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CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION, INSTITUTIONAL GAPS AND FRAGILITY: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION PARTNERSHIPS IN A CONFLICT-AFFECTED REGION

Ans Kolk & François Lenfant

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ABSTRACT

The authors aim to contribute to the literature on subsistence marketplaces and the marketing field more generally by exploring social innovation partnerships in a fragile country characterized by institutional gaps, specifically considering the role of cross-sector collaboration in conflict-affected areas. The empirical setting consists of coffee partnerships in Eastern Congo (DRC), where the authors collected data from and about companies, NGOs and cooperatives, using both primary and secondary sources, including a field trip, interviews and group discussions with farmers and their families. They show results at the organizational level (build-up of managerial capacities; transfer of financial-administrative skills; improved functioning of cooperatives), the farmer level (better prices, livelihoods and access to markets; increased revenues), and more widely in communities considering reduced tensions and collaboration between previously hostile groups, and the creation of new governance modalities in a fragile institutional setting. The study suggests that partnerships may offer a systemic approach to addressing institutional gaps, which seems necessary in such 'extreme' contexts. Further implications for research and public policy are discussed.

KEY WORDS

Development; Fragile states; Institutions; Poverty; Social alliances; Congo; DRC; Kivu; voids

CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION, INSTITUTIONAL GAPS AND FRAGILITY: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION PARTNERSHIPS IN A CONFLICT-AFFECTED REGION

In the past decade, poverty, development and subsistence in relation to marketing have received substantial attention, largely due to agenda-setting through a series of conferences and accompanying collections of publications, including comprehensive special issues in Journal of Business Research (Nakata and Viswanathan 2012; Viswanathan and Rosa 2010) and Journal of Macromarketing (Viswanathan, Shultz, and Sridharan 2014). By emphasizing the importance of the micro-level in relation to meso and macro phenomena, this stream of research has provided a solid foundation to comparable concerns raised in business and management more broadly on the bottom of the pyramid (BOP) (Arnould and Mohr 2005; Kolk, Rivera-Santos, and Rufín 2014; London, Anupindi, and Sheth 2010; Prahalad and Hart 1999). Still, the importance of pre-existing marketplaces and local traditions has been underexposed in the BOP approach compared to the subsistence literature (Kolk et al. 2014; Viswanathan and Sridharan 2009).

Despite a decade of valuable research and publications on subsistence markets, however, Hill and Martin (2014) argue that marketing has overall insufficiently considered the fate of the poor and those people that are less well off, with negative effects for the field's (policy) relevance. This resonates with earlier calls to pay more attention in the marketing literature to issues pertaining to poverty and development (Achrol and Kotler 2012; Hosley and Wee 1988; Shultz et al. 2012; Wilkie and Moore 2012), to peace and conflict, and institution-building (Layton and Grossbart 2006; Shultz et al. 2005). This article directly relates to the important research themes identified by these authors and to specific topics

mentioned in the call for papers. We aim to contribute to the special issue by exploring how social innovation alliances consisting of different actors may help address (post-)conflict tensions and development problems in a fragile institutional setting, and considering the implications for policy. Our empirical setting consists of multi-stakeholder coffee collaborations in Eastern Congo (Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC), linking micro-entrepreneurial activities of small farmers to the meso and macro levels, given that coffee requires inclusion in global marketing systems to also reach distant customers.

We build on an emerging literature that examines the long-standing interest in marketing systems (e.g. Hunt 1981; Layton 2007, 2009) in developing countries (recent examples include Hounhouigan et al. 2014; Kolk 2014), while explicitly considering the fragile context of a conflict-affected region. Our research thus also adds specific dimensions in answering repeated calls by marketing scholars to pay more attention to the institutional environment (e.g. Grewal and Dharwadkar 2002; Handelman and Arnold 1999), particularly in emerging and developing countries where it "is arguably the most important aspect" of difference with developed countries (Burgess and Steenkamp 2006: 339), in relation to wider debates about the existence of so-called institutional 'voids' or gaps (Khanna and Palepu 1997; Kolk 2014; Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos 2015). In taking these starting points, we follow, as suggested by Ingenbleek (2014), a more 'top-down', macro-midrange approach that complements and connects to bottom-up studies as they have emerged in the subsistence markets literature (Viswanathan et al. 2014). Our exploratory study suggests that partnerships may offer a more systemic approach to addressing institutional gaps, which seems necessary in such 'extreme' contexts of fragility, with implications for research and policy.

While the analysis is exploratory in nature, and "stems from immersion in this phenomenon of interest" (MacInnes 2011: 152), the findings from field work in a conflict-affected region illuminate research gaps little addressed in the bodies of literature mentioned

above. Moreover, the study helps shed light on marketing "as constructive engagement" (Shultz 2007) in general and related to collaborative innovations for subsistence in particular. Finally, it has direct relevance for public policy as the question of how to address peace, reconciliation and economic recovery (Shultz et al. 2005) is an area of concern amongst practitioners and policy-makers. This has, for example, come to the fore in the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding and its 2011 New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (e.g. Kolk and Lenfant 2014; OECD 2012), which aim to improve the situation in (post-)conflict countries, emphasizing the potential role of partnerships.

The next section will first indicate current insights into social innovation partnerships, and explains how they may offer compensatory structures and help address institutional gaps, especially in contexts of fragility, based on the most recent literature. This is followed by an explanation of the research approach, and subsequently a presentation of the findings, and a discussion of research and public-policy implications and limitations of the exploratory study.

CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION IN FRAGILE INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS

The (potential) role of partnerships

Partnerships (or social alliances, as they are frequently called in the marketing literature) have received growing academic and practitioner interest as innovative arrangements to tackle complex social problems that a single actor cannot solve. To help address specific or conglomerates of sustainable development issues, collaboration between business and (non-)governmental organizations has been welcomed as the potentially most effective route. Publications have examined a range of dimensions of cross-sector partnerships in the past 15 years. In addition to early articles by Waddock (1991) and Austin (2000), especially overviews by Berger, Cunningham, and Drumwright (2004), Horton, Prain, and Thiele

(2009), Selsky and Parker (2005), and, most recently, Gray and Stites (2013), Kolk and Lenfant (2014), and Seitanidi and Crane (2014) provide a state of the art. Some coffee sector-specific analyses involving cooperation have also been published (e.g. Arnould, Plastina, and Ball 2009; Bitzer, Francken, and Glasbergen 2008; Linton 2005).

A recent review of publications on partnerships in various (sub)disciplines, including marketing, public policy, management and political science, shows that business scholars have focused on value creation for and within organizations, while those in other, non-business fields have usually looked at (external) governance processes and generic societal implications of collaborative arrangements (Kolk and Lenfant 2014). Viewed from a public policy and marketing angle, it may be concluded that partnership researchers have tended to underexpose the more external, societal consequences of social alliances and possible impacts at the different levels, from individuals to organizations and communities. There are opportunities here to explore linkages to more specific program evaluation and assessment studies done in the field of international development (e.g. Bamberger and White 2007; OECD-DAC 2002; Ravaillon 2009; see the next section). Furthermore, most of the partnership literature has examined developed-country actors, frequently considering their activities in developing countries, but much less often the local (entrepreneurial) dimensions and connections with other actors, embedded in a marketing system. Likewise, they usually cover alliances with a limited number of partners, and not the ones encompassing innovative multi-faceted forms of collaboration, also characterized as tripartite or quadripartite, that seem essential in subsistence contexts (Rivera-Santos, Rufín, and Kolk 2012).

In addition, only a relatively small number of publications has focused on partnerships in the most complex institutional settings. As these settings are characterized by weak or missing formal institutions (cf. Khanna and Palepu 1997), partnerships may offer compensatory structures by helping shape new/different networks and/or intermediary entities

(Kolk 2014; Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos 2015). These aspects directly relate to the call in the marketing literature, noted in the introduction, for more attention for institutions in developing countries. Multiple partners, usually from different backgrounds, are needed as no single type of actor(s) is likely to be able to provide the whole range of missing institutions. This is most notable in so-called fragile states, which are marked by a history of conflict, lack of trust and a weak government in addition to issues related to poverty, human rights violations and environmental degradation (Brück, Naudé, and Verwimp 2011; Naudé, Santos-Paulino, and McGillivray 2011). Innovative cross-sector social collaboration seems a precondition for helping address this confluence of issues and foster good governance, reconstruction and peace (e.g. Abramov 2009; Fort and Schipani 2004; Kolk and Lenfant 2012; Oetzel et al. 2009; World Bank 2011), but empirical research in these contexts have been limited thus far.

Fragility and institutional gaps

In conflict-affected regions and unstable countries with weak/missing institutions, collecting reliable data is very complex, which seems to explain the underexposure in empirical studies (Kolk and Lenfant 2014). In addition to situations of direct violent conflict, which lead to specific challenges (Getz and Oetzel 2010), there are also ‘in-between’ situations in which bouts of violence, hostility and lack of trust intersect with formal cessation of fighting or even peace agreements. This has been the situation in which a country like the DRC has found itself in recent years, with fragile, weak and partly missing institutions. It should be noted that while such ‘voids’ (the term used very often) have sometimes been perceived to be ‘empty’ of institutions, reality is usually different as a plurality of rules and arrangements is likely to be in place. There may be a complex mix of formal and particularly locally-shaped informal institutions, with differences in recentness and degrees of centralization of (traditional)

'authority' structures (e.g. 'acephalous' communities without permanent leadership; simple and more complex chiefdoms, tribes or cast-clan systems; or centralized, hierarchical communities) (e.g. Grinin and Korotayev 2011; Kaye and Béland 2009). To account for local peculiarities, combinations/types of institutions, and varying degrees to which they are present, we use 'gaps' rather than voids (unless when used in the original).

In a very recent article on the more formal institutions, Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos (2015) elaborated upon the five types of voids as originally distinguished by Khanna and Palepu (1997) (see Figure 1). They focused on MNEs operating in subsistence markets in various stages of the supply chain (from procurement to production, distribution and sales), which is a rather different perspective from ours. Still, we can build on their insights to some extent, as their voids comprise contextual factors that are also relevant for our study. For example, gaps related to quality ascertainment of produce, shortages in technical and organizational skills and knowledge, and limited access to finance are pertinent to coffee (cf. Kolk 2014). At the same time, the fragile, conflict-affected nature of the region adds other crucial characteristics. These especially relate to hostilities, lack of trust, security and good governance, (occasional) fighting and frequent human rights violations, and the broader informal, sometimes clan-based structures as (re)shaped during the conflict period.

Figure 1 around here

Figure 1 indicates the formal voids derived from Khanna and Palepu (1997) and applied specifically to MNEs by Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos (2015), that we clustered somewhat differently, and embedded in the fragility context with which all actors are confronted. The different fragility elements that we included there have been inspired by recent work from international organizations, government agencies, societal actors and scholars, covering academic and practitioner publications, and which paid attention to subdimensions relevant in such settings (DIE/UNEP 2009; GTZ 2009; OECD 2012; World Bank 2011; cf. Fort and

Schiphani 2004; Naudé, Santos-Paulino, and McGillivray 2011).

We argue that fragility puts the five gaps in a different context, in which gaps are likely to be more extreme while traditional mechanisms to help fill them likely to be less effective. Partnerships might offer a more systemic approach to address the specifics of the institutional environment and the social matrix. To do so, they would, for example, not only need to target the finance gap (via a micro-finance scheme) or the labor gap (via a training progam) but also focus on the connections between the gaps by developing trust between communities and diminishing insecurity. Our study aims to consider how these factors come to the fore in the coffee partnerships set up in the Eastern DRC, as the findings section will pay specific attention to them where relevant. We explore the more generic relation with elements of marketing systems and more specifically interactions with the conflict-affected institutional environment. This is inspired by Layton's perspective on the mutual influence between marketing systems and their institutional environment, which we placed in a fragility context as a specification of his observation that each location or region is characterized by a "distinctive social matrix" (Layton 2009: 354).

RESEARCH APPROACH

The case and its context

We adopted a case study methodology, focused on coffee partnerships in Eastern DRC (in the Kivu region), which have emerged in recent years to help rejuvenate agricultural activity and increase farmers' income. The case study approach enabled us to examine "a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Yin 1984: 23), focusing on a limited number of partnerships as study objects in the specific geographical area selected for its fragility. In the DRC, where agricultural opportunities are strongly underexploited (with only 10% of arable land being farmed), there are several regions that (used to) produce coffee, mostly on old and

small plantations (World Bank 2010). Rehabilitation efforts have been hampered by rampant insecurity, which has led to abandoned fields and lack of up-to-date trading, technical and agronomical facilities, resulting in low-quality input and output, and in low prices (Schluter 2010). However, the Eastern provinces of DRC have fertile volcanic soils that do not require fertilizer and which offer exceptional conditions for the production of high-quality Arabica coffee (Schluter 2010). At the same time, communities in this region have also suffered greatly from the vicious cycle of conflict, poverty and poor governance, characteristics found in the DRC as fragile state (World Bank 2010). While various formal peace agreements have been signed in the past few years (the last two in 2008 and 2009), bouts of violence continue to affect the population, especially in the Eastern provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu, which border Rwanda. As shown in Table 1, the DRC as a whole scores very high on the 'failed state index' and very low on international rankings that assess peace, democracy, governance, transparency, human development, and GDP/capita. The region selected for the study thus exemplifies an 'extreme' context suitable for 'unconventional research' that can help to shed new light on phenomena left unexplored, as recent articles have called for (Bamberger 2008; Bamberger and Pratt 2010; cf. Mair, Martí, and Ventresca 2012). It is also a truly 'natural laboratory', as Burgess and Steenkamp (2006) put it, for research on marketing and institutions.

Table 1 around here

Data collection

We collected information for the three partnerships through desk research, semi-structured interviews with experts and those directly or indirectly involved in the partnerships, both in the Eastern DRC region and outside it (for a full overview of contacts and interviews, see the Appendix), a field trip that involved group discussions and observations (as explained below), through immersion in this phenomenon of interest. These latter aspects of data collection

provided us with micro-level insights into ground-level realities. As doing research and obtaining reliable data are real challenges in a conflict-affected setting like this, the approach seemed well suited as it involved a range of approaches for engagement and data collection (cf. Shultz et al. 2005). We drew inspiration from earlier studies (e.g. Ingenbleek, Tessema, and Van Trijp 2013; Shultz et al. 2012) who called for different research methodologies that would suit a developing/emerging market context. To 'enter' the communities, we benefited from proper introduction by the cooperatives, NGOs and community leaders who were closely involved and trusted (Ingenbleek, Tessema, and Van Trijp 2013; Viswanathan, Gau, and Chaturvedi 2008) and with whom one of the researchers has close ties as he had conducted many field trips in the region the past decade while working for another NGO himself. Our 'immersion' took the form of engagement with partnership leaders through regular contacts, both in the country/region and through email.

The contacts existing before the start of the study were used to carry out an inventory and obtain information on all relevant coffee partnerships in the region from informants, supplemented with a thorough search in various databases and on the internet. This resulted in the identification of four larger-scale cross-sector collaborations in Eastern DRC, of which one was oriented at discussing issues affecting the coffee sector in the DRC broadly, and thus represented engagement and dialogue, not the more strategic, innovative type of activities pursued in this article (which encompass what has been called 'transformative' partnerships, see Kolk and Lenfant 2014). We therefore focused on the other three for further analysis (discussed in more detail in subsequent sections, and summarized in Table 2 there). We carried out additional checks through our contacts, also in the later stage of the empirical study (see below), which confirmed our assessment regarding these three partnerships. They are located in Butembo (North Kivu), with Soprocopiv (cooperative), Solidaridad (a non-governmental organization, NGO), Schluter (business) and DGIS (Netherlands) as

international governmental donor; in Minova (on the border between North and South Kivu), with Sainsbury (business), Sopacdi (cooperative), Twin (an NGO which also owns a trading company), and DFID (UK) as international governmental donor; and in Lemera, Bikokoboko and Mutamabala (South Kivu), with Twin (and Twin Trading, the NGOs' trading branch), UGEAFI as (non-profit) cooperative, and Oxfam Novib (NGO). While there are some differences between the partnerships, mostly concerning their set-up, origin and the ethnic composition of the communities, similarities prevail when considered from the perspective and focus of this study. In conformity with Eisenhardt (1989) the partnerships were thus grouped and analyzed as one phenomenon (case), focusing on cross-sector collaboration, involving a range of different actors, in the conflict-affected Kivu region in a fragile country characterized by institutional gaps.

To collect further information about the various dimensions of the partnerships, we took the following subsequent steps. We first approached 18 persons in our network (from 11 different organizations) by e-mail with questions about the partnerships and actors, the (post-)conflict context in which they operate and their impact (see the Appendix). Their responses contained answers to the questions, or an invitation for an interview by telephone and/or a reference to other persons who could (also) be contacted in view of their specific expertise. This led to a series of semi-structured interviews (mostly by long-distance calls) with ten experts. They covered individuals involved in the three partnerships or with specific knowledge about the coffee sector and/or the region. Finally, the second author of this article made a field trip to the region to obtain more in-depth information about the partnerships, the institutional context and their effectiveness/impact. During the field research, 14 semi-structured interviews were held and ten group discussions with approximately 150 'beneficiaries' (coffee farmers and their families, who participated on a voluntary basis) in the three communities in Eastern DRC. NGO representatives and leaders of the cooperatives

explained the purpose of the researcher's visit and asked interested farmers to give two hours of their time to answer a few questions in smaller groups of approximately 15 individuals. It was stressed that the research was not connected to (NGO) program funding, as development evaluations may suffer from a 'positive response' bias due to participants' interest in continuation of the program.

The group discussions took place in Swahili, the language spoken in Eastern Congo, which was translated into French (the native language of the researcher). The groups were mixed in gender and age, and the researcher ensured that both men and women,[1] young and old answered the questions raised. After each group discussion, preliminary findings were reviewed with cooperative staff, both men and women, to check whether answers seemed representative of the communities. The field visit also included a review of contracts to obtain insight into quantities, prices and conditions, as well as the collection and subsequent analysis of external documentation (evaluations, field reports, annual reports, project reports).[2] In interviews, every opportunity was used to cross-check statements and facts as presented by other interviewees and verify the available data. The context obviously had limitations as ongoing tensions, occasional fighting, insecurity and bouts of violence were noticeable during the study, and became even more intense after the field trip (see the findings and conclusions/limitations sections).

Analysis

In our interviews and examination of primary and secondary materials, we paid specific attention to the aspects above. We categorized the answers per relevant dimension (partnership activities, effects and characteristics, marketing systems, institutional context), and the resulting Tables 2 and 3 were put together by both authors through close collaboration in the analysis of the materials. As discussed in more detail in the next section, both the direct objectives of the collaborative efforts and their wider institutional implications in relation to

peace and reconciliation have been considered. This was inspired by policy assessment and evaluation studies in the field of international development (e.g. Bamberger and White 2007; DCED 2010; OECD-DAC 2002; Ravaillon 2009) that made a distinction between output, outcome and impact dimensions in order to judge "the merit or worth of an activity" (OECD-DAC 2002: 21).

Output refers to the first, or immediate result of an intervention or activity; outcome to changes in behavior of those targeted or in the application/implementation of services, knowledge or standards; and impact to the most far-reaching of the three, which relates to bringing sustainable and structural solutions to the problem(s) at stake, reckoning with possible negative side effects (Liese and Beisheim 2011; OECD-DAC 2002; Schäferhoff, Campe, and Kaan 2009). Applied to the DRC coffee partnerships, this resulted in the following categories. Output was approached as the equivalent of organizational achievements regarding the creation and strengthening of cooperatives for small farmers; outcome as effects on coffee prices, income and living conditions of these beneficiaries; and impact as broader institutional implications concerning a reduction of conflict or tensions, inter alia, due to increased inter-community and village contacts through reconciliation programs and joint cultivation. It should be noted that changes are seen as part of the broader set of activities resulting from the collaboration, not as results in the sense of establishing (causal) links with marketing systems; this is difficult to assess in general, let alone in a (post-)conflict context (as acknowledged by, e.g., CARE 2012a, 2012b; Gitsham 2007; OECD 2008).

FINDINGS

Table 2 gives an overview of the three coffee partnerships, already introduced above, the only ones in the region. The partnerships include multiple actors (local and international NGOs,

farmer cooperatives, international companies, and government agencies as donors) from various geographical settings (local villages, African cities, European countries). These peculiarities partly stem from the specific nature of a coffee supply chain that covers the whole spectrum from an initial commodity in Africa to a product for other (generally Western) markets with thus, by nature, business participation. It is also in line with the literature which indicated that a multitude of partners from different backgrounds, both local and international, is needed to help fill institutional gaps, and for partnerships to serve as 'compensatory structures'. Below we will discuss some more details, following Layton's (2009) indication of elements of marketing systems, the actors, their roles and activities as summarized in Tables 2 and 3. After a more generic analysis of the partnerships on these aspects in the first subsection, the next subsection pays attention to some specifics from an institutional perspective, although the conflict-affected nature of the environment will 'filter through' throughout the analysis.

Tables 2 and 3 around here

Partnerships' characteristics in relation to marketing systems

All actors expressed to see value in collaborating and in bringing in their own specific expertise and experiences. If we look at Table 2, two of the three partnerships were set up as part of broader framework agreements spurred by Northern governments to provide incentives to the private sector to invest in fragile countries: ranging from covering risks to providing matching funds to participants as part of an overall objective to rejuvenate the coffee sector. One interviewee indicated that "beyond risk sharing", the funding mechanism offered by Northern governments "facilitated the partnering process and had a snowball effect on other actors".

Another common feature is the involvement of 'hybrid' organizations: NGOs that also

have a trading branch (Twin, with Twin Trading), aim to transform into a cooperative (UGEAFI) or engage in consultancy; cooperatives that may be partly commercial as well, in addition to the non-profit services offered to members; and companies that mention social and economic goals. Interestingly, the way in which most companies present themselves can be characterized as mission-driven (Raynolds 2009). They frequently emphasize the importance of self-sufficiency and a decent livelihood for farmers, of improving the situation for communities and contributing to sustainable development via empowerment and higher incomes. This is not very different from social purposes mentioned by NGOs, which most often also operate in the economic realm (focused on providing sustained livelihoods). Although actors' strategic objectives exhibit differences (commercial for companies; empowerment and/or capacity-building for NGOs), the overlap of perspectives, and the inclusion of 'hybrid' organizations facilitated partnering.

The case of Twin is interesting in this regard, as an NGO which owns a trading company (and involved in two of the three partnerships), and has a strong business sense combined with a social focus. Twin saw great potential in the DRC to improve livelihoods through coffee, and mentioned to be interested in "restoring supply chains in fragile environments". It clearly indicated economic aspects such as "the potential for high-quality Arabica coffee with Fair Trade and organic certification, as well as the prospects for linking the producers to Twin's high value long term market partners" as motivation to collaborate. Twin also stressed not to act as "gatekeeper" for the farmers but rather to be "eager to play a catalyst role" by assisting them in finding other buyers. In the coffee partnerships, NGOs basically aim to have an impact on the supply chain, to make it more responsive to farmers' needs, cut out middlemen and further sustainability broadly defined, in economic, environmental and social terms.

Moving to company roles, Sainsbury mentioned improving access to markets or

"expanding consumer demand for African produce" as it strives to "promote the DRC coffee to encourage customers to recognize the Congo as origins of gourmet coffee in their own right". It sees clear value in collaboration: "By creating partnerships and sharing expertise, an NGO can empower a retailer to make a difference and vice versa. All parties can better understand each other's challenges and work together to find the most suitable and feasible solution". Schluter considers itself a hybrid organization as it seeks to combine profitability with humanitarian values: making a profit and contributing to economic development by ensuring that local farmers benefit from selling their product. It also sees partnerships in relation to market presence and competitiveness. The company admits not to be able to compete with larger coffee companies already operating in Kenya or Uganda; in this respect, the DRC is seen as a niche market where Schluter has a comparative advantage due to its long-standing presence, experience, network and track record. Concurrently, the company explicitly states to show patience if farmers experience problems and to assist them in multiple ways, such as providing market information, offering opportunities for interaction and establishing links with market and non-market partners. These are key business contributions to the partnerships, in addition to buying coffee.

Cooperatives see the value of partnerships in helping them to serve their members better. In order to be able to negotiate higher prices with companies on behalf of their members, they need organizational and bargaining skills, but also support for improving coffee quality across the board. The 'hybrid' UGEAFI also mentioned that the decision to enter the partnership was made after its constituents realized that the NGO's traditional peace education and reconciliation programs were "necessary but not sufficient to address conflict issues in the region". Sopacdi's main motivation to partner with Twin was to improve coffee quality, improve producers' livelihoods and obtain certification to be able to obtain higher prices. The cooperative indicated that, while it always strives to obtain a higher price,

contractual agreements were the result of “fair negotiations”.

The key elements that characterize the three coffee partnerships are summarized in Table 3. The partnerships have a clear capacity-building component, and aim to help the development of skills, and the acquisition and application of knowledge, at the level of both individual farmers and cooperatives, covering the whole range from production to supply. This is combined with a strong focus on relationship building, organization and marketing, and opening up markets to coffee that is certified according to external standards. While NGOs are typically involved in capacity-building (financial, managerial, organizational and technical, specifically geared to cultivating, farming and producing high-quality/certified coffee), and cooperatives focus on implementation and giving services to their members, companies also engage in activities that, in other settings, may have been considered outside the realm of their core business: they visit farmers regularly from Europe, and in a few cases even organize trips for producers (Twin and Sainsbury). They are committed to not only buying coffee at a fair price but also spreading the story of the Congolese coffee (e.g. through targeted marketing campaigns to raise awareness). The partnerships thus link farmers directly to their potential market. As Schluter noted in relation to the (Utz) certification component of the partnership, this does “not only trace the coffee origin and establish a quality guarantee, it also helps get to know the farmer and establish strong links”.

Interactions with the institutional environment

As explained above, and shown in Table 1, the DRC exemplifies a fragile state, characterized by institutional gaps (cf. Figure 1). Although national elections have taken place, governance structures remain largely dysfunctional. The Congolese state has very limited capacity to control its territory, enforce decisions, or even pay the police force. The situation in the Eastern provinces has been problematic for decades, with numerous conflicts, lawlessness and

chronic poverty. There is a lack of enforcement of formal rules and respect for property rights, with transactions being hampered by a problematic financial system with little access to credit for small farmers, and local markets that are difficult to penetrate. A Twin Trading field report alludes to the fact that "roads are almost impassable and there are no other services and infrastructure whatsoever. Most of the people have only recently re-settled the land, after years living in the forests or in refugee camps in Tanzania. The region remains tense, with the Congolese army only partially in control". Furthermore, while the M23 rebellion erupted after we carried out our empirical research, insecurity and bouts of violence also prevailed at the time. North and South Kivu are marked by extremely weak formal state structures; especially in rural areas, the state is basically absent. Changing alliances of various armed groups govern large parts of the Eastern provinces and control resources, with rebels exerting influence through patronage-based clientelistic networks. Traditional authorities, such as the Mwami (village chiefs), continue to play a significant role in the judicial system, as well as in other matters such as land redistribution and the construction of infrastructure.

The institutional context is thus characterized by a complex mix of 'formal' and 'informal', of 'legal' and 'illegal' spheres, in which customary, state as well as 'practical' norms may be applied. Taxes are, for example, levied by the state (usually one of the only tasks undertaken by the provincial governor); by the traditional authorities (the Mwami), often in kind; and by rebels groups (through illegal toll). The army as institution fails to protect the population in Eastern DRC, and is often the source of insecurity due to fragmentation between composing 'units' which often lack discipline. Although government authorities have tried to disarm or integrate ex rebel groups into the army, with support of the international community, these attempts have not been very successful. Cases of disobedience and/or plundering have been reported amongst those former rebels that were 'integrated'. These examples illustrate blurring boundaries between formal and informal, legal and illegal, in a

setting marked by fragility.

At the same time, as noted by Vlassenroot (2008: 2), “withering state capacity did not lead to a governance void but has rather opened up some space for other actors, including traditional chiefs, civil society groups, churches and aid agencies, to assume services previously delivered by the state”. While this “withering state capacity” also triggered criminality, corruption and arbitrariness, the Kivu case showed increasing opportunity for actors to intervene in the social sphere (e.g., health and education), although our findings indicated that partnerships also addressed governance and security issues. This confirms the observation by Trefon (2004: 2) in his book on the ‘reinvention of order’ in Kinshasa, the capital of the DRC, regarding the emergence of “dynamic new forms of social organization that are constantly taking shape to compensate for the overwhelming failures of the post-colonial nation state”. In the rural context of the Kivus, where there is even less order and more institutional gaps, partnerships seem to have supported similar processes.

For the three coffee partnerships that we studied, we found similarities in how they addressed fragility dimensions, although degrees of pre-existing inter-ethnic tensions differed somewhat (see Table 2). All the evidence pointed at the crucial importance of trust, mutual appreciation and respect. These relational dimensions are highly important in regions with a fragile social fabric, such as Eastern DRC, especially when embedded in longer-term strategic forms of collaboration. In all cases, relationships between companies, NGOs and farmers (organizations) were based on trust and a supportive mind-set, which was translated practically into the concern to provide a fair price, credit (pre-financing), and long-term buying agreements. Partnerships not only help to provide stability of income, they also contribute to the creation of a culture of democracy and trust, and foster social capital (cf. Elder, Zereffi, and Le Billon 2011). Farmers and cooperative and local NGO staff showed clear appreciation for the efforts made by company representatives to visit farmers despite

difficult circumstances. Table 3 illustrates that quite some activities focused at organizational issues, both for farmers and cooperatives. Cooperatives provide important resources to small farmers not only in the form of technical assistance for crop and harvest improvement, but also in the realm of social services, such as health care and credit. Farmers benefited from prefinancing (of up to 60% of the value of the contract), a useful component in (post-)conflict areas where financial access is limited and most companies are reluctant to invest upfront because of the risks involved. From a governance standpoint, partnership members had to learn to work with a contract, to respect its terms, sit at the table, and to negotiate with companies on conditions in a context where recourse to violence is more the norm than the exception.

The three partnerships either strengthened (Soprocopiv, Sopacdi) or created (UGEAFI) democratic structures within the cooperatives to ensure accountability and transparency. Although Soprocopiv was a cooperative already registered at the beginning of the partnership, it benefited greatly from the expertise brought in by Solidaridad, particularly related to management, financial/bookkeeping skills and technical agronomical know-how concerning best ways to produce high-quality coffee (e.g. how to work the land; when to renew the orchard; how to avoid pesticide use to obtain organic certification and minimize environmental impact; how to select, wash, dry and sort coffee cherries). These improvements were also observed in the other two partnerships. Sopacdi systems and documentation improved to comply with the requirements for Fair Trade certification (as the first and only cooperative in Eastern DRC at the time). The cooperative stated that Twin basically facilitated its professionalization. Twin, for example, assisted Sopacdi in securing funds for the rehabilitation of their Coffee Washing Station (the only one in Eastern DRC). UGEAFI, although not a formal cooperative, acts as an intermediary between its members and the buyer (Twin Trading). UGEAFI and Sopacdi also benefitted from the technical expertise facilitated

by Twin: experts are paid by the partnerships to visit both cooperatives to supervise progress and give on-the-job training.

The entire process of participating in the partnership and the collaboration led to a whole range of (new) skills that were (implicitly) learned. Interviewees also mentioned that transferring the passion for coffee back to children, thus perpetuating the tradition, "gives farmers a sense of purpose and togetherness" (UGEAFI). The culture of coffee was in the process of "disappearing due to low prices and the difficulty to work the fields in an unstable environment" (Sopacdi). In the Kivus, coffee is considered to be part of the ancestors' heritage, which they used to proudly cultivate as so-called 'green gold' (Sopacdi). As written in a story found in a Twin Trading field report "in Eastern Congo in the 1970s children were taught that there are four kinds of gold: yellow gold (the metal), brown gold (oil), white gold (cotton) and green gold (coffee); in the current situation in the Kivu green gold really does have the potential to let farmers start to rebuild lives and communities. Unlike the mineral wealth, coffee money can stay in the hands of the people". In addition, well-being also appeared to have improved, considering indicators such as an increase in marriages, better housing (verified through observation and comparison between villages where farmers produce coffee versus villages where farmers do not produce coffee), higher school enrolment, and better health. Female respondents mentioned that they would use the additional revenue to ensure that girls could (continue to) attend school.

Overall, it can be said that the partnerships helped to create 'rules of the game' in a legal vacuum, as they de facto represent new governance modalities in a fragile institutional setting. While none of the partnerships had as goal to rehabilitate the formal judicial system, they nonetheless contributed to reconciliation by bringing people from different ethnic groups together, who started to "walk hand in hand" (Sopacdi) by pursuing joint economic activities. As Sopacdi put it, referring to its membership: "we are more than 3.000 farmers from

different ethnic groups, we speak Kirundi, Kihavo or Kinyarwanda, yet we are united in one vision: to improve our families' lives and our communities through coffee". The common purpose shared by coffee farmers was mentioned by all respondents. When it comes to negotiating prices or terms of contract, "it does not matter if one is Banyamulenge or Babembe. What matters is the successful negotiation of a price, for which we need to be united" (UGEAFI). The partnerships also facilitated "visits between coffee producers from different communities, Babembe, Banyamulenge, and Bafulero, and other producers from other countries which created a culture of exchange. Coming back from the visits, it was common practice to have Banyamulenge share their experience in a Babembe village" (UGEAFI). Farmers from different villages gather to discuss issues directly related to their livelihoods, and therefore share a common interest (coffee) and a common purpose (producing high quality coffee at the best/highest possible price), fostering a greater sense of community.

Regarding violence and security, Sopacdi reported that the partnership resulted in less smuggling across the Kivu lake to Rwanda, and fewer losses of life. Before, "there was no market; we had to resort to smuggling our coffee across Lake Kivu to Rwanda at great risk". In Eastern DRC, fewer cases of thefts and petty crime were reported in coffee producing villages since they started rehabilitating their coffee plantation. The partnerships have helped farmers who were marginalized as prevailing insecurity had prevented them from taking advantage of the fertile soils highly suitable for coffee production, while essential assets, infrastructure, inputs and institutions were missing. Cases of rebels dropping their arms to cultivate coffee were also reported. According to UGEAFI, in one community around 56 ex Mai Mai laid down arms to become coffee producers. In one discussion in Lemera (related to the same Twin-Oxfam Novib-UGEAFI partnership), 14 participants were relatively young men, ex-militia members, who had recently ceased fighting. When asked whether they would

take up the arms again if their commanders would pay them more than the revenues gained from cultivating coffee, they replied having no interest in returning to the militias because they were “tired of the war” and had “finally found a sense of purpose”. The partnership, through its rehabilitation of the coffee sector, had facilitated their reinsertion in the social life of the villages and reunited them with their families, leading to increased social cohesion.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Responding to the special issue call for papers, we aimed to contribute to the literature on subsistence marketplaces and the marketing field more generally by exploring social innovation partnerships in a fragile country characterized by institutional gaps, specifically considering the role of cross-sector collaboration in a conflict-affected region. The specific empirical setting was Eastern Congo, comprising two provinces (North and South Kivu) bordering Rwanda, where tensions have been palpable in the past decades and resulted in regular bouts of violence. This embodies a fragile context marked by lack of trust, of security, and of good governance, and situations of acute poverty. We analyzed partnerships’ characteristics in relation to marketing systems, and the interactions with the institutional environment, inspired by Layton’s work (e.g. Layton 2007, 2009), in this way providing more insight into the specific social matrix in this context. Table 4 explores how the partnerships address institutional gaps, considering various fragility dimensions. It illustrates that they not only help to fill ‘traditional’ formal voids identified in the literature (Khanna and Palepu 1997; Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos 2015), especially in relation to skills, quality of the produce, financing, and contractual arrangements, but also seem to do so in a more systematic way, by providing interconnections reckoning with the fragile context.

Table 4 around here

With the study, we also responded to repeated pleas for more attention to those suffering from

poverty and to the role of marketing in contributing to reducing social problems including conflict, and promoting peace and stability (cf. Shultz et al. 2005), thus helping to further the relevance of the field (see also the subsection on policy implications below). While marketing was crucial in shaping our research, we also used insights from other literatures, thus responding to the call from Ingenbleek (2014) for cross-fertilization. Partnerships have been studied from different perspectives, including management, public policy and development studies, and so have issues related to (post-)conflict, peace and reconciliation in relation to different actors, including business.

Through the partnerships, small farmers gained access to resources, not only in the form of technical assistance for improving crops and harvests, but also in the realm of social services, such as health care and credit, and learned about organizational forms that ensure accountability and transparency. Results were achieved at the organizational level (output) (build-up of managerial capacities and transfer of financial-administrative skills, and improved functioning of cooperatives), at the farmer level (outcome) (better prices and livelihoods, increased revenues and access to markets) and more widely in (coffee) communities in terms of enhanced social cohesion (ethnic groups that were previously hostile are now working together for a common purpose) and the creation of new governance modalities in a fragile institution setting (impact). The coffee partnerships in this region seemed to have offered a window of opportunity to create relationships between different actors. Being able to ‘lead by example and enhance the rule of law’, in line with Fort and Schipani (2004), both non-profit organizations and companies have taken initiatives to help fill a governance void in a conflict context while also promoting sustainable development.

Our findings are in line with Shultz (2007: 298) who suggested that a new “macromarketing orientation toward constructive engagement can render adversarial relationships more cooperative, beneficial and sustainable”. However, central to our approach

is to allow micro-level insights to inform the macromarketing perspective, reflecting up the bottom-up nature of the subsistence marketplaces stream of literature. A view on marketing as a mechanism through which seeds of cooperative relationships are planted, is congruent with the peace through commerce literature where relationship building plays a central role as mutual benefits derived from trading deter potential conflicts (Abramov 2009; Tobias and Boudreaux 2011). Inter-community and inter-village contacts fostered by activities undertaken in the realm of the partnerships led to changed perceptions of different groups towards one another. One of the reasons accounting for this phenomenon is the high labor-intensity of coffee processing that requires many activities that no farmer can do on his/her own, thus 'forcing' collaboration.

The importance of trust and relationships in this study links to broader observations on the importance of social interactions in marketing and in marketing systems, especially in the context of subsistence (e.g. Ingenbleek, Tessema, and Van Trijp 2013). Our research offers insights in the development and conflict transformation/reconciliation potential of providing and improving access to markets through collaboration in a specific value chain. As Shultz et al. (2005: 29) already indicated, repairing value chains, such as in the coffee case in the Eastern DRC region, is not only important "for rebuilding communities" but also to help "provide a sense of normalcy". In their article, they contended that "market-oriented, integrative food-marketing systems indeed help mitigate and even transcend ethnic hostilities" (Shultz et al. 2005: 35), which is in line with our results.

In this way, marketing "can help entrepreneurs succeed in the marketplace" and be "part of the solution" instead of only of the problem (Ingenbleek 2014: 199). Marketing can thus influence the behavior of actors by providing incentives (Hosley and Wee 1988), which is a pattern we also observed from the support offered by Western governments. Our study augments that body of knowledge by examining changes induced by cross-sector

collaboration arrangements in the relational sphere, among and between communities, and across organization types. This is relevant to a broad range of activities and sectors, although it also extends earlier research on coffee that have most often focused on individual-level effects, as resulting from fair trade in Latin America (Arnould, Plastina, and Ball 2009; Geiger-Oneto and Arnould 2011), or from post-genocide reconciliation in Rwanda (Tobias and Boudreaux 2011; Tobias, Mair, and Barbosa-Leiker 2013).

In addition, considering the fact that most coffee farmers can be viewed as micro-entrepreneurs, our findings indicate that cross-sector collaboration schemes involving micro-enterprises provide more than income and employment, but also tackle issues such as lack of governance and security in extreme subsistence markets contexts marked by institutional gaps. A study looking at subsistence consumer merchants in India also identified relationship building with different sets of actors and "commitment to develop, preserve, and strengthen those relationships" (Viswanathan, Rosa and Ruth 2010: 2) as an important theoretical insight on subsistence markets. Our research revealed the potential that partnerships, and the marketing activities they enabled, have in building relationships and creating new institutions, both normative (new organizational forms which induced different behavioral patterns through working together) and cognitive (new insights into how "the other" is perceived).

Implications for Public Policy

Our findings are relevant for public, non-profit and private actors involved in contexts characterized by institutional gaps, and also beyond the coffee sector. We provide case-study insights on how business activities, channeled through social innovation partnerships, help to lift farmers out of poverty in fragile, (post-)conflict contexts. By doing so, cross-sector collaboration has the potential to promote harmony among communities as tension and resentment are reduced, and former enemies are brought in contact through joint economic

activities. Some of the rebels have dropped arms and switched to coffee production and processing, and we noticed a snowball effect as neighboring villages and communities express interest in moving in the same direction. In (post-)conflict situations, cross-sector collaboration may be even more important for building trust, which in turn is crucial for creating a climate conducive to peace. We show in practice that setting up partnerships in such a context seems possible and can be fruitful, provided that the difficult context is explicitly taken into account in carefully building relationships. Our findings resonate with other research on subsistence marketplaces that encourage governments to engage the informal economy, and to contribute to building linkages with formal economies (Viswanathan et al. 2012), or to develop consumer and entrepreneurial literacy programs (Viswanathan, Gajendiran and Venkatesan 2008). Coffee farmers often operate (partly) in the informal sector but do build relationships, via cooperatives and partnerships, with formal-economy actors; they could also benefit from entrepreneurial and marketplace literacy programs.

Another aspect that deserves attention is the role of the government, as its absence in collaborative arrangements in Eastern DRC is noteworthy. Scholars have discussed the danger that partnerships may 'crowd' out an already weak state even further if they do not involve domestic government agencies and instead rely on external/other actors (Eweje 2006; Idemudia and Ite 2006; Kolk and Lenfant 2014). However, the DRC seems to be a special case as interviewees noted that it may take a generation or more before the government can take up its proper role again. They pointed at the absence of 'civic sense' in all segments of society, with institutions being 'rotten'. From that perspective, partnerships may not only fill a governance void but also form a response to an immense need for promoting civic action in a way that local/national government agencies cannot. This is a clear illustration of situations in which non-governmental and private actors jointly take roles and responsibilities that the

government is unable to do, with support from multilateral donors and/or Northern governments.

At the same time, and as implied by the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS), which involves aid donor countries, international organizations and some conflict-affected states and NGOs, it is important to find ways to (gradually) involve local government agencies, and thus help (re)build local institutions. IDPS explicitly mentions partnerships in this regard. Multiple partners from a variety of backgrounds and expertise are helpful as they add their specific skills and resources to a 'messy' context that presents clear challenges. Our study provides information regarding the types of incentives that Northern governments may give to specific actors to promote the emergence of partnerships. Companies are more inclined to become active in fragile areas when governments are willing to share inherent risks of doing business in such settings, and when there are possibilities to partner with NGOs. NGOs often help companies to develop relationships with local communities in an effective and accountable manner, and help firms to proceed cautiously, also in their marketing and communication about these activities. In the case of coffee, NGOs were also seen as credible actors knowledgeable about the communities from which companies wanted to buy the coffee.

Multilateral agencies involved in Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration programs, which often face difficulties in successfully implementing programs, may also learn from our findings as they point at the potential of market-based solutions. The DRC, for example, is marked by constant insecurity and experiences chronic problems with properly integrating ex-rebels in the army and finding sustainable livelihoods for those who do not join the regular army. In this regard, partnerships such as the ones discussed in our study are examples of inclusive venues offering economic opportunities for groups at risk, which include ex-rebels. There are signs that local authorities also find inspiration from these

successes. During a recent trip to Eastern DRC, the second author met a provincial minister who, with self-financed micro-projects, stimulated young ex-rebels to cultivate coffee within their communities, comparable to the cases that we examined. She also indicated that girls who had been physically molested by rebels started regaining trust and were even considering having relationships with these ex-rebels. Thus far, however, it has apparently proven difficult to convince local and national authorities in the DRC to invest more in coffee, due to lack of funds and of 'interest', most likely in relation to poor governance. Northern governments and multilateral agencies might want to support such initiatives and help encourage the DRC government to invest more in its coffee fields together with business, NGOs and international donors.

Limitations and Further Research

It should be noted that this exploratory study has been just a first step to obtain more insight, and follow-up research is needed to assess impact in more detail. In view of the difficult context, including local (security) circumstances, and constraints of time and resources, we could not collect data more longitudinally to cover a longer period of time. Furthermore, while we relied on multiple respondents and sources of information, and thus were able to reconstruct processes and pathways of change from different perspectives, our approach also had clear limitations. This included the fact that almost all data came from those involved in the partnership or the specific (post-)conflict context, thus posing a risk to reliability (Gitsham 2007).

More generally, ongoing tensions, occasional fighting, insecurity and bouts of violence were noticeable during the study, and became even more intense after the field trip. The limitations during data collection were thus more profound than discussed, for example, by Ingenbleek, Tessema, and Van Trijp (2013) in terms of biases faced by researchers in

subsistence markets, due to the extreme context of our study. Concurrently, our approach may hopefully inspire future studies in conflict-affected regions as it shows that doing research under these circumstances is still possible, and can provide exploratory insights rarely encountered in publications precisely because of all the problems faced. Important enabling factors seem to have been pre-existing contacts, a cautious approach involving a careful build-up of communication, good introductions to communities and potential interviewees, and 'immersion' in the phenomenon of interest in such a way that respondents are convinced of true commitment without pre-conditions or relationships to further (program) funding.

In future studies, it might be worthwhile to also pay attention to potential side effects of (rapid) economic development. These may include disruption between and within communities as a result of higher purchasing power that can lead to envy or increased inequalities, or the (re)emergence of certain practices that may be seen as undesirable (in one of the group discussions, for example, we came across a man who expressed his happiness about a greater income as this would enable him to marry a second wife – even though forbidden by law and religion). Partnerships might also play a role in helping cope with such issues.

Moreover, follow-up research on partnerships in other fragile regions, in or outside Africa, to draw comparisons and assess to what extent they seem suitable and potentially effective in other contexts, would be valuable. This also applies to investigations of other value chains or economic activities to see whether similar dynamics could be found beyond our exploratory setting and specific context. Furthermore, there may be options to link insights from cross-sector collaboration, given the multi-actor involvement in partnerships, to the literature on stakeholders as it has developed in the management and marketing fields. Finally, in going from micro to macro, our work opens avenues for further research on the ways in which marketing helps to create new institutions and to further develop existing ones

that are characterized by gaps, thus adding a rather different perspective to a more traditional approach in which institutions are needed to enable transactions.

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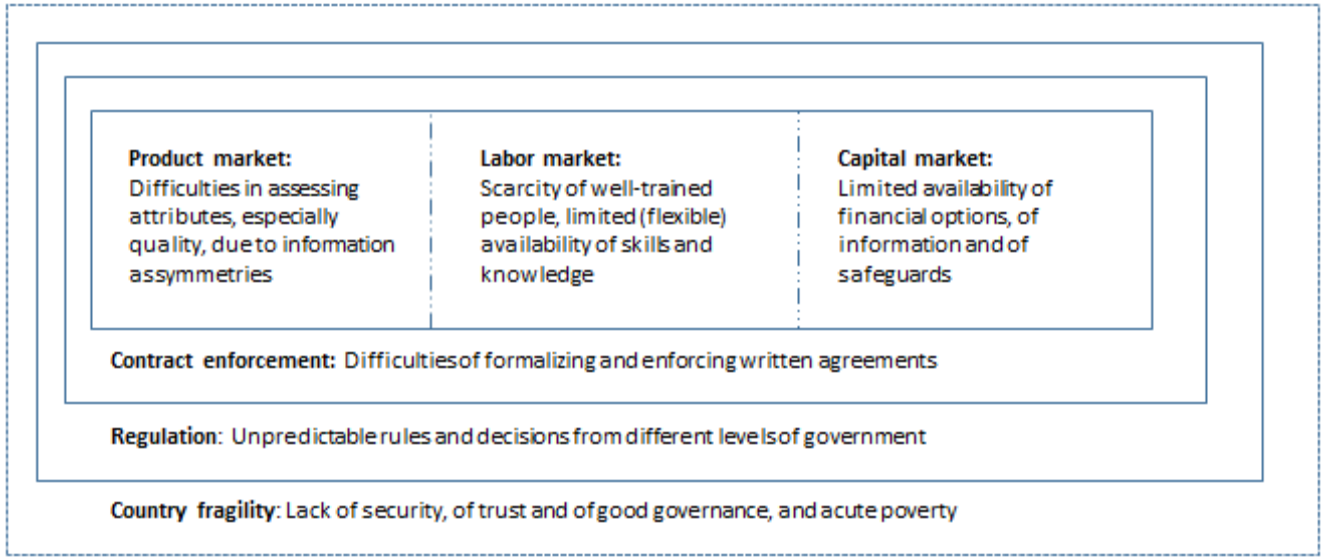
NOTES

[1] In the specific Eastern DRC context, women are not only victims (of rape and plunder), they are also the primary income providers for their family which gives them status and confidence to speak in group meetings.

[2] The initial field research was done in 2011. When finalizing the paper for submission, the second author checked and updated some of the data gathered at the time, especially on the local cooperatives. It should be noted that a more longitudinal study was not aimed for and was also not possible for reasons indicated in the paper. Rather the objective is to shed more light on the role of social innovation partnerships in conflict-affected regions characterized by institutional gaps, as explained in the main text.

Figure 1. Institutional gaps in fragile states



Sources: Khanna and Palepu (1997) and Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos (2015) have been used for the five 'inner' and formal, what they call, institutional voids, in the Figure (i.e. product market, labor market, capital market, contract enforcement, regulation).
Country fragility dimensions added by the authors, inspired by key components in DIE/UNDP (2009); GTZ (2009); World Bank (2011).

Table 1. General information on DRC

Conflict period	Since 1996/1997
Area in km²	2.345,000
Population	66 million
Natural resources	Copper, cobalt, diamonds, gold, other minerals; oil; wood; hydroelectric potential
Main export products	Diamonds (45%); copper; cobalt
GDP/capita	US$ 231 (ranked 212 out of 212 countries)
Ethnic groups	More than 200 African ethnic groups; the Luba, Kongo, and Anamongo are some of the larger groupings of tribes in the DRC; in the Kivus these are the Bafulero, Babembe, Banyamulenge, Bashi, Bahunde, Batembo, Banande and Banyanga
Rank in 'failed state index'	2 (for comparison, Somalia is on position 1): includes aspects related to governance, justice, security, de-legitimization of the state, public services, criminality, uneven development, human rights
Rank in world wide governance index	155 (out of 167); Includes voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulation quality, rule of law, corruption
Open budget index	83 (out of 94); transparency
Democracy index	155 (out of 167); functioning of government, electoral processes, political participation, political culture, civil liberties
Global Peace Index	154 (out of 158); human rights, military expenditures, security, safety, criminality
Human Development Index	187 (out of 187); human development

Sources: basic country information (upper half of table) http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm; http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2861.htm, IMF, World Economic Outlook Database, September 2011, and GDP/capita: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD. Failed states index: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/failed_states_index_2012_interactive; World wide governance indicator: http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp 2011; Open budget index: http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/2010_Data_Tables.pdf 2010; Democracy index: http://graphics.eiu.com/PDF/Democracy_Index_2010_web.pdf 2010; Global peace index 2012: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AonYZs4MzlZbdGVUUEE1UVpFX1dkLVgtZ2RLeVJzV3c#gid=1; or http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2012/jun/12/global-peace-index-2012#data 2012; Human development index: http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/

Note: The Table above contains information relevant at the moment we started to design our study. Since then, there have been some, mostly minor changes – sometimes representing a slight improvement, sometimes a further deterioration. The latest information can be supplied by the authors upon request, but they do not change the overall picture and fundamentally fragile nature of the DRC.

Table 2. Overview of the three coffee partnerships in the DRC

	Partnerships*		
Characteristics	*Schluter (B) – Solidaridad (N) – Soprocopiv (C) – DGIS (G)*	*Sainsbury (B) – Twin (N/B) – Sopacdi (C) – DFID (G)*	*Twin (B/N) – Oxfam Novib (N) – UGEAFI (N/C)*
Goal	Revitalize the coffee sector in DRC	Rejuvenate the coffee sector by releasing, for Red Nose Day in the UK, a first limited edition of high-quality (Fair Trade) coffee from war-torn DRC in the mainstream market since 1960s	To improve farmers' livelihoods
Activities per partner	Schluter: buys coffee, builds relationships; Solidaridad: provides technical support, project management; DGIS: provides funding	Sainsbury: buys high-quality coffee, provides marketing support, staff, time; DFID: covers risks and provides funding; Twin: provides training, technical and marketing support, prepares for certification; Sopacdi: supervises daily activities	Twin: buys coffee, provides marketing support and training; UGEAFI: organizes, supports and accompanies farmers; Oxfam Novib: provides funding, creates linkages
Starting year of partnership	2007	2008	2011
Location	Butembo (North Kivu)	Minova (on the border between North and South Kivu)	Lemera, Bikokoboko and Mutambala (South Kivu)
*Membership of cooperative in first year / 2011/2014***	2007: 1,200 2011: 3,500 2014: 5,540	2008: 280 2011: 3,503 2014: 5,600	Newly created in 2011 2011: 2,473 2014: 2,037
Coffee trees in first year / 2011	2007/2008: 866,450 2011: 2,118,361	2008: n.a.*** 2011: 2,542,366	2007/2008: 280,000**** 2011: 2,542,366
Price in 2007-2009 / 2011 (in US$ per kg	2007/2009: 0.9 2011: 2.5	2007/2009: 0.5-0.7 2011: 2.5	2007/2009: 0.6-0.8 2011: 2*****
Price increase (%)	177	316	185
Change in inter-ethnic social cohesion	n.a.	Yes	Yes
Reintegration of soldiers	No	No	Yes
Alternative to mining	No	No	Yes

*B=business; N=NGO; C=Cooperative; G=Government (donor); in case multiple are mentioned, this refers to more 'hybrid' organizations in operations, links and/or ambitions

** see note 2 in the text

*** no information available for first year of partnership as cooperative was relatively weak, with too little capacity to collect and analyze data at the time. Number of trees is likely to have been very low given small membership base.

**** Estimated number of coffee trees owned by coffee farmers before UGEAFI (NGO) moved towards a more cooperative form in 2011 with farmers becoming members.

***** In 2014, the price was 1.08. Different from Sopacdi and Soprocopiv, UGEAFI was not able to acquire a certification (organic, UTZ, or Fair Trade) for the coffee produced by its members which led to overproduction of 'regular' coffee and a downward price pressure in recent years. The slight decrease in 'cooperative' members in UGEAFI in recent years is linked to the fact that its members were encourage to diversify their agricultural activities which resulted in less coffee farmers.

Table 3. Key activities and 'results' of the partnerships

Activities	• organizational-technical training (bookkeeping, financial skills) • organizational-governance training (collaboration, forming and participating in cooperatives) • organization sensitization sessions (on the importance of working together) • training of farmers on how to select, pick, cut, wash coffee in a sustainable and profitable way • training of farmers on organizational issues related to certification of coffee according to specific standards • exchange visits between farmers, and company visits to farmers and cooperatives
Output	• cooperatives are formed/improved, better positioned, better able to to attract funding, are growing • cooperatives have better governance (clear rules, democratic structures), can better serve their constituents • farmers have been trained, increased technical know-how and agricultural skills that are implemented • working methods of farmers/cooperatives Utz/Fair Trade compliant, (steps towards) obtaining certification • farmers/cooperatives directly linked to buyers, are in touch with those in other villages and with other views
Outcome	• higher production and productivity, higher quality of coffee • farmers benefit from pre-financing, have better access to markets, are in a better negotiation position • higher prices, incomes increase, livelihoods improve • farmers get more confidence from joining forces, contracts are negotiated fairly • farmers' views of other ethnic groups change
Impact	• alternatives to artisanal mining and rebellion are provided • security is improved (less smuggling across the lake) • local peace climate improved through intensified contacts, fostering culture of exchange, tensions decrease • relationships are (re-)established, social capital is built • overall governance climate (accountability, transparency) improved, trust increases

Table 4. The role of partnerships in fragile settings

Fragility dimensions	**Role of partnerships**
Lack of security	• help to improve human security • induce young rebels to drop arms and reintegrate into communities • lead to fewer smuggling activities
Lack of trust	• help to promote reconciliation through joint activities • promote sense of togetherness and trust between and within communities
Lack of good governance	• help to set 'rules of the game' for interactions between the partners • promote respect for legal and contractual (partnership) agreements
Acute poverty	• help improve skills of farmers (through training) • promote better access to finance (through pre-financing of contracts) • contribute to higher prices through quality checks and assurance practicies • better livelihoods of farmers and communities

Appendix. Overview of contacts and interviews

Organization	Type*	Name of persons contacted	E-mail sent on	Response received on	Remarks (if any)	
DFID	G	Louise Horner** Lindsey Napier; Richard Mugabo	18 April 2011	6 May 2011		
Nathaneme***	B (G)	Mark Thomas	18 April 2011	19 April 2011		
Schluter	B	Joel Martin	4 April 2011	27 April 2011		
Sainsbury	B	Liz Jarman Eleanor Taylor	14 & 20 April 2011	6 May 2011		
Solidaridad	N	Karugu Macharia	14 April 2011	5 May 2011		
Twin	N/B	Ian Barney Andy Carlton Richard Hide Andrea Olivar Chris Penrose	14 & 20 April 2011	5 May 2011		
Sopacdi	C	Joachim Munganga	14 April 2011	18 May 2011	Initial contact in 2011, but pursued since then, with multiple interactions in 2012, 2013 and 2014	
Comequi	N	Michel Verwilghen	14 April 2011	19 April 2011		
Café Africa	N	John Schluter***	14 April 2011	18 April 2011		
Oxfam Novib	N	Rudolf Scheffer	14 April 2011	28 April 2011		
UGEAFI	N/C	Butoto Naum	26 April 2011	12 May 2011	Initial contact in 2011, but pursued since then, with multiple interactions in 2012, 2013 and 2014	
Organization	**Type***	**Interviewee**	**Function**	**Partnership**	**Place**	**Date**
Nathaneme***	B (G)	Mark Thomas	Director	Twin-Sainsbury-Sopacdi-DFID	Long-distance telephone call	19 April 2011
Twin	N/B	Andrea Olivar	Project manager	Twin-Sainsbury-Sopacdi-DFID	Long-distance telephone call	17 May 2011
Twin	N/B	Chris Penrose	Head of partnership programme	Twin-Sainsbury-Sopacdi-DFID	Long-distance telephone call	4 May 2011
Comequi	N	Michel Verwilghen	Director	Twin-Sainsbury-Sopacdi-DFID	Long-distance telephone call	22 April 2011
Café Africa	N	John Schluter****	Director	Schluter-Solidaridad-Soprocopiv-DGIS	Long-distance telephone call	20 April 2011
Schluter	B	Joel Martin	Director	Schluter-Solidaridad-Soprocopiv-DGIS	Long-distance telephone call	28 April 2011
Oxfam Novib	N	François van Lierde	DRC country representative	Twin-Oxfam Novib-UGEAFI	The Hague, Netherlands	19 May 2011
Oxfam Novib	N	Rudolf Scheffer	Project manager coffee	Twin-Oxfam Novib-UGEAFI	The Hague, Netherlands	19 May 2011
Oxfam Novib	N	Brigitte Obertop	DRC project manager	Twin-Oxfam Novib-UGEAFI	The Hague, Netherlands	19 May 2011
International Alert	N	Marie Lange	Director	Overall situation in the region	Long-distance telephone call	18 May 2011
FLO-Twin	N/B	Pascasie Nyirandege	Consultant (capacity-building expert)	All partnerships	Kigali, Rwanda	2 June 2011
Twin	N/B	Jean Claude Muzima	Accountant/ Consultant	All partnerships	Kigali, Rwanda	2 June 2011
UGEAFI	N/C	Naum Butoto	Director	Twin-Oxfam Novib-UGEAFI	Bukavu, DRC	30 May 2011

UGEAFI	N/C	Nyongolo Luwawa	Financial director	Twin-Oxfam Novib-UGEAFI	Lemera, DRC	31 May 2011
UGEAFI	N/C	Djesse Samuel	Programme coordinator	Twin-Oxfam Novib-UGEAFI	Bukavu, DRC	30 May 2011
UGEAFI	N/C	Kalimba Kangeta	Agronomist	Twin-Oxfam Novib-UGEAFI	Lemera, DRC	31 May 2011
Soprocopiv	C	Denis Kasereka Katsomibwa	Director	Schluter-Solidaridad-Soprocopiv-DGIS	Butembo, DRC	24 May 2011
Solidaridad	N	Tony Saiba	Consultant	Schluter-Solidaridad-Soprocopiv-DGIS	Butembo, DRC	24 May 2011
Solidaridad	N	Charles Sabuni	Consultant	Schluter-Solidaridad-Soprocopiv-DGIS	Butembo, DRC	25 May 2011
Solidaridad	N	Palata Adelard	Consultant	Schluter-Solidaridad-Soprocopiv-DGIS	Butembo, DRC	25 May 2011
Sopacdi	C	Joel Bahati Fazila	Accountant	Twin-Sainsbury-Sopacdi-DFID	Minova, DRC	26 May 2011
Sopacdi	C	Joachim Munganga	Director	Twin-Sainsbury-Sopacdi-DFID	Minova, DRC	27 May 2011
Provincial government	G	Marie Shematsi Baeni	Minister	All partnerships / overall situation	Goma, DRC	2013, 2014
Pearl*****	P	Jean-Claude Kayisinga	Manager	All partnerships	Kigali, Rwanda	1 June 2011
Schluter-Solidaridad-Soprocopiv-DGIS	P	46 participants (divided into three groups)	Coffee producers	own coffee activities that are part of partnership	Kiruba, DRC	25 May 2011
Twin-Oxfam Novib-UGEAFI	P	Approximately 60 participants (divided into four groups)	Coffee producers	own coffee activities part of partnership	Lemera, DRC	31 May 2011
Twin-Sainsbury-Sopacdi-DFID	P	44 participants (divided into three groups)	Coffee producers	own coffee activities part of partnership	In and around Minova, DRC	28 May 2011

*B=business; N=NGO; C=Cooperative; G=Government (donor); P=partnership; in case multiple are mentioned, this refers to more 'hybrid' organisations in operations, links and/or ambitions
**FRICH (Food Retail Industry Challenge Fund of the UK government's department of International Development)
***private contractor managing projects of FRICH (the Food Retail Industry Challenge Fund of the UK government's department of International Development)
****son of the founder of Schluter company
*****is itself a partnership consisting of multiple companies, NGOs and cooperatives that helped to boost the coffee sector in Rwanda