38 interviews conducted in Kenya as part of a project on the socio-economic implications of Fairtrade, as well as a range of promotional materials derived from organization and corporate websites.

The chapter draws on this material to examine an inherent contradiction between the tools of risk management and the ethical values that are circulated through the globalized networks of Fairtrade. Specifically, I argue that while Fairtrade responds to the risks of corporate capitalism through consumption practices predicated on "partnership" and "community," it also operates within commodity chains that advance liberal ethics as a mode of "governmentality" over African producers, translating consumers' sympathy-based humanism into risk-reducing technologies of regulation and surveillance. Fairtrade's relational ethic, for example, is accompanied by a private regulatory assemblage that authorizes certain knowledge forms, thereby circumscribing the social and economic rights available as well as the form of personhood through which they can be claimed (Mosse, 2003). As a result, the universalist ethos embraced by fairtrade consumers, which aims to render disparate economies and producers commensurable, is tempered, as the technologies of standards and certification reify, if not sustain the distinctions within as well as across communities.

THE VALUES OF RISK

Over the last two decades the commodity has emerged as a prominent heuristic device for exploring the co-construction of the cultural and the material in economic exchange. Anthropologists, specifically, have produced a prolific body of work that illuminates the ways that meanings are inscribed in the forms and uses of goods (Appadurai, 1986, p. 5), and how historical, cultural, and political processes differentiate the trajectories of commodity flows.[3] This chapter is concerned with one particular type of meaning – ethical values[4] – and how they are variously constructed, conveyed, and managed in a global commodity chain.[5] I draw a distinction between the imported cut flower chain, in which an alienable product moves freely through an impersonal chain of market relations, and the *Fairtrade* flower, in which sociality and obligation frame exchange relations. This distinction is not only one of nomenclature but represents a shift in the way that economic exchange is organized and interpreted. As has been argued elsewhere (Dolan, 2007), what is distinctive about the Fairtrade flower is not its status as a commodity per se, but its sign value – the possibilities for redemption, intimacy, and moral expression that its transnational exchange signifies (Baudrillard, 1988; Carrier, 1991). It is the relational and ethical values that reflexive consumers aspire to signal through new market moralities that differentiate fairtrade products from the fungible, abstract utilities of conventional global commodity chains.

Within the fairtrade literature, values have been approached from two vantage points: as either the ethical sentiments articulated by conscious consumers[6] or the material benefits experienced by developing country producers.[7] Yet values are also inculcated in the institutions of fairtrade itself and permeate the site of exchange via the technologies of standards, audits, and certification. These technopolitical arrangements, widely associated with the regnant neoliberal paradigm, extend moral accountability by containing and managing *risk* in the commodity chain.

In recent years the concept of risk as a constitutive feature of economic practice (i.e., financial markets, biotechnologies, government planning, and corporate strategies) has generated significant socio-cultural interest.[8] Discourses of risk and uncertainty, it is argued, are a prominent, if not a defining feature of late modernity, which are simultaneously imagined and concrete, everywhere but often nowhere in particular. Yet while risks are ubiquitous (both historically and spatially), what we label as risk, and how we classify, mediate and manage it, is highly culturally specific (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982; Garsten & Hasselström, 2003; Giddens, 1990;

O'Malley, 1996). The idea, for example, that industrial societies have manufactured hazards that we cannot control or predict, whether they are Exxon Valdez, BSE, or child slaves, and the notion that nonstate actors will mitigate such crises, currently has a strong geo-cultural referent in neoliberal capitalism.

The expanding ethical sourcing movement inhabits several positions within this culture of risk (e.g., corporate social responsibility, animal welfare, organics, community supported agriculture, ethical investment, etc.), positions that signal as much about the potential hazards out there as the way that power and place implicate how actors construct, perceive, and manage them. In the sphere of global business these positions are evidenced in a range of corporate "ethicizing" (Toennesen, 2007) from the increased participation of global retailers and manufacturers in the UK-based Ethical Trading Initiative and the USA-based Social Accountability International to Starbucks preferred supplier social and environmental standards, to Nestlé's fairtrade brand (Mutersbaugh, 2005). Similarly, among NGOs and concerned consumers, the anxieties surrounding the often exploitative relations wrought by global capitalism, from the social dislocation and estrangement rendered through abstract exchange to the environmental damage and food-borne illnesses, have produced a range of sustainable consumption practices that seek to right environmental and social injustices through consumer resistance (Barnett, Cloke, Clarke, & Malpass, 2005; Holt, 2002; Miller, 2004; Peñaloza & Price, 1993), consumer boycotts (Friedman, 1985; Garrett, 1987; Hilton, 2003), and consumer movements (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004; Thompson & Coskuner, 2007).

Fairtrade labeling sits within this broad frame of ethical sourcing. As the progeny of a global economy in which technological innovation, deregulation, and an intensification of corporate power have spawned new vulnerabilities and "arenas for responsibility taking" (Micheletti, 2003, p. 5), fairtrade contests the hegemony of industrial agriculture and large-scale manufacturing, and the effects of its unrelenting appetite on small producers and workers. As Mark, a retired lecturer and fairtrade consumer told me: "They [corporations] do force prices down. I don't think there's too much doubt about that. I mean you know in this country, let alone the third world, developing world….You know, they're always trying to get the cheapest price they can…even farmers in this country complain, so heaven knows what it's like in the rest of the world."[9] His sentiments were echoed by Belinda, a 22-year-old student and fairtrade volunteer, who explained:

> …I think there's a lot of shit going on in the world, I want to do something about it. …I think it's [fair trade] a good way of at least trying to say to, you know, big businesses and

> companies, "wait a minute. We're not going to just let you go and do whatever you want to developing countries and people in developing countries." You know, they've been screwed over enough to do something about it.[10]

These risks of corporate power are, to invoke Douglas' (2002 [1966]) concept, polluting. They threaten the moral ballast of social relations and the normative understandings of our interactions with the natural world. Fairtrade responds to these risks through a moral discourse of *responsibility* that situates the consuming individual rather than institutions and states as the agent of social and economic transformation. According to Bisaillon et al. writing on behalf of the Fairtrade Workshop:

> (C)itizens-consumers in the North are responsible for the consequences of their acts, intentional or unintentional, planned or unplanned, just as they are responsible for not having acted when they had the chance: they must no longer hide behind the knowledge of their own impotence or ignorance. (Bisaillon, Gendron, & Turcotte, 2006, p. 42)

Importantly their status as citizens is exercised through a politics of responsible consumption, where the environment, human rights, and economic justice are insinuated into the routines of everyday life from drinking tea, to buying clothes, to taking out the garbage (Clarke, Barnet, Cloke, & Marpass, 2007). Several fairtrade consumers that I interviewed emphasized the obligations engendered through their location as privileged consumers, invoking a vocabulary of moral responsibility, accountability, and duty to describe their motivations for fairtrade purchases. As a 33-year-old professional living in the city put it:

> I do believe in a kind of moral responsibility and moral duty. For me, I'm not gonna feel guilty about having been born in a relatively wealthy country, never having had gone hungry in my life…I didn't choose to be born where I was…The point for me is, if I'm borne into a more privileged position, well, I feel that I want to do something in return, you know back to what I was saying about moral responsibility, but I feel it's only right that I should try and do something with my life, you know, to help those who are less privileged.[11]

Similarly Paula, an 83-year-old retired schoolteacher said many people are buying Fairtrade "because it is mainly politically a good thing to do, morally, ethically a good thing to do."[12] This concept of "remedial responsibility,"[13] however, is a morally-tinged one, suggesting a potentially troubled relationship between the paternalistic obligation of consuming individuals and the deference and subordination of fairtrade producers (Rajak, 2006). As the checkered history of international development demonstrates, what is construed as benevolent can possess "a tyrannous side" (Crewe & Harrison, 1998; Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994;

Mosse, 2003; Strathern 2000b, p. 309). This side, I suggest, is produced through the components of risk management practices – standards, audits, and protocols – that have been adapted as the instrumental tools of "ethical" regulation.

While these tools aim to *insure against* the social and environmental risks of transnational exchange, they have also positioned Fairtrade labeling, like other forms of "sustainable consumption," in an uneasy alliance with the burgeoning risk management industry. Yet the awkward complementary between the anti-corporate convictions of northern consumers and the global regime of socio-technical standards is glossed by the implicit beneficence of fairtrade itself and its associated vernacular of "democracy," "justice," "rights," and "partnerships." Nevertheless, this disjuncture between technocratic management and moral imperative reflects a central paradox in the process of transnational ethics-making, a paradox between autonomy and relationality, personhood and society, and benevolence and power.

COMMODITY CONTROVERSIES

To many observers, Kenya's cut flowers industry bears witness to globalization's promise. Fueled by IMF and World Bank policies for export diversification, the industry has surpassed Israel and Columbia as the largest cut flower exporter to the European Union, increasing its supply by 10% annually between 2001 and 2005 (CBI, 2006). The flower industry is now the fastest growing sector in the Kenyan economy, with the production of year-round, ready-made bouquets providing employment to an estimated 50,000 workers (KFC, 2002).

Yet while the flower industry has flourished through market liberalization, deregulation, and corporate consolidation, it has also become a trope for globalization gone awry, one that bears the familiar social imprimatur of economic neoliberalism. Like its kin the *maquiladora*, for example, the flower industry depends on migrant women who face low wages, excessive working hours, job insecurity, and embedded gender discrimination (Dolan, Opondo, & Smith, 2003). During the 1990s, these conditions rendered the industry a productive hunting ground for headline news. BBC One's *Real Story*, for example, trekked to Kenya to "expose the cheap labour, health risks and environmental damage at farms which supply supermarket flowers to the UK"[14] while NGOs launched high profile campaigns publicizing the alleged immorality of UK retailers and their overseas suppliers, embroiling Kenyan producers in allegations of pesticide poisoning, sexual harassment, and rape on flower farms exporting to the UK (Dolan, 2005; Dolan & Opondo, 2005).

These concerns and their associated political strategies are, of course, neither new nor unique to Kenya. From Aristotle's distinction between the virtuous and self-interested economies of *oikonomikos and chrematistike* to Smith and Ricardo's reflection on the morality of consumption (Bloch & Parry, 1989; Wilk, 2001), unease with sybaritic tastes has marked the history of exchange and commerce (Hilton, 2003; Thompson, 2001). During the 1990s, however, public animosity toward unfettered capitalism and deepening global inequities reinvigorated an anti-corporate consumer politics. As an NGO representative argued:

> Companies earn huge profits while they take advantage of people so poor they are desperate for a job they will accept any conditions. So companies have to act responsibly. We need to expose the fact that workers are paid slave wages and live in appalling conditions – have to get this discussion out internationally and call the bluff on all this talk about cheaper destinations for industry. It's cheaper because they exploit human rights and the environment, and because people don't have the power to reject them.[15]

The technologies of shame deployed by NGOs and media organizations were not only aimed to sway the consumption practices of the UK public but to bring the spectral figure of the ethical consumer into corporate consciousness. NGOs, for example, engaged in new forms of informational politics to render the ethical consumer "visible" through statistics, interview data, and opinion polls (Clarke et al., 2007). These artifacts of certainty – familiar neoliberal techniques for authorizing knowledge claims – convert the woolly nature of consumer identities and beliefs into evidence that can be measured, reported, and represented as valid and legitimate to public and private actors (*ibid.*). By constructing and circulating the dispositions of the ethical consumer through the public sphere, NGOs forced the hand of Britain's top supermarkets, which in turn transformed their organizational practices, policies, and processes in acknowledgment of this political force. One way this was evidenced was the diversification of their product portfolio into a range of ethically produced wares, including Fairtrade flowers from Kenya.[16]

Sales of Fairtrade products have mushroomed in the UK with revenues nearly quadrupling from 2001 to 2005, reaching £493 million in 2007 (Mintel, 2006; www.fairtrade.org.uk). Much of this growth is derived from the mainstreaming of Fairtrade goods in UK supermarkets, which have pursued fairtrade as a way to simultaneously respond to growing numbers of ethical consumers while capitalizing on the "halo effect" of ethical branding. Fairtrade flowers have become one aspect of this strategy. The UK's first Fairtrade flowers, launched by Tesco in February 2004, came from Kenya, where they are "grown on farms that have been specially selected for their high standards of worker welfare, community support and environmental awareness."[17] These flowers have, according to the Fairtrade Foundation, "surpassed even the most optimistic expectations," generating an estimated UK retail value of over £4 million in 2005 (Fairtrade Foundation, 2006). As a leading Kenyan exporter commented,

> I think the reality is that a hell of a lot this has been put quite rightly on us from the marketplace. But I mean, we very much responded. And I think generally we've responded pretty well as a country, but if you're wearing a Floracare[18] hat, I think we particularly responded well, because I mean I see it as a competitive advantage. I mean, if you've got all these orders and all these standards and you've got, for instance all our roses are Fairtrade certified, I mean we're the only company in this country that has every single rose Fairtrade certified. I mean, it gives you a huge competitive advantage. And you know, we're just very enthusiastic about this sort of stuff. Very enthusiastic.[19]

The Fairtrade flower, which is produced on large commercial farms[20] by waged employees, marks a departure from the original fairtrade model, whose principles were oriented toward small and marginalized producers and producer groups. It thus merges an ethos of care, compassion and "equal exchange" with a more political vocabulary of rights, responsibilities, and universal covenants (Dolan, 2005). Flowers carrying the Fairtrade mark, for example, have met the internationally agreed Fairtrade standards covering social, environmental, and economic development and include a fair wage, decent working hours, and the right to join trade unions. Workers also receive a Fairtrade premium (8% of the export value for bouquet flowers) targeted for community and/or economic development projects such as boreholes, adult education facilities, and farm crèches (Fairtrade Foundation, 2006).

THE SPIRIT OF RELATIONALITY

The fairtrade movement was founded on a "politics of reconnection" between Northern consumers and their Southern brethren (Hartwick, 1998, p. 433), enabling the latter to receive a fair return for their work and decent working and living conditions through equitable trade (Nicholls & Opal, 2005). By foregrounding a consumer's relationship with a group of producers/workers, fairtrade aspires to figuratively and literally to lift the veil on the commodity fetish, making visible the social relations of production through a system of transparent exchange (Hudson & Hudson, 2003). In particular, consumers attempt to re-inscribe sociality and attachment into commodity exchange through long-term "direct relationships between producers and consumers" that embody "mutual respect and ethical values" (Bisaillon et al., 2006). For supporters, much of the popularity of fairtrade and its kinship to contemporary development initiatives stems from its approach of "trade not aid," which tackles poverty through *dialogue, partnership,* and *equal exchange*. Yet while fairtrade aims to unsettle the donor–recipient hierarchy, its relational intent suggests certain ideological continuities with charity and international development industries, both of which similarly extend moral values through economic practice. This raises the question of whether the values, meanings, and forms of knowledge inculcated in fairtrade are "owned" by producers in these commodity networks and to what extent producers frame their participation through similar idioms of solidarity and partnership (Dolan, 2008).

Although there is typically a gap between producers' and consumers' perspectives of any product (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1997), the forceful discursive distinction drawn between fairtrade and charity[21] in Northern consumer markets is notably absent in the sphere of production. Those Kenyan workers and producers who were familiar with fairtrade tended to conceptualize it as a form of charity extended through the benevolence of the "Fairtrade *Mzungu*" [white man], who keeps on "giving, giving, giving."[22] As one producer told me, there are many countries that buy products from Kenya but they don't give something back for thanksgiving like Fairtrade. Before Fairtrade arrived, he said, "We were paying money for school. Now Fairtrade comes and builds a class and no child is being sent away."[23] "Fairtrade consumers," he continued, are "like the church. You may buy something worth Ksh 10 at Ksh 300 to uplift the church and thank God." According to several flower packers social premium funds were "donated" by Northern buyers to express their appreciation for the profits workers generated, an act for which workers expressed sincere gratitude.[24] Yet the persistent references to gratitude and help – words that conjure hierarchy – muddies the parity of fairtrade relations, eliciting as it does an exchange between patron and client rather than equal partners. As Lawson (2007, p. 5) reminds us, caring is often a relation of power in "which the carer exercises (often unwittingly) control and influence over the cared-for," raising a question on who is precisely caring for whom.

Indeed, an abstract and often distorted knowledge about fairtrade underwrites exchange, creating mythologies among both producers and consumers. For instance, despite the fact that the roses supplied to the UK supermarket Sainsbury's are packed in boxes labeled: "Same Price. Same Quality. Now Fairtrade," many flower workers remain mystified as to what it is. As a young flower worker, Mr. Nyaga said, "I don't know what Fairtrade means…I know that it's one of our products…but I can't recall the meaning."[25] Others confused fairtrade with codes of labor practice. As Doris, a packhouse worker told me, "It has something to do with work, like what we should do or what we should not do in relation to work. There are postings within the packhouse to this effect, at the canteen and also at the toilets, in most places."[26] Fridah added, "It is a guide of how to carry out different activities like hygiene, dressing, [and] harvesting. Our supervisor informed us on this."[27] Thus, although Fairtrade strives to recast "donors" and "recipients" as equal members of a trading partnership, this aspired symmetry remains, at least in this case, rather rhetorical.

The incongruity between the discourse of "dialogue, transparency and respect" and the on-the-ground reality of Fairtrade was also apparent during my recent research into Fairtrade tea, where one Kenyan farmer, John, recounted a story of his encounter with the UK Fairtrade Foundation. The following excerpt, selected from my fieldnotes, fleshes out how the commercial rationalities of Fairtrade marketing operate side by side with the idioms of transnational solidarity and producer participation.

> When I arrived at John's *shamba* (farm), he greeted me with a huge grin and enthusiastically shook my hand. He thought that I was one of the *wazunguu* (white people) from the Fairtrade organization. He told me that a Fairtrade *mzunguu* came last year and took a picture of his wife Priscilla in their tea *shamba* and he began to rummage rapidly through a small dresser looking for this picture. Finally he pulled out a manila envelope and carefully extracted the photograph inside. It was a picture of his wife standing in the middle of their green, perfectly tabled tea fields. He explained with visible pride that the photograph is now on the package of Fairtrade tea in the UK and proceeded to show me an email sent to the chair of the Kiegoi Premium Committee. The email came from Traidcraft and the Fairtrade Foundation and said that the Fairtrade Foundation "would like to use it [Priscilla's photograph] on some new tea packaging that we are designing, but I require a short quote from [Priscilla], in her own words, about the benefits of Fairtrade." The email also said that Traidcraft was interested to know if there was another farmer whose picture they could also use in order to showcase "two different stories on the packaging." [The author of the email] also wanted a few details about Priscilla, asking questions like, "Does she farm with her husband? Does she have family support?" John asked me if I knew the woman who wrote the email, and if I could ask her why she never answered his letters. Evidently he had found a farmer who was willing to have his photograph on the tea direct package but she never returned his letters. I promised to follow up when I return to the UK but feel very awkward about the incident.

What was unsettling about this exchange was not the esthetic value of Priscilla – the fact that she, like many Fairtrade producers and workers, are converted into commodity signs to elicit the metaphorical connection that consumers seek (Dolan, 2007) but rather the unanswered letters, the fading photograph, the sense of connection lost. These artifacts spoke to the stubborn inequalities that mark producer–consumer relationships, a testament to show how difficult it is for producers to move from a position of unequal dependence to complementary interdependence in the network of transnational commodity exchange (Rajak, 2007).

This dissonance became more apparent as John proceeded to describe his perception of the Fairtrade *wazunguu* – a group of caring people in London who wanted to uplift the Kenyan farmer through charity. This charity, he told me, is really helping farmers like him, whose daily work has been eased by the gifts of the social premium. In consequentialist terms, whether producers like John experience fairtrade as benign paternalism, rather than partnership, is largely irrelevant to the on-the-ground outcome of Fairtrade. Yet Fairtrade (in contrast to its sister "ethical trade") valorizes the means as much as the ends, as witnessed in the triad of dialogue, partnership and participation. It is not, in the eyes of its acolytes, a top down development initiative but rather a process that cultivates producer engagement in a process of empowerment. During my conversation with John, I tried to unpack this idiom of participation, asking him what role he played in the selection of community projects and the extent of his involvement in the governance of Fairtrade. What I discovered was a familiar picture of disconnection: John neither elected the current representative to the social premium committee nor did he know that there was one until the Fairtrade *mzunguu* came and told him he should participate in it. He said that he is like most of the farmers in his area: they do not participate in the selection of the community projects but rather just "see the project being carried [out]." Despite John's visible enthusiasm for the "gifts" of Fairtrade, and the palpable benefits that such "gifts" actually engender, his narrative evokes the familiar archetype of patron and client, an anathema to the global commonweal pursued by Fairtrade consumers. All this suggests that while the currency of transnational partnership and solidarity holds considerable sway in northern consumption markets, it circulates largely metaphorically among Kenya's flower producers. Producers, in this particular case, hardly experience what Cooke and Kothari (2001) term the tyranny of participation but rather, I suggest, the tyranny of technologies in the form of standards and audits.

"SO MANY STANDARDS ARE FORCED DOWN THE THROATS OF AFRICANS"

The proliferation of standards and their associated modalities of governance have drawn widespread critique across the social sciences in recent years (Blowfield, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Dolan & Humphrey, 2004; Friedberg, 2003; Haworth, Hughes, & Williamson, 2005; Mutersbaugh, 2005). Here I explore the ways that Fairtrade standards operate as particular conveyors of value that aim to render disparate economies, producers, and workers commensurable (Dunn, 2005), ensuring that developing countries will enjoy the same basic rights and freedoms as their Western counterparts and regulating them to that particular end (Dean, 1999).

Standards govern at a distance (Rose, 1996), employing both the discourses and practices of modernity and neoliberalism (i.e., human rights, transparency, participation, efficiency, objectivity, and rationality) to exercise influence over the actors and activities of global commodity chains. Notably, they are construed as techno-rationalist instruments which, cleansed of geography, culture, and industry partialities, can neatly standardize heterogeneous production spaces. Standards are, therefore, an extension of the neoliberal project, casting social relations in terms of an economistic notion of human behavior (Chopra, 2003).

But as Mutersbaugh, Klooster, Renard, and Taylor (2005, p. 382) observe, standards and certification schemes are frequently "a site of social struggle" over who defines the criteria of standards and establishes the practices through which they are monitored and ratified. Critics have pointed to the "epistemological dilemma" posed by standards: a historical parentage of colonial ethnocentrism and a normalization of "western" ethical judgments that are often at odds with the communities they are slated to serve (c.f. Merry, 2006).[28] The grammar of rights extended through Fairtrade (rights conceptualized during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe and codified in various twentieth century covenants, conventions, and declarations), for example, derive from a liberal conception that positions the individual rather than the social, and the right to dignity rather than autonomy, as central in the ethical framework. Indeed the Enlightenment ideal of the autonomous subject, the individual upon whom human rights are premised and made meaningful, draws on a notion of personhood that sits uneasily with social formations in more communitarian societies such as are found in Africa (Dolan, 2008). Yet as Harvey notes, enlightenment thought raises a number of problems including "the question of exactly who possessed the claim to superior reason and under what conditions that reason should be exercised'' (Harvey, 1989, p. 14; see also MacDonald, 2002).

In recent years the ''natural'' rights and moral universals[29] inculcated Fairtrade have generated culturally grounded objections, particularly with regard to ''local'' norms surrounding child labor, often a structural feature of African agriculture (Blowfield & Dolan, 2008). As one flower grower noted:

> If people took time to look at the issues, they would understand that not all [standards] are appropriate in the developing country context…For example, child labour – if there are no schools, what's the point of them staying at home when they could be contributing to family income? So long as the work is not dangerous, [it] shouldn't be a problem for children to work in school hols (holidays) or weekends.

Another commented on the stipulation that labor be unionized, a predicament in a Kenyan context:

> They're always, you know, whether it's Fairtrade or whether it's MPS, or whether it's our customers, they're always pushing us down the unionisation lead. You know, ''Why aren't you unionised? Why aren't you unionised? Why aren't you unionised?,'' and you keep saying, ''Because the workers don't want to.'' I mean…the fact is that on the farms of England…many have only 10 or 15% membership in the union. In many ways, it would be much better if they're 100% unionised, because then you're just negotiating with one adversary. But the fact that is true about unions in this country is that they have a history, there's a history of corruption, and there's a history of workers, basically, being taken advantage of. And workers are very, very reluctant to pay union dues because they just don't get anything from it. And definitely as a company we're not anti-union, but the fact is we can't force, you know, we can't force them to be unionised if they don't want to be.[30]

These growers capture the antonymy between ethical absolutism and cultural particularism that bedevils Fairtrade,[31] a disparity borne from ''an agenda of care…where what is good for the other has already been defined by the benevolent self'' (Giri & Quarles van Ufford, 2003, p. 254). Several consumers that I interviewed in the UK, for instance, explained that it was their ''duty to make it a more just world,''[32] embracing a welfarist conception of rights that defines African producers not by their capacity for choice and self-determination but by their right to dignity. While this ethical frame interprets Kenyan flower workers as rights-bearers, it also positions them as too ''powerless'' to attain these rights without the external intervention of a moral agent, rendering the moral claims exercised by Fairtrade redolent of colonial beneficence. A Kenyan NGO representative who is involved in the auditing of Fairtrade standards expressed this concern:

> The Fairtrade model is too top down. Who determines the prices? Who determines the criteria? There are no producers sitting in these deliberations with buyers. Few

> understand what Fairtrade is. For me that becomes unsustainable….Producers need to understand why they are doing what they are doing.''[33]

Like the colonial, missionary, and development interventions that preceded them, standards act ''as engines for generating knowledge about products, processes, and people'' (Dunn, 2005, p. 184), enabling northern buyers to ''get a handle on its subject'' through closer surveillance (Scott, 1998, p. 2; see also Freidberg, 2007). Yet while this ''handle'' is sought in the name of social and economic justice, it is often ''locally'' experienced as an instrument of authority and control. As Helen Mathanduku, a Fairtrade producer said in our discussion of standards, ''What would you say if a white man comes to your *shamba* [farm] and tells you that you have to make changes…lest you don't get the Fairtrade benefits. I can't refuse…if he wants me to wear protective clothing and all [the] other changes.'' These sorts of sentiments underscore how standards, which are cast as neutral, rational instruments impervious to socio-historical referents, infuse commodity flows with a very particular form of morality. Yet what converts the familiar value frictions inherent in standards into a potentially coercive mode of governance is the normalizing and abstracting power of the audit, where rights and justice are insinuated into new regimes of discipline and accountability (Mutersbaugh, 2005a, 2005b; Raynolds, 2007).

THE ABSTRACTION OF THE AUDIT

Like standards, the phenomenon of ''audit creep'' has drawn wide attention from social scientists who have explored how its practices and esthetic forms have become, to use Appadurai's term, an ideoscape at large, suffusing ''virtually every field of modern working life'' (Shore & Wright, 2000, p. 59). Now global in scope – what Mutersbaugh (2005) terms the ''transnational economy of inspectability'' – audits have become a metonym for risk management, deploying new regimes of control and accountability to ferret out the ambiguities and potential dangers that inhabit commodity chains (Beck, 1999; Power, 1997).

Audits are integral to the legitimacy of Fairtrade whose criteria require monitoring systems to ensure that Fairtrade principles are met and that individual producers are benefiting (Barrientos & Dolan, 2006). The audit process in Fairtrade flowers, for example, translates rights obligations into visible outcomes (i.e., performance indicators), and verifies the extent to which producers are in compliance. In practice this means that both workers and factory documents are subjected to third party external inspection and subsumed within an audit trail that extends from Kenya's flower farms to Britain's supermarket shelves. This audit trail distills knowledge on the socio-materialities of production through the twin processes of abstraction and quantification, both of which convert the varied subjectivities of producers into auditable commodities (Power, 1997). For example, although the audits conducted by the FLO Certification Coordinator for Eastern Africa tend to be more "participatory," labor audits are typically performed through a checklist that condenses key clauses within a code into standardized, verifiable question such as "Do workers earn a living wage?" or "Is child labour used?" (Blowfield & Dolan, 2008). This process of abstraction, variously theorized as "disembedding" (Polyani, 1944), "virtualism" (Miller, 1998b), and "demoralising" (Ferguson, 1994) translates the lived reality of social relations into a checklist category, thereby negating the complexity of the labor process and the social relations that underwrite it through its conversion into standardized conceptual and categorical forms (Power, 1997). But auditing does more than that; it authorizes and naturalizes the power of the category itself (*ibid.*). Like the models of international development, auditing creates authorized categories of "fact" that label and render a certain interpretation of reality as significant (Mosse, 2003). This virtual reality, however, is constituted by the auditor rather than the audited; the latter is simply a bearer of the category defined by the former (Blowfield & Dolan, 2008). Hence, auditing not only validates fair and ethical practice but also defines and naturalizes it.

This "decoupling" of knowledge from social context allows diverse production sites to be rendered commensurate (Power, 1997). But it also reifies the market, objectifying, and quantifying complex social phenomenon in ways that enable their translation and communication through the commodity chain (MacGillivray & Zadek, 1995, p. 3). Fundamental to auditing technologies, for example, is the assumption that measurement obviates interpretation and conjecture, and that as MacGillivray & Zadek (1995) put it, "if you want it to count, count it." The abstraction and quantification of social relations inherent to the checklist or snapshot auditing approach, however, yields a partial account of workplace issues, distilling "the messiness of reality into authorized categories" of manageability, coherence and rationality (Mosse, 2003, p. 46). For example, audits in Kenya have captured visible issues that are easily verified by company records or physical inspection (e.g., wages and safety), but overlooked social issues such as freedom of association, harassment, and discrimination

(Auret & Barrientos, 2006). At one level these oversights reflect the "decoupling" process described by Power (1997), a process that is intensified by auditors who are often unfamiliar with local, economic, cultural, and political conditions and whose status (e.g., class, gender, and ethnicity) differ markedly from producers (Lyon, 2006). According to the owner of one large commercial farm, the audit was completely out of sync with the realities of African production: "[T]hey used Verité Asia and so had Asian auditors who didn't speak the local language. Did have some translators, but God knows where they were from…They were using instruments they use in garment factories in Asia – not appropriate."

At another level, such oversights represent the everyday strategies that Southern producers employ to flout the audit process in order to retain their access to lucrative northern markets. Like the audits of UK universities described by Shore and Wright (2000), audits in the flower industry can often be staged performances, orchestrated to display compliance and conceal untoward practices. Several workers in Kenya reported that when auditors came they were told to hide, wear protective clothing, and stay away from sprayed greenhouses (Smith et al., 2005). One of them told us that the company does not allow them to talk to "outsiders like NGOs and Human Rights" and those that do must be accompanied by supervisors. As he said to me, "how can a person come and ask me the secrets of my wife, and the person has come accompanied by my wife?"[34]

Such stories underscore the paradox inculcated in the audit process, that is, how an imperative for transparency and accountability can produce instead opacity and deception (Blowfield & Dolan, 2008). As an international labor union representative I spoke to claimed, "[The auditors] can never really know what conditions are since there is lots of pretence and camouflage…Since auditors come with advance warning, the owners/managers can prime the workers and can cover up regular abuses…The workers won't say anything bad for fear of losing their jobs."[35]

Recently, the hierarchies inherent in this "top down" auditing have given way to the new orthodoxy of participatory social auditing (PSA), which recasts the beneficiaries of Fairtrade into "partners" in the auditing process. In Kenya participation has become an index of moral responsibility, unleashing a booming business in participatory auditing services as organizations and retailers point to such practices as evidence of accountability (Strathern, 2004). The process has also parlayed the subjectivities and experiences of Kenyan producers into a new source of economic value, as NGOs and auditing firms market techniques to mine "local" knowledge from producers. As the Kenyan NGO Africa Now claimed:

> Africa Now uses audit techniques which encourage workers to develop their ideas and voice their concerns in a peer group without fear of recrimination. In this process, we use participatory approaches first developed for appraising problems in poor communities. Africa Now has been at the forefront of promoting these methodologies, and has provided training for over 20 people…and we plan to expand Africa Now's work on audits and standards. (Africa Now 2004)

Although the methods of PSA are more inclusive, overcoming what Oxfam terms the "voice poverty" of development beneficiaries, they too are a mode of accountability structured by the imperatives of neoliberalism. The concerns that workers identify through PSA, for instance, are translated and distilled into an esthetic form that is amenable to communication through the nodes of the commodity chain and beyond. This form – the auditing report – therefore translates the nuanced and highly particularistic experiences of Fairtrade producers and workers into an ethical artifact that reflects the regulatory lingua franca of best practice (Shore & Wright, 2000). In essence, because the value of an audit lies in its capacity to assuage perceived risks in the arena of consumption, the mobility and the form that knowledge assumes are as important as the knowledge itself (Elyachar, 2006; Strathern, 2004). Thus, whether conducted through participatory methods or not, audit remains a technology of governance, one that identifies, manages, and packages information about Southern producers in the name of ethical accountability (Blowfield & Dolan, 2008). As Shore and Wright argue "it is a feature of policies that their political nature is disguised by the objective, neutral, legal-rational idioms in which they are portrayed. In this guise, politics appear to be mere instruments for promoting efficiency and effectiveness" (1997, p. 8).

CONCLUSION

I began this essay with a visit to Jacinta, one of the thousands of "flower girls" who have migrated to Lake Naivasha seeking economic opportunity in Kenya's "red gold" industry. For many "conscious" consumers, young women such as, Jacinta represent the paradigmatic exploited transnational worker, who evokes dystopian imaginaries of child slavery, pesticide poisoning, and inhumane labor conditions. It is Jacinta's image that has come to capture the perils of globalization, animating our anxieties, and providing the fodder for the moralizing discourse of ethical consumption that epitomize this "anxious age" (Friedberg, 2004).

Jacinta's life, however, bears little relationship to the iconography of global villages and fraternal affinities that are circulated through Fairtrade marketing. Although she is grateful for her job, knowing that without it she would be unable to educate, feed, and clothe her children, she is also strained – tired of the cold, the long hours of standing, the little salary, the pesticides, and the lack of time for herself and her family. She has yet to personally experience the full "benefits" of Fairtrade, but tells me that perhaps if they built houses or paid for school fees that would help her. For Jacinta, the Fairtrade *mzungu* remains an unfulfilled promise, a symbol of patronage yet to come.

The relationality that consumers seek through Fairtrade thus remains illusive for many "flower girls" such as Jacinta, but the values and interests reposed in this ethical exchange do not. Although the liberal ethics embodied in Fairtrade standards are cast as morally unproblematic, they serve as a mechanism through which power is exercised, specific interests are naturalized, and differences are sublimated through a benevolent vernacular of economic and social rights. Indeed, the transcultural differences that imbue Fairtrade with its discursive cachet and material power are paradoxically often rendered "invisible" by the lexicon of universal rights and the abstracting "virtualism" of the audit process.

At the end of the day, however, the dilemma posed by standards and audits may be less than their cultural (ir)relevance than the political economy of knowledge production in which they emerge, a context in which Northern stakeholders have assumed the roles of both architect and steward of international justice. The power of Fairtrade's moral claim – a responsibility for the "other" – renders the ideational roots of this political economy both unnoticed and unexamined, naturalizing the authority of the North behind the guise of partner (Rajak, 2006). The issue is thus not only that Kenyan producers must adapt to the values and ethical practices of Northern stakeholders, which may or may not have resonance for them, but how Fairtrade contributes to establishing and legitimating these practices as a *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1977), an orthodoxy that operates as objective truth. A key issue is therefore to make explicit who possesses the power to define the terms of Fairtrade, that is who possesses the power to determine the need of an ethic in the first instance, and subsequently command a particular ethical vision as the truth.

NOTES

1. Here I am employing the concept of "neoliberalism" to refer to a set of practices including: trade liberalization; deregulation; the penetration of market mechanisms into non-marketized domains (e.g., health, education); and a culture of responsibility and individualism (Walker, Roberts, Jones, & Fröhling, 2008).

2. The terms *ethics* and *morals* denote similar conceptions of ideas and practice in this chapter.

3. See Appadurai (1996), Bloch and Parry (1989), Carrier (1991), Douglas and Isherwood (1979), Gregory (1982), Haugerud, Stone, and Little (2000), Miller (1998a, 1998b), and Taussig (1980).

4. See Graeber (2001), Hannerz (1992), Marx (1867 [1928]), and Simmel (1907 [1990]) on value.

5. A number of analytic frameworks have been advanced to theorize the transnational linkages between the production, distribution, and consumption of goods. See Friedland (1984), Mintz (1986), Porter (1990), Ruigrok and van Tulder (1995), and Appadurai (1986).

6. See Dolan (2007), Goodman (2004), Lyon (2006), and Connolly and Shaw (2006).

7. See Moberg (2004), Raynolds (2002), and Bacon (2005) among others.

8. See Beck (1999), Douglas and Wildavsky (1982), Garsten and Hasselström (2003), Giddens (1990), and Zaloom (2003).

9. Interview, July 30, 2004.

10. Interview, August 5, 2004.

11. Interview, August 8, 2004.

12. Interview, August 4, 2004.

13. According to David Miller (2001, p. 454), to be remedially responsible for a situation is "to have a special obligation to put the bad situation right, in other words, to be picked out, either individually or along with others, as having a responsibility toward the deprived or suffering party that is not shared equally among all agents."

14. BBC, Real Story, 2003.

15. Interview, Kenya, July 29, 2002.

16. This is what Watson (2007) refers to as the "Starbucks effect": the increased presence of global corporations within Fairtrade networks who bring Fairtrade products in-house.

17. From http://www.tesco.com/products.htm, accessed March 20, 2007.

18. This is a pseudonym.

19. Interview, October 13, 2006.

20. The inclusion of commercial farms within the Fairtrade model was spearheaded by FLO's standard for banana certification in 1997, which included coverage of minimum labor standards for workers (Barrientos & Dolan, 2006). Kenya now has 17 Fairtrade certified large farms, more than any other flower growing country (Patton, 2008).

21. This is evident in corporate proclamations such as "Fairtrade is not a charity, but a viable trading model that respects farmers as equal partners in a business relationship" (http://www.williamsontea.com/fairtradetea/index.php).

22. Interview, June 22, 2007.
23. Interview, June 22, 2007.
24. Interviews, January 1, 2006.
25. This quote was cited in *The Guardian* (Vasagar, 2006). The lack of awareness was also registered by my recent study of Fairtrade tea producers whose comprehension of Fairtrade ranged from naught to highly impressionistic.
26. Interview, April 12–13, 2005.
27. Interview, April 13–14, 2005.
28. See Comaroff and Comaroff (1999), Ferguson and Gupta (2002), MacDonald (2002), and Mutersbaugh (2002).
29. Fairtrade is often promoted as a "universal rights ethos" (see PURE, n.d.).
30. Interview, October 13, 2006.
31. There are, for example, no criteria within Fairtrade standards that specify how competing notions of rights and well-being are to be reconciled (Blowfield, 2003).
32. Interview, August 2, 2004.
33. Interview, October 9, 2006.
34. Focus Group Discussion, Kenya, August 8, 2002.
35. Interview, Kenya, July 22, 2002.

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'UPLIFT AND EMPOWER': THE MARKET, MORALITY AND CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY ON SOUTH AFRICA'S PLATINUM BELT

Dinah Rajak

ABSTRACT

In recent years, with the advent of the phenomenon known as corporate social responsibility (CSR), transnational corporations have moved away from traditional modes of philanthropic largesse, to a focus on 'community engagement', partnership, empowerment and 'social investment'. This chapter draws on ethnographic research, tracing the practise of CSR in a transnational mining company, from its corporate headquarters in London, to its mining operations on South Africa's platinum belt. It explores how the practices of corporate–community partnership – and the goal of 'self-sustainability' that the company propounds – project the company as a vehicle of empowerment as it strives to convert 'beneficiaries' to the values and virtues of the market with an injunction to 'help yourself' to a piece of 'the market' and share the opportunities that it offers. However, while the promise of CSR holds out this vision of mutual independence and self-sustainability, I argue that the practise of CSR reinscribes older relations of patronage and clientelism

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which recreate the coercive bonds of 'the gift', inspiring deference and dependence, on the part of the recipient, rather than autonomy and empowerment.

> You must always be ready to concede all that you can. When you want something from a person, think first what you can give him in return. Let him think that it's he who is coming off best. But all the time make sure it is you in the end.
>
> (Ernest Oppenheimer, Founder of the Anglo American Corporation, to his son Harry, quoted in Hocking, 1973, p. 351)

Sitting in Sandringham Gardens Retirement Village in Johannesburg, Ike Rosmarin, now 92, told me of his time in the town of Rustenburg, the urban hub of South Africa's Platinum Mining Belt. For almost four decades from the early 1960s, Ike had been manager of the Victoria Trading Store on the Rustenburg Platinum Mine and Chairman of the town's Red Cross:

> Did Rebecca tell you about the water and the school? Well, when Rebecca, my domestic worker, moved to Bleskop[1] in the 70s there was no water there – not until the Rand Water Company came from Jo'burg and put water there quite recently. So I used to drive out there three times a week to deliver a big water tank to Rebecca and Abe. When her grandson, Elias, was still just little – and he was at school – that school right near Rebecca's house – it was his birthday and we arranged a birthday party for him in his classroom at the school, so we bought cake and biscuits and a tank of water for all his class mates to the school and had a party in his class. When we came out of the classroom there was a big crowd of school children with receptacles for water – because, the principal said, the school had no water, like the township. So the next day I went to see Charlie Stott who was the manager of the Rustenburg Platinum Mine and I told him that the school had no water and something must be done. Immediately we got into his Mercedes Benz and drove to the school and he spoke with the principal. You've seen the mine shaft, just opposite Rebecca's house – the Turfontein mine shaft. Well two weeks later Charlie Stott had a pipe built from the mine direct to the school to pipe water.

Ike's story of Charlie Stott bringing water to the Bleskop School evokes a poignant image of classic corporate largesse in a mining town. Here the iconic figure of the Mine Manager looms over the town as the paternalistic and all-powerful 'big man'. This picture of a mining town in a bygone age has been banished by the advent of the modern discourse of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its focus on progressive buzzwords such as sustainability, empowerment and participation aligned with the political agenda of South Africa's post-apartheid government.

In so doing, mining companies have moved away from the rhetoric of philanthropy towards that of capacity building and social investment programmes allowing them, as Stirrat and Henkel comment with respect to

NGOs, 'to avoid the charge that they are patrons' (1997, p. 73). Over the past decade, significant resources have been devoted to developing comprehensive CSR policy both within companies and in the national and international arenas concerned with the role of corporations as vehicles for sustainable development.[2] Most companies mining in South Africa now have a package of policies covering various areas, which fall under the broad spectrum of CSR or Socio-Economic Development (SED).[3] These commonly include community engagement, education initiatives, social enterprise and small-business development.

This chapter is based on multi-sited ethnographic research, tracking the discourse and practise of CSR in a transnational mining corporation – Anglo American and its subsidiary Anglo Platinum – from the company's headquarters in London, to their offices in Johannesburg and ultimately to Rustenburg, the centre of Platinum mining in South Africa. The CSR movement within the South African mining industry covers a great diversity of issues that are often crudely divided into two broad spheres.[4] On the one hand are those areas that are seen to be directly related to production and core operational activities. These include, working conditions; health and safety (including HIV/AIDS treatment); employee training and development; and affirmative action recruitment policy demonstrating their commitment to the twin imperatives of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and 'transformation'[5] laid down by the South African government.[6] On the other hand, are those activities commonly categorised as 'corporate social investment' (CSI) in the development of the 'broader community' outside the mine, or as it is described in official company discourse, 'the world beyond our perimeter fence' (Anglo American, 2005, p. 16).

This chapter focuses on the latter, as I explore the ways in which corporate responsibility is practised, dispensed and deployed in Rustenburg through 'corporate–community partnership' and two central pillars of the company's 'empowerment' agenda: enterprise and education. I argue that the commitment to 'empowerment through enterprise' (Anglo American, 2005, p. 14), and the discursive practices through which it is enacted, strive to convert 'beneficiaries' to the values and virtues of market capitalism with an injunction to 'help yourself' to a piece of 'the market' and share the opportunities and freedoms that it offers. However the complex social realities around the mines confound any neat distinctions between CSR and CSI, between direct and indirect responsibility spatialised within bounded zones of 'the mine' and 'the community' beyond its borders. What emerges is a somewhat more blurred picture, in which the discourse of CSR glosses the lines between educational development, recruitment, employment and empowerment, as it provides a crucial vehicle through which the company can sustain and reproduce itself, and the hegemonic market ideology upon which it relies.

CSR claims a radical break with the legacy of corporate philanthropy – charitable giving replaced by the technocratic rationalism of 'responsible competitiveness' and a market-driven paradigm of 'social investment', while 'stakeholder engagement' and partnership take the place of the mine manager's paternalism. Mine ethnographers have revealed the way, in which the paternalism of managers was a crucial vehicle of control over workers.[7] But, the philanthropic endeavours of those such as Charlie Stott toward the so-called 'wider community' were traditionally viewed as peripheral to the core business of mining and seen to operate within the moral world of gifts, distinct from the supposedly asocial and amoral realm of 'the market' and the logic of profit-maximisation and material accumulation that drives it.[8]

In contrast, contemporary CSR claims the confluence of economic value and ethical values packaged together as a new human or even 'compassionate capitalism' (Economist, 2004). The apparent convergence of doing good business and doing good unsettles the discursive separation of 'the market' and morality.[9] And, in doing so, it throws into question the conventional representation of 'the market' as a universal, neutral and indeed natural mechanism, free of the taint of moral values, social relations. Or as the Chairman of Anglo American put it: 'the market is like gravity – there's not right or wrong about it'.[10] It does so by drawing on a powerful paradigm of 'empowerment' through enterprise, which asserts, not only that the interests of material accumulation can be pursued alongside those of moral well-being, but that 'the market' itself offers the panacea to poverty: the vehicle for upliftment and emancipation from economic oppression.

However, while the promise of CSR holds out this vision of mutual independence and self-sustainability, I argue that the practise of CSR reinscribes older relations of patronage and clientelism which recreate the coercive bonds of 'the gift', inspiring deference and dependence, on the part of the recipient, rather than autonomy and empowerment (Rajak, 2008). This points to a central paradox that this chapter aims to unpack. On the one hand the discourse of CSR is framed in terms of commitment to the orthodoxy of 'economic empowerment', and its attendant values of 'self-help' and 'autonomy' which solicit the voluntary participation of people in attempts to shape themselves into ideal-type market actors (Cruikshank, 1999, p. 86). On the other hand, the practise of CSR emerges as embedded in the social relations of patronage and clientelism that carry with them the moral bonds and coercive properties of the gift rendering this quest for 'empowerment' elusive.

SITUATING CSR: PLATINUM CITY AND THE 'NEW SOUTH AFRICA'

The discourse of CSR – and in particular the notion of corporate citizenship with which it is equated – has a particular salience in the context of South Africa and the political economy of the post-apartheid state. Over the past decade the state's development agenda has become increasingly dependant on and directed towards the expansion of business (both large and small) and entrepreneurial opportunities, as the central vehicle through which broad-based black economic (and social) empowerment can be achieved[11] (James, 2006, p. 2). The public and private sector appear to have teamed up in a collective devotion to enterprise development, both small and large. This dedication to the spirit of entrepreneurialism – which projects the implicit message that 'everyone can be a businessman in the new South Africa' – is substantiated in the provision of SME training and support programmes that occupy a central position in development planning in both the public and corporate sectors. Within this market-based vision of development, CSR has gained great currency as the framework for a business-state alliance in pursuit of shared goals of development and as a platform from which transnational corporations (TNCs) can state their commitment to the 'new South Africa':

> In a developing country with an unusually substantial private business sector a key challenge is to free the entrepreneurial capacity of large and small players in our industry in order to increase the rate at which they mobilise investment and occupy their rightful place. (Chamber of Mines, 2003, p. 35)

This mission has been articulated through an appeal to 'patriotic capitalism',[12] which places business at the heart of the development agenda, as it frames private enterprise within a narrative of nationalist development and patriotic corporate endeavour. The appeal to 'patriotic capitalism' is encapsulated in the 'Proudly South African' brand that has been ubiquitously adopted by South African businesses of all types: emblazoned on cereal boxes, promotional billboards and adverts in newspapers, magazines and television. The redefinition of development as 'economic empowerment' encapsulated in BEE thus fits perfectly with the discourse of

CSR, authenticating the position of TNCs such as Anglo American in the new South Africa as architects of empowerment and agents of social improvement; as ‘Proudly South African’.

As the state has warmly embraced big business in its development agenda, business seems to have embraced everything. CSR provides a crucial discourse with which South Africa’s corporate giants attempt to negotiate and shape the imperatives of the post-apartheid state according to a dominant discourse of development that reflects their interests. In the case of mining companies this is of particular importance. In a country, in which mining and minerals have retained such economic and political centrality, the commitment of the mining industry – and in particular that of Anglo American the country’s largest private sector employer – to good corporate citizenship asserts the collaboration between big business and the ANC government in the apparently mutual goal of national development in the ‘new South Africa’. The rhetoric of a collaborative venture between business and the state in pursuit of collective development goals is reflected in the appeal to ‘corporate–community partnership’ at the ‘local’ level of mining operations. Here the rather intangible assertion of ‘good corporate citizenship’ translates into the development and empowerment initiatives of various mining companies, in the competitive arena of CSR and CSI that characterises Rustenburg, the global centre of platinum production.

The rich mineral deposits of the Western Limb of South Africa’s Bushveld Igneous Complex[13] are subject to the operations of five separate mining corporations. Dominant amongst these is Anglo Platinum. It is here that close to 40% of the world’s platinum is produced: blasted from the rock, transported to the surface, crushed, smelted and refined until it is ready to be flown to the coast, from where it makes its way across the globe to be moulded into auto-catalysts for cars or jewellery for those who can afford it.

Over the past decade, the explosion of production at the platinum mines that overshadow the town of Rustenburg, has earned the town a new name: Platinum City.[14] Almost as if the mines are physically pushing up through the ground, the pressure from their expansion and the resultant commercial boom is stretching Rustenburg at its seams. In 2005, the SABC news declared Rustenburg the fastest growing city in Africa second only to Cairo[15] and according to the 2005 State of the City Address, ‘all indications are that our city may double in size in the next 15 years’ (Mabe, 2005, p. 2).

The effects of the platinum boom on Rustenburg are manifest in the visible disparity of wealth that defines the city. The expansion of mining has generated a rapid growth in service and consumer industries in the town.

A second shopping mall opened in 2005, offering shops such as 'Platinum Interiors', 'Platinum Home Security' and 'Platinum Reef Hunting' along with 'Platinum' car dealerships selling top end BMWs and SUVs. The increasing population of senior and middle-managers employed at the mines, and the success of small enterprises booming as a result of the rapid growth of Rustenburg's 'middleclass', has created a severe shortage of housing. According to the manager of Anglo Platinum's housing unit, property prices in the town have risen by a few hundred percent over the past 10 years. Property developers have moved into every available area, on which to build new suburbs.

As the mining boom draws increasing numbers of people to the mines in search of work in the expanding formal and informal economy, the rate of in-migration to the Rustenburg Local Municipality has risen steeply in the past 5–10 years. With names suggestive of a very different reality, such as Sunrise Park, Luka and Freedom Park, a number of informal settlements sit adjacent to the various mining complexes on the outskirts of the city. These now house somewhere between 50 and 100,000 people[16] in densely packed rows of semi-permanent homes, accounting for between 10 and 20% of the total population of the municipality which stands between 400,000 and half a million (Rustenburg Local Municipality, 2005, p. 21).

The division of spoils underneath the ground has been translated into an awkward urban geography and social landscape above ground, making the Rustenburg Local Municipality a patchwork of industrial zones and urban sprawl which fall under the domain of one or other of the companies that mine the rich seams of the reef below. However, the mark of competing mining houses is not only seen in the towering mine shafts, chimney stacks and refineries. It is displayed on billboards, signposts and newspaper adverts proclaiming a company's social investment in many of the area's clinics, community organisations and schools – testaments to corporate–community partnership. From newspaper adverts promoting a company's investment of millions of Rand in the 'community' of South Africa, to billboards in Rustenburg, the mining houses strive to present themselves as the 'primary local supplier' (Mosse, 2003, p. 13) of development and empowerment; or as Rustenburg's Mayor put it, 'to win the best reputation in the community' (Rustenburg Mayor).

Thus, despite the rhetoric of 'partnership' (between business, civil society and local government) and 'joint responsibility', CSI in Rustenburg and indeed nationally, is a highly competitive affair, as companies strive to project themselves as ideal corporate citizens, leaders in the nation's development and empowerers of the next generation of South African leaders in their own image. In this way, Anglo American's SED agenda – along with that of its subsidiary Anglo Platinum – has increasingly focused on the mission of enterprise and education development, which have become the touchstone of the company's commitment to empowerment.

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ENTERPRISE

In Rustenburg the elevation of community partnership as the central mechanism through which development is delivered and empowerment achieved, is coupled with the imperative to embed 'sustainability' into the town and guard against the ever-present threat of decline into 'ghost-town' when the mines close or cease to churn out profit. Rhetoric in official company policy and among the company's frontline CSR agents in Rustenburg stresses the rejection of a culture of dependency on hand-outs and gifts, and the creation of a new ethos of 'self-empowerment':

> They can ask us for assistance if they need it but we try not to encourage it because we want them to be sustainable. We have a policy that we won't give money to something unless the school or organisation contributes 1/3 as well. Because otherwise they become dependent on us and start thinking they can't do anything themselves. (Elaine,[17] Anglo Platinum SED Office, Rustenburg)

Similarly, Jerry Mosenyi explained: 'Now we talk about empowerment, not charity. With the mining charter, it means that the company can't try to be Father Christmas anymore'.

From supply chain management offering preferential procurement tenders to new BEE companies, to loans for small enterprise and entrepreneurship training programmes such as *The Business*, the company projects its commitment to teaming up with the community in pursuit of 'empowerment through enterprise'. This mission has infused almost every aspect of the company's broad CSR programme.[18] Thus Gilbert Mogapi, HIV officer at Anglo Platinum Rustenburg explained, 'We are trying to bring the idea to the people that even if you are HIV positive, you can still start a business'. Mogapi's remark hints that implicit within this model of 'empowerment through enterprise' is the creation of a new class of empowered, entrepreneurial and self-sufficient citizens who are not only the ideal beneficiaries of CSR but embody the core values of the new South Africa – citizenship, enterprise and transformation – thus claiming the convergence of business values with those of the 'community', and indeed the nation. Under this new rhetoric, 'donor' and 'recipient' have been re-categorised as 'partners', 'investors' and crucially as 'social entrepreneurs'. This is epitomised in the words of the Chairman of the Anglo American Chairman's Fund, as he explained how the fund selects the targets of its support: 'We're… backing some of the more entrepreneurial NGOs…most importantly…we're looking for winners'[19] (Sunter, quoted in Robbins, 2001, p. 34).

Yet, an explicit sense of moral or even spiritual duty often attended the narratives of individuals charged with conducting the 'ethical' work of the company at the 'coalface'. CSR managers around the mines in Rustenburg often presented not only a deeply personalised vision of CSR, but one in which it was tightly bound up with a sense of a moral mission. The sense of a spiritual duty was powerfully evoked in the words of Betty Fisher, another CSR officer at the Rustenburg mines:

> My passion is nutrition, I'm reading up a lot about nutrition and I've become very passionate about feeding and this new hydroponic system…I have visions of being a Mother Theresa in khaki pants and white shirt…I have visions of going and doing my thing, taking hydroponics up and down Africa and *uplifting* people from poverty.

According to these narratives, the CSR manager appears in the figure of a missionary conducting the 'moral work' of the company and in doing so brings the sacred realm of morality into the profane realm of business. As Gill put it, '*I am the conscience of the company*'. The ubiquitous use of 'upliftment' by many CSR personnel I spoke to in Rustenburg – a word that seems to resonate with colonial missionary ideals – claimed on behalf of the company the power to 'uplift' people from poverty and wretchedness. The notion of 'upliftment' conjures images of upward progress in a vertical social hierarchy, accompanied perhaps by an almost spiritual ascent.

The zeal of CSR rhetoric thus endows it with the sense of a moral mission, projecting a particular vision of social improvement and elevating the company as both architect and agent of that vision. Within this vision of social improvement the very notion of 'empowerment' is recast as an almost spiritual project, infused with a faith in the power of conversion and transformation: a vision that seems somewhat dissonant with the economistic model of extending access to market opportunities according to which BEE is conventionally represented. Implicit within this vision of development is an ideal citizen who can respond to the moral exhortation to 'help oneself' by embracing the opportunities provided by expanding business, and in doing so, will be uplifted out of poverty and brought into 'the market'. This is fervently projected in an article advertising

The Business, entitled 'The ultimate entrepreneur', in *Lebone*, the newsletter of Anglo Platinum's Bafokeng Rasimone Mine (BRM) outside Rustenburg:

> Surely we are the generation to bring liberty to our children from the disaster that befell our ancestors… I believe that in the next generation in South Africa, we will see the *rise of a new breed of entrepreneur, a society not dominated by counterproductive bureaucrats and paper pushers!* A society where parents will teach their kids, "*dream yourself a radical new business idea*, develop it into a financially successful enterprise and retire before you are 40."

The article implores readers, 'It is time…to develop an *entrepreneurial mindset* and [learn] to become your own boss' (Zwennis, 2003, p. 16).

Thus participation in the market comes to stand for the promise of individual autonomy denied black South Africans under apartheid. In order to attain the emancipatory and transformative power of the market, a conversion is required. Anna-Clare Bezuidenhout described the process which, according to her, those selected for *The Business* must undergo:

> There's so many levels of transformation we're working on. It's a mammoth task – transforming someone into a different animal. We do six months entrepreneurial training and we call it "the army," not training, because it's really toughening up. We call it "self-mastering people" – so that people who go through it can say "I am the master of my own destiny." Most of the black people won't believe that. With the whole apartheid system, and the dependency it has created, unless you *change that mindset*, they'll still fail and mess it up because they won't have the internal locus of control.

The discursive practices of CSR thus strive to change 'hearts and minds'; to create an exemplary empowered subjects in the shape of an ideal type of rational economic citizen. This discourse of conversion and indeed elevation is captured in the account of 'empowerment' given by Marius du Plooy, CSR manager, at Anglo Platinum, Rustenburg:

> With the new transformation and BEE, there's a big social impact internal and external to the company. It's one thing to get a guy empowered – give him training in business or technical management – but this guy now moves from a low income to a high income bracket – which changes his place in the community. That's good but we have to make sure this is in a constructive not destructive way because money can be dangerous in inexperienced hands. Parasites jump on him. So he has to learn the right *mindset* as well.

The pervasive power of this discourse of 'empowerment through enterprise' to co-opt allegiance to a 'market ideal' from those outside business is evident as NGOs and community organisations have similarly converged on the language of enterprise, in which development actors are recast as 'social entrepreneurs'; efficiency is conflated with competitiveness; and 'sustainability' is equated with 'profit-making'. Thus, Anna-Clare Bezuidenhout, Director of *The Business*, an entrepreneurial training scheme at the Anglo Platinum operation in Rustenburg, stated:

> Yes I run this NGO, but I am also a business woman. I am a *social entrepreneur* – we are people who are passionately pursuing community development and are passionate about transforming South Africa. And social entrepreneurship, is really the future of South Africa…it means we are sustainable, we can look after ourselves.

However, the scarcity of funding for civil society and community development organisations, intensified by the virtual demise of state-funding and the short-term nature of most corporate support, makes social entrepreneurship an economic imperative for NGOs, as much as an ideological or spiritual mission.[20] This demands financial resourcefulness, inventiveness and opportunism not only for project survival but for the livelihoods of staff. Thus, like Anna-Clare, many of the NGO personnel working in Rustenburg not only divided their time between their community work and a series of business ventures, but had become in effect service providers for the CSR departments of various mining houses operating in the area.

While sustainable enterprise and 'empowerment through business' provide the backbone of the company's CSR policy, the reality is that most community organisations in Rustenburg are dependant on money from the mines. An internal Anglo Platinum report from 2002, which assessed and ranked home-based care organisations in the Rustenburg Local Municipality for future partnership potential, explicitly noted the almost complete lack of alternative sources of funding for the NGOs ('zero from government'[21]). The report concluded that local NGOs do not partner amongst themselves because of the competition between them for the scarce resources (Anglo Platinum, 2003).[22] In this context, NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs), desperate for survival, must compete to become the partner of choice for one of the mining companies operating in the area. This has the broader effect of drawing CBOs working further, a field in rural North West Province towards the mines in the hope of funding, thus creating a 'hotspot' of NGO activity within the 50 km zone of 'responsibility' of the various mines and a dearth beyond its border.

Anna-Clare Bezuidenhout's account of *The Business* disrupted her empowering vision of 'social entrepreneurship', as she narrated the asymmetry of power and the expectation of reciprocity inherent in the relationship between donor and recipient:

> When the mine opened about four years ago there was a lot of demonstrations – a lot of people toyi-toying around looking for work and with expectations of the mine – so we

> were part of [the company's] attempt to please the community because they couldn't give jobs to everyone – so others could have training…

She went on to explain how the mine gave them a plot of barely usable land on which to set up the project and a minimal budget.

> They make use of us when they have to brag about their CSR when they have important people they bring them to see us…whenever the mine wants to bring people there…whether it's from Jo'burg or America we must give up whatever we've planned, so they can have their photos taken in front of everything and put it in the magazine… They don't listen to our financial realities. We're constantly getting feedback from their top management that our statistics aren't good enough, but their expectations are unrealistic…they expect people to be in business the minute they leave our training…they don't realise economic empowerment is a process, that transformation is a process…They put in 500,000 rand and want to see a major miracle…*But they're giving it to us for free so what can we do.*

The funding provided by the company is bound by conditionality and brings with it the coercive powers of patronage. The company demands, in return, the implementation of projects that accord with its particular vision of development. This asymmetry of power is not only neglected, but veiled by the elevation of the partnership paradigm. In this case, the NGO is trapped between the impossible demands of the company and the inability to voice their discomfort, due to a fear that their funding will be taken away and that, after all, they are indebted to the company for this 'free gift'.

Interestingly, while CSR managers within the company appeared surprisingly candid in their accounts of the difficulties of partnership (the more senior the executive, the greater the level of apparent openness), their NGO counterparts were often reluctant to speak to me without proper 'authorisation' from their corporate partners: 'If you've spoken to Bridget at Anglo, you'll have heard everything you need to know about the project. I'm not going to say anything different. If you want to talk to me as well you'll need to get authorisation from Bridget' (Abigail, HIV Community Forum, Rustenburg).

Such relationships between corporations and civil society are at best precarious, at worst can they serve to increase the power of corporations to pursue their own interests, while blurring the lines of accountability between the company and the NGOs with which they work. For, no matter how fervently the parties assert a collaborative venture for a collective goal, the asymmetry between giver and receiver cannot be completely eliminated. After all, as Stirrat and Henkel put it, 'he who pays the piper not only calls the tune but attempts to make sure that it is performed' (Stirrat & Henkel, 1997, pp. 75–6). Thus Grace, an SED officer at Anglo Platinum in Rustenburg explained:

> The *service providers* don't realise that they need to justify the continuance of the project… I was talking to a guy today who was very narked that I was asking things like attendance records and he said he actually found it very hard to have the quality of the project questioned. But I have a right to expect results if I'm *giving* him the money.

Grace recast the so-called 'community partner' as 'service provider', who must deliver a particular service to the company in order to ensure future funding. In doing so she shifts the discourse from one of equal collaboration to a commercial transaction between customer and vendor who must guarantee a 'value-for-money' service that will yield the returns the client demands. Yet slippage between the language of service provider, on the one hand, and Grace's embodiment of herself as donor on the other ('I'm giving him the money'), blurs the lines between the disinterested market model of client and service provider, and the expectation of reciprocity inherent in gift relations, transforming the company – and in this case Grace herself – from client to patron.

By extending the hand of patronage to civil society organisations – giving and taking away social investment where it sees fit – the practise of CSI potentially weakens NGOs as it strips them of autonomy under the banner of empowerment. Anna-Clare Bezuidenhout forcefully evokes this sense of impotence:

> We had a very negative experience with the previous CSI manager, he gave us nothing. Then the next one liked us and started to take ownership – but then it started again with the struggles within his unit and because of political in-fighting he moved to another department…One of the big problems people have with the mines is that if you get to know one person and then they leave…you never know whether the next person is going to… just cut you off. They throw a bit of money at you but they'll never make a contract over six months.

Anna-Clare's narrative of precarious 'partnership' dependant on the personal discretion of CSR managers (and those like hers that I heard repeatedly) challenges the common representation of CSR as defined by impersonal market relations and a bureaucratic rationalism that distinguishes it from the kind of paternalistic corporate largesse that has, we are told, been consigned to the past.

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

The targets of the company's empowerment work begin much younger. Their investment in education is equally couched in the language, not simply of empowerment, but of conversion or transformation. The aim of the company's educational programmes is, as one of the SED officers put it, 'to select the brightest and the best at a young age and invest in excellence and to *change their mindsets*' so that children can 'visualise a different future path, become confident and empowered'. Brochures and company reports speak of 'providing life-changing experiences and opportunities which would otherwise have been beyond their reach' and emphasise that there is a focus on exposing participant students not only to technology, science and maths, but also to 'business principles and norms'. Similarly, the director of one of the Anglo education programmes, *Platinum Future*, an ex-minister turned 'social entrepreneur' described the programme's 'bottom line' thus: 'Upliftment and development, the feeling of togetherness and striving towards our dreams are of the utmost importance… Empowering people to empower themselves'.

As such their education programmes represent not simply training, but a form of disciplining, of producing particular kinds of subjectivities. The relationship between the company and the subject of their educational empowerment is conceived of as a long-term bond. This was manifest in an Anglo American advert that appeared regularly in the Mail and Guardian Newspaper during my fieldwork, entitled *We Have Come a Long Way*:

> We made your acquaintance some years ago when you were still a young person with ambitions to arm yourself with higher education in readiness for the challenges of the future. Our relationship grew during your years of university education when we assisted you with a scholarship/bursary, and after graduation you may even have spent some time at one of our subsidiaries.
>
> We are pleased that our paths crossed when they did. We are happy to have known you. We are proud of your achievements and the contribution you are making in our democratic South Africa. We, too, are passionate supporters of our beautiful country, as our active involvement in efforts to secure the 2010 Soccer World Cup[23] for SA indicated.
>
> Please let us renew our acquaintance and see it blossom into a wonderful friendship.
> (Mail & Guardian, 2005)

The twin targets of education and youth provide a morally compelling narrative not only for Anglo's CSR agenda, but for the relationship between the company as a whole and the new South Africa. As is epitomised in the advert above, by converging on education and youth, the company claims a position as architect of South Africa's transformation. Education provides a central canvas onto which mining companies can project their moral claims as investors in the future of South Africa. Through this narrative the company claims an affinity with the targets of its empowerment initiatives, binding them together in a collective energetic movement which replaces difference with unity in a shared goal.

The advert casts responsibility in a deeply personal and paternalistic register. The relationship between donor and recipient is described in terms of the individual rather than the institutional, evoking connotations of parent and child – 'we are *proud* of your achievements'. The image of personal friendship between company and beneficiary, and the language of affection in which it is described, is then broadened to encompass all of South Africa: 'we, too, are passionate supporters of our beautiful country'. It is a moral bond that is asserted between company and recipient, company and South Africa, rather than commercial relations. The emotional register is far more compelling. Even the title of the advert – 'We Have Come a Long Way' – suggests that this bond between sponsor and scholar is not only personal and moral, but a metaphor for the relationship between the company and the country.

In Anglo Platinum, this corporate commitment to educational development translates into a variety of activities to improve education and 'human capital' in the communities around the mines: from 'support for maths, science and literacy training programmes targeted at empowering 2692 learners' (Anglo Platinum, 2005, p. 3); to the provision of education bursaries and scholarships in vocational skills development. The heavy focus on maths and science education highlights the dual function of the company's commitment to educational development. On the one hand, it is represented as a key area of the company's SED work. On the other hand, the focus on technical schooling aims to create a pool of future employees, not only in order to meet the needs of the industry, but in an attempt to comply with the Mining Charter that enjoins companies to 'aspire to a baseline of 40 percent HDSA[24] participation in management within 5 years' (Department of Minerals and Energy, 2004, 4.2). In this context, it is somewhat less surprising that in a classroom of 25 students aged between 14 and 16 years at Rustenburg's only English (as opposed to Afrikaans) medium public high school, in which Anglo Platinum has invested significant funds, all but two told me that when they finished school they wanted to be a rock mechanic, metallurgist or chemical engineer. The dissenting two wanted instead to be a mine doctor and a human resources manager.

One such initiative is *Platinum Future*, a year-long residential academy between school and university funded jointly by seven mining houses. It provides intensive science and maths teaching with the aim of producing engineers, metallurgists and rock mechanics to staff the mines. Each company selects disadvantaged students from their mining areas. At the end of the year recruitment units at each of the companies compete in a kind of human auction to offer university scholarships to the best students. Those students are then tied to the company for 3–5 years after graduation.

One of those whose responsibility it is to select the targets of Anglo Platinum's educational empowerment is Grace. Grace's passion for her work emerged most strongly in the deep affection she expressed for the recipients she hand-picks for *Platinum Future* and other Anglo Platinum projects, to whom she refers as 'my Platinum kids': 'I love my *Platinum* kids. I don't have much understanding of teachers. Teachers are the bane of my life, but the children, and the chance to give them a future… that, I love'. Support for projects and the granting of bursaries is steeped in personal relations of affection and gratitude that develop between the frontline CSR officers and the beneficiaries of their projects. In this way, the personal relations of patronage and the bonds of affection and coercion that these create, work to close the space between the company as donor and the beneficiary as recipient.

It is through the personalised bonds of affection and warmth expressed by Grace and returned by her 18-year-old protégées, that the commercial relations between the company and its future recruits are enacted:

> Last year, Xstrata (another mining company) poached *my* girls – I brought three of the best and brightest girls to Edumap and the Xstrata people went in early and offered them a scholarship for uni – and Xstrata don't even sponsor *Platinum Future*, they just steal the bright students we produce.

The commitment, verging on ownership, to the talent she has discovered and nurtured acts as a cohesive force imparting loyalty for Anglo to a new generation of 'empowered' recipients as they come under the authority of its paternalistic responsibility. After all, the power of the gift, in contrast to the supposed neutrality of commercial transaction, has always been seen to rest on its ability to generate long and strong bonds between individuals.

Grace's comment exemplifies the twin forces of affection and ownership which seem to define the kind of patron–client relations that the company's SED work generates. However, her anger at the way in which Xstrata 'poached [her] girls' also perhaps points to the rejection of reciprocity that such an act involves. Those who Grace picks for *Platinum Future* spend a year at the academy preparing for the rigours of university and a life as a mining professional. For many of them this is not their first encounter with Anglo Platinum. Many may have attended *The Bridge* – the company's after-school maths and science programme in Rustenburg. Others might have been picked by Grace or one of her colleagues to receive a bursary to attend *LearnLife* – a summer leadership camp for 12–16 year olds or they might even have attended one of the mine's own primary schools.

Thus their relationship to Anglo Platinum, and in some cases individual SED officers, can already have dated back a number of years. Grace makes clear her expectation that at the end of the academy the company will select the brightest among their scholars to whom they will offer an Anglo university bursary, extending the bond for another four years. Finally, reciprocity is expected in the form of 3 or more year's service to the company after graduation. The delay is crucial. As Bourdieu points out: 'delay (in reciprocating the gift) is also a way of exacting from him the deferential conduct that is required as long as relations are not broken off' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 7). In the case of Xstrata poaching the Anglo girls, relations have been broken off. The long-lasting relationship between corporate sponsor and beneficiary has been severed, thus denying the expected reciprocity.

In the case of bursaries the lines between gift and market relations are blurred. On the one hand, bursaries and scholarships represent a central vehicle of Anglo Platinum's empowerment mission. They offer the promise of both affirmative action and the meritocratic selection of beneficiaries amongst the target group and thus embody the central values of self-empowerment – to help those who are willing (and able) to help themselves. Bursaries are awarded through a fair and meritocratic selection process, according to a straightforward bureaucratic procedure accompanied by a contract that binds the recipient to repay the educational support with a number of years' service to the company.

Yet on the other hand, the apparent meritocratic logic of the bursary schemes (much like the company's commitment to selecting and supporting those entrepreneurial NGOs and individuals that prove themselves to be 'winners') remains embedded within the dynamics of power and dependency which define corporate patronage: a kind of patronage that extends far beyond the individual relationship between the scholar and their corporate sponsor. As virtually the only supplier of bursaries to school children in Rustenburg hoping to go to university, and within a context of intense poverty, Anglo Platinum and its rival mining companies become in effect the primary (and almost sole) local suppliers of a ticket to higher education and a bright future in metallurgy, engineering or rock mechanics.

However, the educational benefits offered by the company are not open to everyone: not everyone is seen to be eligible for empowerment. Just as in the case of 'empowerment through enterprise', the process of 'empowerment through education' represents an exclusionary process of identification, isolation and elevation of an elite group of beneficiaries, projecting the company as the architect of a new class of empowered subjects. Thus Gill explained:

> Some say we should be supplying education to the masses. I believe in giving it to a few good kids... We have these "Anglo adopted schools." The idea is, if you target the educators you uplift the masses, you're not just helping a few, you reach more. But the results don't show a big enough impact. Look, you can *uplift* anyone but for it to be to a meaningful level they must have potential... So I believe in going straight to the kids, not the school – cut out the middleman. ...

The school, for Gill, is simply a middleman. And as Grace added, 'we can take a good kid from a beleaguered school and give him what his teacher is not'.

This is precisely the aim of *LearnLife* – an extra-curricular summer programme for 'future leaders'. At the *LearnLife* summer camp Gill introduced me to Thabo, a 14-year-old participant of the programme. Afterwards she remarked: 'he's so good – why isn't he doing maths and science? – then I could bring him in on one of the Anglo projects. He should do maths and science, he would be so good at Anglo'.

Through the practise of CSR, the enduring paternalism and webs of patronage within the company are projected outside in their relations with the so-called 'community' around the mines. While Gill and her colleagues stressed that they are not in the business of 'grooming' people for the company, 'suitability for Anglo' is one of the qualities that inform their selection of beneficiaries. The mission to empower – and to meet the affirmative action requirements of the Mining Charter – thus fuses with the imperative to create a pool of future black employees at management level. For the CSR officers this involves not only selecting appropriate beneficiaries for empowerment through education, but incorporating them into the 'Anglo value system' and inspiring in them, a sense of loyalty and reciprocal obligation to the company. The company's investment in 'educational capital' thus serves as a mechanism for business to legitimately maintain and reproduce, rather than 'transform', itself. For as Bourdieu warns us, 'the controlled mobility of a limited category of individuals, carefully selected and modified by and for individual ascent, is not incompatible with the permanence of structures (of relations between classes)' (1973, p. 71).

Through their educational empowerment activities the company strives to identify, select and support the 'best and the brightest' students in the district around the platinum mines. Thus Gill explained:

> We know which are the best schools and then we run testing in the schools and this year we introduced psychometric testing so we can see if they'll be good in Anglo… When we started doing *Platinum Future*, I said, "no way am I giving money to kids I haven't seen"… I want to see the school records and be in the interviews so that I can pick the brightest and the best.

By establishing themselves as a vehicle of 'empowerment', under the banner of the national government's BEE imperatives and the demands of the mining charter, the company can assert a common interest and cause with local government, thus legitimising their intervention in shaping educational development in the Rustenburg Municipality, and crucially, the selection of who gets to benefit from such support.

The number of those who receive the bursaries and benefits provided by Anglo Platinum alone are few. But the hope or promise of inclusion serves to elevate the company as a central agent of empowerment, securing for Anglo Platinum, a dominant voice in the educational development of Rustenburg. Indeed, the power of social giving to project the moral claims of the company onto the so-called 'community' of Rustenburg, allows the mining companies, and Anglo Platinum in particular, to exhibit and maintain an unrivalled position as the town's benefactors and patrons.

BETWEEN EMPOWERMENT AND ENTITLEMENT

The passionate commitment to 'empowering people' that was commonly voiced by CSR officers, was often accompanied by a rejection of any claims of entitlement from those they sought to empower:

> People around the mines feel an *entitlement* over and above the level of productivity they are willing to put in. Even *my school children* – who we've been *giving* a 40,000 rand bursary, which is more than their parents will be able to *earn* in a life time and you know those are the kids who phone me the first night they're on the programme and tell me they don't like the food… They should be praising the mines not attacking them (Grace).

The recipients of the company's 40,000 rand bursaries are placed in a position of indebtedness, in which they are expected to receive the bursary with gratitude and not complain. The sense of reciprocity or lack thereof is implied as the CSR coordinator criticises people for expecting more than they can give back in terms of productivity. Crucially, the 'gift' is juxtaposed with 'entitlement', so asserting the dominance of the company as a paternalistic institution. Grace implicitly contrasted this sense of entitlement with the work ethic of the managers at the company:

> Peter my husband would literally work 18 hours a day and every Saturday and Sunday if there was maintenance and the people under him are now working like that. These guys work really, really hard to earn the money that CSI then *gives away*. You can appreciate where these guys are coming from – they're at the face and mining life is tough and they see SED giving the money away that he's earning, to some worthless guy who doesn't do anything while he's slogging away to pay his bond and car and pay for his kids to go to college.

The corporate gift thus appears as the antithesis to entitlement, which is 'alienable', defined in terms of the impersonal rather than the personal – 'once passed over to the other person the original owner no longer has any claims on it' (Eyben with León, 2003, p. 10). In contrast, ownership and control of social responsibility or community investment projects around the mines tends to remain with the donor, the company. As Eyben and León put it, 'while *giving*, the company is also *keeping*… if the donor maintains most of the decision-making powers they remain the owner although the recipient is in possession of the money' (*ibid.*, emphasis added). The combination of affection and ownership encapsulated in Grace's reference above to 'my school children', extended beyond the personal relations between scholar and sponsor to the institutional arrangements between the company and their target schools, and the involvement of the company in shaping curriculums and particularly in the orientation of education to maths and science in the primary and secondary schools that they fund. Thus while CSR officers and corporate executives were at pains to stress sustainability and independence as the cornerstone of social investment, as a rejection of what was often termed a 'culture of hand-outs', the frequent physical presence of the donors at the various schools and educational initiatives that they support serve as a constant reminder of the provenance of the gift – affirming the authority of the company, even in the same moment as it is being denied.

As CSR personnel represent themselves as 'empowerers' of a hand-picked bunch of beneficiaries, the corporate discourse of empowerment involves an implicit rejection of any claims of entitlement. The injunction to 'help oneself', and exploit the opportunities given acts to reinforce the denial of obligation. As anyone who does not respond to this injunction to help themselves, has only themselves to blame. Responsibility is shifted from the corporation onto the recipients of their CSR agenda, who thus become subject to conflicting discursive practices – on the one hand to demonstrate their capacity for self-empowerment, on the other hand to show gratitude and deference for the patron's provision.

Implicit within this construction of the ideal subject of empowerment – one who can 'help themselves' – is the rejection of those who cannot or do not follow this model: those who as one CSR officer put it, 'squander the opportunities provided by the mine and sit waiting for handouts'. The true subjects of empowerment are juxtaposed with the myriad 'false' claims on the company for endless supplies of cash, of which CSR officers often complained: 'we're not made of money, we're not a bottomless pit, but everyone thinks we are'. They saw it as their responsibility to sort the 'true' and 'legitimate' subjects of empowerment from those who were trying to 'take advantage of' or 'exploit' the company. The inclusive vision of economic empowerment, whereby the goals of transformation and development are asserted to embrace all through the emancipatory power of market opportunities, gives way to an exclusive discourse of empowerment, delivered by the company to those who can 'help themselves' and do not 'sit waiting for hand-outs'.

CONCLUSION

The discourse of corporate–community partnership – and the promise of 'self-sustainability' that it extends – elevates the company as a vehicle of empowerment. The practices generated in pursuit of this mission, strive to convert 'beneficiaries' to the values and virtues of the market, with the injunction to 'help yourself' to a piece of 'the market' and grab the opportunities that it offers. 'Winners' in this vision of individual maximisation are, as James Carrier puts it, 'autonomous, rational and calculating; losers are dependent, muddled and cannot defer gratification' (Carrier, 1997, p. 28). Most importantly, Carrier points out, this ideal type 'market self' is supposed to be 'free of the immoralities of dependence on others' (*ibid.*).

Yet, while the targets of the company's empowerment work are subject to this proselytising vision of the emancipatory promise of business, uplifted through educational and training programmes, and transformed into ideal market players, they are simultaneously subjected to the coercive powers of the gift which serves to reassert the hierarchy of donor over recipient. As Crewe and Harrison state, quoting Scott, 'as in a relationship between landlord and tenant, at the centre of the donor-recipient relationship is an "exchange of deference and compliance by the client in return for the patron's provision" ' (Crewe & Harrison, 1998, p. 74). Or, as the director of Rustenburg's Community Foundation put it: 'as long as we're dependent on hand-outs from the mines, we'll be their slaves'.

The reinvention of a moral economy of social responsibility within the context of global corporate capitalism and the 'cold reasoning of business-man, banker and capitalist' (Mauss, 1967, p. 73) confounds the classic antithesis between the moral bonds associated with the 'gift', and the autonomy and impersonal market rationalism propounded by the discourse of economic empowerment. CSR seems in many ways to invoke the former as its rationale while delivering the latter. Is the contemporary phenomenon of CSR then, little more than a pale shadow of the largesse of Charlie Stott and his fellow mine managers or the grand philanthropic endeavours of 'Oppenheimer and Son', Anglo's founding fathers and the pantheon of past industrialists? Does the intrusion of this moral discourse into the supposedly modern world of market relations signify, as David Graeber suggests, an underlying repugnance within capitalist societies towards the harsh logic of the market demanding redemption through the morality of the gift (Graeber, 2001): old school philanthropy in new clothes offering moral purification to the process of accumulation?

However such arguments place the act of giving and the practise of CSR, outside the core practise of business – a moral bolt-on or postscript to the fundamentals of 'the market'. Yet the modern discourse of CSR seeks to do quite the opposite. Rather than providing a purifying function to the taint of capitalism, CSR serves as an authenticating discourse *for* market capitalism, according to which, as Olds and Thrifts put it, 'accumulation becomes the very stuff of life, through persuading the population to become its own prime asset – a kind of people mine' (Olds & Thrift, 2005, p. 272).

The relationship between the company's CSR operatives and the beneficiaries they seek to empower thus seems to embody broader tensions surrounding the Anglo American's relationship to the 'new South Africa', and more broadly, the position of big business in post-apartheid state. The company asserts its role as a key player in the development of the nation through a narrative of empowerment, transformation and responsibility. At the same time, the discourse of CSR serves to reject claims of entitlement, obligation or the legacy of their role in the country's tortuous past (Fig, 2005). By providing a moral narrative of commitment to national development, CSR banishes questions surrounding the inequitable distribution of wealth and resources in South Africa's mineral economy. The logic of business itself – and entry into the market – comes to stand for the values of freedom and empowerment that lie at the heart of the discourse of national development in the 'new South Africa'. This ideological vision of 'empowerment' asserts the primacy of the market as the panacea to poverty. It extends the promise of emancipation from the political, social and economic shackles of the past and present, through the empowering opportunities of 'the market', which as Manzo puts it, has become 'the privileged subject around which all struggles for economic justice must orient themselves' (Manzo, 1992, p. 253). The effect is not only to remove poverty from debates about social justice and redistribution, but to establish business as a moral duty in itself.

NOTES

1. Bleskop is a township on the outskirts of Rustenburg next to the Turfontein mine shaft.
2. Examples of such international initiatives include the UN Global Compact, the International Council on Mining and Minerals (ICMM), and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), to name but a few. At the national level, the central regulatory vehicle for CSR in the mining industry is the Mining Charter and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Scorecard.
3. These policies are generally supported by detailed management, implementation and reporting mechanisms, a formal Corporate Social Investment (CSI) budget, often set at around 1% of pre-tax profits, and teams of CSR or SED officers charged with the job of implementation.
4. It should be noted here that, as Hamann points out, CSR within the mining industry is 'a special case' owing to the 'transitory nature of mining' and the inevitable social and environmental footprint left behind. Furthermore, 'in South Africa, such concerns are aggravated by mining companies' implication in South Africa's tortuous history' (Hamann, 2004a, p. 5).
5. In South Africa 'transformation' has become a catch-all term synonymous with affirmative action.
6. These BEE requirements are codified in the Mining Charter and measured according to a 'scorecard' which provides a checklist of commitments to 'broad-based socio-economic empowerment' (Department of Minerals and Energy, 2004). They include employee training and literacy education, housing, employment equity, procurement from BEE companies, ownership and affirmative action to increase the number of those referred to in government policy as 'Historically Disadvantaged South Africans' (HDSAs) in management and technical positions (see note 24).

While the Charter itself is voluntary, its attachment to the government's new Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA) of 2002 gives it teeth. The Act enjoins companies to convert their 'old order' mining rights into 'new order rights'. In order to do so, and in competing with other companies for new exploration and mining rights, they must meet the social and labour requirements of the Charter (Hamann, 2004a, pp. 8–9).

7. See, for example Gordon (1977), Bulmer (1975), Burawoy (1972, 1974), and Wilson (1972).

8. Thus Andrew Barry writes in his discussion of 'Ethical Capitalism': 'ethical problems have generally been reckoned to be external to the market. The potential ethical dilemmas business corporations might have to confront have been traditionally resolved elsewhere (by the political system) and have been translated into the form of legal regulations and taxation that impact on the conduct of business… but they are not reckoned to be the explicit concern of business' (Barry, 2004, p. 196).

9. This separation is seen to be encapsulated in the words of Adam Smith, so often taken out of context and invoked by proponents of the free-market: 'it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest' (Smith, 1991, p. 20). As Carrier points out this evocation of Smith, essentialises market actors as 'self-serving, rational calculators, unconstrained by communal ties and sentiments' (Carrier, 1997, p. 33).

10. Interview, 6 December 2005.

11. This should be seen within the broader shift from a redistributive vision of development espoused by the post-apartheid government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994, to the orthodox neoliberalism laid down by the 'Growth, Employment and Redistribution' (GEAR) restructuring programme of 1996 (Carmody, 2002, p. 257).

12. Georgina Murray has developed a powerful critique of the discourse of 'patriotic capitalism' in the 'new South Africa' in which she argues that 'there is nothing patriotic about capital – it knows no community, state or national loyalty – only the competitive reality of ruthless survival in its disjointed and incoherent march towards globalisation' (Murray, 2000, p. 203).

13. The Bushveld Complex – 'a huge single mass of rock' which stretches for 41,000 miles across the North of the country from Limpopo to the North West Province – contains the world's greatest reserves of platinum group metals as well as extensive reserves of chromium iron, titanium, vanadium and tin (Reader, 1997, p. 13). Due to the dramatic rise in global demand for platinum, the mineral deposits of the Bushveld Complex have become one of the country's most important economic assets.

14. According to Rustenburg's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for 2005/6, mining contributes around 77% of the gross geographic product of the Rustenburg Local Municipality and accounts for 50% of those formally employed in the greater Rustenburg municipal area (Rustenburg Local Municipality, 2005, p. 23).

15. (*SABC News*, March 19, 2005). The Rustenburg Integrated Development Plan (2005) goes even further, claiming that Rustenburg is 'viewed as the fastest growing city in Africa' (*ibid.*, p. 18). During the five years of the most intense expansion,

in the mid to late 1990s, the population of Rustenburg grew by 33% (Hamann, 2004b, p. 208). The population recorded in the last census (2001) was 387,123 (Rustenburg Local Municipality, 2005). Today it is estimated at over half a million. According to the town's mayor: 'We have about 6–8% growth per annum – that is far, far above the national average – the only city on the whole continent that is nearing 6% is Cairo' (Rustenburg Mayor, 28 April 2005).

16. In 2001 a report by a local planning consultancy estimated the rate of growth of informal settlements as 24.2% per annum (Plan Associates, 2001, p. 1). A census carried out in the same year, recorded the number of households in the informal settlements as 48, 212, out of a total 116,592 recorded for the Rustenburg Local Municipality (Rustenburg Local Municipality, 2005, p. 21).

17. For the purposes of anonymity the real names of all informants, projects, NGOs and organisations have been substituted with fictitious names, except those of the mining companies whose identities it would have been impossible to disguise.

18. 'Anglo Platinum reports that it supported the creation of 48 new business and provided training to 145 emerging entrepreneurs' (Anglo American, 2005, p. 18).

19. Here, Sunter, a well-known director of Anglo American, recalls his famous 1987 treatise *The World and South Africa in the 1990s* in which he laid down his scenarios for the future of South Africa. The idiom on which Sunter hangs his predictions – that of 'the rules of the game' – implicitly invokes classical representations of the market model, complete with its own internal logic, rules, winners, and losers: 'what makes South Africa tick? If you know the rules of cricket or football and have studied the strengths and weaknesses of the best players on either side, you can exclude many possibilities. We say exactly the same about the world and South Africa; but understanding the 'rules of the game' and the main actors, you can narrow the range of possibilities' (Sunter, 1987, p. 14).

20. The weakness of the NGO sector in the post-apartheid period (Habib & Taylor, 1999; Ramphele, 2005) has contributed further to the dominance of the privatised, corporate model of company and service provider.

21. This report states that, 'Well-resourced NGO's are funded almost exclusively by local businesses, churches, Impala Platinum, Anglo American Chairman's Fund, Anglo Platinum, PSG and Sun City' (Anglo Platinum, 2003, p. 4).

22. In her study of peer education programmes in Durban, Deborah James describes how 'after 1994, donors began to give funds to the government rather than directly to NGOs. This forced NGOs to bid for money, (and) often pitting them against rival NGOs'. As a result, the 'tendering model' which has emerged as the dominant mode for NGOs to receive funding, can have the effect of '[blunting] the advocacy role' and '[enforcing] a compliance with government policy' (James, 2002, p. 174). In this case, the compliance is not so much with government policy, as with corporate strategy.

23. On 4th October 2003, the South African national newspaper, *The Star*, reported: 'South Africa's 2010 World Cup bid struck gold in Johannesburg yesterday when Anglo American Corporation of South Africa pledged R15-million towards this country's campaign to host the showpiece of the beautiful game… "Like all South Africans, we were deeply disappointed when the country lost the 2006 soccer World Cup to Germany by a single vote", said Anglo American CEO Tony Trahar' (Mark, 2003, p. 24).

24. According to the BEE scorecard of the Department of Minerals and Energy, the term which stands for 'Historically Disadvantaged South African', 'refers to any person, category of persons or community, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination before the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1993 (Act No. 200 of 1993) came into operation' (Department of Minerals and Energy, 2004). The category includes gender-discrimination as well as race.

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