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Abstract

This paper critically examines the discourse surrounding fair trade mainstreaming, and discusses the potential avenues for the future of the social movement. The authors have a unique insight into the fair trade market having a combined experience of over 30 years in practice and 15 as fair trade scholars. The paper highlights a number of benefits of mainstreaming, not least the continued growth of the global fair trade market (tipped to top $7 billion in 2012). However the paper also highlights the negative consequences of mainstreaming on the long term viability of fair trade as a credible ethical standard.

Keywords: Fair trade, Mainstreaming, Fairtrade Organisations, supermarket retailers, Multinational Corporations, Co-optation, Dilution, Fair-washing.

Introduction

Fair trade is a social movement based on an ideology of encouraging community development in some of the most deprived areas of the world[1]. It coined phrases such as "working themselves out of poverty" and "trade not aid" as the mantras on which growth and public acceptance were built.[2] As it matured it formalised definitions of fair trade and set up independent governance and monitoring organisations to oversee fair trade supply-chain agreements and the licensing of participants. The growth of fair trade has gone hand-in-hand with a growth in mainstream corporate involvement, with many in the movement perceiving engagement with the market mechanism as the most effective way of delivering societal change.[3] However, despite some

limited discussion of the potential impacts of this commercial engagement[4] there has been no systematic investigation of the form, structures and impacts of commercial engagement in fair trade, and what this means for the future of the social movement. This is the gap this paper intends to fill.

The authors commence with a historical review of the market for fair trade, investigating its growth and the importance of mainstreaming. This leads to an in-depth discussion of the impact of corporate engagement on the Authorities, the Competitors and the Customers. The paper finishes by discussing the implications of the decisions taken by fair trade participants and what this means for the future of the social movement and its credibility.

The market for fair trade

Many original fair trade organisations (FTOs) set out to stimulate the redistribution of wealth from Northern brand owners back to producer communities, as well as ensuring human rights, improved working conditions and sustained development through increased consumer awareness of social issues.[5] Thus, a key aim in fair trade has been to challenge the existing economic and business models to create a sustained shift towards social awareness and concern in society[6]. However, market changes in recent years have dramatically changed the composition of the fair trade market away from these specialist FTOs, to a plethora of other organisations with varying rationales for fair trade engagement.

Initially starting from a small niche in Argentinean Pin Cushions in the 1960's, fair trade has grown to encompass over 4,500 distinct fair trade products (WFTO, 2011). In so doing the

fair trade movement has consistently harnessed market mechanisms to drive social change through global consumption patterns. This received a major boost when commodity Fairtrade Labelling (or the Fairtrade Mark) began in the early 1990s[7]. Rising to $5.643bn sales on Fairtrade Marked products in 2010 plus more than $1bn in World Shop[8] and unlabelled fair trade sales worldwide[9] the rate of growth of fair trade has been spectacular. The largest and most mainstreamed economy for fair trade is the UK with £1.32bn (US$2.1bn) in Fairtrade Marked sales in 2011, having been worth less than £100million (US$160million) in 2003.[10]

The introduction of mainstream companies to fair trade was through the retailing of fair trade in Swiss and UK supermarkets as pioneered by FTO Cafédirect in the early 1990's.[11] The accreditation of <1% of Starbuck's coffee in the USA in 2000 and joint and own label brands between UK FTO Divine Chocolate Ltd with major UK supermarkets in the early 2000's, moved the licensing of mainstream companies closer. However, it was 2005 when Wal-Mart, Nestlé and Tesco's were licensed to carry the Fairtrade Mark on certain products in their own right that sparked a dramatic rise in the mainstreaming of fair trade,[12] leading to both Cadbury's and Nestlé each certifying their major chocolate brands, Dairy Milk and Kit Kat respectively, in August 2009, followed by Mars Maltesers in 2011. This was in parallel with many supermarkets and multiple retailers across the world selling fair trade products with a number (including Carrefour, Ahold Group, Co-op and Sainsbury's) having their own-label Fairtrade products.[13]

The rapid growth of mainstreaming has led a number of authors to look at its pros and cons, with strong evidence suggesting the economic success of fair trade is down to its market orientated approach.[14] However, many authors warn that uncritical engagement with mainstream

business risks co-optation, dilution and reputational damage to the fair trade movement.[15] In particular Jaffee[16] and Jaffee and Howard[17] discuss the challenges facing US regulatory authority Transfair in managing corporate engagement on the robustness of their accreditation process. However these issues need consideration from not only a regulatory authority level, but on a micro level within the organisations actively involved in fair trade; especially FTOs as the culture carriers of the original ideals and the knock-on effect of potential co-optation, dilution and reputational damage on consumer perceptions and consumption habits.

Concerns about the potential for corporate *Co-optation of fair trade* relate to a phenomenon associated with the co-optation of leaders of political movements to conform to established frameworks and procedures to create social change, thereby only partially achieving their goals.[18] Concerning Fair Trade Authorities, Jaffee focuses on the subversion of policy making to explain co-optation. However in organisational management terms this could be associated with Mintzberg's concept of "assimilation" where in reaching out with an ideology to divergent social groups, the original organisations' ideal becomes compromised.[19] In fair trade this would relate to the adaption of fair trade policy and processes not only in regulators, but also in FTOs and other social movement actors for the benefit of commercial goals or less conflict when dealing with mainstream organisations. In effect co-optation could lead to mainstream partners absorbing the more convenient elements of fair trade at the expense of its more radical edges.[20]

Dilution of fair trade would be the most extreme form of co-optation[21] where even core fundamental principles or standards upon which fair trade is based may be watered down to

ensure mainstream engagement with the initiative. This broader concept of dilution subsumes Jaffee's use of the term regulatory capture[22] (also see Goodman and Goodman[23]) where regulatory bodies (i.e. the fair trade authorities) are influenced by certain actors to make regulatory decisions in the commercial interest of those actors rather than the overall social good. These differ from the more pervasive fears about the *Reputational damage for fair trade* which would be more indicative of the idea of 'fair-washing'[24] or 'Clean-wash'[25], which occurs when a company "derives positive benefits from its association with the fair trade movement, however minimal its efforts to live the values". This is particularly highlighted by Moore, Gibbon and Slack with the fear that mainstream corporations can derive many positive reputational and financial benefits through very limited engagement.[26]

In the following sections the authors investigate the changing role of fair trade Authorities, Competition and Consumers, focusing particularly on the pros and cons of mainstreaming for these groups and investigating the extent to which it is possible to identify corporate co-optation, dilution or reputational damage to the fair trade movement.

Fair Trade Authorities

Davies defined the Fair Trade Authorities as organisations that oversee fair trade and audit the competitors and / or producers, often awarding licenses to carry marks of certification.[27] There are a large number of these organisations covering a range of different forms of product or distribution channel. The most significant is the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation (FLO) which is the international body overseeing the audit of producers and importers for the award of licenses to supply Fairtrade for commodity traded products. Each country then has an independent

licensing body under the FLO umbrella for the award of the Fairtrade Mark to products (not companies). To meet the norms of international auditing standards FLO has created a legally separate certification company called FLO-Cert. A further NGO division called FLO-eV is then responsible for the development and review of standards plus producer support.

The other major authority is the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO). This represents the more than four hundred 100% FTOs operating globally, usually outside the commodity goods marketplace such as craft goods. It has engaged less with mainstream companies and represents the alternative trading group of FTOs. It is less "hands-on" than the FLO but adheres to 10 principles (www.wfto.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2&Itemid=14) which closely match the original principles of the FLO. Two other Authorities worthy of note are the Network of European World Shops (NEWS!) which co-ordinates the activities of specialist World Shops across Europe and the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) which was set up in 1987 by ten fair trade importers to facilitate better co-ordination and co-operation amongst fair trade bodies.

These Fair Trade Authorities make up "FINE" who produced the official definition of fair trade in 2001 and are responsible for protecting the principles of fair trade and protecting producer communities. However EFTA, NEWS! and WFTO's light touch approach and the ability of the FLO and its associated national organisations to protect the principles has come under sharp criticism, particularly around the limited power they have to ensure adherence to the fair trade standards in the face of pressure from major MNCs.[28] To understand this criticism the paper explores the key foundational principles (as summarised in Table 1) in more depth to

identify any systematic dilution. Principles 6, 8 and 9 have effectively never being enforced, but are undertaken by some FTOs voluntarily. However the following discussion will explore those principles which have been enforced at some stage.

Insert Table 1: Dilution of fair trade principles

The *fair trade minimum price* must be paid to producers, which covers the cost of sustainable production and living. The fair trade price is set by taking into account local economic conditions and is calculated by the FLO. This guaranteed price is termed the fair trade minimum floor price, which aims to cover the cost of sustainable production and a decent standard of living. These financial aspects of fair trade are particularly important at both individual producer and organisational level, particularly when fair trade represents a reasonably high percentage of producer exports.[29]

There were delays in raising the cocoa price following the accreditation of Cadburys Dairy Milk, but this has since been rectified. However, the most damning criticism comes from Bacon, who exposes the slow response of FLO to account for inflationary pressures when setting minimum prices for coffee.[30] Bacon demonstrates that fair trade minimum prices have not been raised regularly enough or by enough percentage points since 1988 to counterbalance cost of production and cost of living rises (he suggests as much as 60% reduction in income in real terms). It would be hard to argue this is a result of mainstreaming since this problem has existed since the inception of commodity fair trade and was simply a flaw in the system and is currently under review at FLO. What Bacon fails to discuss however is the extent to which the fair trade

price was still a vast improvement on prevailing market prices over this period, which still made conditions for fair trade producers decidedly better, even if some suppliers could not cover cost of production.[31]

The minimum price aspect of fair trade may nevertheless be under threat. According to Bastian[32] and Jaffee[33] there are proposals to lower or drop minimum prices in the coffee sector. The authors have been unable to uncover any record of this at FLO and consider it a relatively pointless exercise at present on the basis that market prices are way above fair trade minimums. However, such proposals may well be under consideration in the newly reformed Fair Trade USA (as both Jaffee and Bastian come from the USA) following the September 15 2011 announcement regarding Transfair USA's withdrawal from the global FLO certification system.

The fair trade supply agreement also includes the payment of an additional *social premium* (often 10 per cent or more of the cost price). This allows producers to invest in community infrastructure projects such as sinking water wells. However, Blowfield and Dolan[34] find evidence from interviews with tea producers in Kenya that these social premiums are not making their way back to producer communities (although this could be due to tea being produced on plantations and the authority's failure to enforce Principle 7), and even when paid do not amount to as much revenue as can be achieved on the open market. There was also a reduction in the social premium paid on tea in 2008 to make it more price competitive. Reducing premiums appears at odds with the overall aim of fair trade and shows a co-optation of policies at FLO to market forces, even if not to individual MNC pressures. However social premiums in

coffee are currently being raised to make fair trade more attractive to producers due to a lack of supply, thus showing the positive impact of mainstreaming on social premiums.

Unfortunately objective and intensive research with producers in fair trade is very limited and the depth and breadth of research into the effectiveness of fair trade social premium distribution is under explored,[35] therefore it is not possible to assess how widespread or systematic failures in governance of this principle are. However the supply chains under scrutiny are mostly from FTOs – not necessarily corporate partners, as such these problems may be systemic of a growing social movement – rather than the direct impact of the mainstreaming of fair trade.

Long-term relationships and supply contracts that allow for planning and sustainable production practices are designed to ensure producers do not suffer from the effects of buyer's short term bias. Plus *co-operative, not competitive* dealings to develop buyer-producer relationships built on trust and mutual respect. Arnould et al. found this long term planning allowed for higher levels of education in regions benefiting from fair trade than in non-fair trade equivalents.[36] Similarly, from the authors' early experiences of working with producer communities this was the key principle which brought the most benefit to farmers because it provided the ability to plan and systematically improve yield and production techniques. As Mann proposes this should ensure a more efficient way of delivering value to consumers as it leads to higher quality and consistent supply.[37] However Reed identifies that whilst in principal fair trade is built on long-term relationships, in practice contracts only extend for one growing season, [38] or as Smith finds is completely ignored by major retailers,[39] allowing corporations to

search for lower cost suppliers leading to the commoditisation of fair trade and less stability for growers.

Direct purchasing from producers aims to reduce the influence of brokers and middlemen operating between the producer and the consumer (the two stakeholders considered central to fair trade). To ensure transparency fair trade aims for this purchasing to be traceable back to the producer groups. However Bacon[40] suggests traceability is not properly enforced and a recent BBC documentary by Kenyon looking at child labour in the cocoa industry highlighted the problems associated with a lack of enforcement of the traceability principal of fair trade.[41] This is also closely linked to the original fair trade principal to include a provision for *pre-financing*. This commitment to make partial advance payments at key periods is critical because importers generally have better access to credit than producers. This allows producers to receive advance payment for their crop before export, enabling producer cooperatives to remain competitive against private traders.[42] However, similar to traceability, papers by Bacon, Smith and Reed identify that producer support, pre-financing and development investment are not being overseen effectively.[43] In December 2008 FLO-Ev officially suspended the requirement for traceability and pre-financing in a number of commodity areas (pers.comm). By contrast, the original FTOs have made their supply chains traceable as part of their mission and have never questioned the associated cost. This means that MNCs that have entered the fair trade market have not been required to make the original investment in pre-building the fair trade system. These factors result in corporations enjoying an obvious cost advantage over the FTOs leading to the cannibalisation of the FTO brands as is discussed below.

Producers should be organised democratically and small-scale producers must belong to a cooperative/producer association that is democratically organised and which practices one-farmer, one-vote systems. These organised cooperatives buy from their members and are therefore in a good position to develop internal controls and systems for the traceability of products. These democratic structures also allow the benefits of fair trade to be shared out between members in a more equitable way. Renard[44] and Blowfield and Dolan[45] identify this democratisation as one of the few really tangible benefits of fair trade to have noticeable benefits in the growing communities they researched. However, the licensing of MNCs that have enforced fair trade standards back down their existing supply chain (see below) clearly violate this rule. In particular the fair trade standards state that those workers on plantations should also have the *right to organise in democratic structures*, which should ensure the benefits of fair trade are shared within the workforce. However with the certification of major plantations with Chiquita and Dole, the FLO have not enforced unionized representation of workers, have allowed controversial management and worker 'joint associations' to distribute social premiums and furthermore only require payment of national minimum wages to workforces.[46]

There is obviously tension between the FLO and some of the national fair trade authorities on this issue. This resulted in the recent announcement on 15th September 2011 by Transfair USA (now called Fair Trade USA) to withdraw from the FLO system with effect from December, 2011. Fair Trade USA have now launched their own fair trade label called 'Fair Trade For All' which opens up fair trade to coffee plantations with hired labour and not just cooperatives.[47] Fair Trade USA argues they are aiming to increase their impact on those marginalised farmers that are unable to join cooperatives. However it may be that in the years to

come this will prove another point in the dilution of the social movement as access to accreditation becomes more lenient and these valuable democratic structures are sidelined.

As this shows concerns about fair trade standards dilution are probably justified.[48] There has been a clear reduction in the level of the certification standards in fair trade according to Hockerts and Wustenhagen,[49] and this appears to be born out in the dilution of the fair trade principles between 1999 and 2011. However the next section explores that dilution and co-optation of fair trade are not a universal phenomena and acts differently across countries and different value chains.

Fair Trade Competition

Both the media and the vast majority of literature treat fair trade as if it is one holistic movement.[50] Although it started as one network of organisations loosely connected through social relationships,[51] today fair trade is vastly more complex. Many different forms of organisation compete within the fair trade market in many different ways. This can range from Alternative Trading Organisations such as Twin Trading working closely with farming communities to facilitate co-operative movements, the produce of which is sold through farmer owned FTOs or specialist World Shops – through to major MNCs implementing fair trade supply chain mandates on existing suppliers. The impact of this variety makes discussing fair trade as a single entity, or even as a single social movement problematic. In order to simplify this complexity the global value chain model (GVC) developed by Gereffi, Humphrey and Sturgeon,[52] and utilised by Reed,[53] Smith[54] and Taylor, Murray and Raynolds[55] is employed in this paper. Due to the national context of existing models and recent developments surrounding

whom the fair trade licensee actually is, Table 2 proposes seven distinct fair trade value chains which make up the vast majority of fair trade purchases today. Suggesting each of these leads to equivalent social impact, or have been subject to equivalent levels of dilution, co-optation or reputational damage is inappropriate and in error.[56] The final column in Table 2 gives a relative risk assessment of the propensity for these value-chains to undermine the original agenda of the social movement. This demonstrates these risks and discusses the impact of these alternative chains from both a Macroeconomic perspective and for the individual actors themselves. The authors find that suggestions of the fair trade movement failing to achieve its objectives[57] cannot be universally applied to all fair trade value-chains, and outright denials of the value of the fair trade movement such as those by Griffiths[58] are both puerile and in error.

Insert Table 2 Fairtrade Value Chains

A Macro-economic perspective on Mainstreaming

Fair trade has spread globally from the foundational European markets of Switzerland, the UK, Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands[59], to other European countries such as France[60], Spain[61] and Italy[62], as well as outside Europe in the USA[63], Japan[64] Australasia[65] and Canada[66]. Similar to the traditional fair trade markets, these emerging giants for fair trade consumption have grown through the adoption of own-label fair trade commodity products by retailers (value chain 3 and 5), as well as limited adoption by major food brands (value chain 4 and 6). However, unlike the older markets the emerging markets do not have the tradition for highly branded social enterprises as major mainstream players (value chain 2).[67] Smith[68] proposes that the interest shown by mainstream corporations has a number of clear advantages for the fair trade movement including; increasing sales, cross fertilisation of ideas between corporations and FTOs, plus the

ability to hold corporations to account for wider business activity. The clearest way to investigate the financial benefits of mainstreaming is to compare the two bipolar approaches to mainstreaming adopted by the UK and Italy.

The UK and Italy have similar populations and largely similar wealth distribution. As explained by Becchetti and Costantino[69] the Italian market for fair trade started at a very similar time to the UK, following similar roots in religious and alternative trading World Shops (also see Davies for the UK equivalent timeline[70]). Dominant FTOs such as CTM Altromercato in Italy and Traidcraft in the UK emerged early in both countries. However, following the development of commodity labelling in the 1990's the Italian model continued along this alternative, solidarity based model using predominantly value chain 1 business models.[71] The UK on the other hand voraciously expanded into the other types of value chain in a comparatively aggressive manner.[72] The impact on the growth of fair trade sales of these decisions is clear. Despite continuing growth in Italy, fair trade still only represents €49m on labelled and €50m non-labelled fair trade produce versus over €1,343m in labelled and a further €110m in unlabelled sales in the UK (labelled figures from FLO, 2011a; non-labelled from Krier[73]). This represents the UK fair trade market having grown fifteen times faster than Italy.

If you take France (similar GDP and population) as a *half-way house* between the two countries: fair trade emerged exactly as in the other countries but mainstreaming through type 2 and 3 value chains commenced approximately 10 years later than in the UK, but 10 years earlier than in Italy.[74] France has fair trade sales of €303m on labelled and €56m on non-labelled products (FLO, 2011a and Krier[75]), therefore nearly quadruple that of Italy and a quarter that of

the UK. Clearly the faster the rate of adoption of mainstream value chains the more rapid the movement's expansion.

Obviously Italy's approach has safe-guarded it from the co-optation and dilution of standards suggested in more mainstreamed countries like the USA[76] or the UK[77] because it has provided a shield for the FTOs allowing them to dominate the market without major corporate competition or fear of reputational damage.[78] However the extent to which this can attain the critical mass of sales necessary to assist producers out of poverty is questioned by Tallontire.[79]

There is in-fact a strong notion that fair trade could survive quite effectively in pockets of alternative distribution such as World Shops, whole food distribution channels and 'good will' selling. You find this *alternative high street*[80] of FTO dominated fair trade in the founding nations - The Netherlands and Germany - where one FTO, *Fair Trade Original* and *Gepa* respectively account for approximately 50% and 25% of overall fair trade sales.[81] They also maintain strong influence within the movement to protect it from co-optation or reputational harm. However a lack of mainstream interaction and corporate growth appears to "cap" fair trade consumption in these countries despite wide retail availability. FTO led fair trade comes at the cost of slow growth and surprisingly low spend per capita (figure 1) even in countries like Germany and the Netherlands with very similar fair trade awareness and ethical consumption profiles to the UK and Switzerland.[82]

Figure 1: spend per capita

Reduced growth and low spend per capita in these countries indicate there are more benefits to mainstreaming than increasing consumer awareness alone. Nicholls proposes that the work of FTOs in the mainstream has led to new institutional practices of fairer market exchange, thus being a catalyst for change in mainstream corporate supply chains such as coffee and cocoa.[83] Moore agrees with Nicholls and suggests the new corporate interest in fair trade is an indication that fair trade has succeeded in demonstrating that the market should reward socially just and environmentally sound coffee and cocoa production.[84] Therefore although the mainstreaming of fair trade may lead to some co-optation of the original ideals, as discussed above, it has led to some dramatic changes in terms of the semiotics and activities of many mainstream corporations making consumer commitment to fair trade less relevant.

The microeconomic perspective: The impact of different value chains

Exploring the value chains in table 2 it is clear that value chain 1 and FTO managed value-chains (2 and 3) are the least exposed to dilution, co-optation and reputational risk, however they are not immune. On the softer end of co-optation / assimilation, Davies and Crane[85]identify a willingness in FTOs to change ethical boundaries regarding who to work with. In particular the dichotomy between supporting a social movement bringing African communities out of poverty whilst retailing through multi-nationals under the media spotlight for failing to protect workers in Nigeria (Shell), or exploitative pricing with farmers (Tesco's). Davies and Crane[86] highlight further co-optation where FTOs embrace work-practice to facilitate the development of traditional business models for engaging with major retailers, up to and including employing people with little to no interest in fair trade. These have the potential to affect the FTOs' culture, turning away from the duty of care for producer communities in favour

of growth. However, a number of authors argue that some FTOs maintain the transformative of message of fair trade via their advocacy work whilst competing in the mainstream quite successfully.[87] Lowe and Davenport[88] propose that some FTOs competing in the mainstream provide an alternative approach to the market where southern producer organisations are shareholders in these fair trade companies. Lowe and Davenport describe these companies as examples of 'radical mainstreaming' projects. [89]

Some of the major radical mainstreaming FTOs such as Cafédirect and Divine in the UK, Equal Exchange in the USA, Gepa in Germany and CTM Altromercato in Italy, unlike their mainstream partners and competitors pay *Above* the certifications stated minimum price and social premium. They also guarantee they take producer concerns into account when making decisions by having producers as not only board members but also as major shareholders, leading to producer communities benefiting through dividends.[90] Many FTOs from around the globe also lobby the FLO to give greater voting power to producer communities, which ultimately led to a small change in FLO's governance structure. The percentage rates of Producer Support and Development (PS&D) from these FTOs have also remained relatively stable (between 2 and 4% of turnover) despite tough trading conditions (see table 3). It is therefore safe to suggest that despite some co-optation of practices and personnel (according to Davies and Crane[91]), the FTOs manage to maintain a strong governance structure which safeguards their commitment to fair trade.

Table 3: Ratio of producer support vs. turnover in two radical mainstreamers

Supermarkets / multiple retailers were the first mainstream organisations to associate with fair trade (value chains 2, 3 and 5). Retailers The Co-op and Migros in Switzerland were the first to actively engage in mass fair trade distribution (value chain 2) and employ forms of value chain 5 where non-fair trade options are not available on certain products (especially in Bananas) and as such Switzerland have topped the fair trade spend per capita list for over a decade. According to Teather,[92] the involvement of major retailers has also been key to the growth of fair trade in the UK, with the first supermarket - The Cooperative - turning their entire own-label chocolate and coffee ranges to Fairtrade certified in 2002 and 2003 respectively. This policy was followed in 2006 by Marks & Spencer (coffee and tea) and Sainsbury's (bananas and own brand sugar) estimated to increase the fair trade premiums going to producers by $6m per annum. This helps prevent stagnation of sales in these countries because it removes the need to rely on consumers to make the conscious decision to buy fair trade. Fundamentally there is no alternative.

Smith[93] points out that demonstrating a real commitment to fair trade is not always easy for retailers. Supermarkets such as Sainsbury's have had to absorb the cost of balancing the price of some fair trade products in line with non-fair trade equivalents because most customers are not willing to pay the price premium for these products. The commitment is also backed by the 2007 launch of a Development Fund, which committed £1m over 4 years to support marginalised producers entering the fair trade system. This fund is run by the UK charity Comic Relief demonstrating more transparent and independent verification of Sainsbury's social initiative. As was discussed above, this is supporting and deepening an old commitment of fair trade which has actually been diluted as a core principle, even within 100% FTOs such as Cafédirect,[94] but

revitalised by a mainstream corporate. Similarly the Cooperative Group in the UK launched a 3 year 'international development fund', which uses £1m of retained profits each year to support developmental projects. The key focus of this will be cooperative development,[95] argued by Reed[96] to also be a diluted fair trade principle.

Obviously this growth in retailer interest in fair trade has been hugely beneficial to the fair trade movements' sales and public awareness. However, as discussed by Smith[97] all supermarket commitment to fair trade is not the same. In the above cases some supermarkets are working to strengthen and deepen fair trades impact, whereas in others it co-opts and dilutes the overall social movement. Smith[98] outlines that even in value chain 2, where retailers distribute FTO products, there can be high levels of fair-washing. Retailers use the fact they distribute fair trade brands as a means to convey a (sometimes false) image of the company as a responsible purchaser. Therefore as outlined by Jaffee, Smith and Nicholls, major retailers can vastly over sell their commitment to fair trade well beyond the reality.[99]

This fair-washing is worsened in value chain 3 where the fair trade license is held by the FTO but all the reputational benefit goes to the own-brand retailer. The most obvious examples of this are with Agrofair's provision of own-brand fruit to major European retailers, rather than its official óke brand, or Divine's provision of Starbuck's and Sainsbury's Chocolate. Value chain 3 can lead to the retailer gaining sufficient reputation for own-label fair trade that it no longer needs the FTO's credibility (as with Divine and Sainsbury's). The retailer then uses third party suppliers based on price (value chain 5) who are less committed to the success of fair trade, only fulfil the minimum fair trade requirements, do not provide PS&D and do not profit share

with producer communities. This ultimately leads to the cannibalisation of FTO sales and less money per unit sold being redirected to producers.

According to Smith in some cases the supermarkets have no relationship with the producer group at all and treat the second tier manufacturer like any other supplier. [100] The authors are aware of second tier suppliers of supermarket own-label products that have to absorb the extra costs associated with fair trade. At its most extreme Smith identifies many type 3 and 5 value chains (own-label products with or without FTO involvement) where supermarkets simply do not adhere to core principles such as long-term supply agreements and advance purchasing notice. She notes particularly the case of fair trade fruit where supermarkets identify a program of purchase then simply do not complete the contract, or leave produce in the suppliers hands well past the agreed purchase date then fine the supplier for spoiled produce.[101]

Despite all the problems with retailers however, it is at type 4, 6 and 7 value chains where the biggest fears of co-optation and dilution occur with powerful, and occasionally ethically questionable MNCs such as Wal-Mart's and Starbuck's (type 4), Nestlé and Cadbury's (type 6) and Dole and Chiquita (type 7) entering the fair trade market. In 2000 Starbuck's was awarded the Fairtrade Mark by Transfair USA for less than 1% of its coffee, despite grave reservations amongst FTOs (see Jaffee[102] and Renard[103]). This was a landmark case because not only does Starbuck's represent a full 17% of the operating income of Transfair USA, making it incredibly influential, but Starbuck's was also allowed to certify such a nominal proportion of its coffee[104] which was not possible under any other national fair trade authority at the time. This has made it very easy for other major MNCs such as Proctor & Gamble and Sara Lee to gain certification in

the USA on equally nominal commitments to purchasing fair trade, provide producer support or long-term purchasing agreements.

The US fair trade market is therefore almost unique in skipping most of the middle value chains (2, 3, and 5) and being dominated by one supplier with a type 4 value chain and then a large number of type 6 and 7 value chains. This also marginalises the FTOs, many of whom are turning their back on fair trade certification in favour of self-certification or alternative schemes.[105] In fact it was the Transfair USA acceptance of Dole and Chiquita as licensees that allowed the formation of value chain 7 - major MNC plantations - as certified value chains (which has many issues covered in full by Jaffee[106]). This has very significant implications for the fair trade social movement because there are now licensees with greater power, capital and influence than the authorities and FTOs put together. This leaves fair trade authorities in a weak position and lowers their bargaining power leading to some of the most dramatic changes in policy over the last 6-8 years as was discussed above.

Outside the US other major suppliers are making commitments to fair trade including Tate and Lyle (worth $3.2m to producers per year, Lamb[107]), Cadbury's Dairy Milk (worth a retail value of $320m,[108]), Nestlé Kit Kat and Mars Maltesers. Obviously these moves increase the volume of fair trade on the market and increase the fair trade premium to farming communities, however the commitment of these major MNCs is often limited (as with Cadbury's, Nestlé and Mars only certifying individual products). What is lacking with value chains 6 and 7 is PS&D, profit sharing or beyond FLO minimum price commitments. There is also significant evidence of lobbying to lower fair trade standards, slow floor price growth and

an emergence of a "fair trade lite" access to certification with nominal if any benefit to producers[109]. The risk associated with this cost advantage for retailers and MNCs includes cannibalisation of the fair trade market at the expense of the FTOs. Supermarket own-label products are in some cases 40-50% less expensive compared to the FTO brands. This is resulting in reduced sales for FTOs and could have repercussions for the future of fair trade, because the assistance and long-term partnership the FTOs offer producers have been seen as critical for deepening fair trade's impact Smith[110] also warns of uncommitted MNCs, who switch from Fairtrade to other schemes if sales do not meet commercial objectives. There is evidence to support this; John Lewis Cafés in the UK have converted to Rainforest Alliance from fair trade. Asda supermarkets de-listed Cafédirect from their range and replaced it with own-label Rainforest Alliance certified coffee and Kraft (owners of Fairtrade brand Cadbury's Dairy Milk) have announced Rainforest Alliance not Fairtrade certification on their Dime bar.

The positive results of mainstreaming from a commercial perspective are clear. However the mounting criticism of the potentially negative consequences of opening up fair trade to major corporate organisations may very well have some foundation.

Fair Trade Consumers

With ever increasing complexity at a competition and authority level where does this leave consumers in understanding what they are purchasing? The predominant debate in fair trade consumption has been the contrast between 'radicals': those seeking to overturn the dominant economic model by seeking alternative means of consumption, and 'pragmatists': those seeking to demonstrate moral consumption through market mechanisms.[111] However the extent to which

this debate reflects reality in a mainstream world of fair trade is highly questionable. As is the relevance of discussing active, occasional and none consumers[112] in markets where forced choice by suppliers make it a proactive exercise not to consume fair trade.

Radical fair trade consumption was the predominant philosophy behind the foundations of fair trade in the 1970's-1990's, and continues to be so in some non-mainstream orientated countries. Bezençon and Blili[113] suggest that radical fair trade consumers buy mainly through solidarity channels, where both fair trade adhesion and relational ethics are at a high level (value chain 1). In essence this means that radical consumers actively seek out fair trade alternatives because they strongly believe in the principles of fair trade (adhesion). This adhesion with social justice is perceived as dichotomous with the behaviour of some supermarkets. This leads radical consumers to purchase through solidarity channels where they develop a relationship with alternative retailers and producer organisations making them feel part of a global movement to aid international development (relational ethics). Bezençon and Blili therefore propose that to increase fair trade sales, companies need to increase adhesion by communications that create antecedents of involvement, such as illustrations of producer empowerment, credibility of the label, taste etc.[114] Renard identifies the importance of campaign work done by NGOs in this respect in partnership with radical consumers to reorganise food systems and create certification schemes to raise ethical standards in supply chains and consumer awareness.[115]

However, despite the early success of small scale collective action, Strong identifies the lack of product availability in the mainstream as one of the key limitations in fair trade social impact due to consumers' unwillingness to shop around.[116] Therefore through the 1990's there

was a growth in pragmatic fair trade consumption where mainstream retail outlets are a means to an end for the growth of fair trade impact. Ransom argues that the increased availability of fair trade products in the mainstream provides something practical that anyone can do to counteract international trading system injustices.[117] This is ratified by the Economist which suggests buying fair trade in grocery stores sends out a clear political message. A number of authors therefore emphasized that fair trade in the mainstream has shifted the message of fair trade from participation in an international development program to individualized shopping for a better world focused on the dimensions of fair price for producers and product quality.[118] Through fair trade consumption in mainstream channels the consumer is said to act as not purely an economic agent or purely a political agent but as a hybrid of the two: as a consumer-citizen whose identity, belief and practice is brought to bear via the market.[119] Micheletti, Follesdal, and Stolle therefore suggest a connection between the political and ethical consumer.[120] When people use the market to vent their political concerns, they are said to engage in acts of political consumerism. Hence, fair trade products in the mainstream are suggested to provide the opportunity for ethical/political consumers to exercise economic voting. Nicholls supports this argument and proposes that fair trade has moved from the niche of alterative distribution channels to the mainstream via a distinctive politicisation of ethical consumption that uses social entrepreneurship to bring about institutional change within markets.[121] This illustrates the transition from an era of *radical fair trade* in the 1980s and 1990s, where products were mainly available via value chain 1, to a *pragmatic fair trade* era of economic voting at the supermarket check-out (value chains 2 and 3).

With this change in purchase motivation however Ballet and Carimentrand propose that fair trade consumption has shifted from strong relational ethics to a depersonalisation of ethics.[122] They argue that radical consumers feel they are active participants in the development process by involving themselves in social networks with producers through alternative retailers. Whereas in mainstream supermarkets staff are generally unable to discuss information regarding fair trade producers and depth of producer information on packaging is often limited. Carrington, Neville and Whitwell[123] explore the notion of the 'moment of truth', which investigates the actual behaviour implemented to purchase fair trade products. They argue situational context such as time commitment, lack of information at point of sale, weak staff communication and close proximity of discounted products drive the depersonalization of ethics and a reduction of adhesion to the point where consumers may even be unaware of their fair trade consumption. This leads to an individualist approach to fair trade consumption disassociated from the social movement and a lack of collective focus.[124]

Rather than suggesting that this depersonalisation of fair trade is a symptom of pragmatic / political consumption it can be argued that this shows a movement towards a post-pragmatist third era of "passive" fair trade consumption in the most mainstream of countries. In these countries both own-label supermarket and major brand conversions have largely taken the success of fair trade away from active consumer control (see figure 2) to a point where customers would have to actively *anti-consume* fair trade based on "a resistance to, distaste of, or even resentment of consumption"[125] by altering habitual purchases.

Figure 2 Fair Trade Eras/periods

This transition from *radical*, to *pragmatic* to *passive* consumption results in a contested debate on the future of fair trade. The pragmatists are in favour of products coming from the FTOs with strong social branding (value chain 2) competing in the mainstream and being available in supermarket retailers.[126] Campaigns by Fairtrade Town groups (now totalling 1,014 certified Fairtrade towns in 22 countries) to lobby retailers to stock FTO products is evidence of this.[127] However FTO produce is becoming the smallest part of the market and developments in passive consumption result in real concerns regarding the consumers' ability or willingness to identify co-optation or dilution of fair trade standards. Their purchases are habitual, disinterested and disengaged from the fair trade movement.

Obviously not all consumers are passive, in fact, Bondy and Talwar[128] argue the active fair trade consumers are very loyal. However it would also be very difficult to argue all people that buy forced choice Banana's in the supermarket are economically voting. Fair trade is therefore in a stage where the market has all three types of consumer activity at the same time, but the balance of influence is shifting further away from radicals and pragmatists to passive consumers who continue to buy KitKat, Starbuck's, Tate & Lyle and Dairy Milk because it is habitual rather than as an active decision to consume fair trade.

Can fair trade be saved?

The mainstreaming of fair trade has built scale, created institutional change in industry practice, fostered partnerships between corporations and NGOs and provided an opportunity for consumers to exercise their beliefs via shopping either individually or collectively (see table 4).

Table 4 The Pros and Cons of fair trade Mainstreaming (synthesis of review)

It is clear from this paper that the expansion of fair trade in the mainstream has improved market access for producers and some FTOs have managed to compete in both the mainstream (value chains 2 and 3) and the social economy value chain (value chain 1) and maintain the transformative message of fair trade via their advocacy/campaigning work. Therefore in many ways fair trade has achieved many of the goals set out at the Third World Information Network in 1985 and those stated in the FINE definition of fair trade from 2001. It has educated Northern consumers about the origins of commodity trading, it has changed the market mechanisms in the North by forcing the removal of protectionist trade barriers for commodity trading and it has converted brands' and supermarkets' purchasing habits to one that has some benefits to farmers. Therefore one option for fair trade is to allow it to run its natural course as many other social movements have and allow for its dilution, marketisation and habitualisation.[129] This means that the current FTOs would have to accept the inevitable niche brand position they will fall into supported by the remaining loyal radical consumers or consider the direction of many organic and eco-friendly brands and simply sell the brands to bigger organisations.

However, is this the end this social movement and its actors seek? If not what could be done to ensure fair trades' ongoing transformative message? This paper has identified some of the key problems associated with mainstreaming across international markets including; the dilution of standards, commoditization and the decreasing competitiveness of FTOs. If the original fair trade standards associated with traceability and pre-financing had been defined and

adhered to at the outset it is the contention of the authors that some of the problems identified in this paper could have been avoided. This would have created a more even playing field for the FTOs and therefore have assisted in their influence on the system to reduce dilution and co-optation. The authors therefore argue for a number of proposals to manage some of the identified tensions.

Firstly, the main response as academics is a need to move beyond a belief that ethical consumption is some kind of magic panacea. Reliance on consumers to take proactive action is no solution in an environment in which they barely understand what they are buying.[130] Academia therefore must move beyond the pragmatic versus radical debate and explore alternatives like Golding's proposal for a dual approach to fair trade marketing.[131] This suggests strengthening fair trade adhesion and removing some of the depersonalisation of ethics influence in the mainstream. A closer investigation of the problems associated with the situational context in the mainstream retail environment would prove beneficial for both FTOs and fair trade authorities in unpicking the "moment of truth". One potential solution here is to provide consumers with information about each certified product value chain at point of sale. There are projects underway such as the work of the GeoFairTrade project funded by the European Union (www.geofairtrade.eu) which aims to develop a web tool which provides information on the product value chain. Although a web tool is a good start, this technology must work in store from mobile devices so people can check through barcode recognition, thus reconnecting them with the relational aspects of fair trade with minimal time requirement. However this may have low impact considering the limited number of passive consumers likely to decide to become proactive economic voters.[132]

Secondly, an enhanced fair trade supply agreement where the fair trade standards are pushed further up the value chain to ensure commitment from mainstream actors to the fair trade principals. This means if supermarket retailers develop a fair trade own-label product they should participate in the pre-finance, have long term relationships, contracts that acknowledge seasonality and the impact on supply and manufacturing. The same would be true for manufacturers who source their ingredients from FTOs. It is currently the FTO that is entirely responsible for pre-season finance and stock risk. A pre-season finance fund administered by FLO but contributed to by MNCs and retailers would go some way to ensure commitment to this standard. In essence this could also include Reed's recommendation of creating a more level playing field by introducing a minimum fair trade percentage[133] for retailers and MNCs to gain certification. All parties in the supply chain must therefore make a commitment to fair trade including, exporters, processors and supermarkets. However this falls short of the suggestion of Reed et al.,[134] of developing the next level of fair trade accreditation called *Fairtrade Plus.* This would have included a set of criteria involving producer equity and would differentiate between FTO supported fair trade and non-FTO fair trade. The practicality of this is obviously questionable from not only an administration cost perspective but from the perspective of the mainstream participants. What motivation would there be for any MNC to have a certification mark explicitly identified as worse that the product next to them? Also, in effect *Fairtrade Plus* already exists - 100% FTOs can double accredit themselves with the WFTO certification. However to an already confused and increasingly uninterested consumer it is unlikely they would take to an additional label and the fact so few commodity FTOs have taken this route clearly suggests there is little thirst for this in the market.

The third proposition is that the FLO should develop *international commodity strategies* that analyse international supply and demand for fair trade in a detailed value chain analysis. This will identify the countries, producers and interventions needed to scale up the impact of fair trade. The strategies will look at all aspects of growth, such as potential development impact as well as income. Any strategy needs to deliver growth, prevent cannibalisation of other fair trade products and ensure producer empowerment. It needs to look at market opportunities and include manufacturing capabilities and restrictions. Decisions regarding new entrants must comply with these agreed commodity strategies. Targeted companies will need transparent actions plans to develop strategically, with a continuous improvement of standards. A long-term and significant commitment is required and the consequences of exiting fair trade made explicit. Developing fair trade supply chains requires diligent, committed work over a long-term period. There is much knowledge within FTOs on how to do capacity building, innovation and fair trade standards development and perhaps their knowledge and skills could be utilised to facilitate this process for larger companies. Fair trade authorities should try and replicate the development of value chains 1, 2 and 3 in emerging markets to ensure the development of relational ethics and adhesion.

Conclusions

This paper has set out the history of the mainstreaming of fair trade, and the impacts both positive and negative this has had on the social movement. The paper provides an in-depth exploration of the 7 predominant forms of fair trade value chain and clearly demonstrated the extent to which different value chains impact dilution, co-optation and reputational risk for the social movement – not only in the fair trade authorities but in the FTOs and social movement

actors themselves. In counteracting this dilution empowering producers and the more committed FTOs is essential. The authors conclusion is that FTOs are at serious risk of cannibalisation by newer MNC backed fair trade brands, but FTOs motivations to pursue a transformative message in the mainstream and their capability to provide effective support to farmers is clearly still strong. FTOs therefore need support from the Fair Trade Authorities to level the playing field by enforcing the foundational principles on all participants or face marginalisation.

Consumers in the most advanced mainstream economies for fair trade are clearly moving beyond being political voters to a point at which fair trade is simply a habitual and passive activity. Although good for overall fair trade sales this limits the impact radical or pragmatic consumers can leverage upon producers and authorities to reverse co-optation and dilution. Reputation has clearly already been captured in many instances there has been declining sales for FTOs in supermarkets in the face of own-label and branded mainstream product offerings. However social movement activity by Fairtrade Towns and Universities have the ability to create a strong alternative high street in which a limited number of FTOs could maintain their independence.

The paper highlights a number of areas that require further research. Research into the level of commitment to fair trade by mainstream actors and in particular the depth of supermarket commitment to fair trade could assist consumer decision making. However dissemination of this information to customers is obviously key. Considerably more work is needed to investigate the "moment of truth" for different types of fair trade consumer to develop a deeper understanding of how to increase adhesion and relational ethics in more passive

consumers. In parallel there is a need for more technological solutions to convey these messages in easily accessible forms.

The largest vacuum in fair trade research however has to be producers. It is almost impossible to write a section on the fair trade movement's impact on producers beyond hearsay and conjecture because there is a lack of rigorous research with producers. This is especially problematic when trying to compare different forms of fair trade value chain because the scant research to date is mostly conducted with FTO supply chains. Has dilution, co-optation or capture of fair trade by mainstream corporations actually negatively affected fair trade producers, or is the enhanced volume of sales overshadowing any lowering standards?

Table 1: Dilution of fair trade principles

	Principle	How it works	Evidence of dilution?	Corporate fault?
1	*Fair trade minimum price*	- Minimum floor price which fair trade goods cannot fall below	- Floor prices have been slow to rise in line with inflation (Bacon 2010) and have been slowed down in change to accommodate some mainstream players.	No
2	*Provision of a social premium*	- Often 10% or more of the cost of goods over and above the price paid on the market.	- Qualitative evidence suggests premiums are not being properly distributed (Blowfield and Dolan, 2010) However this may be as a result of failures to enforce Principle 7 - Reduction in premiums in the Tea market, however growing premiums in coffee	Partially
3	*Long-term relationships and supply contracts*	- Develop buyer-producer relationships built on trust and mutual respect	- Reed (2009) identifies that in practice contracts need to extend only for one growing season, and Smith (2010) finds is completely ignored by major retailers,	Yes
4	*Direct / transparent purchasing from producers*	- Brand owners should be able to show the full and direct supply chain for their produce.	- Effectively never policed and suspended as a principle in 2008 (Bacon 2010).	Yes
5	*Provision of pre-financing*	- Importers should make advanced payment at critical times to help producers to both meet fair trade standards and maintain cash flow.	- Suspended as a principle in 2008. Many FTOs no longer do it, but surprisingly some mainstream supermarkets are reviving the principle	Unclear
6	*Provision of market information to producers.*	- Close relationships between FTOs and producer co-operatives allow for clear flow of information (Brown, 1993, 2007)	- FTOs with joint ownership adhere to this closely, However neither the FLO nor mainstream competitors have producer representation and in some cases no direct relationship through which to provide information	Partially
7	*Democratic Structures*	- Small scale farmers should be organized into democratic / co-operative structures - Plantations should provide the ability for workers to Unionise and represent themselves democratically	- Plantation owners have not enforced democratic representation of workers, and only require payment of national minimum wages to workforces (Bahra, 2009; Goigoi, 2008; Jaffee 2010).	Yes
8	*Promote consumer education*	- Essentially not audited although is practiced by many organizations	- FTOs still very active in educating consumers however mainstream player rely on the Fairtrade Mark as a branding exercise and communicate little about product origins	No
9	*Sustainable production must be practiced*	- Little information exists to suggest how this works	- Potentially was never enforced	No

Table 2 Fair Trade Value Chains

Value Chain Number	Fairtrade Value Chain	Participants	Features	Propensity for Co-optation, Dilution or Capture
1	**FTO/Social Economy value chain (100% Fairtrade)**	FTOs trading with FTOs, e.g. CTM Altromercato trading directly through associated world shops	Strong relationships with producers building organizational capacity and even producer equity. Consumer activists buying in this chain	Nil
2	**FTO value chain with corporate retail participation**	FTO products such as Divine chocolate and Cafedirect distributed via supermarkets	Strong relationships between FTOs and producers. Retailer purely route of distribution. More convenient for consumers to buy	Nil dilution but limited potential for co-optation or reputational risk
3	**FTO supplying supermarket own-label**	FTOs supplying own-label supermarket brand such as Agrofair selling fresh fruit produce through supermarket branding	Strong relationships with FTOs and producers. Some FTOs maintain the intellectual property with reference to producers on packaging.	Nil dilution, limited co-optation but high levels of reputational risk
4	**Corporate dominated licensee and retailer**	Starbucks Coffee Company is an example	Modular form where corporation has significant control over value chain. Not all corporate products are FT	Some co-optation of FT Authorities and dilution of some principles. High reputational risk
5	**Corporate retail dominated but not licensee**	Own label supermarket products sourced from second tier manufacturers such as supermarkets working through existing own-brand suppliers	Modular form where supermarket retailer does not have to commit to FT standards and minimum relationship with producers	Very high reputational risk, some co-optation for FT authorities but limited dilution
6	**Corporate manufacturer as licensee to retailer**	Multinational corporation such as Proctor & Gamble or Cadbury's converting major brands for general sale	Controlled and dominated by MNCs with limited transparency. Power resides with MNC.	High co-optation, dilution and reputational risk due to power imbalance
7	**Corporations and plantation production**	Control of value chain remains the same but with adherence to social premium and FT price such as large fruit importers Chiquita or Dole	Similar to ethical trade with power very much with the corporation. No consumer brand choice as whole categories are converted e.g. bananas.	High co-optation, dilution and reputational risk

Table 3: Ratio of producer support vs. turnover in two radical mainstreamers

		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Cafédirect	PS&D/Turnover	3.11%	2.91%	3.17%	2.71%	2.94%	2.88%
Divine	PS&D/Turnover			1.39%	1.98%	1.96%	1.99%

Table 4 The Pros and Cons of fair trade Mainstreaming (synthesis of review)

Pros of mainstreaming	Cons of mainstreaming
Growth in sales of fair trade products	Dilution of fair trade standards e.g. pre-financing and traceability (value chains 4-7)
Cross fertilisation of ideas and practices between FTOs, supermarkets and MNCs	The commoditisation of FT
Some evidence of improved industry standards of fairer market exchange (Nicholls 2010)	Cannibalisation of FTO products in the mainstream (value chains 2-7)
Proof that fair trade has succeeded in demonstrating that markets should reward socially just production and trading	Allow some supermarkets or MNCs the chance to improve their reputations with limited or no commitment to FT principals (particularly value chain 5)
Increased opportunity for acts of political/ethical consumerism (value chain 2)	Changes in fair trade governance due to mainstreaming leading to detrimental impact on relationships with producers resulting in co-option and dilution of standards.
Increased awareness of the fair trade mark plus increased media coverage	Certification charges introduced for producer groups
Opportunity to build fair trade brands and viable fair trade organisations (value chains 1-3)	Reduction in fair trade adhesion for consumers leading to passive, disengaged consumption

Figure 1: Spend per capita per year on fair trade in 2007 (source Krier 2008)

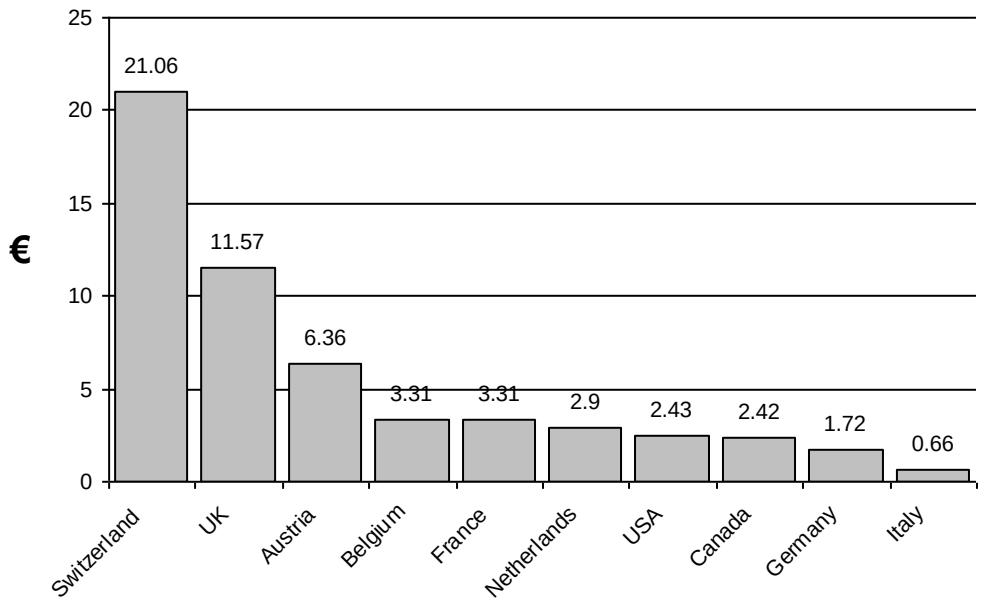
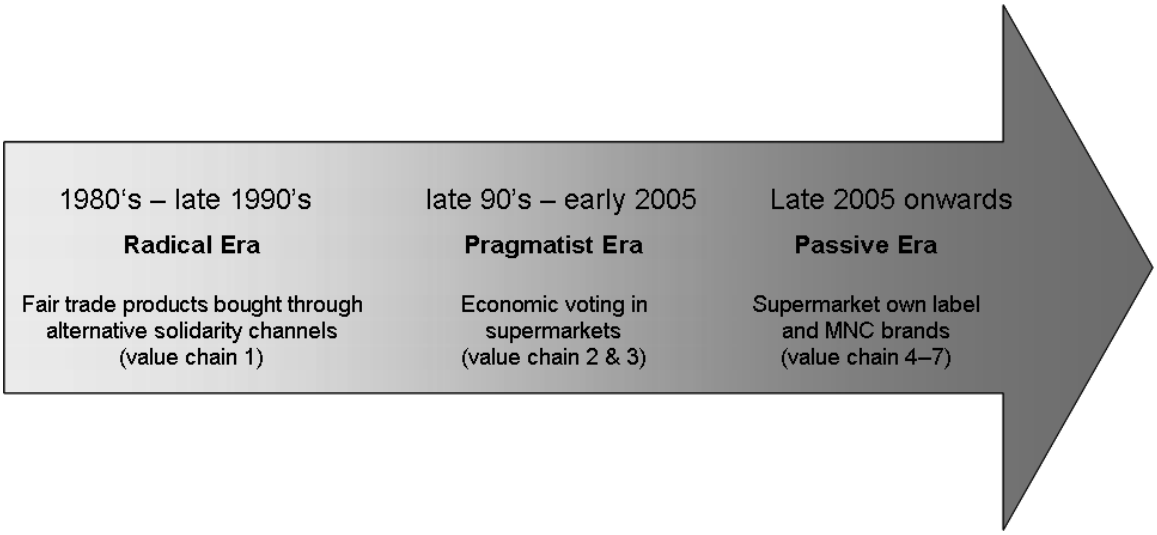


Figure 2 Fair Trade Eras/periods.



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