TO BE FREE AND FAIR? DEBATING FAIR TRADE'S SHIFTING RESPONSE TO GLOBAL INEQUALITY

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Fair trade, a concept that was pioneered by alternative trade activists and organisations *opposed* to the workings of the conventional trading system, has moved from the margins to active exchange in, and indeed reliance on, the mainstream market. With its origins in the early informal activities of missionaries and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Fair Trade in its infancy quickly formalised as an applied opposition to the dominance of free market principles in global markets. This was achieved through the creation of Alternative Trade Organisations (ATOs), today called Fair Trade Organisations (FTOs), as businesses actively trading with marginalised producers on the basis of a typically non-profit and socially oriented bottom line. In the 1990s, a new 'Fairtrade' labelling model emerged.[1] This model sought to propel fair trade activity from the sidelines into the mainstream by inviting conventional profit-oriented businesses to participate. It differentiates from the more deeply transformative and process-oriented features of ATO trade through its emphasis on product differentiation as a mechanism for harnessing the conventional market to mainstream fair trade activity. While it preferences ethical business structures and values at the sites of production, it does so without making concomitant requirements of business structures in consumer markets, only of the terms under which they buy their fair trade product lines.

Unsurprisingly, accusations of 'fairwashing' abound (see Jaffee and Howard (2015) for a discussion of this concept). Yet, this adaptation of

[1] 'Fairtrade' written as one word is a trade mark of the international association for Fairtrade labelling, Fairtrade International.

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alternative trade principles into mainstream distribution channels, leading to the phenomenal growth of fair trade markets, has led to Fairtrade labelling's remarkable success in mainstreaming the concept of fair trade itself and thereby reaching a wider production and consumption base.

Despite, or perhaps because of this success, fair trade took a third turn in its evolution when in late 2011 Fair Trade USA (here after FTUSA), representing a leading Fairtrade Labelling market, split from the international Fairtrade Labelling association. Building on labelling's mainstreaming success, FTUSA aims to push the mainstreaming model further under the motto 'Fair Trade For All' (FTUSA 2012). But just as Fairtrade Labelling inched closer to the conventional market model, piggybacking on the existing market presence of some of its biggest corporate participants like Starbucks, Walmart and McDonald's to name a few, FTUSA arguably moves even closer still. It does this by reconceiving the fair trade production base through extending its certification system to corporatised and large-scale labour mobilisation, moving away from Fairtrade International's ongoing preference to work with smallholder (typically cooperative) production where possible. It conceives of fair trade as a model that 'helps "free trade" work for the poor' (FTUSA 2016), and in this vein, arguably seeks to operationalise 'pro-poor growth'. Not surprisingly, this duality in the fair trade sector today, whereby fair trade rejects a conventional business model on the one hand (through promotion of an ethical business model), yet also depends on conventional businesses through the Fairtrade labelling and FTUSA models, presents the movement with clear challenges. Despite its success, the slippery slope of mainstreaming fair trade appears to have compromised traditional opposition to free market principles, and in so doing creates increasing ambiguity about the meaning of *fair trade*.

This article poses the question: To what extent do 'fair trade' markets, including the recent evolution of a FTUSA model, challenge conventional market responses to global inequality? While the market opposing credentials of fair trade have been conceptualised before (for example, see Fridell 2006, 2007; Jaffee 2007; and Raynolds and Long 2007), there is a dearth of literature that carefully examines this question in the context of the new FTUSA model (an exception, for example, is Hudson, Hudson and Fridell, 2013, which includes a discussion but does not feature a separate conceptualisation of the FTUSA model). The FTUSA model represents a significant re-articulation of the fair trade strategy and its applied critique of markets, and as such, it is significant to examine how a market response to global inequality is constructed in the FTUSA approach. Indeed, this article contributes to broader literature that seeks to critically analyse fair trade as a market-based development project. It specifically fills the gap created by still limited literature on the new FTUSA model, through undertaking an inclusive conceptual analysis of how fair trade strategies work to address global inequality relative to existing free market mechanisms.

This analysis begins by examining debates over fairness in global markets; specifically, debates over growth, trade and inequality within which the founding mandate of fair trade and its key critiques of the orthodoxy can be understood. Applying a value chain framework for the purpose of mapping the values, actors and distribution channels that characterise individual fair trade models relative to conventional markets (to be differentiated from its use for supply chain impact analyses), the article then provides a historical account of the evolution of fair trade. The argument is put forward in this article that three key strands of fair trade activity can be identified, vis-à-vis conventional market activity, in line with increasing expansionary aims and corporate engagement in the sector. Notably, the 'market contesting' value chains of alternative trade organisations is distinct from contemporary models. This in contrast to a fair trade mainstreaming strategy, differentiating between 'market harnessing' and 'market affirming' value chains, which are evident in the respective standards of the international and US fair trade labelling schemes. Herein, the line between 'free' and 'fair' trade as a response to global inequality is examined. Broadly, the thesis is put forward that – for better or worse – the movement's opposition to free markets is weakening, noting that, as a development critique, fair trade is fundamentally wedded to an export-led growth strategy within free markets.

Fairness in Global Markets: debating trade, growth and inequality

Debate over 'fairness' in global markets has co-evolved with the intensification of trade liberalisation and commensurate (albeit uneven) reduction in government protections over the course of the last century. Herein, an export-led growth-oriented development strategy has been contested in the face of persisting global inequality. Accordingly, the conventional or so-called *free* market – understood as featuring minimal government regulation and optimised by specialisation in production and exchange – is conceived as the flip side of fairness in numerous ways. Free markets have extended across industries and countries, largely driven by the creation of international trade treaties under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), as well as the increasing proliferation of bilateral and regional trade agreements (for a comprehensive discussion of trade agreements in the Asia Pacific region, see Ranald 2011). Notably, a late push into agricultural markets through the WTOs *Agreement on Agricultur*e was significant for developing countries which typically specialise in agricultural production. Yet, the failure of the market mechanism to internalise and promote social, political and environmental values has alarmed many (for a conceptual discussion of fair trade arguments, see Anderson and Riedl, 2006, and also; Valiente-Riedl, 2013: chapter 2). This points to fundamental questions about the construct of the 'market' and how it interconnects with political and social processes and goals. In *'Thinking Socially' About Markets*, Cahill and Paton (2013) critique economic orthodoxy which conceives of markets as self-regulating. Drawing on heterodox economics and economic sociology, they reconceive the market as 'socially constituted' where 'people, acting through states and other institutions, are able to shape the nature of markets, and indeed of production and distribution more broadly' (Cahill and Paton 2013: 23). This section engages this broader critique of markets by examining the contestation of free markets in the face of persisting global inequality; a problematic that underpins the logic for creating 'fair' markets today.

Growth, Trade and Persisting Global Inequality

Since Arthur Lewis first tied a fledgling development economics to aspirations of economic growth in the 1950s (see Esteva 1992: 12), and Walt Rostow (1960) proposed that developing economies seek to emulate the growth of developed economies in the 1960s, a growth-oriented development paradigm has been heavily contested. The growth thesis broadly builds on a Smithian truism, typically referred to as the *trickle-down effect*. However, this assumption that '[A] general plenty diffuses itself through all the different ranks of society' (Adam Smith 1776: 11) remains contested. In a landmark publication 'Growth is Good for the Poor', Dollar and Kraay (2002: 198) strongly assert a positive correlation between growth and poverty alleviation. Yet, they also recognised that existing studies, including their own, could not answer 'what mix of growth-oriented policies might especially benefit the poorest in society' (Dollar and Kraay 2002: 198). In the interim, the data on inequality itself is increasingly contested. For example, inter-country inequality analysis can vary depending on how data for large economies like China and India are articulated in the statistical analysis (Dunn 2015: 100 and also chapter 8 for a detailed discussion of data relating to inequality within countries). Indeed, Dollar and Kraay's (2002) growth optimism has now been challenged and built on by many, notably featuring a direct response by Gore in 2007. He sought to operationalise a concept of 'pro-poor growth' by asking the question '[W]hich growth theory is good for the poor?' (Gore 2007: 31). In Gore's (2007: 44) work 'the importance of structure, agency and demand' were emphasised, sweeping away assumptions that 'pro-poor' growth was not contingent on enabling redistributive features. Herein, debates about trade (de)regulation are usefully explored, in particular relating to assumptions about export-led growth.

Approaches to growth vary across the spectrum of classical and neoclassical economics (see Elahi and Stilwell 2013 and Obeng-Odoom, 2016: 119). For example, Lewis himself took a classical economic position on the growth thesis, which strongly contrasts to neoclassical prescriptions by positing that structural change is necessary for growth to occur (Obeng-Odoom 2016: 119). In contrast, a neoclassical position conceives of an internal self-regulating and self-optimising logic in the operation and performance of free markets, conducive to growth. Most famously associated with Adam Smith's conception of the 'invisible hand of the market' (see Dunn 2015: 33 and broader discussion in chapter 3), free trade is popularly positioned as the primary vehicle for growth. This position is predicated on a dual doctrine that a) trade is 'mutually beneficial' for all countries (Smith in Cannan 1904: IV.3.32), and b) that the benefits of trade are maximised by countries specialising in the production of goods for which they hold a 'comparative advantage' (Ricardo 1821). Comparative advantage according to the logic of free markets, however, is signaled by performance in competitive markets and not by the determinations of interventionist states (see Dunn 2015: chapter 3, for a critical discussion of this concept). Historically, this logic served as a central feature of the 'Washington Consensus', which saw a rollout of neoliberal policies favouring privatisation and deregulation (see Williamson, 1990). In a joint statement, the IMF, World Bank and WTO (2003) claim:

> Trade is vital not only for the direct benefits it brings, but also for increasing the flows of financial and real investment resources to developing countries which generate the income growth and job opportunities that help raise people out of poverty and make economies resilient to shocks.

Yet, the links between trade and growth and between free trade and the removal of barriers are contested. Dunn (2015) provides a comprehensive critique. Reproducing a range of econometric tests, he finds that the links between trade and growth and trade and ‘openness’ are indeed contentious (Dunn, 2015:98). Importantly, he adopts Weiss’ (1999 in Dunn 2015: 101) characterisation of trade ‘openness’ being ‘managed’. Accordingly, it is not surprising that debates over the link between trade, growth and poverty alleviation largely concern debates over *managing trade*.

With rising concerns about the distribution of wealth globally, the question of what – if any – forms of regulation should be employed in the management of markets becomes increasingly divisive. Indeed, concerns with gains from growth through trade have been central in the negotiations over the global trading architecture. Before the advent of trade liberalisation, trade – and the spoils of trade – for the commodities in which developing countries specialised, were ‘managed’, with varying success, through International Commodity agreements. In the case of coffee, a global producer/consumer cartel – represented by the International Coffee Organisation – achieved supply and price management for almost thirty years. The collapse of the International Coffee Agreement was followed by a deep period of crisis, which saw coffee elevated as the poster commodity for unequal exchange (see Bates 1999, for a comprehensive discussion of the history of coffee regulation and crisis, as well as Fridell 2007; Jaffee 2007; and Valiente-Riedl 2013 on fair trade in coffee). Across the board, tension over rising inequality has grown. In 2002, Oxfam released a damning report by Kevin Watkins and Penny Fowler (2002: 22): *Rigged Rules and Double Standards: trade, globalisation, and the fight against poverty* which claimed:

> The unprecedented opulence associated with it [trade] is not being shared on an equitable basis. Wealth is trickling down to many developing countries far too slowly; income differences between rich

> and poor countries, already obscene, are widening, and undermining the potential for poverty reduction.

For some, continuing problems with the implementation of free trade practices, point to the need for 'commitment to freer trade' (Bhagwati 1995: 745). Others point to more fundamental problems with the free trade thesis itself, including an enduring critique from dependency theorists, starting with André Gunder Frank (1966) who argued that trade was a vehicle for the exploitation of 'third world' economies by 'first world' economies. These concerns with unequal exchange can be usefully explored applying a 'value chain' lens – a framework which further underpins the logic of fair trade's efforts to re-articulate value chains in global markets.

Locating Global Markets in a Value Chain Framework

Fair trade is concerned with the articulation of global exchange networks and with the governance structures that support systems of production and patterns of distribution. The objective is to develop strategies for value redistribution, whereby relationships of production and exchange are restructured to ensure that marginalised producers have improved access and opportunities in the global trading system. While a large portion of fair trade literature applies a capabilities expansion methodology (Fridell 2007: 11) and while the case study methodology proliferates (Hudson, Hudson and Fridell 2013: 71), for this paper, locating global markets and fair trade strategies within a value chain framework is illuminating (note, the application of a value chain methodology in fair trade research also has precedent, including in a comprehensive study of coffee markets by Daviron and Ponte (2005). While this article does not provide a deep value chain analysis of fair trade – which would require micro analyses of individual commodity and/or consumer markets – it does draw on the broader deconstruction of trade as a 'value chain', comprising individual nodes of activity and governance systems that effect relationships and patterns of production and distribution – to broadly locate differences in fair trade networks, including the actors which participate in individual networks and the standards they subscribe to. This section examines the concept of the 'value chain' before turning to an examination of individual fair trade models in subsequent sections.

'Chain' analysis comprises a tradition of diverse and interdisciplinary terms and conceptualisations. Raynolds (2002: 405) observes that literatures exist in 'sociology, geography, anthropology, economics and political science' and that these have produced 'somewhat varied, conceptualisations of commodity chains, commodity systems, filiéres, and value chains'. Nestled amongst this wide variety of approaches, is the concept of the Global Commodity Chain (GCC) developed by Hopkins and Wallerstein (1986) as an analytical tool for political economy research subscribing to the dependency thesis. Hopkins and Wallerstein (1986: 159) first defined a GCC as, 'a network of labour and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity'. Effectively, they developed a methodological tool which can trace industry inter-linkages across borders, and that examines how these inter-linkages transform over time. In their use of this approach, Hopkins and Wallerstein set out to investigate key issues defined by World-Systems Theory. They were interested in the nature of the global division of labour and patterns of global interdependence, '…to examine claims regarding the transnational interdependence of productive activities' (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1986: 160). Thus, the GCC was originally developed as a tool to understand and explain north-south dynamics and relations through trade, and specifically, to explain patterns and causes of global inequality.

The language of the GCC has since been abandoned by many prominent academics who continue to build upon this tradition of research first conceived by Hopkins and Wallerstein just over twenty years ago. The concept 'value chain' captures advances in the methodology but also attempts to standardise the terminology used in research employing these types of methods (see Gereffi *et al.* 2001: 2). A value chain analysis not only captures patterns of value distribution in an industry, but also 'the power and governance relations which explain these distributional outcomes' (Fitter and Kaplinsky 2001: 4). In addition, by 'problematis[ing] the question of governance: how chains are organised and managed' a value chain lens 'ask questions about the winners and losers in the globalisation process, how and why the gains from globalisation are spread, and how the number of gainers can be increased' (Gereffi *et al.* 2001: 2). Thus, while it attempts to discern the governance structure of a value chain it simultaneously evaluates the prospect for developing countries 'to "upgrade" by actively changing the way they are linked to global value chains' (Gereffi *et al.* 2001: 2). An assessment of barriers and opportunities to upgrade is best understood by examining how governance is conceptualised in value chains.

While 'too broad to capture the full complexity of the GVC [Global Value Chain] governance structures', power within GVCs is broadly demarcated as either 'producer-driven' or 'buyer-driven' (Gereffi 2014: 13). Within the former, 'power is held by final-product manufacturers and is characteristic of capital-, technology- or skill-intensive industries', whereas in the latter, power is understood to rest with end-product retailers and marketers 'through their ability to shape mass consumption via dominant market shares and strong brand names' (Gereffi 2014: 13). This understanding is crucial to a deeper understanding of 'economic upgrading', which refers to a process where actors in value chains, either workers or firms, shift to undertaking higher-value activities (Gereffi, 2014: 18). It is perhaps not surprising, that Gereffi (2014) has found key international donors and peak organisations – including the World Bank, the WTO and the ILO – increasingly adopt a GVC framework.

Certainly, fair trade has taken up this concern with value distribution through its applied opposition to perceived 'unequal exchange' in the 'free' market. Yet, the extent to which fair trade maintains any level of contestation of free market principles is heavily debated. For example, Fridell (2006) in a review of fair trade literature differentiated between that which conceived of 'fair trade networks' as seeking to deliver 'shaped advantage' (for producers participating in free markets), compared to those that saw either an 'alternative globalisation' or 'decommodification' agenda. Jaffee (2007: 26) notes that participants in fair trade networks conceive of the sector as '… a "market-breaking" force, a "market-reform" device, or a "market-access" mechanism'. More recently, Hudson, Hudson and Fridell (2013: 115-24) examined a sample of media statements about fair trade and identified 'neoliberal', 'warm glow', 'fair exchange', 'decommodification' and 'anti-capitalist' articulations of fair trade. In this article, consideration of how differentiated fair trade models have sought to re-articulate global value chains permits insight into whether fair trade models significantly shift the structure of conventional trading chains.

Alternative Trade and the Creation of Parallel Markets

Fair trade hails back to the creation of an *alternative trade market*, whereby trade was re-crafted in line with the values and activities promoted by pioneering NGOs and their alternative trade offspring (ATOs). While the language of 'alternative trade' has long been abandoned in practice, contemporary fair trade campaigns and markets can trace their origins to this earlier push for an alternative system of exchange. The first phase of alternative trade activity is typically traced to the activities of NGOs importing from marginalised producers in the South; first observed in the US in the 1940s (Redfern and Snedker 2002: 5) and in Europe in the 1950s (Giovannucci and Koekoek 2003: 38). This strategy of engagement became more organised through the creation of a new and dedicated business model – the ATO – when Oxfam UK founded the first ATO in 1964 (IFAT, 2006) as its '… trading subsidiary' (Redfern and Snedker 2002: 5). Moving beyond an early focus on 'political solidarity' to a concern with 'unequal exchange', NGOs quickly refocussed the mandate of alternative trade, emphasising trade reform as an engine for development under the motto 'Trade, not Aid' (Renard 2003: 89). This section explores the ways in which this model of fair trade re-articulates global value chains, by examining the core principles and standards of this model which arguably produce 'market contesting' networks of exchange which employ mechanisms of redistribution across the chain.

Market Contesting Value Chain

In contrast to the emphasis on principles of 'freedom' in conventional trade, the alternative trade model wedded itself to concerns with fairness through redistribution. In *principle*, ATOs and the lead NGOs that created and supported them (for example Oxfam, which created the first ATO), challenged the logic that competition should determine prices with concern that prices should reflect basic needs and support sustainable livelihoods. ATOs saw this as best facilitated through the creation of parallel markets or alternative value chains. This was clearly articulated by the then 'International Federation for Alternative Trade' (IFAT) (today known as the World Fair Trade Organisation, WFTO):

> Alternative trade operates under a different set of values and objectives than traditional trade, putting people and their well-being and preservation of the natural environment before the pursuit of profit. Alternative trade… tends to distribute the products through alternative distribution channels (IFAT in Renard 2003: 89).

For key proponents like Oxfam, re-articulated value chains have the potential to address global inequality. For its own 'Make Trade Fair' campaign, which was launched in April 2002 (Oxfam 2006), it saw the potential for reform of 'trade rules that are rigged by powerful multinational companies and rich countries in their favour' to effectively 'lift millions out of poverty' (Oxfam, 2006a). Indeed, from the outset, alternative trade positioned itself as opposed to both the principles and practices that characterise exchange between North and South. In this regard, a drive for global regulatory reform was embraced (and remains a concern for many ATO's today). At a minimum, however, the operation of global markets is contested through an applied opposition of 'business models' that operate in the conventional trade.

Today, 'ATOs' are typically known as 'FTOs' (Fair Trade Organisations) (for example, see Krier 2005: 22). They continue to offer a markedly different model of exchange to that which typifies Fairtrade labelling networks. The ATO business model bridges the divide between a socially motivated or 'development' organisation and an economic or 'commercial business' entity. They are organisations that sell only fair trade products (Raynolds and Bennett 2015: 26) and 'continue[s] to pursue an integrated alternative network approach' (Raynolds and Long, 2007:20). The differentiation of this sector of activity is also evidenced in the strong participation of non-profits. Non-profits often participate directly in trade (for example, in 2002 twenty-eight per cent of the ATO membership of the Fair Trade Federation (FTF) – the north-American regional association for ATOs – were non-profits, which in turn accounted for over half of FTF member sales (FTF 2003: 11). They also often participate in partnership with ATOs (for example, it is very common for non-profits to hold 'guardian shares' in alternative 'for-profit' businesses (see Nicholls and Opal 2005: 96 and for a broader discussion of 'ATO/NGO composite arrangements, Valiente-Riedl 2013: 54-63). More broadly however, the point of difference relates to organisation's adoption of a social mandate in line with the 'World Fair Trade Organisations' (s) standards for its members.

The WFTO comprises a broad membership and its responsibilities and authority as an international association are extensive. At the end of 2014, WFTO membership spanned seventy-nine countries and comprised 359 members (with 308 Fair Trade Trading Organisations) and forty-six individual associations (WFTO 2015: 5). Importantly, it approves use of the 'WFTO logo' by 'organisations who demonstrate a 100% commitment to fair trade in all their business activities' (WFTO 2010). The WFTO Fair Trade Standard forms a central pillar of the 'WFTO Guarantee System' (see WFTO 2014). This system enables the WFTO to vouch for the compliance of member FTOs to minimum requirements, while also requiring and enabling FTOs to work toward and demonstrate ongoing improvements in their practices (WFTO 2014: 1). Compliance is assessed through three devices: 'Self Assessment', 'Peer visit' and 'Monitoring Audit' (WFTO 2014: 1).

Table 1 outlines the WFTO Fair Trade Standard which members – comprising producer, marketing and non-trading organisations (WFTO 2014: 1-2) – are assessed against. Broadly, the WFTO Fair Trade standards require a deep re-articulation of the value chain members participate in, largely by requiring members to work to a socio-economic 'bottom line' over traditional profit imperatives. For example, the standards require organisations to demonstrate good working conditions [within their own organisations as well as within the value chain] (Standard 7), practices that supports gender equity (Standard 6), payment of a fair price (Standard 4) and working with marginalised producers (Standard 1). Importantly, Standard 1 requires members to demonstrate commitment to 'poverty reduction through trade'; specifically working with 'marginalised producers, whether these are independent family businesses, or grouped in associations or cooperatives' (WFTO 2014: 5). Indeed, the cooperative model serves as an important feature in alternative trade networks (see Develtre and Pollet, 2005), especially in the preference of ATOs to work with cooperative producer organisations, but also in some cases, through the application of the cooperative structure in ATOs at the consuming end of the chain.

Table 1: WFTO fair trade standard

1. Opportunities for economically disadvantaged producers/ groups
2. Transparency and accountability in supply chain
3. Adopt fair trading practices with producers
4. Pay fair prices
5. Do not utilise forced or child labour
6. Non-discrimination, gender equity and freedom of association
7. Provide a safe and fair working environment
8. Support producer capacity building where possible
9. Transparency on fair trade practices to buyers
10. Respect for the environment including sustainable sourcing

Source: WFTO (2014: 22).

While the bulk of fair trade activity has now shifted to the mainstream market, traditional alternative trade activities continue to grow (see Krier 2008 for a comprehensive study of key trends in Fair Trade markets). Alternative trade value chains can be differentiated from mainstreaming value chains, through the participation of not only marginalised producers, but also, dedicated 'fair trade' organisations at the consumption end of the chain. These organisations, which subscribe to the WFTO Fair Trade Standard, include importing, marketing and retail organisations. While these organisations sometimes use a branding strategy to market in traditional retail spaces (for example, Cafédirect is a major UK coffee brand produced by a UK ATO), they typically operate in holistic alternative value chains within which business models across the board are rearticulated. FTOs demonstrate their commitment through their compliance to Fair Trade Standards, which in turn are central to the value chain effected within this model of fair trade:

> Simply put, our fair trade model is open for organisations whose core activity is fair trade, focusing on improving the practices of organisations in the supply chain to follow the 10 principles [or standards] of fair trade. it is our firm belief that upholding the

> principles of fair trade is a shared responsibility of all key actors, not solely the producer. The relationships between producers and their buyers, and between sellers and consumers are an important focus of our system (WFTO 2014b).

It is exactly on this point – the relative commitment to fair trade by *all actors in the value chain* – that alternative trade is fundamentally distinct from the offerings of mainstream fair trade models.

Fair Trade's Shifting Response to Global Inequality: moving back to free markets

In contrast to alternative trade, mainstreaming does not rely on the reputations of individual businesses that sell and distribute fair trade products, but rather, on claims made about products that bear a fair trade label. Labelling's capacity to differentiate products has enabled the entry of fair trade products into conventional value chains. Essentially, while alternative trade offers a business or 'process' assurance, actively contesting the structures of businesses and trading networks, which characterise the conventional market, the mainstreaming strategy through the device of labelling provides a 'product assurance' entailing limited re-articulation of the value chains these products circulate in. However, this product assurance itself is shifting through now differentiated articulation in the Fairtrade International system and the new FTUSA system. This 'split' reveals important challenges for the mainstreaming venture and ironically sees fair trade engaging traditional questions of growth and inequality, arguably working to a 'pro-poor' growth logic rather than the deeper contestation of markets found in the alternative trade strategy. This section examines fair trade's competing mainstreaming ventures with reference to the differential value chains they manifest. It then turns to an analysis which problematises fair trade's critique of the growth-oriented trade paradigm today.

Fair Trade vs. Fairtrade in Mainstream Markets

The establishment of an international fair trade labelling regime was preceded by the creation of individual consumer market labels. The first Fairtrade label, 'Max Havelaar' was launched in the Dutch market. It served as a direct response to the appeal made by a group of Mexican growers to a development organisation Solidaridad in 1986, '… that instead of aid they needed trade' (Fairtrade Foundation, n.d.). Jos Harmsen (Project Specialist Coffee, Max Havelaar 2005) explained: 'We started 'Max' up ... to bring it [Fairtrade coffee] into the normal supermarket where every consumer is doing his or her shopping'. Additional individual consumer markets soon followed before an international labelling regime was established in 1997 – Fairtrade International (formerly Fairtrade Labelling Organisations [FLO] International) – and an International Fairtrade product mark was launched in 2002 (Fairtrade International 2015). Under the Fairtrade International regime, existing mainstream value chains and actors are harnessed to support a growth strategy, which aims to lift Fairtrade production and distribution globally. This is achieved through a suite of production, trade and product standards that support Fairtrade product differentiation.

Fairtrade International is able to label products as Fairtrade, by setting and certifying the production and trade of products according to respective 'Fairtrade' standards. Fairtrade standards are set through a combination of Generic producer standards (which set out requirements for producers, also differentiating between democratically organised smallholder organisations, hired labour and contract production) and a Generic trade standard (setting out the conditions for *trade* but not making requirements for the structure of importing, marketing or retail organisations) (see Valiente-Riedl 2013: 82-3). Additionally, individual product standards set out product specific requirements, including minimum prices and the forms of labour mobilisation sanctioned for different products. While Fairtrade labelling is committed to servicing the most marginalised producers, historically – across both labelling and alternative trade – this has meant preferencing smallholder production, typically cooperatives. Today, the labelling system allows for democratically organised smallholders (in cooperatives or alternative structures) to participate, as well as organised hired labour in few product categories where the realities of production require engagement with workers. It also permits contract production in a few categories, on the condition that these small-scale producers work toward establishing a democratic organisational structure with the assistance of a partner organisation (typically an exporter or NGO) (Fairtrade International, 2016). It offers certification for predominantly agricultural commodities but also gold, sports balls, carbon credits and composite products

(Fairtrade International 2016a). Table 2 shows that across these product categories (note, these can be broken down further, for example 'fresh fruit' comprising apples, bananas etc.), only permit production by hired labour. While Fairtrade International requires the producers it works with to adopt business structures that are community-development oriented, it does not make concomitant demands of the businesses that operate at the consumption end of Fairtrade value chains.

Table 2: Fairtrade Product Standards for Small Farmers and Hired Labour, 2016

Labour Type	**Small Farmers**	**Hired Labour**	**Contract Production**
Product Category	Cane Sugar Cereals Cocoa Coffee Fibre Crops Fresh Fruit Gold Herbs, Herbal Teas & Spices Honey Nuts Oilseeds & Oleaginous fruit Prepared & Preserved Fruit Secondary Products Tea Vegetables	Fresh Fruit Fresh Vegetables Oilseeds & Oleaginous fruit Flowers & Plants Herbs & Herbal Teas Prepared/Preserved Fruit Secondary Products Sports Balls Tea	Cereals Cocoa Fiber Crops (*e.g.* cotton) Prepared/ Preserved Fruit

Sources: Fairtrade International, 2016a, 2016b and 2016c.

Not surprisingly, the rise of labelling has drawn heavy criticism from within traditional alternative markets. Dean's Beans (2010), a coffee roasting cooperative/ATO which describes itself as a '100% fair trade coffee company', questions the participation of conventional businesses in Fairtrade. In turn Starbucks, a company that Dean's Beans (2010) is strongly critical of, describes itself as 'strongly committed to buying and serving responsibly grown and ethically traded coffee to help create a better future for farmers and a more sustainable supply chain' (Howard Schultz, Starbucks CEO quoted in TransFair USA 2009: 32). This is not without reason. In 2009 Starbucks emerged as the single largest purchaser of Fairtrade coffee in the world after purchasing 39 million pounds of Fairtrade coffee, drastically increasing its purchases from the previous year by 20 million pounds (Starbucks 2010). Despite this purchasing spike, Starbucks Fairtrade coffee purchases only represented just over ten percent of its total purchases in that year (Starbucks, 2010), a figure which reduced to 8.6 percent for 2014 (Starbucks 2014: 3). While it has made a clear contribution to growing the Fairtrade market, Starbucks is more broadly seen to champion its own voluntary supply chain scheme, C.A.F.E Practices.

This underscores the increasing tension between fair trade and competing certification systems (*e.g.* Organics and shade grown), as well as companies own voluntary ethical supply chain sourcing practices (see Hudson, Hudson and Fridell 2013: chapter 5 for a discussion of this). Indeed, in 2015 Starbucks claimed 99 percent of its coffee was ethically sourced, without providing figures for the relative proportion that was sourced through Fairtrade networks (Starbucks 2015: 5). As such, Starbucks still limited commitment to fair trade raises concern for ATOs operating in this market. Concerns have increased with the entrance of even more notorious corporations such as Nestle into the market (see Hudson, Hudson and Fridell, 2013: chapter 5 for discussion of corporate participation and strategies in this sector). The question put forward by many ATOs is whether a 'strong commitment' to marginalised growers and ethical trade is really demonstrated through 'partnership' with Fairtrade labelling for only a portion of a company's products. This position, as will be discussed further in the section below, drives tension in fair trade networks that continue to worry the transformative potential of fair trade, over the lure of expanding markets.

Table 3: Fairtrade Market Share for Ground Coffee in Europe and the USA, Selected Years

Country	2004	Latest year available
Austria	2.3	2 (2008)
Belgium	1.7	2.8 (2008)
Denmark	2.0	2.0 (2004)
Finland	0.4	0.4 (2004)
France	N/A	7.0 (2007)
Germany	1.0	1.5 (2007)
Ireland	2.0	3.5
Italy	N/A	0.1 (2007)
Luxembourg	N/A	3.5
Netherlands	N/A	3.0
Norway	0.9	1.4 (2007)
Sweden	<1.0	3.4 (2008)
Switzerland	6.0	5.0 (2007)
United Kingdom	20.0	N/A
USA	1.8	2

Sources: Krier 2008: 46 (2004 data); TransFair USA 2006 : 3 (2004 data); FAO 2009: 13-4 (latest year available).

Under the Fairtrade International umbrella, Fairtrade has certainly emerged as a global market venture by harnessing the existing value chains for products of import to marginalised producers in the developing world. There are now twenty-two established National Fairtrade Organisations (NFOs), spanning Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, which market Fairtrade and also license the Fairtrade Certification Mark in their domestic markets (Fairtrade International 2016d). In addition, there are ten Fairtrade Marketing Organisations (FMOs), including in Brazil, India, the Philippines and Slovakia, which market Fairtrade in their domestic markets while Fairtrade International undertakes the licensing activities (Fairtrade International 2016d). This growth is impressive however, if we consider the most mature Fairtrade product – coffee – labelling remains a niche market which only accounts for less than four per cent of individual domestic markets in ground coffee (see Table 3). This highlights the limitations of this mainstreaming strategy, with the corporations that have grown Fairtrade markets only offering a limited commitment and many others not participating at all or developing their own in-house sourcing policies or seeking out alternatives. These limits to Fairtrade's growth capacity has driven the launch of a new Fair trade mainstreaming strategy through the creation of FT USA; a strategy which seeks to 'upscale' and thereby arguably increasingly affirms conventional market value chains.

From Market Harnessing to Market Affirming Fair Trade

Before the advent of fair trade mainstreaming, Renard (2003: 89-90 in Schreck 2005: 18) describes the hard reality alternative trade advocates faced; questioning the operation of the free market system on the one hand, yet 'far from resolving the problems of selling Third World products' on the other. This is the strength that fair trade mainstreaming offers – despite arguably *diluted values* and processes for fair exchange, it has scope to be of (economic) value to more producers than ever before. Yet, as shown above, mainstreaming under the Fairtrade International system has also hit a wall emerging as a 'niche' rather than 'whole market' strategy. It is in this context that FTUSA splintered from the international mainstreaming system. Its departure and its launch of a 'Fair Trade for All' approach '… created shockwaves through the fair trade movement' (Tallontire and Nelson 2013: 28). Yet, where Fairtrade International's 'market harnessing' value chain serve up the contradiction of corporate buyers on one end of the value chain, whilst maintaining socially embedded production models at the other, FTUSA is arguably simply pushing a market-based development strategy even further with ambitions for broader relevance across mainstream value chains, including diverse sites of production. Essentially, the shift from 'market harnessing' to 'market affirming' transpires through: a) extending the model holistically to mainstream value chains (*i.e.* opening up to myriad structures of labour mobilisation), and more broadly; b) working to satisfy the demands of corporate buyers in articulating an increasingly buyer driven value chain.

In its decision to move away from the international Fairtrade labelling system, FTUSA's founding CEO, Paul Rice (2012) argues that the organisation 'has chosen to buck the status quo… to make Fair Trade truly fair for all'. Providing the example of coffee, Rice (2012) promised that both smallholder growers and plantation workers could join the FTUSA system and as such, over four million previously excluded farmers could now gain access to the fair trade value chain under the new US model. Indeed, across 2012 and 2013 FTUSA rolled out an Independent Smallholder Standard and a Farm Workers Standard (Walske and Tyson 2015: 132). Certainly, the issue of the forms of labour mobilisation that fair trade serves remains divisive in fair trade networks today. Indeed, in an evaluation of the narratives used within different fair trade systems, Tallontire and Nelson (2013: 28) argue that FTUSA's departure is primarily due to 'a divergence of approach about what are the most effective and legitimate means for supporting smallholders and workers at a large scale'. Under the Fairtrade International system, major crops like coffee, cocoa and sugar remain exclusive to smallholder production, but these same producers only manage to sell a portion of their product in Fairtrade markets (Jaffee and Howard 2015). Herein lies a tension. The model of organised smallholder production units is preferred in the Fairtrade labelling system, as a structure which facilitates producer empowerment (see Tallontire and Nelson 2013). Yet, by permitting opportunities for value chain upgrading solely through collective capacity and enterprise, the Fairtrade market is limited and many producers who are not organised remain excluded. In response, FTUSA has opened up the production base but is also swiftly moving to diversify product lines and composites that can be branded 'fair trade'.

While coffee remains the flagship of the Fairtrade labelling system within a limited menu of 'Fairtrade' product lines, FTUSA is pursuing the possibility of a 'Fair Trade Lifestyle', wherein consumers have broader choices to 'shop responsibly in every product category' (FTUSA 2016a). Where, with the exception of Gold and Sports balls, Fairtrade International is largely limited to agricultural product lines; FTUSA has managed to extend into a range of manufactured goods through its 'apparel and home goods' line, and is also strongly pushing 'multi-ingredient foods' (FTUSA 2016b). Composite products are not new to Fair Trade mainstreaming. Fairtrade International also offers certification and a differentiated ingredient specific label for composite products provided that 'all that can be' is Fairtrade sourced and 'at least 20% of the content must be Fairtrade certified' (Fairtrade International 2016e). However, the scope for only partially Fair trade products to bear a label is increased under the FTUSA model, through dual devices. FTUSA offers a 'Fair Trade Certified Ingredient' label for products that contain more than 20 percent Fair Trade certified ingredients, and a 'Fair Trade Certified Ingredient Specific' label (*e.g.* where the label would state 'Fair Trade Certified Chocolate' to signify the use of Fair Trade chocolate in a composite product) (Walske and Tyson 2015: 125-6). The rise in composite products across the board raises concerns that consumers will increasingly struggle to differentiate between 100% and partially Fair Trade products, with a recent survey suggesting that most consumers are not aware of the difference in labels (Lake Research Partners 2013 Survey cited in Jaffee and Howard 2015). It is, however, crucial for a strategy that seeks to strongly align itself with existing free market value chains and the needs of mainstream actors.

FTUSA has firmly positioned itself as a system that seeks to affirm and work with existing market structures, seeking to draw in more corporate participation by offering greater flexibility in its certification scheme. In its mission and values it claims:

> Companies should not have to choose between social responsibility and the bottom line. we envision fair trade as a new global business model that helps industry secure its own profitability and competitiveness while it protects the environment and ensures a fair return to farmers and workers (FTUSA 2016a).

This concern with supporting businesses, is also reflected in its business planning activities, with its CEO claiming: '[I]f we are not ready to offer large companies the whole-of-business solutions they require, they will work with the next best solution…' (Rice in 'FTUSA Business Plan 2013: 13, quoted in Walske and Tyson 2015: 135). On the one hand, this strategy, which seeks to strengthen extension into buyer driven value chains, resonates with 'the broader development discourse of "making markets work for the poor"…' (Tallontire and Nelson 2013: 41). However, herein the reduced role of Fair Trade Organisations – either at the site of production or consumption – significantly shifts the orientation of this fair trade value chain to more emphatically affirm existing market actors and relations. Indeed, the elimination of what Reed (2009) refers to as 'social economy actors' arguably reduces Fair

Trade to just another '… form of corporate accountability' (Reed 2009: 15). This is arguably a natural progression to the mainstreaming exercise started with Fairtrade labelling, however, it does cement a re-orientation of fair trade's earlier critique of the conventional export-oriented growth paradigm and its capacity to address global inequality – with increasing emphasis on working within rather than contesting existing value chains.

Conclusion

Since its inception, fair trade has invigorated debate on trade as a vehicle for ameliorating global inequality. With the proliferation of a myriad of fair trade responses to free markets over the years, including more recently FTUSA's promise under the 'fair trade' banner to strengthen the performance of free markets (FTUSA 2016), it is important to reflect on the 'point of difference' that fair trade maintains today. This article sought to analyse the evolution of fair trade vis-à-vis the prevailing free market paradigm, by mapping the different actors and distribution networks that characterise different fair trade models. In so doing, three key 'fair trade' models are identified.

The market-harnessing model offers 'fair trade' as another *product* to circulate through existing free market pathways. It works to facilitate fair trade's access to existing free market actors and networks, whilst maintaining mechanisms for producer empowerment that contradict traditional market arrangements. Herein, global value chains are arguably treated to a shallow re-articulation. In contrast, the market contesting model associated with the original 'alternative trade' roots of the sector, seeks to transform exchange as a *process* by reformulating the principles and practices of exchange through the creation of alternative business models and networks spanning the sites of production, processing, manufacturing and retail creating a holistic parallel market. Cemented by the recent split of 'Fairtrade USA' from the international labelling regime, this tension over the utilisation of existing market mechanisms has now manifested a significant erosion of fair trade's applied critique of free trade, signaling challenges for a cohesive fair trade model in the future. The entry of Fairtrade USA produces a third model, the market affirming model for fair trade, seeking to reinforce existing free market pathways and actors across the board, including at the site of production.

In this context, fair trade is rife with contradictions:

> A key contradiction for fair trade is that it operates 'in and against the market', working through market channels to create new commodity networks for items produced under more favourable social and ecological conditions and simultaneously working against the conventional market forces that create and uphold inequalities (Raynolds 2000 in Raynolds and Bennett 2015: 25).

The contradiction of critiquing conventional market forces on the one hand, yet relying on them on the other is fundamentally problematic despite the expansionary logic that has propelled fair trade's mainstreaming efforts. Herein, FTUSA works to resolve this contradiction in somewhat unexpected ways. It strongly endorses an export-oriented growth paradigm, re-positioning fair trade as the means to 'help[s] "free trade" work for the poor' (FTUSA 2016). A position reminiscent of traditional (pro-poor) growth arguments. For better or worse, fair trade has moved away from its roots and the lines between 'free' and 'fair' trade are shifting.

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