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FROM THE EDITOR

Fairtrade's roots can be traced back as far as 50 years ago, anchored in a mixture of charity and solidarity, and what has become known as the Fair Trade movement.

Before looking deeper into the topic of Fairtrade, I would like to establish an important distinction the public may not have yet fully grasped: the distinction between Fair Trade (2 words) and Fairtrade (1 word):

Fair Trade is a movement rooted in trade justice and human solidarity. This view is supported by the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO) – formerly known as the International Fair Trade Association (IFAT)) – through marketing goods that follow alternative distribution channels characterised by shared understanding of fairness and trading partnerships. (Dolan 2010).

The Fair Trade movement further developed and commercialised under the Fairtrade label. This process focusses on certification and market expansion and is supported by the Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International. What Fairtrade aims to do is support the Fair Trade movement by marketing goods that follow mainstream distribution channels characterised by mass retailers and multinationals' involvement. (Low and Davenport 2005; Dolan 2010).

In a nutshell, the Fair Trade movement aims to combat world inequalities by modifying the structures of world trade considered unjust (Steinrücken and Jaenichen 2007). Fairtrade attempts to solve social justice issues through international trade (McMurtry 2009) by:

1. "providing a working model of international trade that empowers the producers and the consumers that engage in it" (Moore 2004: 74); and,
2. challenging conventional business practices by being a "tool for modifying the dominant economic model" (Renard 2003: 91; see also Moore 2004).

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Issue 14, Winter 2012

GUEST EDITOR: Dr Fanny Salignac

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Fair Trade proponents position the movement as an alternative to traditional trade, emphasising ethical claims and models of social justice. Some argue its commercialisation through the mainstreaming of the Fairtrade label will result in the movement losing its radical edge. Indeed, advocating the involvement of traditionally profit-oriented actors in a market developed to counteract the very effect of the dominant economic model may appear paradoxical.

With this Knowledge Connect I would like to take the opportunity to look deeper into Fairtrade's potential institutionalisation through the certification scheme and the impact of such on the movement itself.

Dr Fanny Salignac

Guest Editor, Knowledge Connect

1. ETHICAL OBJECTIONS TO FAIRTRADE

by Peter Griffiths; www.griffithspeaker.com and *The Journal of Business Ethics* (July 2011)

I believe to express an opinion one needs to thoroughly understand both sides of the argument, only then can one formulate an informed argument. I chose to review this paper to present the other side of the argument: the one I do not share. My travels to Vietnam and India interviewing Fairtrade farmers, families and cooperatives have convinced me this argument is wrong.

This is the argument against Fairtrade.

It is in an assumed climate of strong market-utilitarian ethics and 'no-alternative' market solution (see for example Radin 1996; Hayek 1944; Held 2006; MacEwan 1999) that Fairtrade organisations advocate an ethical and human economic practice which "alters, challenges, or, in its proponents' strongest claims, exist in opposition to, the dominant economic order" (McMurtry 2009: 28). Elevated by its most fervent advocates to the rank of an alternative market infused with 'transformative objectives', there is little doubt that the model advocated by Fairtrade runs counter to the dominant economic order (Low and Davenport 2006; see also Boersma 2009; Gendron, Bisailon and Rance 2009; Steinrücken and Jaenichen 2007).

When in his paper, *Ethical Objections to Fairtrade*, Peter Griffiths then proposes to analyse the ethics of Fairtrade by using Utilitarian ethics, there is little doubt about the direction of Griffiths' argument. I shall not delve too deeply into the intricacies of Utilitarian ethics itself. I should point out the theory's well known double-edged sword.

Griffiths proposes two sets of criteria derived from Utilitarian ethics through which to investigate the ethics of Fairtrade:

- The first he labels *death and destitution*; the rationale for which is that if "money or resources intended for the very poorest people are diverted to people who are less poor or relatively rich" (p.358), death and destitution will increase. Re-reading the paper, I am left wondering: how did 'death and destitution' become an appropriate set of criteria in the first place? Did Griffiths not announce an ethical analysis of Fairtrade?

This criteria does not leave much room for analysis – it is clearly an established opinion. Another option would have been to investigate the value created by Fairtrade and consequences through an ethical lens. With his first set of criteria, Griffiths asks: "should the money be at all given to Fairtrade?"; as well as "is the money spent in such a way as to maximise its impact?". It is interesting to note that just by looking at the question the analysis is meant to answer we can see the true meaning of Fairtrade appears having been lost. Fairtrade is not about giving, it is not about aid: it is about trade. It is about empowering the farmers as the agent of their own development, and giving them an equal opportunity to engage in international trade – taking into account the price of producing sustainable produce.

- Griffiths' second set of criteria: Unfair Trading is relatively more straightforward and relies on the legal understanding of Unfair Trading practices and the disclosure of information. Such criteria are then linked back to utilitarianism giving the impression of utilitarianism being used to justify handpicked criteria rather than providing a lens for analysis.

While Griffiths' analysis is divided into multiple themes, I would like to review his two main arguments:

1. 'What happens to the money?', and
2. 'The creation of ignorance'.

Griffiths starts the analysis demonstrating that of the additional price consumers pay for Fairtrade products only a fraction goes back to the Fairtrade farmers.

It is a common misconception that the premium paid by the consumers goes back to the farmers in full.

The Fairtrade certification scheme provides the farmers with the guarantee of receiving the Fairtrade floor price as well as the social premium. While certification is acquired and controls are conducted throughout the value chain, Fairtrade does not regulate non-Fairtrade licensees, i.e. mass retailers; retailers are free to charge the amount they deem appropriate, as they are for traditional products, organic products etc...as dictated by the law of supply and demand. To put it in Griffiths words: "this is standard economics" (p.358).

Griffiths further argues: not all Fairtrade farmers receive the Fairtrade price, not all crops produced under Fairtrade are bought on the Fairtrade market and some of the extra money made has to be spent on satisfying Fairtrade standards. While the paper attributes all these shortcomings to Fairtrade, it is important to understand where it is all coming from.

Even though farmers are certified Fairtrade and therefore all their crops could be sold on the Fairtrade market, there is not enough demand for them to do so. It is, however, not possible for them to produce different types of the same crops (i.e. Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade). Typically, farmers would sell all their crops as a cooperative to the exporting company who will sell everything they can on the Fairtrade market and the rest on the mainstream market. If for a specific period of time there was no demand for Fairtrade, the farmers will not be paid the Fairtrade price. Nor will they receive the premium.

While this suggests an issue, it is not a price issue but a communication issue. The farmers might not be told by the exporting company what is happening to their crops.

Griffiths continues to argue that even though the social premium is used for social developments there is no reason why these should be better than the ones put in place through aids and charities. Here again, the author is missing the point about the importance of trade as opposed to aid and empowering the farmers as the agent of their own development. Griffiths' final theme refers to *The Creation of Ignorance* in which he argues information disseminated through Fairtrade organisations is false and misleading. I would like to finish the review by going back to my opening statement.

While there is no doubt that there are issues with Fairtrade. However, Griffiths' paper does not display a thorough understanding of "the other side of the argument". He does not demonstrate a clear understanding of what Fairtrade is about, and how it functions, and this diminishes the strength of his argument.

I would like to conclude with a quote from an officer at one of the Fairtrade cooperatives I researched in India, who said that: "Fairtrade is the only certification scheme that gives something back to the farmers".

2. THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF FAIR TRADE

by Corinne Gendron, Veronique Bisailon, Ana Isabel Otero Rance; *Journal of Business Ethics*, Volume 86 (1), Springer Journals – Apr 1, 2009

I chose to review the paper: *The Institutionalisation of Fair Trade: More than Just a Degraded Form of Social Action* for its neutral and informative approach to Fair Trade. Gendron et al's research looks at Fairtrade's development by introducing the concept of institutionalisation.

It is important to note, however, that such institutionalisation is assumed and no data (whether secondary or primary) has been or is being collected and therefore no analysis is being conducted.

Note that the paper this time refers to Fair Trade as opposed to Fairtrade although the authors refer from time-to-time to the "fair trade" label.

It is important to note that the paper was translated from French and Fairtrade and Fair Trade in French are expressed in the same way: “Commerce Equitable”; making the distinction between the certification scheme (Fairtrade) and the movement (Fair Trade) trickier. The lack of differentiation in the paper makes it hard to follow at times.

In their paper, Gendron et al position Fair Trade as “the emblematic figure of [a] new generation of social movement (...) influenc[ing] the economy towards political and social ends” (p.63). They argue that while tensions divide the Fair Trade movement around a “radical and militant” perspective versus a “softer and more commercial” one, situating Fair Trade within the broader context of globalisation allows for reconciliation of these two poles due to specific the modes of institutionalisation.

In presenting their argument, Gendron et al. start by reviewing the origins of Fair Trade. Interestingly, the authors portray Fair Trade as dissociated from, and the result of, different types of movements: the cooperative movement, charity trade, solidarity trade, developmental trade and benevolence trade. Some would argue, however, such movements represent the beginning of Fair Trade - a movement of its own - from which originated the Fairtrade certification scheme (which is quite a different process).

While I am not convinced of the distinction made at the beginning of the section of this paper, in which the link between the Fair Trade movement and the Fairtrade certification scheme appears missing, the paper does very well in describing the origins of the certification scheme.

On another note, it seems the authors are assuming and attributing the institutionalisation of the Fair Trade movement to its commercialisation through the certification scheme. It is assumed that the divide at the core of the Fair Trade movement between militant and commercial is reconciled through the certification of Fairtrade. Research has demonstrated otherwise.

The paper concludes on the institutionalisation of social movements. It proposes three ways in which social movements institutionalise, and on the implications for the Fair Trade movement. While the paper presents a few shortcomings in terms of the understanding of Fairtrade, its neutral and informative tone makes it an interesting one to start with.

3. URGENCY AND NECESSITY

by Francisco VanderHoff Boersma; Journal of Business Ethics, Volume 86, Supplement 1 (2009)

As I re-read the paper *The Urgency and Necessity of a Different type of Market: The Perspective of Producers Organized Within the Fair Trade Market* I was reminded how much I liked it the first time.

My initial reading of Francisco VanderHoff Boersma’s paper was in the very early days of my PhD research. I was attempting not to drown in a sea of literature, and this paper offered a different perspective. It talked about Fairtrade from the perspective of the producers – it was written from a small farmer himself!

I find the simplicity and the meaning conveyed enlightening. While some papers drown Fairtrade in the depths of academic literature, Boersma seems to go back to Fairtrade’s core philosophy. I see it as a Fairtrade paper removed from academic ambitions yet one of the most comprehensive I have read and it is from the perspective of someone who embodies the purpose of Fairtrade.

Boersma states: “I have been fortunate to share in the experience of these communities. I have lived with and subsisted like them for 25 years, working myself as a small farmer. In working with these communities, my academic credentials [Boersma holds a doctorate in political science and rural sociology] have not been of paramount importance. Rather, in the academy of the fields and with the coffee growers as teachers, I have learned a great deal, more than in the different universities where I happened to have studied and taught (p.52).”

Boersma give a very well formulated account of where Fairtrade comes from. Unlike others, he focuses on what the origins of Fairtrade means: “it shows us that when the poor are able to organise themselves and experience that the co-operative road is a viable option, then a new social, political and cultural order begins to emerge” (p.52). Boersma re-positions the Fairtrade market as a product of the poor as opposed to a certification scheme or a movement developed by the western world. He goes back to its core, its very origins, and makes us remember that Fairtrade is about disadvantaged farmers. It is about their

empowerment; not the role of the west in regulating a new market, not a marketing scheme, but development.

Boersma talks about poverty as a symptom, arguing against the traditional view of it as a problem. He states: "it is the irrational accumulation of wealth that is the problem, since it distorts social relationships and creates political conflicts on an enormous scale" (p.54). Very rightly so, and as my interviews in Vietnam and India demonstrate, Boersma points out the problems involved with "paternalistic attitudes involved in traditional development programs" (p.54) which Fairtrade is making a point of avoiding by promoting at its core the empowerment of smallholder farmers.

One wonders if, through the certification system, these ideals in Fairtrade have been lost?

As I conducted my interviews, some of the farmers repeated their need to access more information. They needed the Fairtrade International (FLO) to give them more direction. It is interesting to note that this information exists, but it is for the farmers to find it.

It may be that the paternalistic approaches of the past are so ingrained in these farmers' ways of dealing with the West that they wait for these organisations to come to them with the information. It's hardly a surprising expectation when the organisation responsible for promoting Fairtrade and creating knowledge is located in developed countries, and the power resides on one side only.

This hybrid market in India promises to be an exciting step forward.

Boersma states: "Many development programs and projects have sought to help the poor, while not taking the knowledge and concerns of the poor seriously and not viewing them as the best agent of the own development. The poor are thinking, hard-working people who have a collective wisdom which has almost always been denied or dismissed by the powerful, including the most benevolent among the powerful. The alternative market is not charity, relief work, or any other non-reciprocal form of aid (p.53)."

The last point Boersma makes and that I would like to review is the idea that Fairtrade is not a niche market. He advocates Fairtrade is a market of its own, stating: "the alternative market [Fairtrade] does not seek to co-exist as an option within the large traditional market. Rather, trade within the alternative market begins to correct, to create, step by step, new conditions within the dominant market" (p.54).

He argues Fairtrade creates direct economic impact, enables the development of economic and social infrastructure; and increases farmers' sense of self-worth and confidence, in turn leading to increased capacity building in the economic and social realms but also empowerment in the political realm.

The alternative market is effective, ecologically sustainable; socially sustainable; and allows reconciliation of the two main pillars at either end of the value chain: producers and consumers.

4. FAIR TRADE IN INDIA

by **Saumya Roy, Shloka Nath**

Forbes India's focus for this July 2010 article is the expansion of the certification scheme in the Indian market. This article is of particular interest as it focuses on one of the core foundations of the Fairtrade certification scheme: the differentiation between producing and consuming countries. In line with Fairtrade's central aim, farmers are strictly located in developing countries: the producing countries.

Typically, Fairtrade labelling initiatives (e.g. Fairtrade Labelling Australia and New Zealand) are located in developed countries. As these organisations are responsible for awarding the Fairtrade label in their respective locations, and promoting the Fairtrade market to national consumers, Fairtrade labelled products are exclusively sold in developed countries: the consuming countries.

This hook for this article was the announcement from the Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International's (FLO) of its willingness to make India the first hybrid Fairtrade market, reconciling both producers and consumers in a same country.

The article does well at keeping a neutral tone and presenting the facts. It starts by explaining the basics of

Fairtrade “an organised movement that helps producers in developing countries get a premium for their products if they follow better social, labour and environmental standards” (p.1) and leaps into the economic characteristics of the market with “more than \$4 billion worth of fair trade products sold internationally in 2008, an increase of 22% from the previous year”.

Note that the writers talk about Fair Trade and not Fairtrade, meaning that the statistics account for goods sold on the Fair Trade market that are not Fairtrade certified. This is typically the case with handicrafts, for example, because such goods can by definition not be standardised. The article seems to confuse the movement with the certification scheme, while the certification scheme is introduced through the FLO, the movement is not and is free to develop in any part of the world.

The rationale behind opening up the Fairtrade market to producing countries is to increase Fairtrade’s reach and market size. Fairtrade also promotes changing the rules of international trade and allowing the producers to become the agent of their own development. With such goals at its core, it appears logical to open up the market to producing countries for them to directly impact the growth of the market.

The authors note that for the Fairtrade market to work, Indian customers will need a sense of, and to be sensitive to, its importance. It makes even more sense as India producers sell a lot of their products on the local market, because the label hasn’t been introduced there yet, they cannot benefit from the floor price or the premium.

The article does very well at demonstrating the value of the Fairtrade premium and the ways in which it has been used as well as portraying the way the Fairtrade price works and the fact that the label does not have any control over the price the retailers are charging for Fairtrade. Very interestingly, the authors highlight that the Fairtrade market in India will only be able to develop and succeed if it is supported by “a civil society movement as it is in the West”, thereby highlighting the importance of the movement as part of the certification scheme.

5. FACTS AND FIGURES

by Jean-Marie Krier

In the report *Fair Trade 2007: new facts and figures from an ongoing success story. A report on Fair Trade in 33 consumer countries*, Jean-Marie Krier provides one of the most comprehensive Fair Trade reviews, collecting data and building on national case studies in 33 countries.

It is worth pointing out that the report is prepared by Krier on behalf of the Dutch Association of Worldshops (Netherlands) and its focus is therefore both on the Fair Trade movement and the Fairtrade certification scheme. The report is the fifth of its kind, with this edition of particular note to Australia as it includes countries in the Pacific Rim region for the first time.

I chose to review this report because I was impressed with its straightforward presentation of the facts and figures, with no academic analysis or agenda. Overall, the report “examines the structure of Fair Trade and its market evolution” (p.8) by examining national case studies in 28 European countries, as well as the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Before getting into the details of the national case studies, Krier provides a statistical overview of the data organised by regions and years.

Krier looks at seven different trends:

- Importing organisations are the highest in the US;
- Fair Trade shops are the highest in Germany;
- Supermarkets selling Fairtrade certified products are the highest in the US with 40,000, followed by Germany. No data is available for the UK, and there are only a 1,000 in Australia and New Zealand;
- Full time equivalent paid staff are the highest in Italy;
- Importing organisation’s turnover is the highest in the UK with only half that documented for organisations in the US, and 10 times less in Australia and New Zealand;
- Turnover of worldshops are the highest in Germany with no data available in the Pacific region; and
- Fairtrade consumption per capita (2007) is the highest in Switzerland (€ 21.06) while only 0.44 in Australia and New Zealand is \$0.44 per capita.

From the Krier analyses, it is interesting to note that while in 2007 the Fairtrade labelling initiatives accounted for less than 7% of the 2,700 full time equivalent jobs worldwide, they accounted for 85 to 90% of all Fair trade (including Fair Trade and Fairtrade) products sold to the final consumer demonstrating the important growth of the market.

This study represents a powerful mine of information and I look forward to an even more developed and comprehensive one coming out.

6. RECONCILING PROFITS AND ETHICS

by **Dr. Fanny Salignac**

University of Sydney, 2011

Guest contributor: Tracy Wilcox

In her timely and important thesis *The Institutionalization of Fairtrade: Reconciling Profit-Seeking with Ethical-Seeking Behaviour*, researcher Fanny Salignac draws on a comprehensive study of Fairtrade at the coalface to bring us a rich and vivid understanding of how Fairtrade is enacted in practice; from the perspective of key players in the 'Western' world (the North) and, perhaps more importantly, the 'developing' world (the South). This is a significant piece of work which has particular resonance for those of us interested in how positive social change might be enabled within existing consumer-based market structures.

Fairtrade can be defined in terms of a "trading partnership based on dialogue, transparency and respect" with the overall aim of "solving social justice issues through international trade" (p3). In her study Salignac paints a vivid picture of the expansion of the Fairtrade movement, and the associated tensions as it grows in size and scope.

We learn that 'Fair trade' has been around since the 1988 formation of Max Havelaar in Netherlands and the adoption four years later in the UK. Fairtrade is now a multimillion dollar industry; with 3,000 licensees in 10 consumer countries representing 1.2 million farmers/producers in 58 countries of the South. The 'movement' is in fact a complex arrangement of NGOs, Alternative Trade Organisations, for-profit and not-for-profit organisations.

As the movement matures and grows, Salignac poses some important and timely questions; namely,

1. does FT practice support its moral claim to 'provide a way out of poverty through trade' or is it merely a marketing phenomenon, another example of 'greenwash'? and,
2. can the FT movement provide us with a template for reconciling the tensions between economy/market on one hand and society/community on the other?

Up until recently, research has tended to focus on the end point of the value-chain – on consumers, rather than retailers at one end or the producers at the other. Where there has been empirical work, it concentrates mainly on growers (usually coffee) in Latin America.

Salignac's research addresses this gap in our understanding by looking across the value chain from retailers and certification organisations in the North to producers and cooperatives in the South.

By drawing on her field research in the UK, France, and Australia, along with India and Vietnam (a total of nineteen case studies), we hear the voices of those immersed in the day to day world of Fair Trade. Salignac's research uncovers some important theoretical and practical issues, and makes an important contribution to organisational sociology, in particular 'institutional theory'. She is able to consider how market-based arrangements can potentially be used to counteract some of the effects of dominant neo-liberal economics model. As such it's an example of what institutional theorists call institutional entrepreneurship.

Importantly for us here at CSI, we can also learn a great deal about what happens when ideals-based social visions are translated across the globe, and the degree to which collective meaning is shared amongst key participants. We see here that the original and global vision of Fairtrade has become fragmented and the founding communitarian ideals of trade justice and ethical consumption are not always present at the coalface. This is particularly the case with retailers and certifiers in the North.

Salignac found that in the UK the predominant vision is one of the mainstream 'market', while in France, Fairtrade is still considered somewhat militant.

Australia, she rather diplomatically observes, is still developing – though I would put it more bluntly and say that we are clearly laggards in the adoption of Fairtrade both in vision and in practice. The Indian and Vietnamese producers’ voices, on the other hand, were more in keeping with the reconciliation of economic and social value creation.

Finally, Salignac makes the important point that the Fairtrade movement’s ‘core global vision’ needs to be both solid – to prevent fragmentation into diverging visions – and flexible enough to allow for transformation at the local level. In the case studies featured here, this was unfortunately not the case. What we need are more robust processes of information dissemination and knowledge production across the value chain and between the North and South.

This study has pointed us in an important new direction which will, it is hoped, help this need be met.

7. CHANGING BIG BUSINESS

by **Anna Hutchens**

Guest contributor: Cheryl Kernot

Changing Big Business: The Globalisation of the Fair Trade Movement is a first rate contribution to international discourse on the movement’s continuing evolution. It is authored by Australian, Dr Anna Hutchens, the Director of the Fair Trade Program, Centre for Governance, Knowledge and Development at ANU. As Chair of the Fair Trade Association of Australia and New Zealand I express my shared interest in the topic.

In content terms Hutchens traverses the Fair Trade movement’s pioneers, their innovations in commercial Fair Trade Organisations and brand companies, and the evolution of governance in the movement’s international associations, The International Fair Trade Association (IFAT) and the global Fair Trade Labelling Organisation (FLO.)

In the first chapter Hutchens “re-thinks power and empowerment”, examining the way in which the traditional “power over” process, aimed at maintaining the status quo is challenged by those in the fair trade

movement who choose to work around and independently of institutional politics to build new structures. This is “power beyond” and it utilises network opportunities and connections. The book takes a primary interest in “game-playing as it manifests defiance in a form that brings about radical change that leads to the creation of new institutions and structures at the transnational level.

Chapter two applies “power over” to an examination of global power in world markets through the history of the global coffee market including the emergence of brand-based global business.

Chapter three, which looks at the history of fair trade and places it in the context of free trade theory and reality, is a particularly important discussion. It describes fair trade as “political activism” and “alternative trade.” It accounts for and examines the establishment of product certification and the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation and the way in which this has driven the mainstreaming of fair trade from 2000 onwards.

The following chapters look at the tensions and inconsistencies that have emerged since mainstreaming and examine the two consequent models of fair trade: an organizational model and a product certification model. Interestingly these are tensions existing in the current Australian movement.

One of the book’s strengths is its use of original in-depth empirical data; the author travelled and conversed with a “diverse group of actors involved in fair trade located in Europe, the USA and Latin America. She also had access to documents, leaflets, annual reports, draft policy documents and the minutes of meetings allowing her to document in-depth the story of the movement and to posit theoretical insights about the process of social change that it offers.

I found the end notes equally interesting as the chapters they referred to and enjoyed the appendix: fair trade on the political agenda, discovering the European Parliament’s resolution promoting fair trade and solidarity in North South trade as early as 1994!

A social Innovation of 40 years, offering market access to small-scale producers in developing countries on beneficial terms warrants this original analysis. It is both an academic treatise and a readable account of what’s driving fair trade at the consumer, business and

movement levels. The book's extension of the contemporary analysis of power discourse and its role in driving global social solutions is fresh and useful.

And it gives context to why those in the fair trade movement will choose to work around the status quo of a free trade system and a World Trade Organisation that has failed to give priority to wage justice and environmental practices of farmers and artisan crafts of the developing world.